

# Isles of Scilly

## **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 Board<sup>1</sup>**

Inspection date: 11 April 2016 – 28 April 2016

Report published: 27 June 2016

<b>Children's services in the Isles of Scilly are good</b>		
<b>1. Children who need help and protection</b>		Good
<b>2. Children looked after and achieving permanence</b>		Not Judged
	2.1 Adoption performance	Not Judged
	2.2 Experiences and progress of care leavers	Not Judged
<b>3. Leadership, management and governance</b>		Good

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<sup>1</sup> 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 Inspections 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.

## Executive summary

Children's services on the Isles of Scilly are good. Following an inspection of safeguarding and looked after children in 2012, which judged services to be good, the local authority implemented a successful modernisation and improvement programme. All areas for development identified at the previous inspection have been addressed and effectively monitored to ensure that these have been maintained. Improvements within the quality of practice have continued to be made. For example, in the quality of direct work carried out with children, the successful implementation of the signs of safety model and improvements to quality assurance and management oversight processes.

Early help provision is comprehensive and supports families well. Families can access a range of universal and targeted services. These are greatly valued by families and children on the islands. While the quality of early help assessments is not yet good overall, plans are well targeted, effective and scrutinised by social workers to ensure that targets and objectives are met. The local authority has recognised that some health professionals' attendance at key meetings is limited at times and has identified this as an area for development.

Services for children and young people in need of help and protection are consistently good. Thresholds have been reviewed by the local authority and these are well understood and applied. Partnership working is strong and effective links are in place, particularly with health and education services across the Isles of Scilly. Preventative work is well embedded and there are a number of innovative and creative services in place to provide early support to children and their families.

The local authority demonstrates significant strengths in a number of key areas. For example, the use of scenario planning is used effectively to explore unfamiliar casework and ensure that responses are well understood. Staff consistently and meaningfully consider all issues of equality and diversity relating to children and their families who live on the islands. Children and their parents consistently speak highly of their social workers and of the services and support they have received and which have improved their lives.

Where children are identified as being at significant risk, enquiries and responses are timely and comprehensive and effective partnership working ensures that key information is used to inform planning processes. Children receive a response that is proportionate to their needs of protection. Arrangements to identify and support children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation are well embedded and understood across the partnership. Although numbers are very low, children who go missing receive a well-coordinated multi-agency response to ensure that their welfare is monitored and risks are reduced. Children are offered return home interviews. Information from these interviews is used to identify any areas of concern and to decide what help children need.

Partners work and learn well together, supported by a culture of learning across the partnership. Partners have a genuine commitment to improved outcomes for children and young people. Consequently, partners have succeeded in improving the experiences of children. Senior leaders ensure that professional development is a key

priority and make effective use of learning from national research and serious case reviews. Social workers and partners have access to a comprehensive range of training. Staff feel well supported and morale is good. Children and their families benefit from a stable workforce. This contributes significantly to children and their families developing meaningful and purposeful relationships with professionals who work with them. Direct work with children is a significant strength across the Isles of Scilly. Social workers competently use a range of techniques and activities to enable children to share their feelings and wishes.

Elected members give clear political support to the senior leadership team in the Isles of Scilly and strong links are in place between the Director of Children's Services (DCS), the Chief Executive and the Lead Member. These relationships ensure that key priorities are identified and that the pace of change is consistent and well targeted. The local authority has an accurate overview of its strengths and weaknesses. Financial investment to children's services has been protected, and this has facilitated the ongoing use of creative and innovative support services for children and their families.

All areas for development identified in this inspection had already been built into the overall service improvement plan and are being tackled. Despite a broad range of improvements, some weaknesses remain. For example, the local authority has been unsuccessful in recruiting an emergency foster carer for the islands. Additionally, the local authority continues to work with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to reduce waiting times for children and young people to access support. However, in response to this challenge, the local authority has been instrumental in setting up the BLOOM service to provide mental health support to young people at an early stage.

While the local authority has access to a legal adviser for specific casework and advice, there is no current arrangement to ensure that any changes in legislation are routinely identified and disseminated to staff in a timely manner.

Quality assurance arrangements have been strengthened. Learning from single and multi-agency audit activity is well embedded and leads to improvements within the quality of practice. The local authority continues to use a range of performance information tools. These are used effectively to scrutinise activity and ensure that services are well targeted and reach all families in need.

The local authority has recently delivered comprehensive corporate parenting training across the partnership and with key leaders and elected leaders. The concept of corporate parenting and the responsibilities of this are not yet fully embedded and a corporate parenting strategy is in its infancy.

Arrangements to support young people who leave the islands to attend post-16 study are highly valued by children and their families. This service is provided by a dedicated post-16 worker on the mainland. However, the local authority recognises that more is to be done to consolidate parents' ability to identify appropriate supported accommodation on the mainland for 16- and 17-year-old young people.

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## **The local authority**

### **Information about this local authority area<sup>2</sup>**

#### **Previous Ofsted inspections**

- The local authority operates no children's homes.
- The previous inspection of the local authority's safeguarding arrangements and services for looked after children was in May 2012. The local authority was judged to be good.

#### **Local leadership**

- The Director of Children's Services (DCS) has been in post since June 2014.
- The DCS is also responsible for Adult Services.
- The chair of the local safeguarding children board (LSCB) has been in post since 2014.
- The LSCB is shared with Cornwall County Council.
- To ensure that there is appropriate resource for the wide range of children's services, a service-level agreement is in place with Cornwall Council for adoption and fostering services. The London Triborough, comprising the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and Westminster City Council, provides the local authority designated officer service, responding to concerns about adults who work with children.

#### **Children living in this area**

- Approximately 420 children and young people under the age of 18 years live on the Isles of Scilly. This is approximately 20% of the total population in the area.
- Approximately 1.6% of the local authority's children are living in poverty.
- The proportion of children entitled to free school meals:
  - in primary schools is 3% (the national average is 15.6%)
  - in secondary schools is 7% (the national average is 13.9%).
- Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 5% of all children living in the area, compared with 21.5% in the country as a whole.
- Given the low numbers, no single largest minority ethnic group can be identified.

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<sup>2</sup> 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.

- The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language:
  - in primary schools is 1% (the national average is 19%)
  - in secondary schools is 1% (the national average is 15%).
- The Isles of Scilly are a small isolated community 28 miles from mainland Cornwall. This isolation means that service delivery and the experiences of children and their families in terms of ease of access to services, as well as transport links between islands, can be significant challenges, requiring a creative approach to service provision.

### **Child protection in this area**

- At 12 April 2016, 25 children were identified through assessment as being formally in need of a specialist children's service. This has been unchanged since April 2015.
- At 12 April 2016, no children and young people were the subject of a child protection plan. The most recent child protection cases were stepped down to child in need plans in September 2015.
- At 12 April 2016, no children lived in a privately arranged fostering placement. This has been the case throughout the last year.
- Since the last inspection, no serious incident notifications have been submitted to Ofsted and no serious case reviews have been completed or were ongoing at the time of the inspection.

### **Children looked after in this area**

- At 12 April 2016, no children were being looked after by the local authority. This has been the case since the previous inspection.
- In the last 12 months:
  - there have been no adoptions
  - no children became subject of special guardianship orders
  - no children ceased to be looked after
  - no children and young people ceased to be looked after and moved on to independent living
  - no children and young people ceased to be looked after and are now living in houses of multiple occupation.

### **The casework model used in this area**

Signs of safety

## **Recommendations**

1. Improve the quality of early help assessments to ensure that they clearly identify the specific help that children and their families need to improve their lives (Paragraph 11).
2. Ensure that key agencies fully engage with the planning and delivery of support to families (Paragraph 12).
3. Continue to pursue the appointment and approval of emergency foster carers for the Isles of Scilly (Paragraph 26).
4. Expedite the review of the local authority's role in supporting parents to secure living arrangements for 16 and 17 year olds who move to the mainland to continue their education (Paragraph 31).
5. Ensure that sufficient supported accommodation is available for those young people who might be particularly vulnerable who engage in post-16 learning on the mainland (Paragraph 31).
6. Continue to pursue the appointment and approval of emergency foster carers for the Isles of Scilly (Paragraph 26).

## **Summary for children and young people**

- Senior managers on the Isles of Scilly really want to help children and young people who live there.
- Social workers know their children well and see them often to make sure that they are well and are listened to carefully. Social workers use lots of different methods to help children talk about difficult feelings.
- Social workers and other professionals act quickly to help children or young people who need help.
- Schools, police and health staff work hard to make sure that children who need early help receive this straight away.
- Children, young people and parents we spoke to during this inspection told us that their social workers make sure that their lives improve.
- Social workers ensure that assessments to get to know a child are mostly of good quality and that this helps develop good plans to improve the life for that child.
- Young people, parents and professionals know how to keep children and young people safe from sexual exploitation or if they go missing.
- Young people receive good preparation for when they move to the mainland to attend post-16 studies. Support on the mainland is also provided to young people to ensure that they are happy.
- Social workers listen to what children and young people want and work hard to make sure that services are provided to keep them safe and also to be able to enjoy their surroundings.
- Senior managers make sure that social workers are well trained and well supported by their managers.
- Senior managers know what they need to do to improve services even further and good plans are in place to ensure these improvements take place.
- Although they have tried to sort this, the local authority does not have any emergency foster carers if there was a situation where a child or young person could not live at home.
- Some children and young people have to wait too long to get help from CAMHS. Senior managers are working hard with health professionals to improve this but it is taking too long.
- Health professionals do not always attend important information sharing meetings about children and this has meant that some information is not well shared.



<b>The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection</b>	<b>Good</b>
<p><b>Summary</b></p> <p>Children on the Isles of Scilly who need help or protection receive a consistently good service tailored to their family circumstances. Thresholds at all levels are clear, appropriate and well understood by local professionals.</p> <p>In circumstances where a social work response is not needed, social workers provide advice to professionals about how best to support children. A good range of early help services are available to children of all ages, enabling families to manage the demands of family life before problems get worse. Early help assessments take good account of children's individual circumstances but some do not sufficiently communicate professional concerns or state what specific help families need.</p> <p>Children at risk of harm are safeguarded through effective multi-agency arrangements, comprehensive information sharing and joint consideration of risk. Children's circumstances are robustly analysed. Decision making is clear and accompanied by a well recorded rationale with a timely action plan for social workers to follow. However, 'danger statements' could be used more effectively to articulate concerns regarding children.</p> <p>No Isles of Scilly children are looked after by the local authority or professionals. Contingency arrangements for those children who are most at risk of being looked after are clear and safe.</p> <p>Social work assessments are comprehensive and articulate family difficulty, diversity and strength well. Support is appropriately targeted to meet children's needs. However, some child in need plans could be clearer about desired goals, who should do what and when they should do it. The perspective of children, parents and professionals adds depth to these assessments. Social workers and inclusion workers genuinely care about the children with whom they work and go to great lengths to build trusting relationships with them. Direct work is creative and integral to day-to-day social work practice.</p> <p>Not all children who require specialist help with their emotional or mental health needs can rely on the regular support of a therapist because all specialist CAMHS support is provided from the mainland. For some children, delays or gaps in the provision of help leads to their difficulties getting worse.</p> <p>Young people are well supported to move to the mainland to continue their education. However, there is no specialist accommodation provision for young people who might be particularly vulnerable.</p>	

## Inspection findings

7. The Isles of Scilly is a local authority with a unique range of challenges and strengths. The close knit, but often isolated, nature of the islands necessitates a highly tailored approach to meeting the needs of children, particularly those who are vulnerable. Children who require the involvement of children's services, from early help to specialist support, receive a consistently good service. Through a clear understanding of their community, leaders and managers have designed their early help, child in need and child protection processes and systems to effectively meet the needs of local families, while complying with statutory and legal requirements.
8. A small social work team receives all requests for additional help for children. These range from those who are just beginning to experience difficulties to those who need more targeted or specialist help. The quality of referrals is good overall, with comprehensive information about children's circumstances. Referrers and social workers routinely explain to children and parents issues of consent and this ensures that trust is established.
9. A good range of well-used universal and targeted help is available, particularly for under-fives. Professionals know families on the islands so well that they can quickly identify those who have stopped using support. This leads to renewed attempts to engage them. Older children can access a range of activities depending on their interests and needs, such as 'Scilly's got talent' and outdoor-pursuits trips to the mainland. An inclusion worker, employed by children's services, engages with young people through these activities, and this means that if they need more targeted help, a positive relationship has already been established.
10. Early help assessments consistently involve children and their carers and outline the main strengths and needs within families. While a few explore well what these mean for children, some do not sufficiently reflect identified concerns. Many do not include what specific help the family needs, or what difference this is likely to make. Managers accept that this is a weakness and are actively reviewing referral and early help assessment processes (Recommendation).
11. Professionals send all completed early help assessments to the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) coordinator and these are also overseen by a social worker to ensure consistency of response. Social workers provide consultation to lead professionals, helping them to decide whether a different approach or level of help is needed. Social workers adopt a fluid and helpful approach to stepping cases up from early help to child in need support. This ensures that lead professionals are aware of their responsibilities, with timely assessments undertaken and regular review meetings.

12. Early help assessments reflect the child's experiences. However, some do not sufficiently analyse risk or protective factors. Where the needs identified through an early help assessment do not warrant a social work assessment, but two or more services are needed, a social worker chairs the first team around the family meeting. These meetings are chaired effectively and use the signs of safety approach particularly well, often acting as a catalyst for change. While meetings are effective at drawing up a meaningful plan, some cases were seen where professionals had waited until this meeting before they offered help. Attendees jointly decide who should be the lead professional and the vast majority accept this role with a commitment to driving forward the plan. In a small number of cases, key professionals such as CAMHS therapists or GPs, do not attend these critical meetings, reducing the effectiveness of the subsequent plan (Recommendation).
13. The number of referrals to children's services is proportionately low compared to other local authorities. Contacts and referrals result in a swift response and decisions are made by a qualified social worker or manager. Key decisions are well recorded and accompanied by a clear rationale. Overall, thresholds are set at the right level and partners express confidence in decision making by social care professionals. When professionals are worried about children's welfare, they escalate their concerns appropriately. Re-referral rates are very low. Almost all referrals to children's social care result in a single assessment, indicating that professionals refer the right families.
14. Social workers respond well to a range of risk factors, including neglect, domestic abuse, adult mental health, emotional and physical abuse and adult drug and alcohol misuse. Social workers use 'danger statements' to help them to articulate their most serious worries and to facilitate straight-speaking conversations with parents. While the vast majority of these statements are effective and well targeted, a few cases were seen by inspectors where concerns were not sufficiently explicit.
15. Social workers provide a robust response to child protection enquiries. Strategy meetings are timely and held appropriately. The quality and impact of these meetings have improved considerably since the previous inspection, with good access to the police and comprehensive sharing of information from all relevant agencies. Consideration of significant harm is detailed and analytical, and decisions about what to do next are appropriate and proportionate. Contingency plans are practical and meaningful. For example, they outline well how the extended family network will help social workers to monitor children's welfare. This is particularly important due to the individual nature of island life.
16. Arrangements to investigate allegations made against professionals in the Isles of Scilly are effective. Thresholds and reporting mechanisms are well understood and embedded across the partnership. The local authority commissions the services of an external designated officer who provides a

robust level of scrutiny and oversight to investigations as well as offering advice to professionals.

17. While no children have been assessed as at risk of child sexual exploitation, professionals across the partnership are vigilant about the early signs of child sexual exploitation. This level of awareness is well supported by high quality training and scenario planning. The local authority, in partnership with the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LSCB, is ensuring that all hoteliers and taxi drivers on the islands have been made aware of what to look for and how to report their concerns if they are worried about sexual exploitation. Social workers are familiar with risk assessment tools should these be required.
18. Single assessments provide a vibrant account of how children and parents see their lives and their difficulties. They include family history and comprehensively explore risks and strengths using a Signs of Safety approach. Risk and need is analysed in a clear and young-person friendly way. Information sharing by key partners is timely and these are explicitly recorded within the assessment. Relevant research is referred to, although this is not always analysed or linked to the family's circumstances. Assessments are consistently shared with parents and children. Social workers make sure that parents who are not resident on the islands are meaningfully engaged in assessments.
19. Assessments are completed in a timeframe that is appropriate, based on the needs of children and the complexity of their lives. Help, such as sessions with an inclusion worker, is provided alongside the assessment. Almost all single assessments result in the child being judged to be in need. Children in need plans include appropriate actions and result in children's circumstances improving. They are reviewed regularly with good engagement from professionals, children and parents. Social workers were able to readily describe individual plans for children. However, this was not effectively translated into written plans in a minority of cases. Some do not clearly articulate what needs to change, who will help or timescales for actions.
20. Issues of equality and diversity are extremely well considered by social workers and professionals across the partnership. Social workers' insight into difference within families is excellent and well reflected in both assessment and planning stages. For example, effective consideration is given to the island culture and close knit community as well as to social isolation and sexual orientation.
21. Social workers have attended signs of safety training and receive ongoing professional consultation to help them to use the model well. During the inspection, a range of partners attended a three-day course to strengthen the multi-agency approach. Scaling of 0–10 is used flexibly and effectively in meetings, visits and direct work. This helps children, families and professionals to describe the extent to which they think children's lives have improved or have got worse. Professionals and families are positive about

the helpfulness of the approach and believe it leads to the right help being provided for children and to improved outcomes.

22. No children are currently subject to a child protection plan on the Isles of Scilly. Inspectors did not find any cases where such a plan should have been in place, but was not. For past child protection enquiries and cases, conferences used the signs of safety approach effectively. Minutes demonstrate that the most important worries and strengths are carefully considered by professionals who know the children well. Child protection plans confront the most critical issues, and focus well on what needs to change. These plans end appropriately when risk is much reduced and children are safe. Families receive good ongoing help and support which is focused on sustaining change and strengthening their resilience.
23. Social workers know children well and go beyond normal expectations with help and support provided to their children. The lengths to which social workers go to ensure children and families are meaningfully involved is exceptional. Some children do not find communication easy, either because of their emotional difficulties or because of their disabilities. Social workers use a wide range of tools and techniques to ensure that children have a sense of ownership over their plans and the help they receive, whatever their self-esteem, ability to communicate or willingness to engage. This focus is pivotal to everything that social workers do on the islands to help vulnerable children. Social workers establish trusting relationships with families, to find out what children are worried and scared about and to lay the foundations for tougher conversations in the future. Direct work is integral to daily practice, and frequent, with a range of approaches. For example, ideas, 'apps', books and tools are used well according children's age, understanding and particular family circumstances.
24. Children are encouraged to share their thoughts not only about their own assessments and plans, but also to contribute to the wider understanding of their lives. For example, they are encouraged to take part in national surveys about young people's mental health, or to explain what life is like on Scilly for other children who might come to live there.
25. Advocacy arrangements are well embedded and provided through a commissioned service. Children, parents and professionals report that while this service is not often used, when it is, it is supportive, effective and greatly valued. Where parents have particular support needs, an adult social worker is offered to advocate on their behalf. A commissioned mainland service provides advocacy service to parents with learning disabilities or mental health needs.
26. A disproportionate number of children experience emotional or mental health difficulties. Island professionals work sensitively with them to understand their worries and needs. Specialist child and adolescent mental health support is provided from the mainland. Poor weather and staff sickness have

led to some children, particularly those with lower level emotional health needs, waiting too long either to be assessed or between sessions with a therapist. For a few children, their difficulties and worries have got worse. Managers are working with their partners in CAMHS to find solutions, for example, to enable children to talk to therapists via a video link, but the support is still not equitable with children living on the mainland.

27. Social workers go to considerable lengths to keep families together. Inspectors did not find any children who should have been in care, but were not. Family and community networks are used well during times of family stress or difficulty. Despite sustained efforts, the local authority does not have any emergency foster carers. Where there is a potential risk that a child may need to be looked after in an emergency, partnership working and information sharing is effective. This ensures that a plan is in place for most eventualities. During the inspection, managers implemented a policy for assessing and agreeing emergency friends and family placements and the process now complies with regulations (Recommendation).
28. Children with disabilities receive a good service, proportionate to their needs. Parents told inspectors that they particularly value easy access to specialist advice, despite the practical challenges of travelling between the islands, or between the islands and the mainland. They also appreciate the flexibility of direct payments because this empowers them to improve their children's lives through a range of creative services. A sibling and young carers group gives children whose brothers or sisters have a disability opportunities to have fun with other children, away from their worries and responsibilities. Children attending these activities give consistently positive feedback.
29. Daytime social workers run the out of hours service on a rota basis; the service is responsive and helpful to families. However, on-call staff are not able to access the client database when they are undertaking these duties. This potentially limits their ability to make sound decisions based on known information. At the time of inspection, managers had purchased laptops and these were in the process of being set up for this purpose.
30. The local authority responds effectively to the rare occasion that a child or young person goes missing. Arrangements are effective and well-coordinated and result in significantly reduced risks to young people. Local residents are proactive in keeping children safe and in helping each other to locate children or vulnerable parents. Professionals are alert to the possible risks associated with children who might go missing from school. Where children are late for or miss a lesson, steps are taken to explore and understand the reasons for this.
31. Arrangements to support the educational needs of children and young people in the Isles of Scilly are strong. No child has been permanently excluded from school over the past few years and no child currently receives alternative education. Where this has been needed in the past, creative

packages have been provided to ensure that children continue to engage with learning and with their peers, making re-integration successful. Home education is rare. Where parents opt to educate their children at home, the local authority offers the right level of information, support and oversight.

32. To continue their education beyond Year 11, young people leave home to study and live on the mainland. School staff, a careers adviser and a post-16 support worker prepare young people and their parents well, starting from Year 9. This includes help to choose the right course and accommodation, and support to deal with the challenges of living away from home. Most stay with host families, many are family members or known adults. The Isles of Scilly post-16 support worker is based on the mainland and provides effective targeted support to young people to help them make the most of their new experiences while keeping themselves safe. Managers are actively considering options to strengthen these arrangements. Plans include incentivising families so that they thoroughly check the suitability of host families and finding more supportive accommodation for vulnerable young people (Recommendation).
33. No young people aged 16 or 17 have presented as homeless or at risk of homelessness in the past year. As part of their routine scenario planning, managers and partners have ensured that they are ready to respond to such a situation. Contingency plans comply with legislation and case law.
34. Multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) arrangements are appropriately tailored to the Isles of Scilly, with the trigger for convening a meeting set at medium rather than high risk. Independent Domestic Abuse Advocates (IDVAs) are commissioned but based on the mainland. Victims access this support independently as well as via referral. There is no waiting list. The police are very rarely called to domestic abuse incidents where children are part of the family. Domestic abuse is thought by professionals to be under-reported. When reports are made, professionals share this information appropriately with children's social care. Professionals attend multi-agency domestic abuse training and are confident to complete a risk assessment. School staff in particular are alert to the signs of family upset on children.
35. There are currently no children privately fostered on the Isles of Scilly. Steps to increase local awareness are comprehensive. During the past 12 months, every professional and every parent has received a letter explaining what private fostering is and who to notify if they believe a child is living in such an arrangement.

<b>The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence</b>	<b>Not Judged</b>
<p><b>Summary</b></p> <p>The council of the Isles of Scilly does not have any children looked after, care leavers, or children who are adopted. Consequently, this area has not been judged. However, policies and procedures are in place should the local authority need to respond to these needs. Staff are well trained and continue to be made aware of recent practice developments and good practice examples across these areas. Learning from other local authorities and research is effectively disseminated and staff are well prepared to respond to a child who may need to become looked after.</p>	

<p><b>The graded judgement for adoption performance.</b></p> <p>Adoption performance was not judged. At the time of the inspection, and within the timescales for judging adoption performance, the Isles of Scilly has not commenced adoption proceedings nor placed any child for adoption.</p>
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<p><b>The graded judgement about the experience and progress of care leavers.</b></p> <p>This aspect was not judged. At the time of the inspection, the Isles of Scilly had no care leavers for whom it was responsible.</p>
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<b>Leadership, management and governance</b>	<b>Good</b>
<p><b>Summary</b></p> <p>The local authority has maintained a strong focus on improvement and has undergone a significant modernisation programme. The roles of Director of Children’s Services and Director of Adult Services were merged into one post last year and this has ensured that an effective, well targeted and innovative use of resources has been provided. The corporate plan is well focused and is clearly linked to the children and young people’s plan and this ensures that outcomes for children and young people continue to improve. Senior leaders strive for excellence and are making good progress.</p> <p>The senior leadership team continues to have a good overview of key strengths and weaknesses across the service. Senior leaders have ensured that improvements in the quality of practice have been implemented and sustained. The commitment of politicians is clearly demonstrated. Combined with support and oversight, this collective, determined focus has ensured that efforts to maintain high quality service provision and planning are well coordinated. The needs of children and young people in the Isles of Scilly are a key priority and children’s services budgets have been protected.</p> <p>Senior leaders have significantly strengthened arrangements with the LSCB to ensure that the focus of the Isles of Scilly within the shared board is not diluted. An Isles of Scilly executive board is being developed.</p> <p>Management oversight of casework has received significant focus and this is consistently good in purpose, as well as timeliness. Case records clearly reflect effective high quality management oversight. Supervision arrangements have been strengthened as a result of learning from the peer review in 2015, as well as individual and multi-agency audit activity. Social workers feel well supported by their managers and have access to high quality individual and multi-agency training programmes.</p> <p>All professionals spoken to during the inspection reported a learning culture across the partnership. Professional development is a key priority and is well supported through innovative scenario planning. Performance management is effective and quality assurance processes are comprehensive.</p> <p>Despite a wide range of improvements, some key weaknesses remain. For example, access to CAMHS is slow and the quality of early help assessments vary considerably. Additionally, despite continued and focused efforts, the local authority has not yet been able to appoint emergency foster carers for the Islands.</p>	

## Inspection findings

36. Governance arrangements in the Isles of Scilly are clear and well founded. The post of senior manager for services to our community incorporates the roles of director of children's services and director for adult services. This post enables greater efficiency in the use of resources across the islands, as well as ensuring that services are effectively coordinated through a consistent and well understood perspective.
37. The senior leadership team has an accurate and well-informed overview of the strengths and weaknesses of services and quality of practice and this is well reflected in the recent self-assessment. The DCS and senior staff are described as approachable and are well respected by members of staff. There is sustained and demonstrable commitment to the needs of children and families from elected members and senior leaders. Aspirations for young people are a key priority and a core value across the partnership and these are well underpinned by the Isles of Scilly corporate plan. The senior leadership team has fostered a learning and improvement culture across the service and this has been successful in directly improving outcomes for children and young people at operational and strategic level.
38. Links between the chief executive, lead member and the DCS are strong. Relationships between the children's committee, the LSCB and the health and well-being board have been reinforced and this has resulted in sustained improvements for children's services at strategic level.
39. The local authority has recognised that the shared Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LSCB has not sufficiently focused on the specific needs of the Isles of Scilly. The involvement of the Isles of Scilly within board activity has now been greatly increased. Strategic links have now been fully established and these have led to significantly improved communication and challenge between the LSCB and senior leaders. The LSCB has recently agreed to set up a dedicated Isles of Scilly executive board and this is designed to be more streamlined, efficient and focused. Learning from serious case reviews is effectively identified and disseminated to staff. Front-line staff spoken to by inspectors are able to describe their learning as well as identify the impact of this on their practice.
40. The Isles of Scilly children and young people's plan has been recently developed by the children's trust board. This ensures that service planning and delivery is well supported and focused on clear and measurable outcomes. Senior leaders have identified that, despite sustained and purposeful efforts, a key challenge across the Islands is the need to identify emergency foster placements (Recommendation).

41. The recently updated joint strategic needs assessment is well aligned to local priorities and ensures that service provision is well targeted and meets the needs of children and families across the islands. For example, it identifies the need to develop greater integration between the health and well-being board and the children's committee to align aims and aspirations as well as to increase mental health support services. A key local priority has also been focused on children accessing services and moving away from the assumption that children are expected to travel to where the service is provided. For example, young people accessing mental health support and drug and alcohol support services are now able to use video conferencing arrangements.
42. The local authority has identified that corporate parenting had not been sufficiently well embedded across the Isles of Scilly. Consequently, training was commissioned and this has been recently delivered across the partnership. The concept of corporate parenting has been a challenge for the local authority in that there are currently no children looked after in the Isles of Scilly. The local authority does not currently have a corporate parenting strategy. However, one is being developed.
43. Senior leaders have worked effectively with partners and good progress has been made in improving the quality of practice in a number of key areas. All recommendations from the previous inspection have been implemented. For example, there is now a more timely, well targeted and consistent multi-agency response to protecting children on the Isles of Scilly. The quality and effectiveness of supervision and training across the partnership has been improved. The quality of social work assessments of children has improved and now routinely reflects a robust analysis of need and risk factors and a more comprehensive consideration of issues of equality and diversity, specifically related to the island culture and potential social isolation of living on the islands. Robust arrangements are now in place to respond to child sexual exploitation and services are well coordinated and comprehensive.
44. Arrangements to gather the views of children and young people and parents in the Isles of Scilly are a key strength. Mechanisms for gathering these views include children's ambassadors, the school council, parent-carers' forum, sibling and young carers' group, as well as through the youth parliament representatives. Additionally, the social work team periodically attends the parent carers' forum to ensure that senior managers are kept up to date and informed about key messages. Feedback from children and young people and parents has resulted in changes to service provision. For example, the setting up of the Bloom service and additional mental health support for children and young people, increased inclusion worker time and increased road safety training for young cyclists through the Bikeability programme.
45. The multi-agency early help strategy has now been implemented and the multi-agency forum has been developed to ensure that children and their

families receive a broader partnership response to their needs. The early help offer is now comprehensive and well delivered across the partnership. Management oversight has been improved. This has resulted in more effective, time limited and well targeted work with children and their families. Thresholds have been adjusted and are now well embedded and fully understood and applied across the partnership.

46. The local authority has worked innovatively to ensure that learning and professional development is maintained despite some of the confines within caseloads. Senior managers have introduced multi-agency scenario planning sessions to ensure that professionals are aware of what action they should take in particular cases. For example, how to identify and support a child who is privately fostered, or how to respond to the needs of a young person at risk of sexual exploitation or if a child needs to become looked after. Scenario planning has also been used should a 16- or 17-year-old present as homeless or for children who have been permanently excluded from school.
47. Scrutiny arrangements are both robust and comprehensive, and effectively monitor performance across children's services. Measures have been significantly strengthened through the provision of training, as well as through appointing a buddy system in order to target and maximise this function. Senior leaders ensure that committee members have an accurate awareness of strengths and weaknesses across the islands and through scrutiny of the information included in the performance scorecard as well as anonymous narrative of casework. The recently revised scrutiny committee has become increasingly proactive in gathering a comprehensive range of performance information, including learning from audits and complaints. The level of challenge provided by the children's committee has led to demonstrable improvements for children and young people across the islands.
48. The performance management information system is well established and provides appropriate information to senior leaders through the data scorecard as well as a comprehensive narrative of performance. While these are effective tools, the data collection inevitably reflects such small numbers and does not readily facilitate identification of key themes or trends. As a result, senior leaders also work creatively to scrutinise work and performance through organisational memory. For example, cases are well known and senior managers can monitor individual cases alongside taking an overview of performance information. Monthly performance meetings are chaired by the DCS and ensure that performance is tracked consistently and that learning from key strengths and weaknesses is used to inform future priorities and training as well as strategic planning across the islands.
49. Management oversight of practice is well established and clearly reflected in case recording. Support to social workers is strong and social work caseloads are described by workers as manageable. The supervision framework has been revised and improved. The supervision template has been amended to

facilitate effective recording and linking to professional development. Reflective supervision has been a key priority for the Isles of Scilly and is now routinely taking place and is well recorded. The quality of case supervision is consistently good and demonstrates effective and timely challenge and scrutiny by managers. Signs of safety is well evidenced in supervision records. Additionally, the local authority chose supervision as a focus for the Section 11 audit to ensure that this was well targeted and that it led to additional scrutiny and improved arrangements.

50. Governance arrangements for child sexual exploitation have been strengthened. The Isles of Scilly has recently signed up to the peninsula child sexual exploitation and missing protocol and the accompanying screening tool which helps professionals to decide if children may be at risk of child sexual exploitation. Professionals across the partnership are now well trained and while there are currently no children identified as being at risk of child sexual exploitation, staff are able to clearly articulate a robust knowledge of local multi-agency procedures. A comprehensive range of information is available to staff, and this assists them to make sure that any child or young person identified as being at risk receives an effective and well-coordinated response. Senior managers and the LSCB ensure that learning from cases on the mainland is disseminated to staff to ensure that professional development and learning for staff in the Isles of Scilly is ongoing.
51. The local authority has revised the quality assurance framework and this has significantly improved the overall quality and timeliness of quality assurance processes across the Isles of Scilly. For example, the audit tool has been improved and now links to practice standards and to key priority outcomes for children. Audit activity is well established and is completed by managers at all levels, including the chief executive and DCS. Learning from audits is shared with practitioners and has been used effectively to identify key areas for development. For example, the quality of early help assessments has begun to improve following lessons learned from audit feedback. Additionally, audits have identified the need for children to be observed by social workers in differing environments in order to improve opportunities to communicate and gather their wishes and feelings and assess their experiences.
52. The local authority has needed to develop a flexible and innovative approach to commissioning services due to the unique environment and diverse needs of the community. Resources have been effectively matched and the modernisation programme has further strengthened senior leaders' ability to match need with resources in a timely and effective manner. Senior leaders ensure that value for money is consistently delivered across the service. The local authority has developed a creative range of both commissioned and in-house services for young people and families, and monitoring arrangements of these are robust. For example, the local authority has commissioned new alcohol and substance misuse services from an independent agency. This service has contributed to reducing risks to children across the Isles of Scilly

through well targeted intervention services as well as a community-based detox programme.

53. Strategic planning is effective and well targeted. Recent activity has identified, for example, the need to improve support services for parents with mental health needs and, as a result, the local authority has responded by appointing a dedicated community psychiatric nurse to provide crisis intervention support in conjunction with the CAMHS worker. Senior leaders have actively encouraged parents and young people to contribute to the commissioning and development of services. The views of parents and young people have been well considered by senior leaders and have been incorporated into strategic planning arrangements. For example, advocacy arrangements are now commissioned through a national voluntary agency. This has ensured that when children request an advocate they are provided with one and in good time. The local authority has also recently commissioned services from an independent domestic violence adviser.
54. The Isles of Scilly workforce training and development strategy ensures that the professional development and focus on learning for staff is a key priority for the service. The learning and improvement framework provides professionals across the partnership with a wide range of well-used learning opportunities, including on corporate parenting, female genital mutilation, child sexual exploitation and 'Prevent'. Additionally, the local authority has ensured that domestic abuse awareness has been a key priority. Robust, well targeted risk identification, assessment and management model training on domestic abuse, stalking and honour-based violence (DASH) has been successfully delivered through the community safety partnership. Staff report that they have easy access to good quality training. Annual appraisals ensure that individual staff learning needs are identified and mapped against training provision. Evaluation of training provided is routinely completed and used to inform future training programmes.
55. Children's workforce planning is effective and is underpinned by a clear strategy. Strong recruitment processes are in place. The local authority has a very small but stable workforce. Social workers are allocated to work with children from preventative stages through to statutory intervention. Staff morale is good and children across the Isles of Scilly benefit greatly from the consistency and stability of the workforce.
56. Arrangements to deal with complaints in the Isles of Scilly are well coordinated and understood. The number of complaints is extremely low. However, learning from these is well embedded and key lessons are effectively disseminated and lead to well-targeted and sustained improvements. For example, the education, health and care plan has been revised to ensure that social care outcomes are fully integrated into the single plan.

## The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)

### The Local Safeguarding Children Board requires improvement

#### Executive summary

The LSCB is a joint board covering both the Isles of Scilly and Cornwall. The LSCB requires improvement to be good. However, it is now well positioned to enhance significantly the coordination and effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements for children and young people in the Isles of Scilly.

The LSCB is meeting its statutory responsibilities and has made significant progress in accelerating and strengthening strategic partnerships over the last year. Links between senior managers and the board are increasingly effective, although the role of the lead member for children's services needs to be strengthened. Leaders, the chair and partners recognise that the board's priorities and business plan do not sufficiently reflect the needs and priorities of the Isles of Scilly. Plans to resolve this, including establishing a separate executive board, have been well considered and are nearing implementation.

The board has addressed gaps in partner agencies' capacity to provide performance information and outcomes, illustrating how children and young people's safeguarding is central to their provision of services. Quality assurance and scrutiny panels rigorously challenge all partner agencies.

Leaders and managers have prioritised awareness raising with local businesses, as well as training for professionals, to ensure that they are ready to respond should child sexual exploitation concerns arise on the Isles of Scilly. However, the board has not yet strategically coordinated or driven this awareness-raising programme.

The chair undertakes regular case audits of early help and social work practice but has not yet facilitated a comprehensive multi-agency auditing programme to evaluate the quality of practice. This is being addressed, but the impact on multi-agency service development and improvement is limited at this time. The board is not yet systematically evaluating the effectiveness of early help services.

The influence and participation of children and young people in understanding and informing the board's priorities, and providing ongoing feedback, are in its infancy. The annual report does not comprehensively analyse the safeguarding arrangements for children who live on the Isles of Scilly.

The board has a comprehensive multi-agency training programme, ensuring lessons from serious case reviews (SCRs) are carefully promoted across partner agencies. The board has appropriately considered safeguarding issues, including around modern slavery, female genital mutilation and radicalisation.

<b>Recommendations</b>
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- 57. The board should evaluate the impact of early help services across the partnership (paragraph 64).
- 58. The board should ensure that multi-agency audits provide an effective overview of front-line practice and inter-agency cooperation to safeguard children. The views of children should routinely be included (paragraph 67).
- 59. The board should expedite plans to ensure that the needs and priorities of Scillonian children are fully reflected in all aspects of its work (paragraph 67).
- 60. The board should ensure that children and young people have the opportunity to influence the board's priorities, and that feedback from their experiences regarding multi-agency safeguarding arrangements is well considered (paragraph 68).
- 61. The board should promote a better strategic understanding and response to raising awareness of and responding to child sexual exploitation (paragraph 71).
- 62. The LSCB annual report should include a full evaluation of the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements on the Isles of Scilly (paragraph 80).

## **Inspection findings – the Local Safeguarding Children Board**

- 63. Following a self-assessment in September 2015, the LSCB is purposefully tackling areas identified as requiring improvement. As a result of robust discussions between senior Isles of Scilly leaders, the chair of the board and key partners, plans are progressing well to strengthen the board's specific focus on Isles of Scilly safeguarding children arrangements by developing a separate executive board and business plan. The board's visibility and impact in calling to account the children's safeguarding priorities of other partnerships is gaining momentum within the children's committee and health and well-being board (H&WBB). The impact of stronger partnerships is illustrated in an objective to improve the range, quality and access to emotional and mental health well-being services becoming one of the board's five priorities.
- 64. The board provides robust scrutiny of partners' performance. For example, the board regularly challenges the clinical commissioning group (CCG) and the emotional and mental health well-being board (E&MHWB) on the pace



and breadth of reforms, influencing the progress of the child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) transformation programme. The board has also been instrumental in challenging inconsistent access for Isles of Scilly children to CAMHS services, with the development of some innovative practices to help to remedy service deficits.

65. Earlier frustrations experienced by the LSCB in monitoring the effectiveness of local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements have been assertively addressed. This has been achieved through setting up scrutiny panels in which all board partners have to demonstrate and evidence the rigour and effectiveness of their operational safeguarding arrangements. Partners are questioned on six common core safeguarding themes, including child sexual exploitation and missing children, the quality of their single agency audits and how children and young people are involved in their decision making. A further set of questions is tailored to the specific focus of each partner agency. Partners are required to provide evidence to support their self-assessments. However, the evaluation of some areas, for example the impact of early help services and attendance of professionals at key meetings, has not yet been completed and this is an omission (Recommendation).
66. While social care safeguarding arrangements are considered by the board to be working well, board scrutiny panels have identified some areas for improvement within partners' safeguarding and auditing practices. For example, community health safeguarding audits were found by the board's scrutiny panel to be too focused on cases where a social care referral is needed. This level of scrutiny has strengthened the culture of multi-agency cooperation and accountability through peer challenge and public oversight. Recommendations are closely tracked and scrutiny reports published on the LSCB website. Partners are expected to make timely progress towards better outcomes. The board's understanding of the quality of multi-agency safeguarding, while rapidly developing, is not yet complete.
67. The LSCB has engaged productively with the council of the Isles of Scilly to build awareness and strategic and operational responses to issues such as modern slavery, radicalisation and female genital mutilation. Devon and Cornwall police have engaged well with the five islands school staff in order to raise their awareness of radicalisation. The board's influence in increasing the content for young people in the H&WBB 'suicide strategy' is testament to the board's growing influence by holding other boards to account and increasingly influencing their priorities.
68. The quality and value of auditing by children's social care is well established, with a multi-agency element adding breadth and depth to findings. However, a key omission is that the views of children on the islands have not been included. Audit activity undertaken by the board is improving. The board chair has ensured oversight of social work practice on the Isles of Scilly through regular visits and case audits. This has included a focus on child

protection work, early help and step-up and step-down arrangements. The board has not yet introduced a comprehensive programme of multi-agency audits to inform its understanding of the quality of front-line practice and management oversight. An independent multi-agency case audit, linked to board priorities and with a focus on Island children, was commencing at the point of the inspection (Recommendation).

69. The board has not included the views of children and young people in deciding its priorities, nor sought their contributions to the evaluation of multi-agency safeguarding with sufficient attention. Partner agencies are asked to self-assess the inclusion of children's views in their scrutiny panel presentations to the board, but the impact of consultation with children and young people is yet to be demonstrated (Recommendation).
70. The LSCB's website is not an attractive nor interactive platform for children or the wider public to engage with the board, although plans are in progress to modernise it. This will help in the board chair's objective to achieve an ongoing exchange with children, helping his understanding of how safe children feel in their schools and communities.
71. Child sexual exploitation has not, to date, been identified as a feature in case work on the Isles of Scilly. Much work has been done to raise awareness among local businesses such as hoteliers and taxi drivers, and to ensure that professionals have the skills to respond effectively if this were to become a challenge in the future.
72. While robust scenario planning is used to good effect, an effective multi-agency strategic and operational response to child sexual exploitation and missing children is not yet in place, reducing the effectiveness of front-line practice. Efforts to tackle this shortfall are delayed across key partner agencies and the board has only recently addressed this concern with sufficient energy. The board's recent changes to the governance arrangements have strengthened its ability to improve. In particular, the amalgamation of the child sexual exploitation and missing sub-group, along with the appointment of a police superintendent to chair it, supported by senior managers from partner agencies, provides the seniority required to achieve improvements (Recommendation).
73. The board has been active in improving both the quality and volume of returns of partner agencies' Section 11 reports. The large majority of agencies submit returns. The local authority chose supervision as a focus for a recent Section 11 audit. This has assisted managers to strengthen supervision arrangements which were found to be good during the inspection. The council of the Isles of Scilly completed a Section 11 return to the LSCB, commenting on the joint LSCB arrangements. This good practice positively contributed to the ongoing review of the LSCB function. The board has assessed the content of reports more closely than previously, returning them for further work when required, and conducting monitoring visits to

schools to evaluate compliance in onsite reviews. The board's scrutiny panel process is aligned with major Section 11 themes, adding a further layer of checks and balances.

74. Effective use has also been made of information collected under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 report and this has added to the richness and depth of information provided to the LSCB.
75. The board facilitates a varied and carefully targeted programme of training through the learning and development group and training contract monitoring groups. An Isles of Scilly operational manager is well engaged with this group, disseminating learning to fellow professionals. There is a diverse pool of experienced trainers, many with extensive operational and practitioner backgrounds, delivering well-evaluated courses to practitioners, first line and senior managers. Careful training needs analyses and emerging themes from local learning and serious case reviews are considered, allowing course content to adapt to intelligence from multi-agency practice. Course capacities and allocations for optimising the attendance of agencies is carefully planned, and patterns of low attendance from some partner agencies, particularly adult agencies and the police, are challenged. Isles of Scilly professionals are well engaged with this training programme. Certificates validating professional development are issued three months after attendance, when both practitioners and managers have completed reflective learning feedback, sharing how learning has improved practice.
76. Serious incident notifications are thoroughly scrutinised by board partners through the Serious Case Review (SCR) sub-group with appropriate and timely recommendations reviewed and endorsed by the chair. The rationale for recommendations is recorded meets statutory criteria. Opportunities for learning from cases not progressed to a formal review are generated through local learning reviews. Learning from serious case reviews is well integrated, with lessons concerning fabricated illness carefully disseminated across health and social care settings following publication of an SCR in 2014.
77. The board is innovative in considering different methods of distributing learning from a range of activities and these are valued by professionals in the Isles of Scilly. The board is part of a Department for Education pilot, undertaking reflective analyses of live cases, tested in 'real time' to assess the extent to which core groups are considering well-formed questions in implementing child protection plans concerning babies and infants. The group uses a wide range of methods to communicate key messages from SCRs and learning reviews, through providing well attended annual multi-agency conferences, seminars, and newsletters.
78. The board's published threshold document is a helpful matrix guide for front-line practitioners and managers exploring and balancing levels of vulnerability. The document provides comprehensive guidance on securing parental consent, although concerned professionals are only directed

towards the Cornwall multi-agency referral unit (MARU) and not to children's social care on the Isles of Scilly. The board lacks data and analysis on the extent to which targeted early help interventions are reducing the level of demand on the statutory children's social work service and improving children's outcomes at an earlier stage of their difficulties.

79. While the board does not maintain a specific log of challenges about multi-agency safeguarding practice, they are well recorded and tracked. The chair is tenacious in his challenge of partner agencies' shortfalls in safeguarding arrangements identified in the scrutiny panel programme. The chair corresponds with and visits senior managers to address any delayed progress.
80. The board's risk register has been reduced to two overriding risks: child sexual exploitation and missing children; and the quality and lack of timely access for children to emotional and mental health services. The second of these is particularly relevant to the Isles of Scilly given the identified delays children can experience in accessing high quality support. A large number of earlier risks have been addressed and it is evident that improvements are consistently made. The board recognises the need to sharpen its focus on the unique nature of the Isles of Scilly, for example by increasing its scrutiny of the effectiveness of arrangements for 16- and 17-year-old young people who move from the Isles of Scilly to the mainland to continue their education.
81. The Isles of Scilly LSCB chair is the representative on the child death overview panel (CDOP) and proactively disseminates learning from child deaths to partners. Modifiable factors in children's deaths are analysed on a peninsula-wide basis rather than at an individual local authority level. The most recent CDOP annual report identified that governance arrangements between the CDOP and CCGs needs to be strengthened and this is now being addressed. Scrutiny of the panel has also identified that the process for following through actions and outcomes between the CDOP, LSCBs and Children's trusts should be improved. This work is in its infancy.
82. The forthcoming LSCB Annual Report for 2015–16 should more explicitly address how the board's improving oversight and scrutiny arrangements are contributing to improving outcomes for children and young people across partner agencies. The last annual report was comprehensive but its content largely described safeguarding arrangements rather than providing a cogent evaluation of them. The effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements for Isles of Scilly children was not sufficiently integrated within this report (Recommendation).

## **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 two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) from Ofsted.

### **The inspection team**

Lead inspector: Emmy Tomsett

Deputy lead inspector: Stephanie Murray

Quality assurance manager: Christopher Sands, Senior Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store St  
Manchester  
M1 2WD  
T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)  
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