

Salford 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: 21 April 2015 - 8 May 2015

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Children's services in Salford are good

Good leadership means that:

Children and young people are protected, the risks to them are identified and managed through timely decisions and the help provided reduces the risk of, or actual, harm to them.

Children and young people looked after, those returning home and those moving to or living in permanent placements outside of their immediate birth family have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

1. Children who need help and protection	Good
2. Children looked after and achieving permanence	Good
2.1 Adoption performance	Requires improvement
2.2 Experiences and progress of care leavers	Good
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.

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The local authority

Information about this local authority area²

Previous Ofsted inspections

- The local authority operates seven children's homes. Of these, six were judged to be good or outstanding in their most recent Ofsted inspection.
- The previous inspection of the local authority's arrangements for the protection of children was in November 2012. The local authority was judged to be adequate.
- The previous inspection of the local authority's services for looked after children was in June 2010. The local authority was judged to be adequate. In the same inspection safeguarding was judged to be inadequate.

Local leadership

- The Director of Children's Services has been in post since October 2014.
- The chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board has been in post since May 2014.

Children living in this area

- Approximately 52,269 children and young people under the age of 18 years live in Salford. This is 22% of the total population in the area.³
- Approximately 28% of the local authority's children are living in poverty.⁴
- The proportion of children entitled to free school meals⁵:
 - in primary schools is 27% (the national average is 17%)
 - in secondary schools is 23% (the national average is 15%).
- Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 14% of all children living in the area compared with 22% in the country as a whole.⁶
- The largest minority ethnic groups of children and young people in the area are Asian or Asian Black and Mixed.⁷

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.

³ Source: ONS Mid Year 2013.

⁴ Source: HMRC Snapshot as at 31 August 2010.

⁵ Source: DfE Schools, pupils and their characteristics.

⁶ Source: ONS 2011 census.

⁷ Source: ONS 2011 census.

- The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language:⁸
 - in primary schools is 15% (the national average is 19%)
 - in secondary schools is 10% (the national average is 14%).
- The net population gain resulting from international migration is the single most important driver of population growth within Salford – adding about 1,400 to the population per year (average 2001-12).

Child protection in this area

- At 31 March 2015, 1,931 children had been identified through assessment as being formally in need of a specialist children's service. This is an increase from 1,663 at 31 March 2014.⁹
- At 31 March 2015, 335 children and young people were the subject of a child protection plan. This is an increase from 278 at 31 March 2014.¹⁰
- At 31 March 2015, 15 children lived in a privately arranged fostering placement. This is an increase from nine at 31 March 2014.¹¹

Children looked after in this area

- At 31 March 2015, 589 children are being looked after by the local authority (a rate of 113 per 10,000 children). This is an increase from 575 (111 per 10,000 children) at 31 March 2014.¹²
- Of this number 214 (or 36%) live outside the local authority area
 - 53 live in residential children's homes, of whom 34% live out of the authority area
 - two live in residential special schools, both of whom live out of the authority area
 - 410 live with foster families, of whom 41% live out of the authority area
 - 78 live with parents, of whom 22% live out of the authority area
 - three children are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- In the last 12 months there have been:
 - 43 adoptions
 - 26 children became subject of special guardianship orders

⁸ Source: DfE Schools, pupils and their characteristics.

⁹ Source: DfE Characteristics of children in need in England.

¹⁰ Source: DfE Characteristics of children in need in England.

¹¹ Source: DfE Notifications of private fostering arrangements in England.

¹² Source: DfE Children looked after in England including adoption.

- 212 children who have ceased to be looked after, of whom 4% subsequently returned to be looked after
- three children and young people who have ceased to be looked after and moved on to independent living
- no children and young people who have ceased to be looked after and are living in houses of multiple occupation.

Executive summary

Services in Salford for children and young people in need of help and protection and for looked after children are good. This is the result of a collective determination to improve services for children from a very low base. The local authority has effective partnerships with other agencies such as police, schools and health both at a strategic and an operational level. This includes preventative services and awareness raising on a range of risks including child sexual exploitation, gang involvement and radicalisation. As a result children in Salford benefit from well-coordinated multi-agency help which is improving outcomes for many.

Following an inspection of safeguarding and looked after children in 2010 which judged services for looked after children as adequate and safeguarding as inadequate the local authority engaged with partners in a rigorous improvement programme. By 2012 services had improved significantly and were no longer inadequate. However much more needed to be done to improve the quality and timeliness of assessment, multi-agency planning and actions to protect children. The current Director of Children's Services and the interim Assistant Director have built on firm foundations from their predecessors. This is enhanced by a stable core of staff and leaders who have been part of the local authority's transformation from the onset. Workers value the quality of support and oversight they receive from managers at all levels although this is not always fully reflected in supervision records.

Early help support for families is strong, including support provided by the Protect team to children at risk of and experiencing sexual exploitation. Early help is improving outcomes for children with a wide range of needs preventing problems from escalating or re-emerging.

Children in Salford who go missing from home and school or who are at risk of child sexual exploitation benefit from a coordinated multi-agency response to assess risk and need. They receive good support which is helping some of those most at risk to reduce the numbers of times they go missing. Although all children are offered return interviews the quality of these is inconsistent. Some do not contain sufficient detail to inform individual plans well or to assist in the analysis of any emerging trends or patterns.

Multi-agency responses to the significant challenges presented by the high prevalence of domestic abuse within Salford are very strong. The Junior MARAC is effective in helping children who are the victims and the perpetrators of violence. However, there are no services for adult perpetrators that are not court directed.

When children are potentially at risk of significant harm enquiries are timely and robust based on effective information sharing by all relevant agencies. As a result children and young people receive a response that is proportionate to the known risks. In a very small number of cases seen there were resource issues with partner agencies such as unavailability of police to attend meetings. In these cases partners

worked creatively together and the safeguarding of children was not compromised.

Child protection conferences and core groups are generally well attended by agencies. Good use of the signs of safety model results in child centred plans to reduce risk. Although recent initiatives should result in increased participation by children, parents do not have access to independent advocacy within meetings and some parents' views are not fully represented. Chairs monitor progress of the plan between conferences to reduce any drift or delay. Children subject to child in need plans benefit from a similarly robust approach with those that are more complex chaired by an independent child in need co-ordinator. This offers an additional layer of independent scrutiny and quality assurance.

Information on children who are accessing alternative education is robustly collated and analysed for looked after children but is not routinely collected on those living at home. The local authority recognises that while this is not a statutory requirement, the experiences of this vulnerable group of young people need to be better understood.

The local authority has robust arrangements for children who are on the edge of care which in some cases prevents the need for them to become looked after. When children are subject to court processes under the Public Law Outline (PLO) proceedings are concluded within expected timescales, reducing uncertainty and delay for children. Until very recently monitoring of children in the pre-proceedings phase of the PLO was not rigorous enough.

Most looked after children benefit from stable relationships with social workers and carers and live in in good quality placements. Good attention is paid to their health and they receive timely therapeutic support if needed. They are helped to understand their past and to express their wishes and feelings. As a result the majority of looked after children are thriving educationally and socially.

Looked after children receive good practical and emotional support in their transition to adulthood, including increasingly the opportunity to remain with former foster carers beyond age 18. Numbers of care leavers in employment education and training are good although access to apprenticeships is too limited. Performance data are not systematically used to drive improvement for looked after children, so areas for development can be missed.

Although there are examples of good individual work with children overall, children continue to wait too long to be adopted, and adopters are not referred to the adoption register quickly enough.

Recommendations

1. Urgently analyse the local authority's current performance in relation to adoption so that the reasons for its deterioration against the adoption scorecard are understood and addressed. Develop robust systems for monitoring and tracking the experience of prospective adopters and children with a plan for adoption in order to improve timeliness.
2. Ensure that all approved adopters who have not yet been matched are added to the adoption register within three months of approval.
3. Improve consistency in the quality of return interviews so that all interviews contain sufficient detail of the missing episode to inform plans to keep children safer and contribute to intelligence gathering about trends and patterns of children going missing.
4. Ensure that parents and carers who need an advocate to support them in child protection conferences and meetings have access to this service.
5. Ensure that tracking and reviewing of progress of children in the pre-proceedings phase of the Public Law Outline is sufficiently robust to prevent any drift or delay.
6. Improve the quality and detail of records so that the local authority knows how many children who are not looked after access alternative education.
7. Ensure that care leavers have greater opportunities to enter the workplace through an increased access to apprenticeships and that they all have details of and understand their health histories.
8. Ensure that recording of supervision is consistently robust across all parts of the service and is used to track performance and drive improvement within individual case work as well as professional development.

Summary for children and young people

- Services for children in Salford have been judged to be poor in inspections since 2010. Now they are good, although a few things need to improve further to be good all of the time. The people in charge and social workers are working hard to make sure services stay good and get even better. Inspectors think that the new Director of Children's Services and her senior team will make this happen quickly.
- The local authority listens to what children and young people want and works hard to make sure that the services they provide help keep them safe and to achieve their wishes.
- Children's centres, schools, housing and many other partners work very well together when children and their families first need help, and a wide range of help is available. We found that children and families who have suffered domestic abuse have very good support.
- Social workers are determined to assist children and their families. They know the families they work with well and spend a lot of time listening to children. All that can be done is done to help families stay together. Children who need protection are helped quickly.
- Children who need an adoptive family sometimes have to wait too long, and much longer than in many other local authorities. The local authority is working hard to improve this. Last year, more children were adopted, but there is more work to be done.
- Children and young people in care in Salford are increasingly doing well at school. Many of them continue their education after they leave school or do training which will help them get jobs in the future. When looked after children reach the age of 18, those who want to, including those who have additional needs, are able to stay with their foster carers until they are ready to move on. Support to help them set up their own home or go to university is good.

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
<p>Summary</p> <p>There have been significant improvements in services for children who need help and protection. Despite increases in demand for services, thresholds are appropriately applied in most cases and children and families are increasingly offered a wide range of services to meet need. This is resulting in improving outcomes for many children.</p> <p>An extensive range of services is available to support differing needs of children and families. There is good engagement from many schools in providing an early help offer. Children’s centres provide bespoke services to meet diverse needs. The suite of services available through the Early Intervention and Prevention teams ensures that many families receive a timely and comprehensive response when early help is needed, including out of hours.</p> <p>There is very effective information sharing within the newly established Bridge across a range of agencies including GULF (a multi-agency team to manage organised crime) and Protect (a specialist child exploitation team). This is supporting timely decision making to address risk, including in many complex cases. As a result risk and harm are responded to appropriately, including an effective well-coordinated response to children who are missing or at risk of child sexual exploitation. The quality of return interviews for children who have been missing is not always sufficiently detailed to inform plans.</p> <p>Strategy meeting are well managed and timely, although in a very small number of cases there are delays due to lack of police availability. Child protection enquiries are thorough. Almost all assessments are good, although a few are not comprehensive, for example in including all relevant adults. Child protection plans and children in need plans are mostly robust although some require a sharper focus on outcomes and timescales. Reviews of plans are regular and well attended by a range of agencies and the majority provide rigour in ensuring that plans progress.</p> <p>Recent initiatives are resulting in improved identification of young people who are victims or perpetrators of domestic abuse. This is helping break the cycle of abuse in some families. There are no adult perpetrator programmes other than those mandated by the court.</p>	

Inspection findings

9. The local authority and its partners have invested in prevention and early intervention services and this is making a significant and positive difference in improving outcomes for many children. There is a wide range of early help support available to families when needs are first identified which is delivered by the extensive Early Intervention and Prevention service (EIP), children's centres, schools and a range of other agencies. An innovative initiative to improve access to early help, the 'No Further Action under 4' project means that families with children under 4 that do not meet the threshold for children's social care are referred to the local children's centre. The Outreach service, including the 'Rapid Response' teams, ensures that many families identified as in need receive a timely and comprehensive response, including out of hours.
10. Concerted efforts have been made to reach different groups in Salford. Early Intervention teams are based in localities. This, together with children's centres that have good reach and many schools providing early help, means that many of the families most in need are able to access early help. Children's centres offer a range of services including bespoke parenting programmes which have been adapted to meet the needs of a diverse community, with very positive feedback from parents about the difference this has made to their parenting. The focus of the Strengthening Families Programme on mothers who have already had one child removed is having a significant impact; of the 147 mothers who have accessed the programme in the last two years, 128 are successfully looking after their child.
11. The majority of early help assessments are timely, concise and reflect appropriately the family history and reason for referral. The best assessments seen capture the experience of the child well, though a few fail to capture or articulate well enough the impact of the presenting concern on the child's life. In a small minority of cases targets and timescales resulting from early help assessments are not sufficiently clear. It is therefore difficult for the lead partner and the local authority to monitor fully the impact of the early help assessment and the support arrangements. Numbers of early help assessments have reduced by 21% since 2013/14, from 786 to 623, which means the local authority cannot be sure that all children who would benefit from an early help assessment and targeted early help services are identified quickly enough. The local authority has analysed this and is targeting training for those agencies currently not completing early help assessments. All decisions about whether referrals meet the threshold for a social work assessment are made by qualified social workers. Thresholds are appropriately applied in almost all cases, though a very small number were managed as team around the child when the threshold for 'step up' to children's social care was indicated.
12. There is very effective information sharing within the Bridge to ensure an appropriate response to risk. The co-location of the police, children's social care, health, early intervention and prevention, adult mental health and drug and alcohol services as well as domestic abuse services, means that relevant

information is shared and robustly analysed to inform decisions about the level of need and support that families and children require. Advice and consultation is readily available. For example, intelligence from the GULF team ensures a good understanding of violence within and between families and supports effective safety planning for children. The strong interface with the Protect team ensures that those at risk of or experiencing child sexual exploitation and who go missing receive a well-coordinated response so that risks are identified and appropriate action taken to assess needs including the need for protection.

13. There has been an increase of 28% in the number of referrals to children's social care in 2014-15. This is partly as a result of the change in the categorisation of a referral, but also as a result of significant changes in demographics and continued high levels of deprivation. Thresholds are appropriately applied and generally well understood by the partnership and no children were seen to be subject to child protection investigations where this was not necessary.
14. When child protection issues are identified they are responded to promptly by children's social care and referrals passed immediately to the Referral and Initial Assessment teams (RIAT) for strategy discussions or meetings. Where a decision on a referral is not made within 24 hours, due to the need to gather more information, managers do not routinely record the reason for the delay. This does not assist quality assurance of timeliness of decision making or identification of themes. At the start of the inspection, managers did not receive performance information regarding timeliness of decision making. When this was raised by inspectors the local authority took immediate action and this issue had been addressed before the end of the inspection. Inspectors saw a very small number of cases where there had been delay in order to gather more information and only one where that delay was not appropriate.
15. There is timely and effective management of domestic abuse notifications within the Bridge which ensures that where there is an immediate risk to victims, including children, there is an appropriate, timely multi-agency response to reduce risk. There is a range of services including Salford domestic abuse service, EIP and the Rapid Response service that can offer immediate support and advice. Appropriate referrals to these agencies were made in cases seen. In all cases notifications are sent to health professionals, such as health visitors and school nurses, so that they are kept informed of recent concerns. Multi-Agency Referral and Assessment Conferences (MARAC) are held three times a week and are well attended. These provide robust, timely consideration of risk and effective multi-agency work to ensure services are delivered to manage and reduce risk.
16. A weekly Junior MARAC is resulting in early identification of children and young people at risk of perpetrating domestic abuse, with clear pathways of referral for support. A Young Person's Violence Advisor (YPVA) Champion is working to raise awareness across all agencies about the prevalence and needs of young people perpetrating domestic abuse, and there are now 24 trained YPVAs

across various agencies who carry cases and undertake work with victims and young people who harm others. Resources to manage needs identified through the Junior MARAC only just meet the demand. There are gaps in services for adult perpetrators as there are currently no perpetrator programmes other than those mandated by the court.

17. In the vast majority of cases strategy meetings are timely and very well attended by a range of agencies. In a small number of cases there are delays in convening strategy meetings due to the non-availability of the police, although in cases seen this did not delay action to ensure that children are safe. The quality of recording of meetings is very thorough and reflects effective collation of key information on family history, agency involvement and known risks. Actions from meetings are comprehensive, detailed and well recorded. There is clarity of responsibility for actions so that all agencies know what is expected of them.
18. Child protection enquiries are timely and well managed. They provide clear analysis of risk and protective factors. The views of children are sought and contribute to decisions about next steps. Records are very thorough and outcomes are appropriate, with good management oversight that is clear and directive.
19. Most assessments are good and include effective consideration of historical factors, in balancing risks and strengths. As a result, young people's complex needs and vulnerabilities, including the risk of child sexual exploitation, are mostly understood and analysed well to inform effective planning. Children's views are sought and considered in most assessments although they are not always central to the assessment. Assessments are mostly timely and in many cases children were offered services while the assessment was underway. A very small number of assessments were not sufficiently comprehensive and robust. In a few cases significant adults had not been involved in assessments and self-reporting by adults was not checked thoroughly to ensure all information is accurate. There is a high level of use of written agreements with parents and although no children were seen to be at risk, in a few cases too much reliance was placed on agreements to keep children safe.
20. All children receiving a social work service as a child in need and children subject to child protection plans have plans that are up to date on cases seen. This shows considerable progress since the last inspection. The format for plans is appropriate and supports recording of SMART objectives. Most include clear goals, actions, responsibility for actions and timescales. Plans are well written so that it is evident what needs to change and by when. In a very small number of plans, goals could be more specific so that the expectations of parents are clearer to both them and other professionals.
21. Initial child protection conferences and review conferences are generally well attended. Most ensure robust consideration of risk. Although the numbers of children on child protection plans have increased significantly from 278 in

March 2014 to 355 in March 2015, the threshold for children being made subject to child protection plans is applied appropriately. Review meetings ensure that plans do not drift. For example no children have been on child protection plans for more than two years. Child protection conferences are well chaired and there is effective quality assurance of plans by child protection chairs including between conferences to monitor progress of the plan. Quality assurance activity by chairs is not yet used effectively to systematically improve practice or identify themes. A database for capturing issues raised through the 'escalation of concern process' by chairs has just been introduced to fulfil this function.

22. Effective use of the Signs of Safety model was seen during this inspection to have a positive impact on improving rigour within initial and review conferences. Between January and May 2015, 28% of children attended their child protection conference. A project which captures children's views online is being rolled out across the service and indications from the pilot are that it will increase their participation. Parental attendance at conferences is better (78% in January–May 2015).
23. An advocacy service for children has recently been introduced. There is no equivalent service for parents. This means that there is more to do to ensure children and parents are fully represented when they are unable to advocate on their own behalf.
24. Child protection core groups and child in need (CIN) reviews are regular and the role of the CIN coordinators is ensuring an independent overview of more complex cases including those stepped down from child protection. Core groups monitor plans rigorously, very directly addressing the plan, progress and review of actions from the previous meeting. However in a small number of core groups the plan is not reviewed in sufficient detail, with some actions not being progressed over several meetings.
25. Social workers in Salford know the children they work with well. Children receive regular visits from workers. Most case files include good detailed recording of visits. They include descriptions of observations of very young children which provide a clear sense of the child and their attachment to parents, as well as parents' bond with the child.
26. Families subject to child in need and child protection plans receive a wide range of services. Direct work with children is well embedded in practice and creative methods are used to assess wishes and feelings of children. Direct work is available from a range of services to meet diverse and often complex needs. This includes work to address risk of child sexual exploitation and to establish routines to support young people to access education. In almost all cases, findings from direct work inform risk assessments and plans, with many good examples of risks being reduced as a result.

27. Adult mental health and drug and alcohol services are present in the Bridge. Examples were seen where this was resulting in an early response, with holistic assessments of risks and needs, but this is a very recent initiative and it is too early to evaluate the impact. There were examples of effective work when children are subject to plans, for example intensive family support to parents with mental health problems and good information sharing at case conferences and child in need meetings. However the extent of need is not yet fully understood. Work is being undertaken with Public Health to understand more fully the data on children in the city who are living with parents with an alcohol, drug or mental health problem. Until this work is completed the targeting of services to ensure all children who need them receive them is based on incomplete information.
28. A significant proportion of children and young people are made subject to child protection plans due to neglect (46% March 2015). Cases seen for the purpose of the inspection were closely monitored by social workers and conference chairs. Many had a range of support to meet different needs within families. However, the neglect strategy has not yet been launched and use of the Graded Care profile (a tool to support analysis of neglect) has reduced. The partnership is aware of this, has analysed the reasons and intends to deliver further training to support practitioners to use the tool effectively.
29. Children who are missing from home and school or who are at risk of child sexual exploitation benefit from a coordinated multi-agency response to assess risk and need. A range of multi-agency meetings ensures effective information sharing and the tracking and monitoring of all these groups of children. As a result of these arrangements coordinated packages of multi-agency support are provided to meet young people's immediate and long term needs. In a number of cases seen this is leading to reduction of risk.
30. The specialist Protect team comprised of social workers, police officers and youth workers provides those vulnerable to, or experiencing, child sexual exploitation with a range of skilled interventions that reduce risk and provide young people with sustainable strategies to support them to keep safe. Cases are held at the appropriate threshold levels and there are currently 32 children ranging from 11 to 18 years known to this team. A wide range of training and workshops to raise awareness have taken place in Salford and referrals to Protect have increased by over 30% this year, but the extent and reach of the training on child sexual exploitation has not been mapped. The partnership recognises that there is more to do, and plans are in place to address this for example raising awareness among young people through schools, and work to promote community awareness of sexual exploitation through Operation Avert.
31. The number of reported episodes of children going missing from home and care has increased substantially over time. In 2011-2012, 461 episodes were reported. In 2014-15 there were 315 children who had 824 episodes, which is a slight reduction on the previous year. A small cohort of children accounts for a high number of missing episodes. The partnerships have developed a range of

initiatives to address this, including a new multi-agency project to provide intensive support to those most at risk when missing and to offer return interviews for other young people. Early indicators show that the project is having some impact, with a reduction in missing episodes for the group of most prolific missing since the project started from 66 episodes in the three months up to the end of January 2015 to 26 episodes from January to April 2015. In addition young people are starting to take responsibility for their own behaviour. All children are offered a return interview and the vast majority take up the opportunity, indicating front-line workers' persistence and sensitivity in engaging with them. Data are also showing a marked improvement in the timeliness of return home interviews with 73% completed within 72 hours in the three months to March 2015 compared with just 28.9% from October to December 2014. The partnership recognises that there is more to do to reduce the number of children going missing, for example improving the consistency and the quality of return interviews to better inform analysis and understanding of the reasons why children go missing.

32. There were 580 children missing from education in the last calendar year. Of these 91 were still recorded as missing at the end of the year. The local authority does not remove any child from the register until their whereabouts are known and a school place confirmed. This is good practice. Clear procedures ensure that all professionals understand their role in reporting children missing from education. School attendance is closely monitored and close liaison between education welfare officers and schools ensures prompt action to reduce risk.
33. Currently 66 electively home educated children are known and appropriate support offered when needs are identified. Reasons for elective home education are carefully scrutinised and, action taken to safeguard children if necessary. The local authority keeps an appropriate record of children and young people they are directly responsible for who are accessing alternative provision. However, the number of children and young people accessing alternative provision through their schools and the quality of this provision are not recorded by the authority. While this is not a statutory requirement the local authority acknowledges it is good practice and would increase its understanding of the experiences of this vulnerable group of young people.
34. The proactive approach of the private fostering lead officer, supported by the LSCB, is raising awareness across community groups and the partnership. The number of children notified to the local authority as privately fostered has increased over the last year from 10-17. The number of queries from the public and partner agencies has also increased. Sustaining awareness is promoted by a range of measures, for example incorporating a question relating to private fostering within every early help assessment and continued work to promote the benefits of undergoing an assessment through publicity campaigns. For those children who are privately fostered, statutory visits and assessments are undertaken within timescale, are thorough and in accordance with guidance.

Assessments consider a wide range of needs resulting in the provision of appropriate levels of support to ensure that children are safe.

35. Since October 2014, focused work to ensure an appropriate and consistent approach to support homeless 16-17 year olds, has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of young people placed in bed and breakfast. From March 2014-Jan 2015 there were 15 young people placed in bed and breakfast. This reduced dramatically to two young people placed in bed and breakfast accommodation for two nights this year. Homeless young people receive timely and appropriate support, but this is not yet effectively reflected in procedures. A joint protocol with housing is being refreshed to reflect current practice where all homeless young people are referred to children's services and a social work single assessment undertaken. Inspectors saw no examples where young people should have been looked after but were not.
36. The role of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is well understood as evidenced by the number of consultation and referrals to the service in the last year (155 consultations and 174 referrals in 2014-15). In cases sampled, effective management by the LADO ensured that allegations against professionals were taken seriously and appropriate steps taken to safeguard children, including the convening of strategy meetings where required. While a wide range of work has taken place to promote understanding of the role of the LADO in the past, there are limited examples of this in the last year, and there has been a reduction in attendance at LADO training events. The service recognises that there is a need for renewed efforts to maintain agency and public awareness.
37. Issues in relation to diversity are not routinely addressed in assessments and planning for all children. In cases where children are from minority backgrounds, issues of culture and identity are explored and analysed well to inform assessments and planning. Issues of identity and sense of self are not always explored sufficiently for white British children, for example those growing up in areas of high deprivation and poverty or with complex backgrounds and life experiences.
38. Despite a wide range of training and awareness raising activity in relation to female genital mutilation, few referrals are made to children's social care.
39. Salford has not been identified by the Home Office as a priority area for the prevention of radicalisation. Nevertheless, due to its close proximity to priority areas and the transient nature of communities, its response under the Prevent agenda is suitably robust. Monthly meetings with the Channel Team (a specialist team to identify and respond to risk of radicalisation) and the Prevent Engagement Officer (who works with key institutions and statutory partners) share information on risk and any new referrals. From January 2013 to March 2015, 27 people were referred to Channel of whom four were under 18. Currently one young person under 18 is receiving a service as a result of this initiative.

The experiences of progress of children looked after and achieving permanence

Key judgement	Judgement grade
<p>The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence</p>	<p>Good</p>
<p>Summary</p> <p>Services for looked after children have improved since the last inspection. Children benefit from positive enduring relationships with social workers who know them well. Families on the edge of care are well supported which in some cases prevents children becoming looked after. When children cannot remain with their birth families court processes under the PLO are effective and timely achieving early permanence for some children. However some children experience delay at an earlier stage.</p> <p>The vast majority of looked after children and young people live with families in good quality homes within 20 miles of Salford. Children with complex needs are well supported by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services known locally as STARLAC so few children experience a disruption to their placement.</p> <p>Looked after children are making good progress at school, attendance is much improved and performance at all key stages is improving. Independent Reviewing Officers provide effective challenge to ensure children’s needs are met.</p> <p>Robust arrangements track children missing education and those who go missing from care. Risk of child sexual exploitation to these vulnerable children is well considered. Effective action is taken which is reducing risk for many children.</p> <p>The timeliness of placing children for adoption is deteriorating and the local authority has significant challenges in adopter recruitment. The adoption register is not being used fully to make available nationally those adopters for whom the local authority does not have a suitable match. The assessment and training of individual adopters is thorough and social workers complete reports which give a comprehensive picture of the child to assist the identification of a suitable family. Post-adoption support for placements and adopters is strong.</p> <p>The local authority is in contact with all its care leavers, who reported that they feel safe. They are consistently supported by workers who know them well. The majority live in good quality accommodation that meets their needs. Although access to apprenticeship schemes is limited, the proportion of care leavers who are in education, employment and training is well above the national average. Not all care leavers have access to their health histories.</p>	

Inspection findings

40. The rate of children looked after in Salford is high and the number of children in care continues to rise slowly. This is due in part to effective work of the local authority and partners, responding to a history of poor social work decisions which resulted in children staying in abusive family situations too long. Improved early help is identifying younger children who need to become looked after more quickly.
41. Decisions to look after children are appropriate, timely and taken at a senior management level. The Families on Track Panel provides an effective multi-disciplinary forum to discuss children and families so their needs are known and understood and effective decisions made to provide support. Good work is undertaken with families on the edge of care. This ensures all that can be done is done to support families and prevent children becoming looked after unnecessarily.
42. When children return home from being looked after they receive a range of good quality services to prevent subsequent family breakdown. Outreach workers provide practical and emotional support including out of hours. The adolescent team, for example, offers support to children, families and schools in addressing complex behaviours. In cases seen decisions for children to return home were based on realistic assessments of parenting capacity including capacity to change. This, combined with appropriate support services, resulted in positive outcomes for the young people concerned.
43. Children and young people who become looked after do so in a properly assessed and planned way. Social workers have good quality legal advice regarding thresholds for legal proceedings. The Resource Panel chaired by senior managers provides comprehensive scrutiny of high risk cases, ensuring that thresholds are robustly applied, and that all other options for children are explored thoroughly.
44. The Public Law Outline (PLO) is used effectively to engage families and achieve permanence early for most children including good use of family group conferences, action to instigate parallel planning and to escalate children's cases where they have been subject to a child protection plan for more than 18 months.
45. Although legal planning meetings are timely, in some cases the quality of information provided by social workers is too descriptive and not sufficiently analytical to support decisions. Decisions made at legal planning meetings are sometimes poorly recorded, and there is a lack of clarity about when actions will be completed. Systems for monitoring pre-proceedings work were not clear or robust until very recently. Decisions to invoke the pre-proceedings phase of the PLO were not always followed through in a timely fashion, and timescales for review of cases in pre-proceedings were not always met. At the time of the inspection 20 of 63 children in the pre-proceedings phase of the PLO had been

subject to it over six months. The local authority has taken recent action to strengthen monitoring of pre-proceedings work and is in the process of reviewing the circumstances of all these children to ensure they are not experiencing drift.

46. Once children enter the legal arena they receive a timely, effective service. Social workers provide good quality reports to the courts. Cafcass statistics indicate that in 2014-15 Salford concluded care proceedings within the national target of 26 weeks in 45% of cases. Average duration for care proceedings in Salford is 26 weeks. This represents very strong performance in reducing delay for children.
47. The local authority is in the process of revising the sufficiency strategy for looked after children which it recognises currently lacks a robust evaluation of the range of current services and has targets for improvement that are imprecise. Despite imaginative use of social media and targeted campaigns to recruit carers for specific groups of children where there are recognised shortfalls, overall in-house sufficiency and choice of foster placements has not significantly improved. In 2014-15, 22 mainstream and specialist foster carers were approved, as were 27 connected persons. There were 40 resignations of foster carers in the same period. Of these, 26 were due to foster carers becoming special guardians for the children in their care. All foster carers are offered an exit interview when they leave but take up is low so reasons for resignations are only partly understood.
48. The local authority has mitigated against shortfalls in its own fostering provision by judicious use of high quality placements through independent fostering agencies. All children who live in independent foster placements are in placements that are at least good and 63 children live in agency placements that are rated outstanding.
49. The local authority has been effective in placing children with their brothers and sisters when it has been assessed to be in their best interests. At the time of the inspection one family of children were not placed together due to a lack of resources. Those children lived with carers in the same area and saw each other every day.
50. The range of in-house fostering resources is appropriate and includes mainstream, short term and long term therapeutic services. Applications to foster to adopt have increased and there were two current applications at the time of the inspection.
51. Foster carers are tenacious and skilled. They benefit from good continuity of support from their supervising social workers and feel well supported. Outcomes for young people are good, including in the intensive 3D scheme and Focus Fostering, which address the needs of some very challenging young people.

52. The fostering panel is independently chaired and has a full time panel advisor who is helping to maintain and drive up standards. Fostering panel minutes show an appropriate level of challenge, a focus on fast-tracking cases when necessary and appropriate monitoring of carers including safety, smoking and dog checks. Assessments of foster carers are thorough and balanced. Reviews of foster carers are comprehensive and appropriately carried out by the fostering panel. The reviews include the views of young people where these can be gathered. The timeliness of these reviews is now 91%, which is a considerable improvement on previous figures.
53. The majority of children and young people who become looked after live in homes in Salford or within 20 miles, and the vast majority of these live with families. Effective work has been undertaken in the last year to reduce the number of children placed in out of city residential provision (from 22 to nine). Salford has a policy of only placing children in good or outstanding provision so the vast majority of children and young people live in places that are at least good. When a placement is judged as less than good, its effectiveness in meeting the individual needs of children is considered carefully at all statutory reviews and children are only moved if it is considered to be in their best interests. As a result these children are well matched, their needs are met and outcomes are improving.
54. The local authority Special Guardianship Order (SGO) coordinator reviews SGO support annually. An agreed standard support package is provided and there is a commitment to 'no detriment' to foster carers financially if they become Special Guardians. Assessments of applications for an SGO are thorough. As a result the number of young people leaving care through an SGO has recently improved from the low figures in previous years and in 2014-15 26 children were successfully placed with their former foster carers via an SGO.
55. The rate of children placed at home on care orders is high compared with national averages (55 on full care orders and 31 on interim orders). Regular robust review of this group of children is required to ensure that they do not remain subject to statutory orders unnecessarily. IROs have identified that there are a small number of cases where children are living at home on care orders that could be discharged using SGOs or Child Arrangement Orders. Plans are underway to apply to the court for discharge of these orders.
56. Social work interventions are based on effective relationships between social workers, children and their families. Social workers visit children regularly, know and understand their needs well and can articulate their successes and what needs to be done next. There are many examples of social work interventions with looked after children which are making a discernible difference to improve their outcomes. Social work assessments have improved over time and the majority of assessments seen are of good quality. Social workers are intent on understanding children's experience and on meeting often complex and diverse needs. In the vast majority of cases seen by inspectors assessments have led

to good quality direct work that helps children. For example using research on homophobic bullying to tackle issues and protect children more effectively.

57. Care plans for looked after children and young people are underpinned by good quality assessment of need. They are regularly re-assessed by social workers to reflect the changing needs of children, including those with a disability, to ensure they are met. The majority of care plans comprehensively consider the diverse needs of children and young people. In cases where the child's diversity needs are a central feature, they are sensitively met.
58. Life story work is given appropriate priority. Children are assisted to understand their life history through purposeful direct work including input from STARLAC where this is indicated. Social workers are increasingly effective in their work with children and young people with the most complex needs and engaging with reluctant children and their families. They are tenacious in their efforts to improve the lives of looked after children.
59. Some children and young people (24 from January 2015 to March 2015) are effectively matched with an independent visitor to support their care plan but there is a small number of children (12) who would benefit from this relationship where plans have not been progressed. Eight of these have been waiting for longer than six months. Although the local authority has recently re-commissioned the independent visiting service some children wait too long.
60. Effective arrangements support looked after children to achieve good health outcomes. Performance in relation to initial health checks (90% within 20 days), annual health checks (95%) and immunisations (98%) is good. There is a small number of looked after children placed out of the city who do not experience the same timely completion of their initial health assessment (18% of those placed out of area). The rate of children and young people recorded as having a dental health check last year was also low (78%). The local authority has identified it as an issue of underreporting as only those children registered with a National Health dentist are included. This means that the local authority does not have a full understanding of its performance in this area.
61. Looked after children have good access to high quality child and adolescent mental health services through the STARLAC Team. This provides a range of individual therapeutic and group work to children with emotional, mental health and behavioural needs, including children placed out of area within a 50 mile radius.
62. Children are seen by STARLAC within between one and seven weeks of referral, depending on need and the quality of information provided by other agencies. At the time of inspection there was no waiting list. The most recent management information shows that this work is making a discernible difference and is effecting positive change in the vast majority of cases (38 out of 45). Strengths and difficulties questionnaires are completed annually and are

used as a screening tool by STARLAC. However, they are not used routinely to routinely inform health assessments.

63. Although there are many locally run programmes to divert looked after children from offending including effective work to deter young people from guns and gangs, the rate of looked after children involved in the criminal justice system is high and rising. Despite this there are examples of the youth offending service in conjunction with social work staff making a real difference. The youth offending service is currently working with 13 looked after children. The majority of these are on referral orders, one is on remand to the care of the local authority and four are in custody. The local authority recognises more needs to be done and this area of work is subject to an action plan including better analysis of first time offenders to help shape early help.
64. The local authority, the virtual school and all partners have extremely high aspirations for their looked after children, which is reflected in improving educational outcomes. Almost all children looked after attend good or better schools. For those who are in schools requiring improvement, the reasons are well considered and clear. Children attending these schools are very closely monitored by the virtual head teacher. Most children looked after enter the Foundation Stage well below that expected in relation to their age. During Key Stage 1 nearly all make rapid progress, and at the end of this stage their attainment is broadly in line with that of all children in Salford.
65. Overall this good progress is sustained at Key Stage 2. In 2014 results in reading, writing, grammar, punctuation and spelling were above the national average for other looked after children and the same in mathematics. Although below that of all children in Salford, and despite the decline in performance compared with 2013, the gap between looked after pupils' achievement and that of all children is narrowing in all subjects apart from mathematics.
66. Performance in GCSE examinations at five A*-C, including English and mathematics, is improving. In 2013/14 the proportion of young people gaining five or more GCSE grades A*-C including English and mathematics improved from 11.1% to 17.1%, some 5.1% above that nationally for all looked after children. Inspectors saw examples of pupil premium funding being used to give young people additional tuition leading to some young people exceeding expectations. However, performance was 31% below that of the attainment of all Salford children. The rate of progress is not yet rapid enough to close the attainment gap at this level.
67. Since September 2014 the virtual head teacher has quality assured all PEPs in recognition that they are not yet consistently good, a view shared by inspectors. Close partnership working with schools, social workers and designated teachers, including a range of training linked to the outcomes of quality audits, is beginning to improve the content and quality of plans.

68. Particularly good use is made of the pupil premium to provide, where appropriate, individualised learning and emotional and behavioural support for looked after children. This includes one to one tuition and immediate access to an educational psychology team that includes a specialist in therapeutic approaches. This, combined with close partnership working with schools, is proving successful in improving attendance and reducing exclusions. In the last seven years, no looked after children have been permanently excluded. The proportion of children excluded from school for a fixed time is reducing. It is currently 6% and below the national rate of 9.8% for looked after children.
69. School attendance is much improved. The rate of persistent absence of children in care is 5.4%, similar to that of all children. The education welfare service liaises well with schools to support those children whose attendance is declining. Individual schools use a range of methods to monitor and tackle children who miss parts of a school day.
70. Tracking and monitoring of looked after children missing from education are thorough and included as a possible indicator in assessing increased risk of child sexual exploitation. The virtual head teacher has a comprehensive understanding of where all children are accessing their education and the hours they are accessing. Where the full entitlement of 25 hours is not being accessed, appropriate plans and strategies support the increase to full time education. Looked after children who go missing or are sexually exploited receive the same comprehensive service from Protect and the missing from home pilot as other children.
71. Those children and young people who are in alternative provision are well monitored, with a strong focus on performance and attendance. The quality and provision of these placements is carefully monitored. The needs and the ambitions of the child are well matched when considering alternative provision.
72. The local authority and its partners ensure that looked after children and their carers have access to a broad range of social and leisure activities. Many activities are arranged throughout the year and in the holidays, including trips that are chosen and planned by the children and young people. Children looked after by the local authority are actively encouraged and supported to participate in activities that are just for them and in those that all children in Salford access. The pupil premium funding is used appropriately to support looked after children to attend school trips and participate in out of school activities.
73. Performance on the timely completion of statutory reviews is good (96%). All looked after children have an up to date care plan. Permanence is considered for all children at the second review. IROs offer effective challenge when permanence is not pursued with sufficient rigour. For example in February 2015 the IRO service convened a 'collective problem resolution meeting', with the interim Assistant Director and Head of Service. As a result 100 children's settled placements with independent fostering agencies were reviewed and action

taken to ensure that appropriate placements were ratified as permanent by the panel.

74. The voice of the child is promoted effectively, with 95% of looked after children participating in their review from January 2015 to the end of March 2015. There are many examples of younger children making an effective contribution to their plan and of carers' observations of nonverbal children being used to inform plans. Advocates have been used well by some young people; this has helped them to ensure their views are known and understood at their review and used to help shape their plan.
75. The achievements of looked after children are celebrated annually. Looked after children are well represented by a small dedicated children in care council 'Fight for Change'. Its activities are well publicised in a quarterly newsletter sent to all looked after children over the age of eight and the group runs a stall at the annual celebrations event for looked after children. Efforts so far to attract new members have not been successful. 'Fight for Change' vigorously represents the interests of looked after children and has made a valuable contribution to the improvement of the service since the last inspection.

The graded judgement for adoption performance is that it requires improvement

76. Children are not always placed for adoption in a sufficiently timely way. The forecast average time from becoming looked after to date placed for adoption is 586 days in 2012-15. This would be a decline in performance from the 575 days achieved in 2011-14. 586 days is 99 days above the national target of 487 days, and the gap between Salford's performance and national targets is widening. The average time between placement order to matching is projected to be 236 days for 2014-15, which would be a decline in performance from the 222 days achieved in 2011-14 and would put the local authority 115 days over the national targets. This also represents a widening of the gap between Salford and national targets.
77. The local authority's strategy for adoption recruitment has not been successful. Recently the local authority has placed considerable reliance on taking part in a regional consortium to encourage adoption applications rather than local campaigns. Salford has in the past often recruited from outside the city, but enquiries to this regional consortium are directed to their home local authority, reducing the number of applicants to Salford. As a result, the number of enquiries, which was 355 in 2013-14, has reduced to 288 during 2014-15, a reduction of 19%. Attendance at applicants' training courses dropped in the same period from 57 to 33, a reduction of 43%. The local authority is now intending to refocus on local adoption recruitment. However, this year's

reduction in applications will almost certainly impact on adoption capacity during 2015 and beyond, delaying some placements.

78. There are 19 adopters without placements and nine are not on the adoption register. Of these nine, five have been approved for over three months and therefore should be included on the register. For five of the 11 who are now on the adoption register, this took more than three months, with two taking over 200 days. The reasons why these adopters cannot be matched with children who are waiting in Salford requires further analysis by the local authority.
79. Despite the deficits identified in adoption performance during this inspection there have been improvements in the number of children adopted in the past year. Five children (11%) were from a BME background compared with 5% reported in the 2011-14 scorecard. However, the improvement in the number of children adopted is from a low base and the numbers of children adopted in the local authority have been consistently below similar local authorities since 2011. For instance, only 10% of looked after children were adopted in 2013-14, compared with 17% for similar authorities. The 43 children adopted in 2014-15 therefore represent an improving picture but the local authority is not yet consistently performing at the level of similar authorities. Demand is increasing and currently the local authority has 44 children awaiting adoption, four more than in 2013-14.
80. The monitoring of adoption performance has not been robust. Although an adoption tracker is used to follow the progress of individual children, relevant data are not regularly gathered, aggregated, analysed and used to drive improvements.
81. When members of the public make enquiries or applications to become adopters, the local authority is effective in making these processes timely and helpful. Of those adopters approved in the past year 88% were approved within the national target of eight months. Adopters were complimentary about the speed of response and the positive messages they received from Salford when they first made enquiries. In two cases this was instrumental in choosing Salford rather than another local authority or voluntary adoption agency. All adopters spoken to by inspectors found the adopters' training illuminating, for instance regarding attachment issues for adopted children.
82. All Prospective Adopter Reports viewed by inspectors were thorough, analytical and measured, for instance regarding issues from applicants' history. There was good use of applicants' own words to make these reports more vivid. All necessary checks are comprehensively carried out.
83. Decision making about children needing permanence is timely. Permanence is considered at the second looked after children's review. Seven young people became looked after and have had a decision that they should be adopted in the last six months. All had the decision made by the Agency Decision Maker within five months of becoming looked after which represents robust practice.

84. All Child Permanence Reports viewed gave a lively picture of the child's current functioning and presentation, including where they have complex needs. Family history is detailed and convincing regarding the reasons for the care proceedings. Contact with parents is carefully considered and observations of children are used well to give a picture of their attachments and feelings. The reports are informed by a wide range of assessments, including psychological and parenting assessments, which are carried out with an appropriate sense of urgency. The agency Medical Adviser is prompt in providing almost all permanence medicals. However, the current contact between brothers and sisters was not always evaluated and issue of future contact between them was not sufficiently addressed in most reports seen.
85. The Adoption Panel has an experienced chair, meets regularly, and provides sufficient challenge, for instance regarding adopters' applications. There is a sound working relationship with the Agency Decision Maker who provides prompt scrutiny of the work of the panel. The panel is quorate and members provide a useful range of experience, for instance as foster carers or adopters. However, there are currently no members on the panel from the wide range of ethnic and other backgrounds within the local authority area.
86. Adopters report that the matching process was timely and that the information they received about the child was accurate and comprehensive, including that from the current carers. When children had specific health issues, adopters met paediatricians to be fully informed regarding the child's condition. All adopters spoken to by inspectors had plans for matching which ensured an appropriate pace for introductions and placements. There have been no disruptions prior to an adoption order being made in 2014-15.
87. The life story work and later life letters that were viewed were of good quality and individualised to the child's story. There were some examples of very detailed life story books for older children. Social workers are clear that this life story work is a priority within the looked after children team and is a vital piece of work for a child.
88. The assessment and provision of post-adoption support is very strong. During the year the local authority received 194 requests for post adoption support which is highly accessible to young people and adults. 34 young people are currently receiving post adoption support and there is no waiting list for this service. A dedicated social worker carries out a thorough initial assessment and may provide support on a short term basis while a plan is being formulated. Involvement by partner agencies such as schools is very good. Inspectors saw examples of direct support work with young people post-adoption which was accessible, high quality and effective. Support to adopted adults and birth families is appropriate and timely. There are 245 letter box contacts, of which 202 (82%) are active, demonstrating an effective system.
89. Adopters receive a leaflet which clearly describes post-adoption financial support, the pupil premium and the changes made in the Children and Families

Act 2014. Adopters spoken to were aware of the support package which Salford provides. All had adoption support plans which were tailored to their child's needs and which they found helpful.

90. Adoptive parents receive the pupil premium funding for one year after adoption and, where necessary, support from the virtual head teacher. Inspectors saw this being used to relieve stress in an adoptive family and prevent placement break down.

The graded judgement about the experience and progress of care leavers is that it is good

91. The local authority is effective at staying in contact with care leavers. At the time of the inspection staff were in touch with 100% of young people and as a result opportunities to improve their life chances are maximised.
92. Young people spoken to reported that they feel safe in their accommodation and well supported by workers who know and understand their needs well. They value highly the relationships workers have developed with them over time. Low staff turnover in the Next Step Team, coupled with an unwillingness to move cases between workers unless absolutely necessary, creates high levels of consistency for young people. The quality of relationships developed provides a firm basis for effective support and when necessary, challenge.
93. The 'Opportunities Centre' where the team is located acts as a hub for services for young people aged 16 plus. The centre is currently working with 84 eligible, 14 relevant and 183 former relevant young people. Young people talked of it as a place to go that helped them feel less isolated. They report they receive good support from their individual workers and from other team members.
94. The centre operates a duty drop-in service and offers tenancy support, along with group work sessions and the opportunity to practice independence skills such as cookery. A recently established health drop-in staffed by the LAC nurse and STARLAC gives easy access to advice and support on health issues up to the age of 19. This initiative is too recent to evaluate its effectiveness.
95. Co-location of a specialist substance misuse worker and missing from home worker with personal advisers supports effective partnership working to reduce risk. Arrangements to support care leavers who are experiencing drug and alcohol problems are well developed and young people are engaging with services. All young people are screened for substance misuse when they transfer into the Next Step Team and the specialist substance misuse worker undertakes a range of activities aimed at reducing use and building resilience. Between March 2014 and March 2015 work was undertaken individually with 22 young people. During the same period the worker ran three groups, each involving 12 young people.

96. Early action is taken to support care leavers who go missing or are at risk of all forms of exploitation including sexual exploitation. Those assessed as at most risk or as experiencing exploitation have plans for intervention that are clear. In cases seen, risk was reduced and the capacity of the young person to make safer choices increased.
97. Not all care leavers have access to, or understand, their health histories. Some young people receive a copy of their last health plan and their immunisation status. The local authority acknowledges that this practice is not widespread, systematic or sufficiently robust. Recently work has been started to develop a health passport. National insurance numbers, birth certificates, passports and provisional driving licences where applicable are provided to all care leavers for enhanced identification purposes. Asylum seekers also have an application registration card and legal letters in line with their individual circumstances.
98. All cases seen by inspectors had an up-to-date pathway plan, the vast majority of which were detailed and thorough and with a high level of analysis. The pathway plan template is easy to use and supports the worker to identify needs and then create an action plan specifying how those needs are to be met. The best plans included the voice of the young person but practice is not yet consistent in this area and needs to improve further to ensure that the process is meaningful to all young people. While action plans are generally good and clearly specify tasks to be undertaken to improve outcomes, contingency plans are not always included. This means that some young people are not sufficiently challenged at the planning stage to really think through potential consequences of their situation.
99. Reviews of pathway plans are chaired by an independent reviewing officer. Review reports are detailed and contain evidence of challenge to both practice and to young people.
100. Effective arrangements support young people with additional needs to make the transition to adult services. Continuity of service is provided throughout the period of transition. A senior practitioner within the Next Step team takes the lead in this area ensuring that cases are identified and proceed to the Transition Panel. Inspectors saw examples of cases being taken to the panel and linked to an adult worker who will eventually take over the case when the young person becomes 18.
101. Young people, including those with disabilities, are encouraged to remain in their foster placements after they reach their 18th birthday through the local authority's 'Staying Put' scheme. The option for young people to remain with former carers has been available for some years under a previous scheme 'Continuing Care'. The local authority recognised that this scheme did not encourage carers for more challenging young people to participate. These arrangements have now been superseded by 'Staying Put'. Strong performance in this area resulted in all young people who turned 18 staying in their foster

placements in the years 2012-13 and 2013-14. Currently there are 22 care leavers being supported to remain living with their foster carers.

102. Performance in relation to suitable accommodation for care leavers has been better than statistical neighbours and the national average for the last three years. The range of supported accommodation options is good, providing various levels of support that enable young people to move towards independence at their own pace. Strenuous efforts are made to move young people who are found to be living in unsuitable accommodation.
103. At the time of the inspection six care leavers were assessed to be in unsuitable accommodation all of whom were in custody. There were no young people in bed and breakfast accommodation. According to the local authority's unvalidated data, at the time of the inspection, 58% of all care leavers were living independently. This is slightly lower than the published data at 31 March 2014 (61%) but is in line with published figures for comparators. A tenancy support worker assists young people to bid for a property and provides ongoing support to maintain their tenancies. The housing protocol identifies care leavers under the age of 21 as a priority group.
104. Inspectors saw examples of young people being given strong additional support to start again when arrangements had broken down or had not worked out as they had hoped.
105. While case recording is of a good quality, recording of management oversight is weaker often lacking rationale for why decisions have been made. This does not assist young people's understanding if they come back to access their records later in life.
106. The local authority has high aspirations for education and employment for children in its care and care leavers. At 78%, the proportion of care leavers who are in education, employment and training (EET) is well above the national rate of 45%. Currently 25 (7%) care leavers attend university, which is just above the national average of 6% and in line with the average in the north west of England. It remains considerably below the figure for all Salford school leavers.
107. Those who attend university receive good financial support during their time at university, and personal advisers maintain close contact with them. Two care leavers who are on masters' programmes receive this same good level of consistent financial and practical support.
108. The local authority has struggled to meet a long-standing commitment to provide 12 apprenticeships through its own business operation. Overall, eight care leavers are on apprenticeship schemes, but only one of these is with the local authority. Of the nine young people who have benefited from local authority apprenticeships in the past, six progressed into employment. The DCS has undertaken to improve access to a wider range of apprenticeships in the

local authority. Support for care leavers to gain employability skills is provided through a range of activities that facilitate the development of wider skills such as communication, presentation and time keeping.

109. Care leavers with dependent children are prioritised for two year old funding for nursery places to help them ensure their children get the best possible start in life.
110. As at 31 March 2014, Salford had a much higher percentage of 19, 20 and 21 year olds in custody compared with comparable authorities and national averages (8% compared with zero % and 3% respectively). Currently, according to the local authority's unvalidated data, it is 3%. While performance has improved and is now the same as the national average for last year, no analysis has been undertaken or measures considered to maintain and further reduce custody rates.
111. Care leavers know and understand their rights and entitlements and the local authority is responsive in ensuring that these are met well. Personal advisers are tenacious in ensuring that young people get what they are entitled to and this is supported by good literature which young people acknowledge they have received. The local authority celebrates the achievements of its care leavers in several different ways. Young people spoken with talked enthusiastically about the annual celebratory event for looked after children and care leavers.

Leadership, management and governance

Key judgement	Judgement grade
Leadership, management and governance	Good
<p>Summary</p> <p>The local authority has a consistent clear focus on improvement. The vast majority of the areas for development identified throughout this inspection had already been identified by senior leaders as requiring targeted improvement and are part of an on-going robust improvement programme. Appropriate governance arrangements and effective working relationships between the local authority, the LSCB and other strategic bodies such as the Children’s Trust and Health and Wellbeing Board are helping drive this improvement. They are supported by strong strategic and operational partnerships to prevent and reduce risk including a focus in relation to domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation, organised crime and radicalisation.</p> <p>Significant improvements in the quality of practice across the service have been made and sustained in most areas leading to good outcomes for most children. However, improvements are not yet fully reflected in key documents which lag behind practice, for example, the Salford looked after children strategy and the neglect strategy. The early help strategy requires significant updating due to developments in practice since it was first published in September 2014.</p> <p>Performance management, quality assurance processes and scrutiny arrangements are robust but until recently have largely focused on the experiences of children who need help and protection. Reporting of performance data in relation to looked after children and care leavers has not been as systematic or used to analyse trends with the same rigour, although performance in relation to the experience of individual children is monitored closely.</p> <p>Management oversight of casework is evident and staff benefit from regular supervision that offers support and challenge although this is not always reflected in written records. Corporate parenting is well embedded and senior leaders are committed to the needs of looked after children in Salford. The needs of these children are well understood and prioritised, which serves to inform strong commissioning arrangements. Arrangements to ensure that the views and experiences of children and young people contribute effectively to service planning and delivery are comprehensive and robust.</p> <p>The workforce is stable and children and young people in Salford have sustained and meaningful relationships with consistent workers. Social workers feel well supported by both the senior leadership team and line managers. Staff are supported through a well-targeted and effectively delivered training programme.</p>	

Inspection findings

112. Governance arrangements in Salford are clear and robust. They have recently been revised to further strengthen arrangements to discharge statutory functions smoothly. These revisions have been made following the ending of the Ofsted Improvement Group. The senior leadership team has a well-informed overview of the strengths and weaknesses of services and quality of practice due to robust quality assurance. The DCS and senior managers are visible to staff, are respected and take an active role in audit and wider quality assurance activity. There is clear political commitment to children's services and while savings are being made in the local authority, these have been minimised within children's services provision.
113. Links between the City Director (chief executive), Assistant Mayor for Children's Services (lead member) and the DCS are strong. The lead member attends both the Children's Trust and the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB), which gives continuity and avoids duplication. The compact between the LSCB, Children and Young People's Trust and the HWB has been recently revised and demonstrates clear responsibilities for services at a strategic level. The local authority recognises that the HWB has, until recently, been dominated by adult issues and is now in the process of developing its arrangements in respect of children's services. Corporate parenting is well embedded across the local authority, with sustained commitment to the needs of looked after children from both elected members and senior leaders.
114. Progress has been made in a number of key areas, for example, consistency of social work staff and stability of looked after children's placements, as well as the timeliness of supervision to staff. These improvements have been sustained and are directly contributing to improved outcomes for children and young people. Arrangements to respond to referrals by the Bridge and RIAT teams are robust. The same Head of Service has strategic management and oversight of the Early Intervention and Prevention service (EIP), the Bridge and RIAT. This has improved the consistency of the application of thresholds between services.
115. The local authority has appropriately identified some areas for further improvement. For example, the draft multi-agency neglect strategy has not yet been finalised and the looked after children strategy is out of date and requires improvement.
116. To date a full range of performance management information has not been as effectively collated or analysed within services for looked after children and care leavers as it has within other parts of the service. This means that although operational and strategic managers have a good insight into the progress of individual children, they do not always have a detailed enough overview of the bigger picture. At the point of the inspection the local authority had already identified this as a gap and made arrangements for the dataset to be refreshed and extended.

117. Although the performance management data collected in relation to looked after children requires extending, scrutiny arrangements to effectively monitor performance across children's services are well informed by quality assurance and audit activity. Committee members have an accurate awareness of strengths and weaknesses across Salford children's services. The committee has contributed to city-wide strategic plans which are updated to reflect areas for improvement. For example the current update of the Salford City Plan, which is in draft form, includes increased sufficiency of fostering as a priority. The recently revised Scrutiny Committee has become increasingly proactive in gathering a comprehensive range of performance information, including learning from audits and complaints.
118. Until recently performance activity has largely focused on compliance with practice standards. This was appropriate in light of the local authority's journey out of inadequacy following inspection findings in 2010. A further unannounced inspection of arrangements for the protection of children in October 2012, while finding Salford no longer inadequate, identified seven immediate priority actions to address deficits in practice including risk assessment of referrals, timeliness of strategy meetings, case recording, contingency planning and quality of supervision. The local authority's current increased focus on quality and outcomes as the next stage of improvement is appropriate and its self-assessment that it is making good progress in moving from a compliance culture to a performance management culture is accurate. However, a critical analysis of the local authority's performance across children's services is not yet fully reflected in written documents including elements of the self-assessment which in parts is too descriptive. This has been identified by the local authority as an area for development to achieve the local authority's ambitions to consolidate and build on its current good performance.
119. An established performance management information system provides appropriate information to senior leaders and monitoring arrangements for safeguarding are robust. Monthly performance meetings chaired by the interim Assistant Director and all heads of service are effectively supported by regular data analysis by children's services specialists within the corporate data team.
120. All performance management activity is well aligned with the strategic priorities outlined in the Mayor's city plan, underpinned by directorate plans and service plans. Safeguarding, including prevention of child sexual exploitation, troubled families and looked after children, is appropriately prioritised. Issues from practice are fed back into strategic planning and used to inform future priorities. For example learning from a thematic audit of children subject to repeat child protection plans has resulted in an action plan that includes training for workers in recognising disguised compliance.
121. While management oversight of practice is well established and clearly evident in case work, the implementation of management action plans, in a minority of cases is not timely or robust. Most staff (93%) now receive supervision every four weeks and social workers spoken to by inspectors report good support

from line managers. Supervision arrangements are supported by the provision of quality reflective supervision sessions provided by the Advanced Social Workers. The quality of recording of supervision is variable. Stronger examples show clear focus on personal professional development, celebrate good practice and challenge poor practice. Weaker examples are too brief, consisting of a list of actions that do not enable performance development of social workers to be routinely tracked and evaluated.

122. The local authority plays a lead role in multi-agency responses to child sexual exploitation through its involvement in the LSCB child sexual exploitation sub-group. Governance arrangements for responses to child sexual exploitation are clear and effective. They are led by a senior police officer and social care managers. A comprehensive range of information is shared and cross-referenced across partners. This has led to improving intelligence of child sexual exploitation activity in Salford. Robust action is taken to disrupt perpetrators and serve abduction notices. Salford joined Greater Manchester Police and Manchester City Council children's social care in the well-established Protect Team 18 months ago, and this has ensured support to young people as well as disruption activity is effective and well-coordinated. Leaders have committed resources to continuing this service.
123. The lead member and City Director have a clear understanding of issues in relation to child sexual exploitation through their enhanced scrutiny of missing and child sexual exploitation reports. Members of the Corporate Parenting Committee have met with the Borough Commander to assure themselves that work in this area is effective. The City Director has agreed funding for an independently led review of historical cases as a result of findings from the Jay report into child sexual exploitation in Rotherham.
124. Quality assurance activity is well embedded across Salford and undertaken by frontline managers and senior managers including the interim Assistant Director. Inspectors saw examples of managers supporting workers to improve practice in their day to day interaction with them. Good practice is routinely recognised and acknowledged personally, including by the interim Assistant Director. Social workers spoken to greatly valued this recognition which spurs them on to greater efforts.
125. Formal quality assurance includes observations of practice as well as audit activity. The local authority programme of audit activity includes thematic audits based on analysis of performance management information and individual cases. Learning is further supported by multi-agency audit activity undertaken by the LSCB. All learning is effectively collated and shared with practitioners and has contributed to sustained improvements. For example, an audit of the quality of core group meetings has contributed to an improvement in the implementation of child protection plans and improved attendance of partners at meetings. A significant amount of additional audit activity is currently in progress, for example on step down arrangements from child

protection to team around the child and an audit of repeat referrals. While these are well targeted it is too early to identify their impact.

126. Salford has a range of both commissioned and in-house services for young people and families and monitoring of these is robust. Strategic commissioning is informed by a joint strategic needs assessment (JSNA), but this is not comprehensive. It includes information on safeguarding issues, looked after children and risk in relation to missing children. However, child sexual exploitation is not included. The local authority and partners have identified that the JSNA requires refreshing to better reflect current priorities and the rapidly changing local demographic of families within the local authority. Strategic planning has identified, for example, the need to improve identification of 'hard to reach' families in the community. This has resulted, in well targeted commissioning of services through children's centres to provide continued support to minority groups including some sections of the Orthodox Jewish Community, with a Jewish children's centre run and staffed by members of the Jewish community.
127. Parents and young people are very well engaged in commissioning arrangements and have made a valuable contribution to the commissioning and development of services. For example, children subject to child in need or child protection processes are now able to access support from the advocacy service. The local authority understands its local population and works hard to improve engagement with the large Jewish communities within the borough for example; bespoke safeguarding training has been developed for the Orthodox Jewish community; work has been undertaken with the two academies for Jewish children with efforts made to raise awareness of bullying and safeguarding concerns, although the Local Authority acknowledge that whilst there are representatives from the Jewish community on the local safeguarding board it remains a challenge to gain access to and work with the Jewish independent schools including addressing safeguarding issues. There is also liaison with the Jewish Federation to encourage participation by the Jewish schools in individual children's assessments to engage this community more to in better supporting their children.
128. Service planning and delivery is well supported by the Salford Children and Young People's Participation Strategy 2013-18. This strategy has ensured that there are clear and robust mechanisms to gather the views of young people in Salford regarding services and their experiences. This information is used proactively to inform service development and review service provision. The views of children and young people are gathered from a number of groups of young people across Salford. These include school councils, young carers group, Voice of Child Advocacy Group, Teenage to Adult Group and the Young People's Council. Input from young people is used to improve services. Examples of improvements as a result of their involvement include the distribution of information sheets outlining support services to young people and the development of an online programme to enable young people to participate in child protection conferences.

129. The local authority has a well-established children in care council 'Fight for Change'. There are effective links between this group, the Children's Trust and the Corporate Parenting Board and this has resulted in the needs of children and young people in Salford being well understood and planned for. Representatives from 'Fight for Change' have contributed to the review of the local authority's pledge to looked after children. Care leavers and 'Fight for Change' members have also participated in staff recruitment and selection. However, the local authority recognises current membership is not sufficiently representative and has undertaken a wide range of activities to attract new members but so far with only limited success.
130. Effective planning and access to good quality training have led to Salford maintaining a stable workforce of qualified and well experienced social workers and children and family support workers. Social work stability for the last year is good at only 2% turnover. Workforce planning is effective and is underpinned by the Children's Services Workforce Strategy 2014-17 which provides clear recruitment and retention strategies. This has ensured that the use of agency staff to cover vacancies is kept to a minimum. Currently there is a vacancy rate of 11%. Agency staff made up 8% of the workforce at the time of the inspection.
131. A clear professional development framework supports newly qualified social workers (4% of the workforce) in their assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE). The framework includes a range of mandatory training and opportunities to gain advanced level three qualifications. Each social worker has an annual appraisal. The Organisational Development and Training Plan is clearly aligned to the Salford Business Plan and ensures that training needs are appropriately identified and training is sourced and delivered effectively. While evaluation of training does occur following some training events, consistent and robust evaluation of training and its impact on learning for practitioners is underdeveloped.
132. Most social workers have manageable caseloads with an average of 17 children. However inspectors saw a few workers with up to 25 cases which was high due to the complexities of the work. Newly qualified workers have reduced caseloads and benefit from comprehensive arrangements to support their development, and this is further supported by frequent joint working opportunities on complex cases. Caseloads are well monitored across the service.
133. The City Director and the DCS meet separately and regularly with the LSCB independent chair. All ensure that lessons from serious case reviews and learning reviews are effectively identified and disseminated across the partnership in Salford. Frontline staff are able to articulate learning and identify changes in practice as a result. For example, training on the needs of homeless 16 and 17 year olds has resulted in an improved understanding of requirements to support this cohort of young people, and bed and breakfast is now

considered only in emergencies for a very limited period of time. At the time of the inspection no children were in bed and breakfast accommodation.

134. Arrangements to deal with complaints in Salford are well established and these are coordinated through Customer First. The annual complaints report is comprehensive, robust and fully addresses learning as well as future areas to be targeted. Lessons arising from complaints are well identified, collated and disseminated and lead to well-targeted and sustained improvements. For example, the buddy system for foster carers has now been reviewed to ensure buddies are geographically close.
135. Since the launch of the Prevent Strategy in 2011, which identified Salford as low risk, the approach to the prevention of extremism has primarily focused on integration and awareness-raising. As a result, the Prevent Strategy has been implemented by the Partnership and Engagement Team within Strategy and Change, with governance and local authority leadership through the Community Safety Partnership and Partnership Delivery Group.

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.

Executive summary

The Salford Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has made consistent progress, benefiting from strong independent leadership and significant political support. The board's sub-groups have progressed their respective areas of responsibility. Shared leadership of the groups demonstrates the commitment of partner agencies to safeguarding. Governance and accountability arrangements are clear, with the independent chair reporting directly to the City Director. These meetings are not formally minuted and to do so would increase transparency.

The LSCB has clear priorities which inform the board's business plan, and progress is proactively monitored to ensure the pace of change is maintained. Partner agencies are held to account for their safeguarding arrangements and the methods of challenge and scrutiny are effective in helping agencies continue to deepen their understanding of safeguarding issues. There is careful learning from serious case reviews and other serious incidents, which is widely disseminated. There are clear action plans which are regularly monitored to ensure progress. A comprehensive programme of Section 11 audits includes robust scrutiny of the evidence submitted.

The board maintains good oversight and scrutiny of work to identify and protect young people who may be at risk of child sexual exploitation and those who go missing from home or care. The overarching strategy locally and pan-Greater Manchester is well embedded and understood.

The LSCB delivers a comprehensive and well-attended multi-agency training programme, though does not yet evaluate its impact on multi-agency practice. There is good oversight of the recently-launched early help strategy and threshold guidance. The board has recognised the number of early help assessments has reduced and is examining the reasons for this. The board has also driven improvements in the operation of the multi-agency 'front door' service and continues to monitor the impact of changes. The neglect strategy has been consulted upon but is not yet finalised. These developments are not yet reflected in the published safeguarding procedures, which the board is updating.

Safeguarding performance data are scrutinised regularly and more recently the board has developed a more comprehensive multi-agency dataset that provides scrutiny that is more equitable challenge of all partners and that is well aligned with the board's priorities.

Recommendations

136. The board should satisfy itself that all partners have a good understanding of the early help strategy, thresholds of need, and arrangements for a multi-agency single point of contact for children as these initiatives continue to develop and mature.
137. Ensure that the neglect strategy is finalised and disseminated across the partnership. Ensure that the published multi-agency safeguarding procedures accurately reflect local services and pathways for children in need of services including recent changes so that all agencies can clearly understand them.
138. Improve the contribution and engagement with the board that children, young people, practitioners and lay members are able to make.
139. Ensure that a proper record is made of the formal meetings between the independent chair of the LSCB and the City Director and also the formal meetings with the DCS.

Inspection findings – the Local Safeguarding Children Board

140. The Salford Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has clear and appropriate priorities based on the current needs assessment and leading to a clear action plan. The LSCB chair is independent and reports directly to the City Director. He is suitably experienced and brings a wide knowledge of initiatives elsewhere to assist in developing this board. He meets regularly with the City Director and the Director of Children's Services (DCS). These meetings are not minuted which is a shortfall, though there are other records such as exchanges of emails that provide evidence of the issues discussed and progress made.
141. There is an effective compact between the LSCB, the Children's Trust and the Health and Wellbeing Board, but governance arrangements between these strategic leadership groups requires further strengthening. The compact does not yet include the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) or the Adult Safeguarding Board, which would formally clarify arrangements between all the relevant key strategic bodies. The lack of a compact between the LSCB and the CSP is offset, to some extent, by some senior officers being members of both, which assists with communication. The LSCB and the Adult Safeguarding Board jointly commissioned the most recently published serious case review and both are disseminating the learning. The independent chair of the LSCB also sits on the City Partnership in Salford which brings together a wide range of sectors such as local universities, the elected mayor, and businesses. This provides a good opportunity for safeguarding issues to be raised outside of the core partnership.
142. The LSCB is well attended by sufficiently senior officers from a wide variety of relevant agencies, demonstrating good commitment to safeguarding. Political oversight is strengthened with the lead member for children's services sitting as a participating observer. Partners discuss issues in a good level of detail with mutual challenge. All LSCB partners make financial contributions to the board and it has an appropriate infrastructure. At the time of the inspection there was a projected overspend meaning the LSCB will need increased funding for 2016 if it is to sustain its current level of activity. The recently revised structure clarifies the responsibilities and reporting arrangements well.
143. Actions agreed by the board and its sub-groups are clearly ascribed to individuals. The board is proactive and takes account of emerging issues well. The board also seeks information about wider local developments such as the review of midwife-led services, and ensures it is kept informed and involved in the consultation process.
144. Safeguarding arrangements in partner agencies are supported by the requirement for them to complete section 11 audits bi-annually. The challenge panel was effective and robust in requesting that agencies provide additional assurances where shortfalls in supporting evidence were identified. The practitioner survey conducted subsequently found the audit had positively impacted on respondents' understanding of the need to consider the voice of

the child. A good development is a school-friendly version of the audit tool to enable schools to provide assurance in the future.

145. The independent chair and the City Director met with staff and managers of the Bridge to clarify arrangements for strengthening the 'front door' of children's services and the operation of a single point of contact, leading to improvements. The board maintains close oversight of these developments, for example, proposed changes were presented to the LSCB in November 2014 enabling board members to appropriately scrutinise and challenge the proposals.
146. The LSCB, as a member of the Greater Manchester Safeguarding Partnership, jointly commissions safeguarding procedures. These take Greater Manchester-wide and local issues and pathways into account appropriately. Policies are updated regularly but do not yet reflect Salford's new threshold guidance and the renaming of the single point of contact for children's services as the 'Bridge', nor is this included in Salford's new threshold guidance. This means that agencies remain unclear about developments and those external to the local authority do not have accurate information about current referral arrangements.
147. Salford's early help strategy is jointly sponsored by the Children's Trust and the LSCB and there are regular and clear reporting arrangements between the two bodies to report on its progress. The strategy was revised at the same time as the threshold guidance and published in September 2014. Early help services are at varied stages of being able to demonstrate impact but plans have been developed for the board to scrutinise effectiveness on a regular basis.
148. Good work is underway to improve governance arrangements for domestic abuse services as they impact on children and young people. The CSP's sub-group 'Violence against women' (VGWB), which is responsible for the domestic violence over-arching strategy, currently lacks sufficient focus on children and young people. To address this, the next LSCB will focus entirely on domestic abuse to share information and agree future responsibilities and governance arrangements.
149. The sub-group that monitors both the strategy and services provided to support children at risk of child sexual exploitation and children at risk of going missing is thorough and effective. Greater Manchester's over-arching arrangements to tackle child sexual exploitation (Project Phoenix) provide the umbrella framework within which local strategies and services are delivered. The full board rigorously reviews the local response to child sexual exploitation, paying particular attention to how well partner agencies identify, refer and support young people. Intelligence about hotspots is known and shared, although there is currently no problem profile. Good consideration is given to children placed in Salford by other local authorities to ensure the notification process is robust.

150. The Protect team reports quarterly on its activity to the board. From January-March 2015 there were 22 referrals to Protect involving Salford young people. In these cases, four joint visits by police and children's social care have taken place, 11 children have been subject to child sexual exploitation assessments, and seven children have been involved in group work. Three abduction warning notices have been served.
151. Operation Avert complements the work undertaken by the Protect team through a combination of intensive disruption and awareness-raising activity. Visits made to licensed premises, taxi-drivers, hotels, off licences and takeaways ensure local businesses are alerted to risk, intelligence is gathered, and activity by perpetrators is disrupted. This includes regular visits to potential hotspots such as local parks and taxi ranks.
152. Awareness-raising and training with foster carers and children's homes has been rolled out and are continuing. The recommendations of the report into child sexual exploitation in Rotherham have been carefully considered, resulting in the City Director agreeing to fund an independently-led review of historical cases.
153. Greater Manchester has been identified as a potential hotspot for female genital mutilation. Salford has adopted the Greater Manchester strategy and protocols, which have been widely disseminated. A range of awareness raising activity and training has been undertaken with partners including health and schools. To date Salford has convened one child protection conference as a result of female genital mutilation. The chair is of the view that there is more to do to ensure cases are referred into the Bridge when concerns are raised.
154. The schools sub-group of the LSCB provides a good conduit for raising concerns, disseminating information and sharing good practice between schools and LSCB partners. Its scope has recently been strengthened with three representatives from independent schools joining the group. Every school cluster is represented and this facilitates easy information exchange.
155. A wide range of multi-agency safeguarding training is delivered, supported and accessed by partner agencies. For example, a recent event hosted at the Salford Royal hospital trust on female genital mutilation, forced marriage, honour based violence and child sexual exploitation was very well attended by a variety of different professionals. Bespoke safeguarding training has been developed for some Black and Minority ethnic (BME) sections of the community who have not traditionally accessed training. This has had a good reach and received positive feedback. Twenty per cent of the safeguarding training delivered by an umbrella voluntary sector organisation is to BME participants. Learning is enhanced by the board's annual learning events, most recently in March 2015 on 'the unseen child'. The board has not yet undertaken a multi-agency training needs analysis to inform the future training plan and ensure a closer alignment between needs and delivery.

156. The LSCB is strengthened by participation and input from the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the Health Trust. The CCG's commitment to safeguarding is exemplified by its incentives to GPs to participate in safeguarding training. As a result, 98% are trained at level 2 and 85% are trained at level 3. This has contributed to more GP reports being provided to child protection conferences. The CCG actively monitors performance in terms of compliance and quality and this is reported in the LSCB annual report.
157. The LSCB considers equality and diversity issues well, with support from the equality and diversity sub-group which also reports to the Children's Trust. The group considers a range of relevant issues, for example, the standard of translation services, take up of services by recent immigrants and others such as Gypsy, Traveller and Romany groups, and awareness of the Equality Act. There is good cross-referencing between the sub-groups with, for example, the equality and diversity sub-group being consulted on the anti-bullying strategy.
158. Safeguarding standards for the voluntary sector have been developed and are being increasingly applied so that voluntary organisations ensure they meet minimum safeguarding standards.
159. The LSCB has supported the promotion of private fostering well and sponsored a 'task and finish' group to achieve this. Surveys conducted before and after a publicity campaign aimed at agencies showed an awareness increase from 55% to 77% of respondents. There has been a small increase in referrals regarding private fostering, and sustaining awareness has been built in by incorporating a question relating to this within every early help assessment.
160. The voice of the child' sub-group ensures that children's views, expressed in a variety of forums, are fed into the LSCB. The group has overseen the introduction of a child-friendly software tool to enable children and young people to express their views. This is being rolled out incrementally in children's social care from January 2015 so it is too early to see its impact but early signs are positive. Other videos about the value of consulting with children and young people have been developed and made accessible through the LSCB website. Two young people act as safeguarding representatives on the Youth Council. The group also successfully embedded 'Hear by Right' standards within the section 11 audit process. The independent chair has plans to meet directly with young people but has not done so yet. Until very recently the sub-group met during office hours, but now meets outside of school hours to enable young people to participate. Hearing directly from children and young people remains a priority for the board.
161. The LSCB's practitioners' sub-group enables the board to hear directly from practitioners. This group also helps to deliver key messages from the board to their colleagues and is a popular and easy way for practitioners to engage directly with board priorities. The LSCB has had a lay member for some time and plans are in place to extend his contribution.

162. All serious incidents that may require a serious case review (SCR), or would benefit from another kind of in-depth review to generate multi-agency learning, are carefully considered by a well-attended SCR sub-group; all key decisions are ratified by the independent chair. The scope of the sub-group means it performs the function of undertaking multi-agency audits of individual cases, and there is wide dissemination of learning and themes. Learning from the Child/Adult 15 case review, which was shared with practitioners, can be seen in, for example, the development of accreditation for interpreting services used in Salford. The board considers the progress of action plans at each meeting and this promotes transparency and swift completion of actions. The absence of a representative from the police at the presentation from the independent author of the Child N SCR to the sub-group in February 2015 was promptly followed up by the independent chair, resulting in an internal review and agreement to revise the GMP single action plan.
163. There are appropriate reporting and scrutiny arrangements between the secure children's home located in this local authority, which is judged to be outstanding, and the LSCB. The board receives regular reports from the home including details of restraints. A member of the LSCB sits on the home's management committee and its own scrutiny panel which, for example, reviews CCTV footage to provide external oversight of incidents and provides additional assurance that children and young people are being safeguarded in the home.
164. Performance information on safeguarding is considered routinely by the board and the data is shared with the Children's Trust. However, the board has struggled to develop consistent performance reporting that is clear, includes trends, and supports scrutiny. The current dataset is of limited use and intermittent gaps in information inhibit the LSCB's ability to assure itself of performance regarding practice in children's social care. For example, in one report, four measures relating to 'children in need' were blank. Devising an appropriate performance report has been complicated by attempts to incorporate the recently-developed Greater Manchester Safeguarding dataset which presents additional difficulties in collection and analysis, and is not sufficiently focused on local need. As a consequence, the board has revised its performance reporting arrangements by supplementing the core children's services dataset with performance reports aligned to its priorities. This is a very recent development but performance reporting for the next board demonstrates valuable data presented well. The board undertakes one or two multi-agency audits a year to inform practice and this helps compensate for the difficulties in developing a consistent performance report, but more could be done in this area.
165. The 2013-14 LSCB Annual report set out clear priorities but lacked sufficient underpinning data and limited analysis. Despite this, the board has a clear business plan based on its priorities and progress is regularly considered. Activity is underway to ensure that the next annual report is more detailed, is sufficiently analytical about past achievements, and sets out a clear rationale for future priorities. A key challenge for the board's planning are the shortfalls

in the current JSNA which is incomplete with respect to safeguarding data and child population ethnicity and diversity data. The board is updated in detail about the work of the local authority designated officer (LADO), the child death overview panel (CDOP) and the progress made by looked after children, and provides good scrutiny and challenge in these areas.

166. Salford CDOP operates as a tri-partite arrangement with two neighbouring authorities. It has run a safe sleeping campaign for the past three years, concluding in July 2014. There has been a reduction in the number of child deaths normally associated with the risks around safe sleeping, with only 2 such deaths in 2013-14. The Care Quality Commission inspection of safeguarding services recommended that health services should review care pathways when young people attend the emergency department following self-harm. In Salford, the practical response has been to link this into the emotional health strategy within schools and this is overseen by the Children's Trust.
167. The board monitors the impact of the 2013-15 children and young people's emotional health and well-being strategy. The SCR sub-group has identified several cases where self-harm is a factor and the CQC inspection of health safeguarding services recommended a review of care pathways when young people attend the emergency department following self-harm. A play on self-harm commissioned by the CCG performed in schools in March 2014 to approximately a thousand pupils received extremely positive feedback from the young people. Links have recently been made between the board and public health's local and Greater Manchester suicide prevention groups. However, mutual awareness of what activity is underway in the realms of public health across Greater Manchester, public health locally, and activity driven by the LSCB and the CQC inspection action plan remain relatively new. This requires further consideration with a view to developing a cohesive strategy, avoiding duplication of effort, and ensuring that impact is measured.
168. The board has been proactive in driving forward progress on the neglect strategy, and the draft strategy has been commented on by the independent chair. This illustrates the impact of the board in progressing issues which have been under-developed.
169. The board had not been alerted to difficulties in police attendance at strategy meetings, although a report explaining the reasons for the shortfall in their attendance at child protection conferences has been considered previously.
170. Salford has revised local safeguarding procedures and guidance on responding to individuals who are vulnerable to messages of violent extremism. These documents are awaiting sign off by the LSCB but have been agreed in principle.

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 10 of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) from Ofsted.

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