

City of London

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

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Children's services in the City of London are good		
1. Children who need help and protection		Good
2. Children looked after and achieving permanence		Good
	2.1 Adoption performance	Not judged
	2.2 Experiences and progress of care leavers	Good
3. Leadership, management and governance		Outstanding

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 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

Determined and inspiring leaders within the City of London take a detailed and ambitious approach to continuous improvement. For this reason, services provided for vulnerable children are consistently good and, in some instances, very good. As a result of outstanding leadership, management and governance, the trajectory is positive, with all the key components in place to enable the City to achieve exceptional outcomes for children.

The senior leadership team is stable and entirely child focused. Governance arrangements facilitate a culture of firm challenge and generous support, which extends beyond the City limits. Partners agree on their priorities and work together with real energy to achieve them. Leaders and partners have ensured that they know their community extremely well. This has resulted in a highly individualised approach, which takes full account of the unique, diverse and sometimes challenging City context. Services, including those that are commissioned, consistently meet the needs of local families. They are also well targeted to safeguard children who do not live in the City yet are supported by its services, or whose parents work there.

Early help services are effective, and some are particularly strong. A comprehensive early help strategy underpins the partnership approach to providing support to families before their problems worsen. Parents told inspectors that they are very happy with the help that they receive. Although positive impact can be evidenced for individual children, the City is yet to introduce a multi-agency evaluation tool to help them to judge how effective their early help services are, overall.

Partners have a clear understanding of local thresholds of need and support, and children consistently receive help at the right level for them. Targeted work with partners has led to an increase in referrals and early help assessments, which is a positive development. The social work response to risk and need within families is swift and reliably good, with analytical assessments leading to helpful support that demonstrably improves children's lives and makes them safer. Although working plans are effective, written plans are not always clear enough to make sense to all families. In a small number of cases, the work with parents who disengage from support lacks purpose and clarity. It is positive that the City has commissioned innovative research into neglect within affluent families.

The City of London is a caring and aspirational corporate parent. Most children looked after are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. They are provided with good education and healthcare, many leisure opportunities, high-quality independent fostering placements and very effective social work support. This enables them to do well in their lives. Social workers and children enjoy enduring relationships beyond childhood, built on meaningful time spent together. All children looked after experience good outcomes, and some are doing exceptionally well in the context of their life experiences. Senior and commissioning managers have taken steps to further improve placement choice in order to enable social workers to consistently achieve the ideal match for children.

The City is very committed to its care leavers and continues support until, and sometimes beyond, the age of 25, whether or not they are in full-time education. All care leavers live in safe and suitable accommodation, guided by their own choices and needs. Social workers consistently stay in touch with young people and work closely with other services to ensure that the young people reach their full potential. Healthcare for care leavers is very good, but not all care leavers have been provided with information about their health histories. Planning for these young people is effective, and their diverse needs are particularly well addressed. Written plans should include more focused personal targets and better attention to young people's views.

Children looked after and care leavers are actively encouraged to share their views. Direct contact with senior managers, the highly effective independent reviewing officer service, independent advocates and visitors, and an annual consultation event ensure that their voices are heard. The Children in Care Council (CiCC) enables young people to use their direct link to leaders to effect positive change. Children looked after and care leavers meet with the corporate parenting board. However, council members and the town clerk (chief executive) could further strengthen these relationships by spending more informal time hearing about young people's lives.

No children have had a plan for adoption for some time, but commissioned and shared services are in place to provide a full range of adoption and post-adoption services. Social workers and managers ensure that children experience a strong sense of belonging to their carers. Care plans address children's need for permanence well and in good time.

The City of London's approach to increasing the skills and abilities of childcare professionals to provide outstanding services is exemplary. The knowledge transfer programme, an innovative partnership with a local university, provides practitioners with valuable opportunities to improve their practice. Training, supervision and support of social workers are comprehensive and contribute to good and improving outcomes for children. The workforce is stable, and this is linked to the vibrant learning environment. Caseloads are manageable and allow social workers to spend the time that they need with children and their families.

Supported by thorough quality assurance processes and excellent performance information, leaders and managers routinely identify where services for children need to be improved in order to be consistently good or better than good. This is reflected in strategic service plans and translated into specific actions that are assertively progressed. Case auditing is well established and ensures that leaders and managers are confident that they know what is happening on the ground. However, audits do not routinely include the perspectives of children, families and partners.

At the time of the last inspection in 2012, services for children were judged to be good. A number of areas for development were identified, including improving and integrating performance and quality assurance systems. Supported by the children's improvement board, all these areas have been rigorously addressed.

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The local authority

Information about this local authority area²

Previous Ofsted inspections

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

Local leadership

- The director of children's services (DCS) has been in post since April 2013.
- The DCS is also responsible for adult services and housing services.
- The chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has been in post since April 2013.
- The LSCB is shared with the London Borough of Hackney.
- The local authority has commissioned out the following services:
 - information, advice and guidance for children looked after and care leavers (Prospects)
 - advocacy services (Action for Children)
 - adoption services (Coram)
 - youth offending services (London Borough of Tower Hamlets)
 - emergency duty team (Hackney).

Children living in this area

- Approximately 1090 children and young people under the age of 18 years live in the City of London. This is 12.4% of the total population in the area.
- Approximately 14.3% of the local authority's children are living in poverty.
- The proportion of children entitled to free school meals:
 - in primary schools is 20.8% (the national average is 15.6%)
 - there are no state secondary schools in the City of London.

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.

- Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 42.6% of all children living in the area, compared with 21.5% in the country as a whole.
- The largest minority ethnic groups of children and young people in the area are Asian, Asian British and Mixed.
- The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language:
 - in primary schools is 64.6% (the national average is 19.4%)
 - secondary schools data is suppressed (the national average is 15%).
- The City of London is just over one square mile in size. It contains 15,105 enterprises and is a key transport hub within London. The residential population is approximately 8,000. Only 10% of households have children, compared with 30% in Greater London and nationally. The City's daytime population is over 50 times greater than the resident population.

Child protection in this area

- At 1 July 2016, 37 children had been identified in need of a specialist children's service, including child and family assessment. This is an increase of one from 36 at 31 March 2015.
- At 1 July 2016, two children and young people were the subject of a child protection plan. Data at 31 March 2015 was suppressed.
- At 1 July 2016, no children were living in a privately arranged fostering placement. This was also the case at 31 March 2015.
- Since the last inspection, no serious incident notifications have been submitted to Ofsted and no serious case review (SCR)s had been completed or were ongoing at the time of the inspection.

Children looked after in this area

- At 1 July 2016, 10 children were being looked after by the local authority (a rate of 91.7 per 10,000 children). The number was in line with that at 31 March 2015, although the rate had increased (84.0 per 10,000 children at 31 March 2015). Of this number:
 - 10 (all) children live outside the local authority area
 - no children live in residential children's homes
 - no children live in residential special schools
 - 10 children live with foster families, all of whom live out of the authority area
 - nine children are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- In the last 12 months:
 - there have been no adoptions

- two children became the subject of special guardianship orders
- six children ceased to be looked after, none of whom subsequently returned to be looked after
- three 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 in multiple occupation.

Recommendations

1. Further improve the quality and consistency of written plans for children, including early help plans, child in need plans, personal education plan (PEP)s and pathway plans. These should be clear and simple, fully integrate the views of children and young people and clearly state what is to be achieved by when.
2. When families disengage from services and the threshold is not met to escalate the case further, ensure that any ongoing work is purposeful and that case records clearly evidence managers' rationale for ceasing or continuing support.
3. Ensure that permanency planning records include a record of decisions about legal permanence for children, along with the rationale for these decisions.
4. Expedite the provision of health histories for all care leavers.
5. Increase opportunities for direct contact between children looked after, care leavers and councillors, and between these children and the chief executive, in order to establish even more meaningful personal relationships.
6. Strengthen the inclusion of the perspective of children, families and partners in case auditing, in order to improve services.

Summary for children and young people

- The City of London is a small area where many more people come to work than to live. Just over 1,000 children live within the City of London, and many older children travel outside of the City to go to school.
- Services for children in the City of London are good. Some children have difficulties within their families. When this happens, a social worker steps in early, to see whether they would like some support. This help is very good and families are very happy with it. It improves children's lives and, for most families, it stops their worries increasing.
- Social workers spend a lot of time with children and families who have bigger problems, making sure that they understand what has gone wrong. This means that the help that they offer is what families need. When there is a risk that children may be unsafe, social workers talk to other adults like the police and teachers. Together, they make good decisions about what to do next to keep children safe.
- Some parents do not want a social worker to help them, even though they have problems that are making their children unhappy. Social workers need to be clearer about why they are involved with these families and what they are doing to help them.
- When children need to be looked after, they are found caring foster homes. Almost all children who are looked after have moved here from another country, often because they were scared or unhappy where they were living before. They are given good help to speak English, to talk about their experiences, and to settle into their new homes and schools. As a result, they make friends and quickly become more confident. They are helped to be healthy and to do many enjoyable things like playing sports and going to the theatre.
- Social workers and managers are proud of the children whom they look after and they care about them, as a loving parent would. They make sure that children go to good schools and that they get a lot of help so they achieve well. Social workers encourage young people to stay living with their foster carers for as long as possible, and this means that they only leave home when they are ready.
- When children leave care, they receive good help and support. They live in safe homes that they are proud of, and most find a job or carry on with their education. Senior managers and local politicians are very interested in the children whom they look after and those who have left care. They listen carefully to the CiCC and have meetings to find out what young people think. Relationships between young people and local politicians would be even better if they spent more informal time together.

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection

Good

Summary

Social workers in the City of London listen to the children whom they work with and develop good relationships with them. The children and families team is settled and stable, and all social workers have manageable caseloads, allowing social workers to spend the time that they need with families. This supports good direct work with children. Managers at all levels provide practitioners with good formal and informal oversight and guidance.

Children in the City of London who need help are identified early. They are supported by a range of services that make a tangible difference to their lives. Increasing the number of children who benefit from early help has been a priority for the City and partners. This has successfully led to a doubling in the number of children being helped in the last year.

In a few cases, families do not believe that they need help and disengage from services. As a result, support plans are difficult to achieve. Plans are regularly reviewed, and efforts to re-engage with families are tenacious, but the rationale to continue or cease involvement is not always recorded well.

When children are, or may be, at risk of significant harm, information is shared appropriately. Decisions are sound and are made promptly, and assessments are consistently good. They take into account risk, family history, children's diverse needs and relevant research. Children's views and experiences are well reflected. Children's case files are generally clear and up to date, although a very small number of children in need cases do not include an up-to-date chronology.

Multi-agency work is well coordinated and has a positive impact on outcomes for children, including those living with parental mental ill health or learning difficulties, or domestic abuse. Child protection conferences and plans are very effective in understanding, addressing and reducing risk within families.

Very few children are known to be at risk of sexual exploitation, go missing, live in private fostering arrangements or become homeless. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to identify and support any children who present to social care in these circumstances. Practitioners are well trained and well informed to ensure that they can deal with new situations and presenting problems as they may arise.

Inspection findings

7. Strong arrangements are in place to identify children in need of early help. All new parents receive an early help visit. This is often a joint visit by a family intervention worker and a health visitor. Such early identification has led to a complete take-up of two-year-old children's free childcare places. Families have access to a wide range of helpful services. The 'friendly dentist' scheme provides dental checks for all under-fives and parenting support is available from a child psychologist through a commissioned service, while weekly speech and language sessions, 'stay and play' and other activities are available through the City's children's centre. Parents are well supported with benefits advice and debt counselling by a commissioned service. The 'nanny network', launched in 2015 to establish links between the City's early help services and this large group of private childcare providers, runs weekly 'stay and play' sessions for approximately 10 nannies and the children for whom they care.
8. Increasing the number of children and their families taking up early help services is a priority in the City of London. Although numbers remain low, determined work across the partnership at a strategic and operational level has led to a doubling of the number of new early help assessments completed over the last year.
9. Early help assessments are generally of a good standard, and lead to helpful and valued support. Team around the child meetings are held when they are needed, and there is good engagement in these by a range of professionals. Although there are individual agency tools to measure progress, there is not yet a single agreed system to measure family improvements so that they can be aggregated and reported on. Work with partners to agree a suitable tool is already underway.
10. A consultation conducted on behalf of the City indicates that parents are very positive about the help that they receive. For example, parents increase in confidence, manage their children's behaviour better, strengthen children's routines and improve their children's speech. Parents spoken to by inspectors said that staff are 'fantastic', services are provided quickly and the help that they received 'sorted things out'.
11. The children and families team includes social workers and early help practitioners, and is fully staffed and stable. An experienced manager has been in post for over a year, and oversees both the practice of social workers and early help staff. Practitioners who spoke to inspectors during the inspection were positive about working in the City of London. Senior managers are described as visible, approachable and knowledgeable about children's circumstances. Staff feel well supported and have access to a wide range of training and development opportunities. They were able to describe how they apply learning from training to their work with individual children.

12. Secure arrangements are in place in relation to contacts and referrals that are made to children and family services. All calls are taken by a qualified social worker, and recommendations made by them are signed off by a manager. Appropriate and detailed instructions about next steps are included in the management decision record. Decisions are made promptly, and all records seen during the inspection were signed off within 24 hours.
13. The thresholds of need document is clear and up to date. When making decisions about how to respond to referrals, social workers consistently apply the guidance appropriately. Consent is sought explicitly, with careful consideration to overriding it given when it is necessary. Partners report a clear understanding of thresholds, and this is supported by close partnership working. Police forward all notifications to the children and families team when there are potential child welfare concerns. These often relate to children who have been stopped in the key transport hubs of the City. Many of these children do not live in the City, and some are flagged for child sexual exploitation concerns. When this is the case, the duty social worker proactively ensures that the referral is made to, and received by, their home local authority area.
14. When children are identified as being at risk of significant harm, prompt action is taken to understand their circumstances and to protect them. Strategy discussions include relevant professionals, and appropriate decisions are made. In one case, details of significant relevant information were not shared by the police. This was appropriately escalated and resolved by senior managers.
15. Children are seen, and seen alone, as part of their assessment. When case auditing, senior managers specifically look for evidence of regular and meaningful visits to children. Inspectors saw case examples, where senior managers had appropriately raised questions about visits to children, leading to actions to strengthen practice further. Social workers know the children whom they work with well. They use a range of tools to work with them to ensure that their views are understood and reflected in assessments and plans. Some very good examples of bespoke direct work were seen by inspectors. Social workers include detailed observations of the demeanour and developmental progress of younger children in case records and assessments.
16. Assessments are comprehensive. They consider family history and reference the appropriate research. Strong examples were seen of social workers identifying presenting and emerging risks, including those arising from domestic abuse, sexual exploitation, honour-based violence and parental mental ill health. In almost all cases, children's diverse needs resulting from disability, ethnicity and religion were well considered. Good use is made of advocacy services when parents with learning difficulties need support to engage with and understand the assessment and planning process.

17. Assessments lead to appropriate plans that make a difference to children. A parent of a disabled child described the support that his child receives from the City of London as 'amazing'. Child protection conferences are well attended, and enable professionals and families to reach a clear understanding of risk and need. Children make use of advocacy services to share their views, and professionals take careful account of these views when agreeing the plan. Subsequent work is consistently effective, and risks for children reduce as a result of good multi-agency intervention. Inspectors saw cases where children were being supported to develop an understanding of the risk of child sexual exploitation, with effective strategies leading to a marked reduction of risk.
18. Although the support provided to children and families is effective, not all written plans are in simple language that clearly describes the desired outcomes. Some actions do not specifically include the date by which they should be completed. (Recommendation)
19. Practitioners demonstrate tenacity in working with the small number of children whose parents do not wish to accept support, yet the threshold is not met, in order to escalate to child protection procedures. However, in a few cases, child in need plans remain in place but are not purposeful, due to the disengagement of the family. Managers need to ensure that their rationale for continuing involvement or ceasing support is clearly recorded. A research project considering neglect within affluent families is nearly complete. It has been commissioned with a view to assisting practitioners in working successfully with such families. (Recommendation)
20. Multi-agency working to meet children's needs and keep them safe is effective. Early help, child in need and child protection plans are regularly reviewed. Inspectors saw examples of effective joint work with an independent school, a homelessness officer, a housing support worker and a debt advice service, as well as a specialist parenting support agency and adult services. Bringing together agencies and working in a coordinated manner consistently leads to improved outcomes for children and their families, such as moving to suitable housing, managing debt, improving school attendance and the provision of intensive support for a mother to continue to care for her child.
21. Case records seen were generally up to date and comprehensive, and showed evidence of clear and regular management oversight and direction. Although family history is considered well in assessments, in a very small number of children in need cases chronologies are not kept up to date on children's files. This is a lost opportunity to maintain a clear record of significant incidents, themes and patterns in children's lives.

22. No child has been reported missing from home in the City of London in the last 12 months, and very few children have been identified as at risk of sexual exploitation. Clear and well-publicised processes are in place to monitor and coordinate services, through the multi-agency sexual exploitation group, for those children who may be at risk. This group has an intentionally low threshold, to identify children who may be at risk at the earliest opportunity. Awareness raising about child sexual exploitation across the City is comprehensive and is targeted at residents, businesses and those who work in the City. Positive links have been made with the two independent secondary schools in the City to raise awareness of a range of safeguarding issues, including sexual exploitation. A drama production with a sexual exploitation theme was commissioned for the girls' school during this school year, and will be delivered at the boys' school in the new school year.
23. Although no children were known to be living in private fostering arrangements at the time of the inspection, a small number of arrangements have been identified in the past year. Thorough assessments, in line with requirements, are completed with appropriate and timely ongoing support.
24. Effective work has been completed in relation to raising agencies' awareness of their responsibilities in relation to allegations against adults who work with children. This has led to an increase in the number of referrals received. Processes to manage allegations, once they are made, are comprehensive. In one case, the City took responsibility for coordinating the multi-agency response to concerns in order to avoid further delay, even though the professional no longer worked in the City and the child lived in another area. This demonstrates a commitment to good practice.
25. Multi-agency risk assessment arrangements to support vulnerable victims and children affected by domestic abuse are effective. Meetings are convened when required, are well attended and lead to appropriate support plans. Support to victims of domestic abuse is available from the advocate for vulnerable victims. Specialist programmes and services for individuals, including perpetrators, are provided on a case-by-case basis when needed.
26. At the time of this inspection, no children were missing from education. Managers frequently and assiduously monitor children's school attendance both within and outside the City. Very good processes are in place through productive partnerships with schools, to respond when safeguarding concerns are identified. An effective risk RAG-rating (red, amber, green) system and procedure is in place for those children at risk of missing education.
27. Very few children are electively home educated in the City of London. For those children who are, good arrangements are in place to monitor their progress, in cooperation with their parents.

28. Out-of-hours services are commissioned from a neighbouring authority. The commissioning arrangement is sufficient to meet current need and any unexpected peaks in activity outside of office hours. Inspectors saw an example of effective joint working between the out-of-hours team, City police and children's social care when there was concern about possible child trafficking.

29. No 16- to 17-year-old young person has presented as homeless in the last 12 months. Close working relationships are in place between the housing department and the children and families team. These support clear arrangements that would be put in place if a young person presented to either department. This includes an assessment and consideration of whether the young person should be looked after by the City of London.

The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence

Good

Summary

All of the children looked after and care leavers spoken to during the inspection were very positive about the services and help that they have received. Inspectors found that the support provided is reliably good. Many children looked after are unaccompanied asylum seekers with no previous links to the City. Children are provided with highly individualised care and support, leading to them settling well and achieving consistently good outcomes.

By design, there are no care placements in the City of London. All children are placed within 20 miles of the City in fostering placements judged to be good or better by Ofsted. Children live in families and communities that meet their diverse needs well, with interpreter services and helpful English and educational support. Social workers and managers care about children and know them very well. The small number of placement breakdowns are due, in the main, to a lack of in-depth knowledge of children who have recently arrived in the United Kingdom (UK). The range of placements is being improved. A permanence panel monitors children's care plans well, although some decisions could be recorded more clearly. No City of London child has had a plan for adoption since 2012. However, a secure and comprehensive commissioning arrangement is in place to ensure that any child or adult who requires an adoption service can access this.

The independent reviewing officer has established strong relationships with children. Children looked after reviews are purposeful, and plans are rigorously progressed. Potential risks for children are considered well. On the rare occasion that children go missing, follow-up is swift and effective. Good information briefings are used well to raise awareness, of child sexual exploitation and radicalisation, among foster carers, children looked after and care leavers.

Accommodation for care leavers is good, and young people are supported well to remain with their carers into adulthood. High-quality independent accommodation is provided in the City or where care leavers choose to stay. The virtual school provides valuable support to children, including to care leavers at university. Employment and training opportunities are also good. Most PEPs and pathway plans are comprehensive, but a few could be improved by more focused targets and better recording of young people's views. Health support is timely and meets the needs of children. Mental health assessments are particularly good. Not all care leavers have been provided with information about their health histories. Children use a number of routes to express their views. The CiCC is well attended and has effective links to the corporate parenting board. The group makes good use of its direct link to senior and political leaders.

Inspection findings

30. Services for children looked after in the City of London are somewhat unique. Although the proportion of children who are looked after is similar to that in other local authorities, the number is small in comparison. All children looked after are between the ages of 14 and 17, and only one was resident in the City prior to being received into care. The other children are unaccompanied asylum seekers who are the responsibility of the City through a London-wide dispersal scheme for sharing refugees across the capital. Most of these young people have arrived in the country and become looked after in the past year. Inspectors looked at the support provided to all of these children and found social work to be, in the main, of a high standard and, in some cases, of an exceedingly high standard. Many children looked after achieve very good outcomes. However, support is not yet consistently demonstrating an exceptional and sustained difference to all children's lives.
31. All children receive at least a good service. They are supported and helped by social workers and managers who have found creative ways to ensure that they know them well. Visits are regular. Children are seen alone. The children spoken to by inspectors were very positive about the support that they have received. Their views are considered very well in visits, meetings and plans, and are recorded, in the vast majority of cases, to a high standard.
32. There is a strong focus, led by the DCS, on building high-quality relationships between social workers and children. Social workers and children spend time together doing fun activities on both a one-to-one basis and as a group, and this strengthens their relationships. An annual holiday for social workers, children looked after and care leavers is valued by children and social workers as an opportunity to get to know each other much better. This complements the time spent during other visits. All children's cases are known, in depth, by the DCS and the assistant director, who, commendably, visits all children looked after on a bi-annual basis.
33. Due to the unique nature of the City, and in order to maintain sufficient matching choice, the City of London has chosen not to provide any in-house foster placements for its children looked after. No children are placed within the City, and all children are placed in foster placements within 20 miles. The quality assurance of these placements is rigorous. The City has decided that children will only be placed in placements that Ofsted has judged to be good or better. The City complements the training offered by foster carers' own agencies with additional targeted learning, for example through the provision of workshops on countering radicalisation and child sexual exploitation. Overall placement stability is good. There have been a small number of placement breakdowns, due in part to the lack of knowledge about children who have recently arrived in the country. Work is ongoing to improve further the choice of carers available. Related children are placed together, when

appropriate. Effective support is provided to children to have continued contact with their families, including for unaccompanied asylum seekers.

34. All children looked after attend school regularly. During 2014–15, the attendance rate was 96%. No children have been excluded from school permanently in the past three years, and only two have been excluded for a day or so, and the isolated incidents were resolved. No children looked after are in alternative provision. Children participate and make the expected progress in their learning. Staff at the virtual school, in good partnership with teachers, work relentlessly to make sure that children with vastly different starting points, most with skills levels below level 1 in key stage 3, receive bespoke individual support. This ensures that they develop the skills that they need for life in the UK.
35. All but one child looked after came into care as an unaccompanied asylum seeker at secondary school age. Just over half of these have achieved entry-level qualifications in English and have progressed to the next level. Some children looked after have made particularly good progress, and others have made sufficient progress in their studies towards achieving GCSE qualifications. Good advice and guidance from experienced advisers ensures that all children looked after are prepared well to make the next steps in their education or training. For instance, a wide range of progression opportunities is provided to learners who are about to progress to key stage 5.
36. Most PEPs are purposeful, and staff are particularly effective in monitoring each child's progress. Targets for children looked after to improve their academic skills and knowledge, particularly English and mathematics, are clear. A few identified gaps in personal skills, which are recorded well in the plans, do not translate sufficiently well to targets. (Recommendation)
37. The City virtual school team implements effective measures to make sure that children looked after get the support that they need through, for example, pupil premium funding. This includes funding for targeted support to help those who are falling behind with their GCSE studies or to improve the English skills of unaccompanied asylum seekers who have recently come into care. The City ensures that foster carers are well equipped to care for children for whom English is not the main language. For example, a toolbox including a whiteboard, word box, world map and role-play pictures is provided to foster carers, along with helpful guidance. This enables them to help children to improve their English at a faster pace than through formal education alone.
38. Good enrichment opportunities have had a visibly positive impact on the confidence and attitude to learning of children looked after. Children looked after participate in a good range of activities, including sailing, football, cricket and art classes. They enjoy trips that staff facilitate. One such trip to a local maritime museum, where there is a large map of the world, provided a safe

catalyst for a group of unaccompanied asylum seekers to show each other where they had come from and to get to know each other better.

39. Health outcomes are improving. Most children looked after have needs arising from poorer health provision, or from the ways in which they were treated in their home countries or on their journeys to the UK. Most initial health assessments are done promptly and all are undertaken by a paediatrician. Children also receive timely dental support, immunisations and further health support, when needed. All children receive a baseline extended mental health assessment by City of London child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), wherever they are placed. This has been specifically negotiated by senior managers with the local CAMHS. Children are referred promptly and receive ongoing support when further emotional or mental health needs are identified. No children are known to be misusing substances.
40. A small number of children looked after have gone missing over the past year. This has mainly been for a matter of hours. The response by children's services and police has been swift and robust. All of these children were offered a timely return home interview, and strategy discussions were initiated to consider any wider safeguarding issues. One child was subject to a more in-depth assessment, which was of a high quality, to look at risks of child sexual exploitation. Careful consideration is given to potential ongoing risks to those children who had been trafficked by organised criminal networks into the UK. No children looked after have been involved in offending during the time covered by this inspection.
41. All children looked after reviews are held within national timescales. Reviews seen and attended by inspectors were of a high standard, with children fully engaged. The independent reviewing officer provides a strong, creative and sensitive service. She visits children between reviews and closely monitors the progress of care plans. Her interaction with children was observed by inspectors to be warm and engaging. She also regularly meets with the head of the virtual school, health commissioners and providers to ensure that high-quality support is provided to children looked after. Plans are well focused and child centred, and actions decided at reviews are, in the main, actioned promptly.
42. All children looked after have clear and appropriate plans for permanency before or by the time of their second looked after review. The permanence panel ensures good oversight of all children in care, and includes the assistant director, legal services and the independent reviewing officer. Consideration is given to whether care proceedings should be initiated to provide security for children, although decisions with accompanying rationale are not always explicitly recorded in permanency panel minutes. In addition to ensuring that social workers and managers have access to these decisions in the future, better recording would ensure that, in later life, children can fully understand why these judgements were made. (Recommendation)

43. There are no current or recent care proceedings, although the City of London maintains good relationships with the family courts and the Family Court Advisory and Support Service. No children have had a plan for adoption in the past three years. Secure and appropriate commissioning arrangements are in place to ensure that the full range of adoption and post-adoption services is available for adults and children, if these are required. A small number of children looked after have recently left care and are subject to special guardianship orders. The full range of permanence options was considered for these children, and the resulting care arrangements meet children's needs well. Court work in relation to these children was of good quality, and the ongoing support provided is appropriate.
44. Direct work is a strong feature of social work with children looked after in the City. Some of this is of an exceptional standard. For the unaccompanied asylum seekers, there is sensitive and sustained support to help them with their claims for refugee status. Local children are also well supported through family- and community-focused activities. Careful and sensitive life-story work is provided for all children looked after, to help them to gain a better understanding of their backgrounds and of what has happened to them. Work is underway to extend the skills of staff in culturally specific life-story work, in particular for children who have experienced disrupted childhoods before arriving in the UK. Support to children and children from different ethnicities, faiths and beliefs is very good.
45. Independent visitors are provided to over half of children looked after, and they are matched well to children's interests and hobbies. Some of these relationships have been sustained over many years through shared interests, such as going to the theatre and sports. Two further children were being matched at the time of the inspection.
46. Formal advocacy support is available and well publicised, but it is not taken up by many children, who rely more on their social workers, their independent visitors, the support of the independent reviewing officer and visits from the assistant director. When children raise concerns, they are responded to swiftly and appropriately, including when it is felt that a change of social worker would genuinely make a difference to them. In one instance, a young person asked the independent person who visited him after he had gone missing from his placement to sort out a worry about his placement. This was quickly resolved, leading to the 'missing' episodes ceasing. There have been no formal complaints from children and young people in the past year, although concerns or worries expressed by children, for instance through the independent reviewing officer, have been responded to promptly and to the satisfaction of the children.
47. Thresholds for whether children and young people should become looked after are clear. Agencies understand these well, and social work support to

children and families at home is good. A small number of cases have met the threshold to be dealt with through the Public Law Outline. In these cases, high-quality social work resulted in there being no need for legal proceedings to protect children further. Managers appropriately involved the commissioned adoption service at an early stage, ensuring that all permanence options were considered to avoid potential delay for children. Care proceedings involving the High Court were also initiated last year, as the case involved the citizens of another European Union country. This was resolved promptly with the family returning home, supported by their local social services department.

48. The CiCC is well attended and meets quarterly. Members receive child-friendly versions of key policies and strategies. There have been a number of improvements facilitated by this group, including improvement of the pledge for children looked after and care leavers. This, along with a welcome pack, is provided to all children looked after, in both English and the child's first language. CiCC members have been involved in interviewing new staff and producing reports for the safeguarding sub-committee on the services available for care leavers. It is good that members of the CiCC have also been involved in mentoring children who have become looked after more recently.

The graded judgement for adoption performance

At the time of the inspection, and within the timescales for judging adoption performance, the City of London has neither commenced adoption proceedings nor placed any child for adoption. Therefore, arrangements to provide adoption services were considered, but adoption performance was not judged.

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

49. Care leavers who spoke to inspectors were very positive about the assistance that they receive. All are allocated to a social worker who sees them, in most cases, regularly and flexibly, depending on the young person's wishes and needs. Social workers support children and young people through their time in care and throughout their transition to adulthood. This supports enduring and trusting relationships.
50. The quality of support provided to care leavers is consistently good. No young people leave care before the age of 18. Specific care-leaver support starts at age 18 years and continues at least until the age of 25, whether or not they are in full-time education. The care leavers who are at university are being supported beyond the age of 25. The City is in touch with all of its care leavers.
51. All but one care leaver is an unaccompanied asylum seeker. All care leavers live in suitable accommodation. This is either in 'staying put' arrangements, whereby they remain with their former foster carers, or in independent accommodation provided in the City of London or an area where the young person wishes to live. Social workers undertake checks to ensure that proposed independent accommodation is not in an area known by police to cause concern, due to anti-social behaviour, gangs or drugs-related activity. There has been a good range of awareness-raising courses for care leavers, for instance on the dangers of child sexual exploitation and radicalisation. No care leavers are known to be involved in criminal activity.
52. The large majority of planning for care leavers is effective. Education and employment outcomes for most of those leaving care are good. Of the current care leavers, 80% are following courses in further or higher education, are in training or are in employment (EET). A few care leavers achieved particularly good results, following completion of their degree courses at university. For those care leavers who are currently not in employment or training, there have been concerted efforts by the virtual school to enable them to participate in a range of work experience opportunities. The City commissions a targeted service to help young people to access and sustain EET opportunities. The support includes attending college open days, accompanying young people to maths and English tests, completing enrolment forms and helping with bursary paperwork. Advisors are steadfast in the help that they provide and, in most cases, this increases young people's ability to succeed with their choices.
53. The City provides care leavers with work experience opportunities within its own services. At times, this is used as a creative way to encourage young people to re-engage with a meaningful daily activity or for staff to re-establish

contact with older young people who are resisting support. Senior leaders such as the DCS and the chief executive promote and support these opportunities.

54. The advice and guidance for young people leaving care are supportive and skilled. Good links to the City of London adult learning service mean that care leavers have the option to start apprenticeships and higher apprenticeships in subjects such as butchery and accountancy. Two care leavers will soon be commencing a traineeship programme to help them to progress onto an apprenticeship. Support to prepare young people for independence is good. Examples were seen by inspectors of focused programmes that had assisted children looked after in developing their practical skills in preparation for future career opportunities.
55. The large majority of needs assessments and pathway plans are good. The diverse needs of young people are particularly well considered in these records, with sensitive consideration of young people's asylum-seeker status and preparation for the possibility that they will not be allowed to remain in the UK. Access to good legal advice is prioritised for young people who are making asylum-related claims. The best pathway plans have clear, aspirational targets and desired outcomes. A few pathway plans have actions that do not move the young people forward quickly enough. In a small number of cases, pathway plans had not been shared with care leavers, and the voice of the young people was not consistently recorded. (Recommendation)
56. The availability of health support is good. The provision of care leavers' support to one young person was extended beyond his 25th birthday to allow time for the social worker to ensure that his emotional well-being was stable. However, not all young people have received a summary of their health histories upon leaving care. Senior managers are working with health managers to progress this. As most of the care leavers are unaccompanied asylum seekers, these health records would assist in providing an overview of their emotional, mental and physical health needs, wherever they choose to live in the UK. This is currently being taken forward by the CiCC. (Recommendation)
57. The CiCC includes care leavers. It has developed the Pledge, which also incorporates the City's promises to its care leavers. It is provided to all young people in their first language. This ensures that care leavers have a good understanding of their entitlements. Activity-based schemes are run, through the CiCC, to provide learning experiences and to maintain contact with care leavers. For instance, a popular annual activity holiday strengthens social work relationships with care leavers and facilitates mentoring relationships between young people.
58. Over the past year, the corporate parenting board has met with the CiCC for lunch and young people attended a board meeting. The board has considered

messages from the annual consultation with young people. However, regular informal contact is not yet a strong enough feature. Members have a good awareness of their responsibilities, but have underestimated how powerful regular, direct contact with children looked after, in particular care leavers, is likely to be. (Recommendation)

Leadership, management and governance	Outstanding
<p>Summary</p> <p>Leadership, management and governance in the City of London are outstanding. All aspects of strategic, political and operational leadership are keenly focused on achieving the best outcomes, not just for children who live in the City but for children or parents who spend time there. Senior and political leaders know their local community very well indeed. Scrutiny arrangements are challenging and support improvement. Leaders and managers work proactively with key partners and forums to ensure that services meet the needs of the diverse and unique population. The response to the potential risks of female genital mutilation and radicalisation is robust. Commissioning arrangements, including those to meet the needs of any child or adult who may require adoption services, are evidence based and sensible, and demonstrate the City's exacting standards for its children.</p> <p>Leaders are attentive and proud corporate parents. Children looked after and care leavers do consistently well and, sometimes, exceptionally well. Leaders listen to what children think about their lives and go to great lengths to provide them with very good care. However, council members have not used all available opportunities to further strengthen their informal relationships with children looked after and care leavers.</p> <p>The strong and stable senior management team has ensured a very clear understanding of the quality of frontline practice. Analysis and evaluation of performance are meticulous. Quality assurance, including case auditing, is robust and leads to sustained improvements, although the voices of children and partners are not always evident. Leaders and managers are responsive to challenge and make focused improvements at a timely pace. The City improvement board has been very effective in addressing areas for development.</p> <p>Leaders and managers have created a safe and vibrant environment in which social workers and their practice can continually improve. Learning opportunities are rich and wide ranging. They include the knowledge transfer programme, through which a local university and the City work together to strengthen practice through research. Caseloads are manageable, supporting social workers to establish meaningful relationships with children. Social work practice is consistently strong, and consideration of children's diverse needs at all levels is extensive. The children's workforce is stable. Good management oversight of practice is evident, and social workers appreciate opportunities for reflection, although records do not always evidence this well. Leaders commit their time to supporting local authorities that are not performing well. This illustrates the City's approach to improvement, and has not detracted from the quality or effectiveness of leadership in the City.</p>	

Inspection findings

59. The DCS has been in post since April 2013 and the chief executive since September 2012. The DCS is responsible for community and children's services, which include education, community housing, and adults' and children's services. Together with the assistant director for children's services, they provide strong and inspiring leadership, with a steady determination to use all the skills and resources available to them to benefit children in the City and in Greater London. The DCS's capacity to undertake his roles and responsibilities has been thoroughly explored by a test of assurance undertaken by an independent person. He states that he is 'a social worker first and a senior leader second', demonstrating this through a highly detailed and enthusiastic approach to all areas of social work practice and a keen interest in individual children. Senior leaders have an outward-looking and philanthropic approach to improvement, for example in their willingness to invest their time in mentoring and supporting senior leaders from other London boroughs.
60. Governance arrangements are highly effective in prioritising and improving the well-being, safety and outcomes of children who live or spend time in the City. Safeguarding is a clear theme through all City strategic documents. The DCS, chief executive and the lead member for the City are active and committed partners of the City LSCB. The priorities within the children and young people's plan are clearly linked to measurable objectives, with a strong emphasis on early help, and on preventing domestic abuse, radicalisation, neglect and child sexual exploitation. They are congruent with the priorities and plans of the LSCB, the children's services improvement plan, the health and well-being strategy and the City's education strategy.
61. The City executive links proactively with a range of partnerships, including Transport for London's safeguarding board and the Safer City Partnership, through formal membership, informal meetings and an inter-board chairs' meeting. Importantly, all strategies, priorities and plans relating to City children are rooted in a highly detailed understanding of the local community. The joint strategic needs assessment has been supplemented by the resident insight database, the 'troubled families' analysis and a detailed review of a particular neighbourhood in the City to enable partners to gain a clearer understanding of the local resident and non-resident population. Assertive steps have been taken to understand this diverse City, for example through the public health analysis of more than 300 local private health providers. This has been scrutinised by the City executive and is being taken forward in partnership to ensure that these providers fully understand their safeguarding duties towards children.
62. Partners share a firm commitment to innovate and to tailor safeguarding activity to the unique way in which children live in and connect with the City. For example, strong performance management information and tracking systems identify, monitor and respond to children who live locally yet may go

missing from education outside of the City, and children at risk who pass through the area or use its public transport.

63. Children's casework at all levels of need, including for those children who are in need of protection, is overseen by experienced managers who have a sound understanding of the legal and statutory framework in which they work. In almost all cases, decision-making at key points in children's lives is considered and unambiguous, leading to plans that meet children's needs and reduce risk. Managers demonstrate a clear understanding of the importance of establishing permanent care arrangements for children. Case supervision is regular, and social workers have many opportunities to discuss children with managers at all levels. Social workers are clear about plans for children and can articulate these well. However, not all staff supervision records are up to date and, in a few instances, they do not reflect the key discussions about professional challenges and dilemmas that social workers describe.
64. Leaders and managers are nurturing, determined and aspiring corporate parents. Care and ambition are backed up by personal and financial investment. The assistant director visits all children looked after, personally addressing the issues that they raise with him. The City supports care leavers to the age of 25 years and sometimes beyond, whether or not they are in full-time education. Senior leaders, in partnership with the head of the virtual school, make effective use of their chain of academies to ensure that children are matched with good schools that meet their needs. They welcome care leavers into the City for work experience and apprenticeships, as they would a family member. Senior and political leaders use these arrangements creatively to establish and maintain helpful contact with young people.
65. All care leavers are in suitable accommodation and almost all are in employment, education and training. The City sets very high standards for the provision of support to its children looked after and they are adhered to. For example, through a commissioning arrangement, CAMHS assessment and, if needed, ongoing therapeutic support are provided to all children looked after, wherever they are placed. Bed and breakfast accommodation is never used.
66. The corporate parenting board receives good-quality data and information about children's experiences, and this enables members to challenge practice effectively. Questions asked by members demonstrate genuine scrutiny and insight. The scrutiny function of the safeguarding sub-committee is effective. The provision of good-quality performance information and reports enables the committee to decide what it wishes to analyse. The chair has a 'no nonsense' approach to getting to the heart of critical issues. The dual adults' and children's focus of this sub-committee enables helpful crossover and resolution of shared issues, such as young people's transition to adult services.
67. The views of children and young people are sought and acted upon. Annual consultation, undertaken by the commissioned children's rights service, results

in an action plan that is closely monitored by the improvement board and safeguarding sub-committee. Senior managers are held firmly to account for their actions, in response to the issues raised by children. For example, they have raised the profile of the virtual school and have taken appropriate steps to increase the knowledge of practitioners about immigration issues. With a direct link to senior managers, the independent reviewing officer acts as a strong and influential voice for children subject to child protection plans, children looked after and care leavers. Children are confident to raise their concerns or worries, and these are swiftly addressed. Formal complaints are rare, but when they are received they are dealt with quickly and fairly. Members of the corporate parenting board have met with children looked after and care leavers through joint meetings and a lunchtime event. Council members and the chief executive could establish even more meaningful personal relationships with children and young people by seeking out informal opportunities to get to know them well. (Recommendation)

68. Senior leaders ensure that they have an exceptionally clear line of sight on frontline practice. They have achieved this through the combination of a comprehensive quality assurance framework, a very detailed and analytical approach to performance information, and a personal interest in children's experiences. The quality assurance framework provides a clear structure, which ensures that practice is thoroughly explored and analysed through the routine oversight of case work, a robust cycle of independent and in-house case auditing, learning from complaints and consultation, and detailed scrutiny by the independent reviewing officer. Learning is translated into whole-service change through the service improvement plan. For example, quality assurance activity highlighted some areas for improvement in the independent reviewing officer service, leading to the service being brought back in house. This is now a highly effective and child-centred service.
69. The lead member for children's services takes a direct interest in practice. Over the past year, he has attended a step-down meeting, a child protection conference and a multi-agency sexual exploitation (MASE) meeting. He assertively exerts his influence on behalf of individual children. The DCS regularly reviews and audits cases, inviting social workers to reflect with him on his findings. The audits carried out by managers for this inspection were reflective, clearly focused on children's experiences and, on the whole, accurate in their appraisal of the quality of practice. Early help audits consistently include the views of families and partners, but other audits do not do this routinely. (Recommendation)
70. The quality assurance of independent fostering arrangements is detailed and effective. The voice of children is a key part of twice-yearly monitoring reviews. This leads to improvements in the quality of placements. For instance, as a result of a quality assurance visit, additional training was provided for an independent foster carer, to enable her to respond more effectively to a young person's alcohol use.

71. Live and retrospective performance information is very comprehensive and is shared with the right people and forums. Performance reports are detailed, and commentary is particularly helpful where numbers are low, enabling managers at all levels to maintain a sharp oversight of services and to identify patterns and trends to scrutinise further. Low numbers do not lead to data being dismissed as insignificant. For each area of data, analysts, leaders and managers ask, 'Does this mean anything?' and, 'If so, what?' As a result, no assumptions are made about how relevant or otherwise the data is. Where numbers are low, additional child-level detail is provided. Rigorous analysis of performance information has led to targeted work and practice improvements, such as raising overall referral rates to children's services and increasing referrals to the designated officer about adults who work with children. Proactive steps are taken to improve the use of performance information continually, for example through collaboration with another London borough to improve the City's child sexual exploitation dataset.
72. Senior managers recognise that local professionals who work with children will not necessarily have the same breadth of opportunity to develop their practice skills as those who work in other areas. This potentially reduces their ability to make an exceptional difference consistently to children's lives. There are relatively low numbers of staff in the City and, as a result, they are required to deal with a wide range of tasks that would be undertaken by more specialist teams in most other areas. In response to this, and to ensure that services for children are as good as they can be, leaders have taken determined steps to provide many innovative and creative learning opportunities for staff.
73. The knowledge transfer programme, a three-year partnership between the City of London and Goldsmith's University of London, was established in 2014, to increase the ability of staff to provide outstanding services through ready access to high-quality research and knowledge. A launch event and four seminars have been attended by over 90 professionals, combining policy, practice and research, to explore subjects such as mental health and risk, and domestic abuse. The programme has completed research projects on the longitudinal impact of early help and the impact of social isolation on City families. Structured reflective practice sessions help staff to think more creatively about their work with local families. The learning in relation to domestic abuse has led directly to the development of a revised City domestic abuse policy and to the creation of a new coordinator post to counter domestic abuse.
74. In response to the recognition that abuse and neglect within affluent families can be harder to recognise and address, the DCS, the chair of the LSCB and the chief executive have worked together to commission a research project in partnership with Goldsmith's University of London. The findings of this project are due to be shared with stakeholders in autumn 2016. The City will draw on the findings to promote a greater understanding of the issues, with a view to enabling practitioners to respond better to the needs of children who may experience harm within affluent families.

75. Social workers and practitioners are very positive about the environment in which they work. It affords them the right learning opportunities to strengthen their practice and to prepare them to respond effectively to a wide range of complex case situations. For example, social workers attend the adoption and fostering boards in Hackney, and any referrals and assessments relating to the children of staff who are employed by a neighbouring borough are dealt with by the City to enhance the range of work in which social workers are involved. Moreover, staff are supported to attend higher-level courses in order to benefit individuals and all staff. In one instance, a manager undertaking a Master's level degree in strategic management was able to use her learning to strengthen further the impact of case audits on staff and on practice.
76. The children's services training programme is closely linked to City priorities and complements the LSCB training provision very well. All of the 15 training priorities for 2015–16 were achieved, including the legal context for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, the use of research in assessments and life-story work. During the inspection, the positive impact of this training was seen by inspectors in casework, such as the helpful use of research to inform assessments and plans for children, and the quality of life-story work.
77. The City's approach to staff retention is well considered and effective. It is realised on a number of levels, including providing social workers with the right technology to do their jobs, good-quality supervision and support, the care and interest of senior managers, appropriate financial reward, generous investment in training and a firm commitment to using research to improve practice. Social workers are afforded rich opportunities to develop meaningful relationships with children, through low caseloads, direct work and activity breaks. Staff reported to inspectors that the approach to improvement and the City's outward-facing culture attracted them and retains them. The children's workforce is stable at all levels and turnover is very low indeed.
78. The strong commitment to promoting learning and development extends to the independent foster carers who care for City children. Free training has been provided to carers to counter radicalisation, child sexual exploitation and children going missing. The City provides all foster carers with an innovative toolbox to enable them to help children to improve their English at a faster pace.
79. The City works resolutely with the LSCB to reach out to professionals who work in the City of London, in order to ensure that they take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. There is a particular focus on those who might not usually engage closely with children's services, such as private healthcare professionals and public schools. The 'nanny network' identifies and reaches out to carers, many of whom look after children who do not live within the City, and provides them with safeguarding advice alongside 'stay and play' sessions. The network is also used as an opportunity to raise their awareness of private fostering.

80. Commissioning arrangements are based on a clear understanding of the local population and the needs of children. Where services have not been deemed to be consistently good enough, senior and commissioning managers have rigorously reviewed arrangements. This has resulted in the decommissioning and recommissioning of services, such as the independent reviewing officer and children's rights services, leading to better quality provision and improved outcomes for children. Arrangements to meet the needs of any child who may have a plan for adoption in the future are robust. A comprehensive commissioning partnership, established in June 2015, is in place. This includes the provision of a good range of services, including post-adoption support and services for individuals who wish to seek information or help in later life. When specific commissioning needs are identified, new arrangements are made, for example through the provision of a targeted service to support young people who need intensive help to engage with work or learning. This is particularly helpful to young people whose first language is not English.
81. City leaders and partners have worked together in a focused and determined way to develop clear and practical procedures and guidance for agencies to identify and tackle child sexual exploitation. The City has its own well-structured operating protocol to counter child sexual exploitation. Wide-ranging education and awareness raising have been undertaken in the City in partnership with the LSCB. Senior leaders, including the chief executive, were closely involved in the highly successful 'notice the signs' campaign. Multi-agency training is comprehensive and targeted awareness raising includes local hoteliers. Although numbers of children at risk of child sexual exploitation in the City are low, MASE meetings ensure that children, adults and places of concern are identified and that targeted support is provided. The City has established helpful intelligence-sharing links with neighbouring authorities. All child sexual exploitation concerns are referred to and followed up by the child and family team, whether or not the children are resident in the City.
82. Partners are highly proactive in their approach to issues such as female genital mutilation and radicalisation, which have not, to date, been a problem in the City. Few cases of concern have been raised in relation to radicalisation. However, the response by partners to potential risks is very robust, demonstrating a sound knowledge of the community, effective partnerships, the interconnectedness of strategic priorities and a determined approach to identifying the individuals of concern.
83. Leaders have ensured that they are fully engaged with the 'Prevent' duty, with regular updates to the City executive and the identification of 'Prevent' leads in all 19 of the City's departments. They have worked with police to provide free 'Prevent' workshops to all foster carers caring for City children, all children looked after and care leavers, police cadets, young apprentices and those undertaking adult skills courses. The City supported the police to run a 'fun day' to engage with the local Bangladeshi community. Partners are aware of the possible links between radicalisation and child sexual exploitation, prompting 'Prevent' leads to deliver a presentation to the City MASE group.

Police and City leaders have forged links with neighbouring boroughs to share intelligence and good practice.

The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)

The Local Safeguarding Children Board is outstanding

Executive summary

This is an outstanding Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). It is a dual board, covering both the City of London and Hackney. The board demonstrates an unwavering determination to safeguard children who live in or visit the City, or whose parents work there, with a firm commitment to sustaining and improving partnerships. The board has an ambitious resolve to be the best that it can be, to contribute the best possible outcomes for children, and to learn from itself, external sources and, most importantly, from children and their communities. Strong governance arrangements are evident across partnerships, developed to ensure that the City of London is not overshadowed by its dual partner authority on the board. As a result, it is making a real difference to children's lives. An example is the chair's persistent escalation of a recommendation from a SCR to the Home Office, Department of Education and the national police chief's council.

The board has inspirational leadership, which is open and reflective, with a relentless focus on quality and a passion for improvement. Outstanding partnership working has enabled the board to respond to emerging safeguarding issues through highly effective strategic approaches that positively influence children's lives. The board robustly reviews progress and takes decisive and prompt action when necessary in order to meet its objectives. The board's business plan is pivotal in improving safeguarding practice.

The board is unrelenting in its challenge to partners to improve services to safeguard children. It scrutinises agencies' compliance with safeguarding policies and procedures through effective bi-annual section 11 audits and evaluation. The board is forward thinking, demonstrates an impressive ability to reflect on a range of critical issues and robustly considers creative solutions to address individual and collective partnership concerns. Learning from SCRs, as well as from other LSCBs and relevant research, is well embedded across the partnership. The LSCB annual report provides a rigorous assessment and overview of key strengths and weaknesses across safeguarding services in the City of London and Hackney.

Learning and practice improvement is systematically cascaded to frontline staff through a wide range of creative and highly effective opportunities. The board's analysis and evaluation of performance are effective, and help partners to understand the impact of services and the quality of practice, and to identify areas for improvement. However, it would benefit from stronger links to the diverse communities within the City.

Recommendations

84. Take steps to engage with children and families in all diverse communities within the City, for example through the role of lay members.

Inspection findings – the Local Safeguarding Children Board

Inspection findings

85. The LSCB is a highly accomplished safeguarding board, supported by solid governance arrangements. It demonstrates exemplary effectiveness in holding partners to account to ensure that they safeguard children. The separate City and Hackney executive boards ensure that rigorous oversight of safeguarding practice in each local authority area is achieved, while also benefiting from economies of scale created through their shared sub-groups. The board's relationship with City of London leaders is highly effective.
86. The independent chair provides strong, credible and influential leadership. He has successfully facilitated a culture of openness and challenge that has positively influenced wider partnership working. LSCB members express a high level of confidence in the chair, who is extremely knowledgeable across all areas of the board's business. As a result, board members are motivated and engage fully with the work of the board. Safeguarding is a firm priority for all board members, demonstrated by consistently good levels of attendance, effective engagement in sub-groups, and a strong culture of constructive challenge and debate.
87. Governance arrangements are robust, with clear lines of communication between the chair, DCS, lead member and chief executive. A productive inter-board chairs' meeting, alongside clear protocols, links the chairs of the LSCB, the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Adult Safeguarding Board and the Safer City Partnership. It shares annual reports and business plans, which feed into strategic documents. As a result, the board effectively influences partner agencies and provides persistent challenge, to ensure that safeguarding is a golden thread running through all strategic documents.
88. The senior professional advisor, board manager and community partnership advisor provide highly effective support to the board. The senior professional advisor has been pivotal in strengthening the board's scrutiny function, as well as providing a valued resource to partners.
89. The board is forward thinking, demonstrating an impressive ability to reflect on a range of critical issues. It robustly considers creative solutions to safeguarding or partnership challenges. For example, female genital mutilation is now flagged on the City's electronic recording systems, and a private fostering mobile phone application (app) is disseminated by the board and the City to provide information for residents, practitioners, children and parents. It

is of note that the City has recently received two private fostering notifications.

90. Board members describe the chair as seeking opportunities through 'horizon scanning', to ensure that the board is proactive in anticipating new issues. This enables the board systematically to investigate emerging evidence, which might pose new and future safeguarding threats to children. For example, in response to challenges identified by City of London leaders, the board has worked with the City to commission independent research on effective intervention with affluent families in need. The board has also introduced a comprehensive and up-to-date strategy to tackle online safeguarding challenges. This sets out guiding principles for professionals about how to keep children safe in the context of social media and technology.
91. Serious incident notifications are thoroughly scrutinised by board partners through the joint SCR sub-group. This leads to appropriate and timely recommendations that are reviewed and endorsed by the chair. The national panel of independent experts has validated these decisions, commending the clear and analytical correspondence and the inclusion of children's voices in the process. Opportunities for learning from national SCRs and multi-agency case reviews are comprehensive. Lessons concerning neglect, sexual abuse and domestic abuse are widely disseminated in the City through well-attended learning events, lunchtime seminars and 'things you should know' (TUSK) briefings. Discernible differences have been made, including the implementation of an escalation policy for practitioners and managers. The majority of practitioners spoken to by inspectors had attended briefings, and almost all articulated the lessons learned.
92. The board demonstrates respectful, rigorous and tenacious challenge of partners and agencies. One member who sits on other boards said that this board is 'the most challenging, rigorous and child focused' of those he attends. It has an impressive and up-to-date log that identifies challenges, alongside persistent tracking of recommendations until sustained evidence of improved practice occurs. For example, the LSCB continues to challenge the Home Office with regard to its position on a recommendation arising from an SCR. The board is requesting a review of Home Office guidance for police on how to disclose 'soft intelligence'. This is not yet fully resolved, but the determination of the board in pursuing the issue is testament to the culture of resolute challenge.
93. The City of London has a small residential population characterised by extremes of wealth and poverty and a broad range of ethnic groups. The board has a clear commitment to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to build partnerships based on mutual respect and trust. An example of this is the work of the board's community partnership advisor, who provides extensive support to community and voluntary organisations on a range of issues, such as economic and cultural diversity, female genital

mutilation, forced marriage, radicalisation, child trafficking and honour-based violence.

94. There are numerous examples of where the board has influenced and supported the City to maintain a strong focus on the safety and well-being of children. The board and City leaders have worked together to engage more closely with private schools, in order to ensure that safeguarding is their first priority. The addition of lay people to the board has strengthened links to schools and other settings.
95. The board maintains a very strong focus on hearing the views of children and using their experiences to influence developments to improve local safeguarding arrangements. Board members make extensive efforts to engage with children who have experienced services and, from a wider group, to use their feedback to inform practice developments. In partnership with the City, consultations with children led to the commissioning of a new children's rights service and training sessions for independent reviewing officers on immigration rights. The 'say something if you see something' campaign was launched at Hackney's youth conference, following consultation with children who challenged professionals about the original ideas for communication. The focus of the campaign changed from one of raising awareness in the local community, in order to spot signs of child sexual exploitation, to encouraging children to identify friends who may be at risk of, or experiencing, exploitation. The introduction of lay people who engage directly with children in settings such as schools and other services for children is already having an impact, but it requires further development to ensure that the authentic voices of harder-to-reach children and communities are heard. (Recommendation)
96. The board's business plan is comprehensive. It has three key strategic priorities that are underpinned by strategies to tackle safeguarding, relating to neglect, domestic violence and child sexual exploitation and preventing radicalisation and female genital mutilation. Sub-group work plans provide a robust framework detailing how the board works to safeguard children. These plans are well coordinated, effectively monitored, challenged and used to drive priorities for children robustly. Specific City sub-groups have been established to ensure that the needs of local children are prioritised.
97. The board has made substantial progress in raising awareness of female genital mutilation, forced marriage and child abuse through faith, belief or culture. The board has worked closely with public health services to influence and monitor the multi-agency response to female genital mutilation. The chair has hosted meetings with the voluntary sector and survivors of these abusive practices, enabling the board to take account of these voices in the development of the strategy to counter female genital mutilation.
98. The board closely monitors the City's 'Prevent' duty and holds agencies to account for driving their response, including awareness raising and recognition. The City 'Prevent' coordinator post is well established. The post

holder is also the community safety manager. Designated 'Prevent' leads are in place in each corporation department. Awareness-raising sessions have been held across agencies, foster carers and community groups, and the coordinator links with other boroughs to share information and good practice. Risk assessments include awareness of risks within affluent communities.

99. The 'Prevent' lead is approved to deliver workshops to raise awareness of the 'Prevent' duty. The widely disseminated Safer City 'Prevent' roadmap is informative, comprehensive and well presented. A designated email address is available for people to seek advice, alongside clear referral processes. Innovation is evident, with discussions and challenge regarding the links between radicalisation and mental health, and the connection between radicalisation and child sexual exploitation. Extensive awareness raising, using a variety of media, has been effective. For example, a foster carer reported a concern about radicalisation. Work is underway to develop the use of social media to increase the community's understanding of risks further.
100. The board continues to drive the strategy and action plan to counter child sexual exploitation effectively and coordinates the partnership response through a highly effective child sexual exploitation and 'missing' working group. The board's data analyst has ensured that comprehensive information about children informs the local child sexual exploitation profile. The City's operating protocol sets out comprehensive, well-structured and practical guidance. Extensive work has been undertaken through a City-specific children sexual exploitation working group. The group coordinated a targeted City campaign with hoteliers, alongside multi-agency training and support for children, together with research and intelligence. The police refer all children at risk of sexual exploitation to City child and family services, regardless of where children reside. Effective intelligence-sharing links with neighbouring authorities are in place.
101. In May 2016, the LSCB supported the City in its highly effective and innovative 'notice the signs' campaign, utilising a range of communication media to raise staff understanding of the signs of child and adult abuse, including child sexual exploitation. This included blogs, a website and a film. Senior leaders, including the chief executive, distributed leaflets. This stimulated many conversations with members of the residential and business communities, schools and other agencies involved with children who live or spend time in the City.
102. The LSCB led the 'say something if you see something' campaign to raise public awareness of child sexual exploitation. This included a film made by young people for young people, leaflets on countering sexual exploitation for parents and young people, and free sessions of the 'Chelsea's choice' play, attended by more than 1,300 students across the City of London and Hackney. During 2015–16, the LSCB delivered seven separate training sessions on child sexual exploitation to 113 staff from the City and Hackney. A further 199 staff from the two local authorities attended the board's

conference on the theme of child sexual exploitation. 'Operation Makesafe' continues to raise awareness in the business community, including hotels, taxi companies and licensed premises.

103. The board utilises a comprehensive range of multi-agency performance information, which includes children with disabilities, unregistered schools and, more recently, attendance and reports received by agencies at child protection conferences. The dataset is clear. It represents all agencies' contributions to safeguarding and fully supports an understanding of effective practice across the whole partnership. Data and commentary are thoroughly scrutinised by the quality assurance sub-group, executive group and the main board, with appropriate focus on the board's priorities. The board receives regular reports regarding the few children who go missing in the City and the actions taken when they return, including return home interviews. However, the board has not sufficiently scrutinised the timeliness of these interviews.
104. The board comprehensively monitors multi-agency frontline practice. An extensive programme of themed audit activity is determined by the board's priorities, and local and national concerns. These include early help and intervention, child sexual exploitation, children who go missing, the journey of the child and the experiences of children with disabilities. The board considers findings from its own audits, alongside those from City single-agency audits and from staff surveys. Learning is carefully fed back to staff and findings inform training.
105. The board has ensured that safeguarding is a priority for all partner agencies through rigorous scrutiny of agencies' compliance with safeguarding policies and procedures. A comprehensive section 11 audit process engages all partners. Returns are rigorously analysed by the quality assurance sub-group. Bespoke training to support agency participation and peer reviews provides the board with assurance that agencies are meeting their safeguarding responsibilities. Training extends to diverse sections of the community. Audits have led to changes, which have improved the safety of children in the City, for example joint actions with British Transport Police regarding children using public transport. Low referral rates led to the scrutiny of two hospitals outside the City, where City children are born, to assure the board that safeguarding practice was robust. Further work is progressing to map the private health providers in the City, in order to engage them in the safeguarding agenda.
106. Early help remains a firm priority for the board, with the effectiveness of early help services evaluated through the learning and improvement framework and City sub-group. The board rigorously monitors the numbers of children who receive early help assessments, through its multi-agency dataset. The annual report provides a comprehensive overview of early help services. A multi-agency audit of the effectiveness of early help identified strengths and learning, which are widely disseminated through TUSK briefings. The City early help sub-group has led to improvements in practice and services. For example, good performance data increased the focus on concerns about

adults who work with children, and this led to an increase in referrals. Awareness raising and protocols to counter child sexual exploitation led to the identification of a small number of children with vulnerabilities. 40 partners attended a multi-agency partnership event in February 2016, which included a presentation covering the strategic objectives and operational priorities for early help.

107. The board has adopted pan-London LSCB policies and procedures, which are adapted to the City and reviewed regularly. The City has refreshed and relaunched a revised threshold document, which is comprehensive and practical. Descriptors provide clear examples for each level of need, including child sexual exploitation, radicalisation and disability, as well as a link to the joint City and Hackney escalation policy, which staff reported as extremely useful in achieving resolution when agencies disagree. Thresholds are now understood well and used by staff across the City.
108. Arrangements for the review of child deaths are highly effective. The child death overview panel (CDOP) is well attended by the right professionals and has clear terms of reference. The CDOP annual report provides a comprehensive analysis of local issues and appropriately sites this in a national and regional context. It identifies issues of concern and themes, for example the risks associated with baby slings and co-sleeping with infants. Both have resulted in well-targeted public awareness raising across the City. The panel identified the need to discuss a range of issues with the senior coroner. As a result, all coroner reports concerning the prevention of future deaths are now sent to the panel to ensure that learning is widely circulated.
109. The board has created and fostered an effective learning culture that extends to frontline practitioners and embraces the community. Professional relationships across the City are based on a team approach, ensuring excellent communication and an atmosphere of continuous improvement. The board delivers a comprehensive range of training for managers and practitioners relating directly to multi-agency improvement priorities. Technology is used creatively and well, for example the online booking system and the provision of a range of online training modules through its website. The training and development sub-group ensures highly effective planning, monitoring and oversight of all training activity. Regular reflection by the board on the learning arising from SCRs, reviews and case audits further enhances the training programme, with relevant themes shared effectively with trainers. Contemporary messages to improve safeguarding of children are comprehensively included in the rolling programme of training. The board regularly monitors the effectiveness of its training courses. This includes observation of trainers, post-course evaluation, staff surveys and random telephone calls to participants and their managers, to assess how learning has influenced practice. Following safeguarding awareness training, a City apartment receptionist raised concerns about a child to the police.

110. The annual report for 2014–15 is well written, comprehensive and evaluative, providing rigorous and detailed overview of the board’s work. The report clearly identifies learning and provides documented examples of effective and constructive challenge to partner agencies and other boards. The board’s website is accessible, mobile telephone friendly, easy to navigate and well used. It includes a comprehensive and up-to-date set of procedures with links to research information, legislation and practice guidance. The latest news from the board is highlighted on the home page and is disseminated through monthly TUSK briefings. There are regular tweets from the Twitter account to update staff.

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 that 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 whom 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 four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) from Ofsted.

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