

# London Borough of Hackney

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

and

## **Review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board<sup>1</sup>**

Inspection date: 4 July 2016–28 July 2016

Report published: 20 September 2016

<b>Children's services in the London Borough of Hackney are good</b>		
<b>1. Children who need help and protection</b>		Good
<b>2. Children looked after and achieving permanence</b>		Good
	2.1 Adoption performance	Good
	2.2 Experiences and progress of care leavers	Outstanding
<b>3. Leadership, management and governance</b>		Good

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<sup>1</sup> Ofsted produces this report under its power to combine reports in accordance with section 152 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. This report includes the report of the inspection of local authority functions carried out under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the report of the review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board carried out under the Local Safeguarding Children Boards (Review) Regulations 2013.

## Executive summary

The combination of ambitious leadership and long-term political and senior officer commitment ensures that the large majority of Hackney's children and their families continue to receive good-quality services that provide effective help and support. Almost all areas for improvement identified in the inspection of safeguarding and looked after children's services in 2012 have been effectively addressed. The local authority continues to focus on improving the quality and use of chronologies.

The interim director of children's services has quickly established herself as a strong leader of children's services and is identifying relevant priorities to further improve services for children and families. During the inspection, she took decisive action to cease a practice of visiting families prior to taking threshold decisions for children's social care, and to establish more robust management oversight of early help visits and more transparency for children and families.

Children and families are provided with effective help from a wide range of early help services when needs and concerns first emerge. When children require immediate protection, they are well protected through robust child protection processes. Almost all children have detailed assessments of their needs that lead to a range of relevant help and support services that improve their outcomes. Children who are at risk of child sexual exploitation, including those who are looked after, receive good-quality multi-agency planning and support that helps the majority to reduce risk. The local authority maintains active and detailed oversight of children who are missing education and responds well to safeguarding issues for these vulnerable children.

The local authority has more to do to ensure that all children benefit from consistently good-quality provision. There is not a sufficiently robust system in place to ensure that all assessments are completed within a timescale that meets the child's needs. This means that a small minority of children wait too long for case closure or multi-agency decisions and plans. Written plans contain clear actions, but the majority lack the intended outcomes for children. Most assessments and plans do not record children's diversity issues well. Initial strategy discussions do not routinely include all relevant professionals to inform safeguarding decisions. The local authority is currently unable to be assured that all children who are missing are offered a return home interview within 72 hours of their return. Although provided with accommodation swiftly, assessments of need for almost all homeless 16- and 17-year-old young people take too long. They are not being informed of their full range of entitlements swiftly enough.

A noteworthy area of service is the local authority's excellent in-house clinical service, which provides swift access to child and adolescent mental health support for those children who need this support. The service has an impressive range of therapeutic options for children and their families and these are leading to demonstrable benefits in children's lives. The service provides real-time clinical input and consultation for the social work units and this enhances social workers' understanding of the most beneficial approach to complex families.

A further example of excellent practice is the very interesting and targeted data analysis being used to help the local authority understand the needs of the most vulnerable children. Data and information from partner agencies is brought together across a range of vulnerabilities, including risk of sexual exploitation, radicalisation, gang affiliation and sexually harmful behaviour. This informs decisions about reducing risk for individual children and decisions regarding service developments.

The local authority has high aspirations for its children looked after and care leavers and their education, training and employment outcomes are very good. Children become looked after appropriately to meet their needs and safeguard them. They benefit from good-quality placements that promote contact with family and friends when in their best interests, and they have good access to a wide range of leisure and educational opportunities. Not all children have a timely assessment of their health, which means that some needs may not be addressed. Good-quality services are maintained for the many children who are looked after outside the local area, and clear strategies are in place to increase local foster placements.

The adoption service is strong and ensures that permanence through adoption is secured for a broad range of children. A continued focus on the timeliness of placements for children is required to ensure that recent progress is maintained. Adoption support is comprehensive. Care leavers receive outstanding services that are leading to sustained improvement in their lives.

The local authority is innovative in its aim to improve outcomes for children and their families. For example, Hackney was part of the successful national PAUSE project, helping women who have had multiple children taken into care previously to turn their lives around. This project is now being extended to seven other local authority areas.

The use of performance management information, audit and learning from complaints are areas of strength. The comprehensive workforce development strategy is leading to significant improvements in the recruitment and selection of social workers and managers.

While strong leadership is obvious across senior officers in the local authority, management oversight of the day-to-day decision making for children is less evident. The effectiveness of the social work unit model is predicated on having strong consultant social workers, practice development managers and service managers to provide oversight and supervision of individual children's cases. Inspectors found too much variability, particularly in the assessment and child in need teams, in management oversight and delivery of this unit model.

The quality and timeliness of recording within children's case files is an issue identified across this inspection, including in relation to recording management oversight. Although the senior management team has been actively seeking to address this issue for three years, this has not yet led to strong recording practices that fully inform and drive proactive work.

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## The local authority

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

#### Previous Ofsted inspections

- The local authority does not operate any children's homes.
- The previous inspection of the local authority's safeguarding arrangements was in July 2012. The local authority was judged to be good.
- The previous inspection of the local authority's services for children looked after was in July 2012. The local authority was judged to be good.

#### Local leadership

- The director of children's services is interim and has been in post since January 2016.
- The chair of the LSCB has been in post since April 2013.
- The LSCB is shared with the City of London.

#### Children living in this area

- Approximately 60,000 children and young people under the age of 18 years live in the London borough of Hackney. This is 22.8% of the total population in the area.
- Approximately 35.6% of the local authority's children are living in poverty.
- The proportion of children entitled to free school meals:
  - in primary schools is 32.1% (the national average is 15.6%)
  - in secondary schools is 34.2% (the national average is 13.9%).
- Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 58.5% 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 Black or Black British and Asian or Asian British.
- The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language:
  - in primary schools is 55.3% (the national average is 19.4%)
  - in secondary schools is 45.1% (the national average is 15.0%).

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<sup>2</sup> The local authority was given the opportunity to review this section of the report and has updated it with local unvalidated data where this was available.

- Hackney's Orthodox Jewish (Charedi) population in Stamford Hill of around 30,000 represents more than 10% of Hackney's population and around 50% of the community is under the age of 19 years.

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

- At 4 July 2016, 2,348 children had been identified through assessment as being formally in need of a specialist children's service. This is a reduction from 2,848 at 31 March 2015.
- At 4 July 2016, 289 children and young people were the subject of a child protection plan. This is an increase from 216 at 31 March 2015.
- At 4 July 2016, 22 children lived in a privately arranged fostering placement. This is similar to 21 at 31 March 2015.
- Since the last inspection, seven serious incident notifications have been submitted to Ofsted and three serious case reviews have been completed at the time of the inspection.

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

- At 4 July 2016, 338 children were being looked after by the local authority (a rate of 56 per 10,000 children). This is a reduction from 345 (58 per 10,000 children) at 31 March 2015.
  - Of this number, 247 (or 73%) live outside the local authority area
  - 15 live in residential children's homes, of whom 14 (93%) live out of the authority area
  - 3 live in residential special schools<sup>3</sup>, of whom all live side the authority area
  - 255 live with foster families, of whom 75% live outside the authority area
  - 10 live with parents, of whom one (10%) lives outside the authority area
  - 25 children are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- In the last 12 months:
  - there have been 17 adoptions
  - 15 children became subject of special guardianship orders
  - 203 children ceased to be looked after, of whom 9% subsequently returned to be looked after
  - 10 children and young people ceased to be looked after and moved on to independent living

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

- no children and young people ceased to be looked after and are now living in houses of multiple occupation.

## Recommendations

1. Revise the local authority protocol for 16- and 17-year-old homeless young people to ensure that it is consistent with statutory guidance. The revised protocol should ensure that young people are advised of their rights and entitlements as soon as possible and that s20 status is applied appropriately and within the young people's timescales.
2. Ensure that assessment timescales are effectively planned for, overseen by managers and completed within a timeframe appropriate to individual children's needs.
3. Involve health and other relevant professionals in initial strategy discussions to ensure that decisions are informed by their knowledge, perspective and insight of the child and their family.
4. Ensure that child in need plans and child protection plans focus on what needs to change to improve outcomes for children, and include timescales for completion of all actions.
5. Further develop processes to provide assurance that all children are offered an independent return home interview after an incident of going missing, that these occur within 72 hours of the child's return and they are recorded appropriately within the child's file.
6. Ensure that the health needs of children looked after are fully understood and met through timely health assessments.
7. Improve the oversight of outcomes and the timeliness of investigations of allegations against professionals to ensure that there is a clear understanding regarding the effectiveness of this role.
8. Ensure that a full understanding of the child's journey is achieved within case records through good-quality, accurate and timely case recording. This is to include consideration of the impact of diversity for children within all assessments and plans.
9. Ensure that operational managers are held to account for providing effective management oversight of day-to-day decision making, assessment and service provision for children. This to include operational managers recording case discussion from both unit meetings and case supervision, to inform planning and decision making for children.



## Summary for children and young people

- Inspectors found that services for children and young people in Hackney are of a good quality.
- Senior managers and councillors in Hackney take their roles very seriously and they are committed to improving the lives of children and young people.
- Managers do not always maintain a good enough oversight of day-to-day decisions for children and this needs to improve.
- Children and their families who require extra help usually receive the support that they need, at the time that they need it.
- Children and young people are helped to feel safe and are protected from harm. Their needs are assessed well. More should be done to ensure that assessments are completed within a timescale that meets children's individual needs.
- Young people who are homeless do not always receive a fast enough service and are not always advised of their right to be looked after quickly enough.
- Hackney has an excellent team of mental health specialists to help children and young people who need extra help at difficult periods in their lives.
- Children who are at risk of sexual exploitation benefit from all professionals working together well to help them reduce risk.
- Managers are doing some good work to share data information to make sure that they know when children may be vulnerable to more than one risk, for example going missing and having links with gangs. Some more work is needed to make sure that all children who have been missing are being offered an independent return home interview when they should.
- When children cannot live at home, their social workers make good decisions to ensure that they are looked after by people who take good care of them.
- Children looked after do well at school and are encouraged to do a wide range of additional activities and attend events. Children looked after are helped to keep in touch with the people who are important to them.
- Social workers and managers regularly meet with children and listen to their views. The children in care council, Hackney Gets Heard, works closely with Hackney Borough Council to improve the lives of children looked after.
- When children need a family to care for them and adopt them, families are found quickly. Adopted children have access to good support.
- Hackney is working hard to improve the lives of children looked after by trying to find more local foster carers and improving the timeliness of adoption.
- More needs to be done to make sure that children's records are up to date and accurately reflect decisions and the support that children are receiving.
- Young people leaving care receive excellent support to help them to live independent lives. They are given help with housing and a high level of support with their education and employment.

<b>The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection</b>	<b>Good</b>
<p><b>Summary</b></p> <p>The London Borough of Hackney has a good range of early help services, provided by both local authority staff and commissioned services, available to children and their families. These are provided when needs are first identified and are helping to improve outcomes for children at an early stage.</p> <p>When children are at immediate risk of harm, referrals are dealt with swiftly and children are seen to complete effective child protection enquiries. Appropriate decisions are taken when risk is identified to safeguard children. However, initial strategy discussions rarely involve health or other relevant professionals. The large majority of assessments contain good consideration of family histories and analyse parenting capacity, risk and protective factors well. A small minority of assessments are not completed within the child's timeframe, leading to delays in reaching decisions regarding service response for a small number of children.</p> <p>Written plans address all the areas of identified need. However, the majority of plans do require improvement to ensure that intended outcomes for children are clear and that timescales for completion of all actions are included. Children's diversity and identity are not well recorded within most assessments and plans. Effective multi-agency groups such as child in need meetings, core groups and multi-agency planning (MAP) meetings ensure that need and risk are reducing for children. The in-house clinical service, which offers therapeutic support, is a particular strength and is improving outcomes for children and families.</p> <p>There is clear evidence that children are seen and seen alone, where appropriate. Their views are listened to and influence the help and support that they receive.</p> <p>When 16- and 17-year-olds present as homeless, they are provided with a range of services to enable them to remain within their families. However, some young people are being accommodated under s17, even when it is their express wish to be taken into care.</p> <p>The prevalence of domestic violence, substance misuse and mental health issues is well understood by the local authority and its partners and this leads to the appropriate commissioning of services.</p> <p>Professionals at all levels have a clear understanding of the risks of child sexual exploitation and other vulnerabilities of individual young people, including harmful sexual behaviour and radicalisation. This is enhanced by excellent data analysis across agencies regarding issues of vulnerability for children.</p> <p>Social workers understand the reasons why young people go missing, and usually where they are going. While return home interviews seen by inspectors were well recorded and detailed, the local authority cannot be assured that all children were offered an interview following their return after being missing.</p>	

## Inspection findings

10. The local authority receives referrals from a wide variety of sources. These demonstrate a good understanding of the issues facing children and their families. Consent is sought from parents when necessary to gather information from partner agencies. Prior to the inspection, the local authority had been undertaking visits before accepting a referral in a small number of cases to assess whether the threshold for children's social care intervention had been met. These visits constituted a short assessment to assist with decision making. However, this practice is outside of the local authority's own protocol and the director of children's services took swift action during the inspection to cease this practice.
11. There is an extensive range of early help services, both in-house and commissioned, that are available to families when needs are first identified. These are helping to improve outcomes for children at an early stage. Cases are appropriately stepped up to children's social care when concerns escalate. When a referral is received, officers in the First Access and Screening Team (FAST) identify whether individual families currently have, or have had, an early help assessment. However, the local authority is currently unable to collate comprehensive step-up information to inform future service planning and identify themes and trends.
12. Step-down decisions to early help services are appropriate and a wide range of professionals within universal and targeted services take on the role of lead professional. Multi-agency meetings drive forward family support plans. Cases that are referred to early help are effectively tracked via the multi-agency team (MAT) and children and young people's partnership panel (CYPPP). Both of these panels effectively track cases that they have considered. However, cases referred to early help services through other routes are not currently monitored for effectiveness. The local authority has appropriately recognised that it should improve the way that it tracks referrals to and from early help. It is currently building a new information technology system which will help track and monitor the effectiveness of early help systematically.
13. Decision making for children is appropriate and thresholds are consistently applied, including for decisions taken out of hours. Decision making in the FAST team is, in the vast majority of cases, taken swiftly and cases are appropriately passed through to assessment teams for further work. Decision making is aided by detailed review of historical information. Decisions have a clear rationale and, in most cases, identify direction for further work with children and their families. Where children are at immediate risk of harm, referrals from other professionals are dealt with swiftly and children are seen promptly in order to undertake s47 child protection enquiries without delay.
14. Health colleagues, and other relevant professionals, are consulted about initial safeguarding decisions in a minority of cases, and are invited to attend

when full face-to-face strategy meetings are held. However, there needs to be more routine involvement of health and other agencies in initial strategy discussions to gain their knowledge, insight and engagement in safeguarding decisions. (recommendation)

15. Risks are appropriately identified in the vast majority of cases. In a very small number of cases, it took too long to recognise the level of risk that children were experiencing and the impact of long-term neglect should have been recognised and led to decisive action at an earlier stage.
16. Assessments are, in the large majority of cases, of a good standard. They consider historical involvement, analyse risk and protective factors well and assess parenting capacity, with a focus on parents' own experience of being parented. A small minority include relevant research. Partner agencies are appropriately involved in the assessment process and individual children's needs are, in the majority of cases, clearly identified. In just over a quarter of cases seen, assessments were not completed within a timescale that meets individual children's needs. In some cases, this led to a delay in decision making and case closure. In a very small number, there was a delay in appropriate decision making, such as convening an initial child protection conference (ICPC), or the development of a multi-agency plan. The impact of this for children is minimised as support services are put in place as soon as needs are identified, including during the assessment process when appropriate. (recommendation)
17. There is no standard process in place to establish appropriate timescales for assessments according to individual children's needs, or to then systematically review completion against key points. Consultant social workers vary in the way that they monitor the timeliness of assessments and inspectors found that in those units where this was more closely monitored, assessments were completed more swiftly and were of a better quality. In those units where this was monitored less closely, there were more very lengthy assessments and more cases waiting for closure or transfer. (recommendation)
18. Assessments lead to plans that include actions to address areas of identified need. Plans do require improvement, though, to ensure that they identify the desired outcomes for children and contain clear timescales for completion of all actions. (recommendation)
19. Effective multi-agency meetings, such as child in need meetings, core groups and multi-agency planning (MAP) meetings, ensure that plans are regularly reviewed and that progress is achieved for children to meet their needs and reduce risk. Child protection conferences, reviews and core groups are well attended, although there is an issue with general practitioners not attending or providing reports. This is recognised by the local authority and recent work with the clinical commissioning group (CCG) is showing significant improvement in this area. Inspectors saw cases where young people had

been supported well to attend and contribute to their reviews. The use of advocacy in this regard is improving and chairs are thinking creatively about how to involve children more practically in giving their views to conference. There is evidence of challenge within reviews that is effective and that leads to sound decision making, including escalation to legal planning processes when risks to children increase.

20. There is clear evidence that children are seen and seen alone, when appropriate. Social workers spend time building up relationships with families and developing a rapport with children as part of their work. Their views are listened to and influence the help and support that they receive. Inspectors saw creative use of direct work to ensure that children were able to express their wishes and feelings.
21. Social workers are tenacious in their efforts to engage families and, in some cases, improvement in engagement is demonstrable over time. However, in a very small minority of cases, escalation due to parental non-engagement should have happened more quickly and this may have facilitated earlier improvements in children's experiences.
22. When 16- and 17-year-olds present as homeless, they are provided with a good range of services to enable them to remain within their families. This includes advice and support as well as specific adolescent parenting support. This, combined with family network meetings, has successfully led to over 80% of young people remaining with their families. However, there is an issue with assessment and legal status as the vast majority of young people who are unable to return home are provided with accommodation as children in need pending the outcome of assessments. This occurs even when, for some, it is their express wish to be taken into local authority care. In the large majority of cases, these assessments take too long to complete and young people are left uncertain about their future, in some cases for several months, while assessments are completed. Social workers do not always adequately explain to young people their rights and entitlements as young people who are homeless. (recommendation)
23. The local authority has a clear and detailed knowledge of whether children are missing from education. Local authority staff go to great lengths to identify and investigate children who are missing education and use data well to understand the key issues and monitor progress of these investigations. They also respond immediately to evidence about safeguarding issues for children missing education and involve children, families and the local authority designated officer well. The local authority robustly monitors referrals for elective home education and those children being home educated. They constantly push the boundaries of their statutory authority to work extremely well and ensure that children have the education they need.

24. The prevalence of domestic violence, substance misuse and mental health issues is well understood by the local authority and its partners and this leads to appropriately commissioned services. The local authority has been commissioning services for perpetrators of domestic violence for a number of years. The in-house domestic violence advocacy service is being reconfigured to work with perpetrators as well as victims to provide an all-round approach to prevention and intervention. There are several innovative projects which are providing improved outcomes for children and families. The in-house clinical service to promote emotional well-being and mental health for children is a particular strength and enables bespoke work to be undertaken with parents alongside direct work with children. This is leading to improved outcomes in all areas of children's lives.
25. Professionals at all levels have a clear understanding of the risks of child sexual exploitation and other vulnerabilities for individual young people, including harmful sexual behaviour and the risk of radicalisation. Young people are discussed at the multi-agency sexual exploitation meeting (MASE) when appropriate. Through good partnership working, risk, in many cases, is reducing for children. When young people go missing, there is a good understanding of the issues, with tenacious efforts to find and keep in touch with them during episodes of going missing. Social workers understand the reasons young people go missing and usually where they are going and why.
26. A list of children who are currently missing is maintained so that these children can be monitored until their safe return. However, the local authority cannot yet be assured that young people are always offered an independent return home interview after they have been missing. The local authority uses its children's rights officer to conduct some return home interviews and these are of a good quality and are analysed for trends and patterns, with the views of young people beginning to influence service design. However, other professionals, such as social workers, also undertake return home interviews. Although, there is less analysis of these and it is impossible at present to know how many are undertaken within 72 hours. (recommendation)
27. The local authority is undertaking detailed data analysis, which is significantly enhancing their understanding of risk in relation to vulnerable children. They are scrutinising information, data and intelligence from a wide variety of sources, including schools, police, health and probation as well as 'softer' sources such as social media. This is helping to identify young people who are vulnerable to a range of issues, including child sexual exploitation, links with gangs and harmful sexual behaviour. It is also enabling the partnership to identify links between vulnerable young people and the places where they may be at risk. This enables an appropriate and holistic response. All relevant data is reported into MASE and also the strategic child sexual exploitation group that sits under the LSCB to inform decision making for children and promote service improvement.

28. There is a clear strategy regarding female genital mutilation, and an accompanying action plan, which are leading to an increase in referrals. The large majority of cases seen by inspectors showed a timely response, with appropriate follow-on action being taken where relevant, including pursuing a female genital mutilation order.
29. Work with privately fostered children and their carers is effective, and benefits from good oversight by the service manager. There is an effective private fostering strategy, which is increasing the appropriate identification of private fostering arrangements.
30. Allegations against professionals working with children referred to the designated officers within the local authority are responded to appropriately. However, current oversight and monitoring of the outcomes and timeliness of investigations is not sufficient to secure clear strategic understanding regarding the effectiveness of this role. (recommendation)
31. Social workers are able to articulate the experiences and impact of diversity and identity factors for children. However, in almost all the assessments and plans seen by inspectors, diversity issues are not well explored, which means that these important factors may not directly influence ongoing multi-agency work with individual children.

<b>The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence</b>	<b>Good</b>
<p><b>Summary</b></p> <p>Children who become looked after by the London Borough of Hackney are well supported and their outcomes improve. Decisions about whether children need to become looked after are appropriate and timely. Strong emphasis is placed upon children remaining with their families when this is safe and appropriate and there is a good range of edge of care support.</p> <p>Family network meetings are used effectively and assessments for court are a strength, with the length of care proceedings reducing. Social workers know children well and see them frequently. Children's views are represented within assessments, plans and reviews. However, case records do not reflect the work that is being undertaken and inclusion of too many key documents is delayed.</p> <p>The provision of an in-house clinical service means that children looked after receive high-quality, effective support, which improves their emotional well-being. Health assessments are not always timely and this means that children looked after may have unmet needs. Children looked after are very well supported by the virtual school and educational progress is very good.</p> <p>Although the majority of children looked after live outside the borough, clear arrangements are made to support them to ensure that they are not disadvantaged by this. Contact plans are clear and balance risk well. The authority recognises that more needs to be done to recruit foster carers and improve long-term placement stability. In-house carers are well supported and access relevant training.</p> <p>The children in care council, while active, has small numbers and more needs to be done to involve children from outside the borough as well as children with disabilities. There is an inconsistent approach to return home interviews for children who have been missing.</p> <p>Plans for permanency are progressed in a timely way and consider the best interests of the child. Adoption services are strong and ensure that adoption is achieved for a broad range of children. Adopter recruitment is comprehensive and innovative support programmes have been initiated to ensure good support and stable placements.</p> <p>The support that care leavers receive is outstanding. The vast majority of care leavers live in suitable accommodation and are well supported to develop their skills for independence. Their outcomes are exceptionally positive and they are encouraged to aim high and to do well in education, employment or training.</p>	



## Inspection findings

32. As at 31 March 2015, there were 345 children looked after by Hackney Borough Council. This represents a rate of 58 per 10,000 of the population, which is below the rate of statistical neighbours (69 per 10,000). At the time of the inspection, there were 338 children looked after so there has been little change.
33. The local authority has a strong commitment to keeping children with their families when it is safe and appropriate to do so. There are effective edge of care and preventative services, which include in-house clinical services, family support, parenting groups and direct work provided by social workers. For example, the clinical service has provided high levels of intervention for some children with a plan to return home to ensure that they, and their families, receive good-quality support to maximise the potential for success with reunification. Family network meetings are used well. This means that the number of children who enter care in Hackney remains consistently lower than statistical neighbours.
34. Decisions for children and young people to become looked after are timely and appropriately meet legal thresholds. Such decisions are well informed by good assessments.
35. A weekly children's resource panel, chaired by the assistant director, approves plans for the Public Law Outline (PLO), care proceedings and reunification. The panel comprises a wide membership across children's social care and includes the virtual school and health and placements professionals, so a full discussion is held about plans and the panel has access to a member of the legal team to give advice. Cases within PLO are effectively tracked and monitored, with plans for reunification robustly reviewed on a regular basis.
36. High-quality direct work with children and families results in effective change, enabling children looked after to return home with clear support plans in place. These are appropriately ratified by senior managers and endorsed by the reviewing officer. A wide range of services are put in place to support return home plans. This includes innovative work by the Family Learning Intervention Project (FLIP), in which professionals work intensively with the family away from their home environment to minimise distractions and maximise opportunities for reflection and change. Therapeutic interventions and parenting support are among the continuing services when families return to their home environment to embed change.
37. The quality of work placed before the court is good. The social work units and clinical services team undertake high-quality parenting assessments and viability assessments which are well thought of by the court. The length of care proceedings is reducing and is now at an average of 30 weeks. The provision of an in-house clinical service means that children receive timely

specialist assessments for court, by clinicians who understand the family well.

38. Children are seen frequently by their social workers and are appropriately involved in their assessments, plans and reviews. Their wishes and feelings are explored and, where children are pre-verbal, there is a good use of observation feeding into assessments and plans. Social workers make tenacious efforts to ensure that family members are involved, including when parents are separated. Children receive care that is sensitive to their identity in the large majority of cases. This includes issues within complex families being well explored, appropriate involvement of wider family from overseas, translation of key documents, sensitive exploration of identity issues with young people and evidence within matching of balancing the child's best interests in terms of their cultural background and risk.
39. Children looked after have access to an independent visitor service, which is appropriately prioritised for those living outside the borough; 25 children are currently successfully matched with an independent visitor. Although there has been recent awareness raising with social workers by the children's rights officers, the local authority recognises that more needs to be done to ensure that all children looked after are better informed about the availability of the advocacy service. The local authority has clear plans in place to address this.
40. The majority of children at risk of child sexual exploitation have clear risk management plans in place. There was clear evidence that risk was reducing in a minority of cases. However, frequent episodes of going missing by some young people was hindering effective delivery of the risk management plans. Regular multi-agency meetings monitor and agree actions to address risk. There is clear evidence of good liaison with the police and children's social care. Foster carers and residential staff follow clear procedures when a child goes missing.
41. The local authority cannot provide assurance that all children looked after are offered, or receive, a return home interview after they have been missing. Recording of return home interviews is inconsistent and, as a result, they are not always used to inform plans for children looked after. Not all interviews were on case records and in the vast majority of cases seen, there was no evidence of an independent interview being offered.  
(recommendation)
42. Health assessments for children looked after are not always timely and this means that they may have unmet health needs. The local authority's latest data indicates that only 62% of children looked after for over 28 days had received an initial health assessment in the first quarter of 2016. Completion rates for review health assessments for children looked after for 12 months or more have declined in the past two years (93% in 2013–14, 89% 2014–15). Unverified figures from local authority performance reports show that

this has dropped further to now be at 58.9%. The local authority has not been swift enough to address this lack of timeliness, and delays in understanding the individual health needs of some children have continued for too long as a consequence. (recommendation)

43. Children looked after and their families have timely access to a wide range of short- and long-term therapeutic interventions from the clinical service team that, as part of the social work unit model, knows the families well. Positive impact is evidenced by improved Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) scores.
44. Children looked after achieve well at school. The proportions of children gaining qualifications and making expected, or better, progress are much higher than their peers nationally. While achievement gaps do exist between children looked after in Hackney and all children in Hackney, they are lower than those nationally and are reducing year on year. The proportion of children looked after gaining five good GCSEs, including English and mathematics, continues to improve and at 34% for 2014–15 is much higher than the national average of 14%.
45. The local authority has developed an effective virtual school team. This team manages education for children looked after, from early years all the way through to post-16 education, which provides good continuity. The team includes a range of well-qualified staff to cover the varying educational needs of children looked after, for example the team includes two occupational therapists. Schools report very good and effective support to help them support children who are looked after. The large majority, 76%, of children looked after are in schools rated good or better and 10% are in new schools that are yet to be inspected. Where an Ofsted inspection results in a change of grade, virtual school staff and social workers always consider the best interests of the child when considering whether to move schools and they ensure that the right support is in place.
46. The local authority works extremely well to safeguard children online. Hackney Learning Trust and Young Hackney work closely with all schools to educate, inform and support staff to ensure that they are knowledgeable about the risk areas and challenges that young people face. The virtual school also works very well with foster carers to provide advice and guidance, and with social workers to provide training on emerging topics such as new technologies.
47. Too many personal education plans (PEPs) require improvement as they lack detail and do not provide continuity between one PEP and the next. Some targets that are set are not based on analysis of need. The local authority is aware of this weakness and has taken action to improve the process. From the start of the next academic year, to improve quality, all first PEPs will be completed by virtual school staff in collaboration with school staff and social workers.

48. The local authority has a detailed knowledge of all children looked after not receiving at least 25 hours of education. At the time of inspection, there were six such children looked after. Virtual school staff had detailed knowledge of the reasons why these children are on reduced hours and were working on plans to ensure that they received at least 25 hours of education or transfer to a more appropriate education setting.
49. Foster carers ensure that children are able to access a range of social and leisure activities of their choosing and clear agreements about delegated authority are in place to enable this. Children are actively supported to access a range of additional activities and events organised by virtual school staff.
50. Long-term placement stability within the local authority is below that of statistical neighbours (61% in 2014–15, compared with statistical neighbours at 66% and England at 68%). The local authority, although recognising that this as an issue, has not been swift in its response. A recently formed (May 2016) placement stability working group has been established to better understand what may be done to improve placement stability, develop timely support and avoid placement breakdowns. It is too early to have yet demonstrated an impact.
51. For the large majority of children looked after, their plans are comprehensive and clear. Children's views influence their plans in most cases. A delay in some plans being uploaded onto the case recording system means that professionals would not be able to fully check that progress against plans was being achieved. (recommendation)
52. Children are supported to maintain contact with family and friends, including those who live outside the borough. Clear contact plans were in place in almost all cases seen by inspectors and contact is considered in all matches for permanence. Where applicable, children are supported to maintain links with those people who are significant to them through plans that carefully consider risk and appropriately consider transport arrangements.
53. A small number of children looked after live within the local authority boundary, 19% as at 31 March 2015, with a further 60% who are placed outside the borough but still 20 miles or less from home. Local authority data for 2016 indicates that this placement profile continues. All out of borough placements are approved by the head of service. Notification is systematically sent to receiving authorities. Children who live out of area are well supported. The clinical service travels to see children placed out of area and independent reviewing officers (IROs) carry out reviews within placements across the country to ensure continuity. There is regular oversight of numbers of children who live in placements which are outside of Hackney, and a clear process is in place to make sure that they are not disadvantaged by this. However, the local authority does not analyse the

difference, if it exists, between the educational outcomes of those children educated in the borough and those educated outside.

54. A total of 77% of children looked after as at 31 March 2015 were in foster placements, with the majority being placed with independent fostering agencies (IFAs). The local authority recognises that it does not have sufficient in-house foster carers and is actively recruiting. There is no evidence that the shortage of in-house carers is unduly impacting on children. The wishes of children inform placements and there is careful consideration to ensure that children are matched to carers who are able to meet their needs. IFA placements are identified swiftly when required and the local authority's communication with these placements is strong. When possible, children meet with their potential foster carers prior to moving in to reassure them about these moves. There is a detailed fostering recruitment and retention strategy, but the authority acknowledges it has set an overly ambitious target.
55. Hackney's in-house fostering service is effective and supports its carers to ensure good-quality care for children. Foster carers help to further develop the fostering service through the Foster Carers' Council. The new ambassador scheme will develop this further through making payment to experienced foster carers to, for example, build networks within the foster carer community and mentor foster carers who require additional support. Foster carers feel well supported by their social workers and supervisory visits and annual reviews are meaningful for them. Carers have good access to relevant training, targeted at developing their own skills and addressing the individual needs of the children for whom they care.
56. Plans for permanency are progressed in a timely way and consider the best interests of children. Progress is tracked effectively by independent reviewing officers at the second review meeting. Parallel planning is evident within children's records. IROs refer cases which are not progressing to the care planning panel, where senior managers agree plans and resources to minimise further delays. The panel ensures that there is a clear approval process for long-term foster care matches, makes decisions about private fostering arrangements and also tracks all residential placements. Special guardianship orders are appropriately progressed as a route for permanence and special guardians attend helpful preparation sessions. Permanency plans include reunification with the family. When permanence is secured for children in foster care, this is appropriately and formally confirmed to children and their carers.
57. The local authority has only recently started to conduct a comprehensive review of children looked after under voluntary agreements to assure itself that their legal status is appropriate. Inspectors saw evidence of appropriate decision making as a result of this review, which in turn resulted in initiation of care proceedings where relevant. While this work is now underway, there

are children who have remained without an appropriate plan for permanence for too long.

58. The quality of life story work for children who are fostered is not yet consistently good and for some children there are delays in completion. While there is much sensitive direct work being undertaken with children, more needs to be done to ensure that all children looked after receive help to understand their histories.
59. The majority of children's plans are reviewed regularly within statutory timeframes by IROs who have manageable caseloads. IROs meet children prior to their review. Most children participate in their reviews either through attending or having their views represented including through their own written words or pictures. This means that their wishes and feelings are represented and influence their plans. A formal escalation process is in place, enabling themes to be used to inform onward planning, although issues are often resolved informally. As a consequence of consulting with children looked after through Hackney Gets Heard, there have been significant recent changes to the review process to make them more child-centred. One young person enthusiastically told an inspector about how empowered she had felt by co-chairing her own review, engaging participants in a game and holding it at a venue of her choice.
60. Social workers know the children well and were able to articulate this to inspectors. However, case records do not reflect the work that is being undertaken. In a minority of cases, recording was not contemporaneous and many key documents, including reviews, were delayed in being uploaded to children's records. This means that planning is not always informed by the latest information and has implications for children choosing to access their records later in life. (recommendation)
61. Hackney Gets Heard, which is Hackney's children in care council, is rightly proud of its work on the Hackney Promise: a comic-style, user-friendly pledge with informative supporting leaflets. The children in care council has contributed effectively to the updated corporate parenting priorities through consultation and this is written against the headings within the promise. Individual members have contributed well to the recruitment of staff and to developing the new style child-friendly format for children looked after reviews. However, the group has a relatively low number of children who attend regularly. The local authority has plans in place to increase membership and to ensure that children with disabilities and those who live out of the local area have their views better represented to inform service planning.

**The graded judgement for adoption performance is that it is good**

62. Services are dynamic and well managed, leading to adoption being achieved for a broad range of children in Hackney. This includes brothers and sisters living together when it is in their best interests, children from a wide range of cultures and religions and children with complex needs and disabilities. Front-line managers have an excellent understanding of adoption practice and monitor progress for children and adopters through detailed, up-to-date trackers. Adoption service staff report being supported by managers to be 'creative and dynamic in practice'.
63. Seven children have been adopted since April 2016, 16 were adopted in 2015–2016 and nine children were adopted in the previous year. This annual variation is because the timing of adoption orders for some placements made in the previous year impacted positively on the current year's figure. The number of children being placed for adoption reflects the changing older profile of the looked after population and the higher number of special guardianship orders (19 since July 2015). There are seven children with a placement order waiting to be matched, with two of these children due to go to panel for a match with identified adopters. Active family finding work or appropriate reconsideration of the plan is being undertaken for the remaining five children. There are 13 children placed with their adoptive parents but not yet adopted, demonstrating a good performance overall for children.
64. The adoption scorecard for 2012–2015 shows that children in Hackney waited an average of 564 days between entering care and being placed for adoption. This is 77 days short of the national threshold and has been steadily improving. The average time that children with a placement order waited to be matched in 2012–2015 at 126 days is better than both the England average and statistical neighbours and is only five days from the national threshold.
65. Timescales in both of these key measures had increased for children adopted in the 12 months before the inspection period. Some improvement was seen for children currently being matched and placed for adoption, with some recent practice showing children being matched very swiftly (within two months) and the service demonstrating determination and considerable effort. Hackney has steadily worked to improve timeliness and this has resulted in consistent improvement in the three year adoption scorecard timeliness data. Consistent improvement over shorter periods of time has been difficult to achieve and is, in part, due to the circumstances of a cohort of children where it has taken more time to resolve their individual circumstances. This includes a small group of seven children who required a change of plan away from adoption, and those waiting to see if their current placement was a viable adoption placement. The local authority showed a tenacious approach to ensure that appropriate outcomes were found in

complex circumstances but needs to continue to ensure that progress is sustained in a timely way for each child.

66. Managers have an excellent grasp of the service and the progress for each child, and are continuing to build on the strong performance shown. Oversight and thoughtfulness are shown for each child to achieve adoption when this is the plan. All permanency planning meetings are chaired by the head of service ensuring good senior overview and early planning. The adoption service is made aware of children prior to the granting of a placement order and commences anonymised family finding at the earliest possible opportunity. A wide range of family finding strategies are used and there is a dedicated family finding worker within the team to ensure effective coordination. A helpful family finding chronology in the adoption service supports the monitoring of progress and ensures that the consideration of each potential match has been offered and explored for children. Child appreciation days are used as routine good practice when placing older children for adoption.
67. Foster to adopt is considered for children with prospective adopters but, so far, has only led to one recent early placement. The local authority is committed to the principle but this has not yet led to an outcome for many children. Adoption disruptions are very rare, with the first disruption in six years occurring recently. This was followed by a thoughtful analysis, reflection and learning process embedded in an action plan.
68. The local authority has progressed actions since their last adoption inspection and has successfully improved the quality of information provided to children. A 'write it right' campaign has led to child permanence reports being strong overall and providing children with a clear and sensitive understanding of their histories. The local authority continues to reinforce consistency in practice in these reports. Quality assurance processes through line management and the adoption panel are effective and have picked up on a very small number of cases where child permanence reports needed to be strengthened.
69. The adoption service is flexible and ensures that the right form of permanence is considered and achieved for all children. This includes comprehensive support packages for foster carers who adopt, and time and space for everyone to be certain that the plan and placement are optimal under an adoption order. The quality of these is variable, with a small number primarily based on existing case records and lacking detailed observations of the children and their views.
70. The recruitment, assessment and preparation of adopters is strong, with prospective adopter reports being comprehensive, analytical and supporting adopters in considering how they will meet the range of needs of a looked after child. All adopters spoken with praised their experience and would recommend the service highly, stating that they were 'so lucky to be in



Hackney with this marvellous service’, and could provide concrete examples of advice and support that had made a difference.

71. Twelve adopters were approved in 2015–16 and three have been approved since April 2016, with six applicants in the first stage of recruitment and three applicants currently being assessed. The local authority is not meeting expected timescales for stage one of the recruitment process for four applicants due to external factors such as timeliness of disclosure and barring scheme checks. Managers have been proactive in challenging external delays and expedite all recruitment work within their control. Prospective adopters being assessed at stage two of the recruitment process are processed promptly. The very small minority that go over time is either at the request of the adopter or due to a complex assessment. Adopters confirmed that they felt the process was undertaken at an appropriate pace. A good range of diversity was seen in the adopters recruited.
72. The adoption panel is appropriately constituted and chaired by an experienced independent chair. The panel and agency decision maker process is effective and well managed. The matching process works well and adopters are matched quickly with suitable children. Good, sensitive support is provided to adopters awaiting a match and the local authority is active in the local consortium, national exchange and profiling events for both adopters and children. Sensitive consideration is given to diversity and the adoption service is committed to finding the best possible match for each child while being balanced and realistic about timescales.
73. The local authority has invested in the adoption service and has a dedicated team for post-permanency support. There is no waiting list and, of the 45 children currently receiving a service, 10 of these are adoption cases. The remainder receive support for other forms of permanence, including special guardianship orders and child arrangement orders. Support is comprehensive and includes financial support and therapeutic and educational support. Some packages have been agreed until the child reached the age of 18 years, demonstrating an understanding of the life-long nature of adoption.
74. The service has initiated a range of exciting and innovative adoption support services through successful bids to the adoption support fund. This includes a creative partnership with an adoption agency for a therapeutic life story work project. This two-year project started in September 2015 for a specific cohort of 32 children. Other children have since been included and access this service. Although it is too early to report on the impact, in cases seen where consultation had been provided, considerable added value was demonstrated through sensitive expert consultation and advice on behalf of children. Other services include staff being specifically trained in a parenting technique to support adopters using video observation and feedback. This is supplemented by access to the high-quality in-house clinical service, which is flexible in being able to offer bespoke packages of support through internal services or via external agencies and this was confirmed by adopters. Life

story work is particularly strong, with outstanding examples seen that were child-friendly, warm, attractive and personal. Letters for later life are thorough and sensitive but some of these have not yet been provided to the children.

75. The local authority is an active participant and contributor to the North London Fostering and Adoption Consortium and accesses a range of collective services including a shared statement of purpose, annual report, recruitment and training. Most importantly, this economy of scale has ensured that the local authority is able to access groups such as the Body and Soul group for adopted young people, with 'teen spirit' for young people aged 13 to 18 years and 'young explorers' for children aged eight to 12 years. Three young people in Hackney benefit from this service. Support to birth parents is provided through the innovative PAUSE project where success has been shown through only one of 20 parents having had a further pregnancy. Take up of this service is monitored through the team manager.
76. The local authority listens to adopters and the adoption team describes there being 'no barrier to help and support'. Support groups for adopters are now run by peer adopters through a London-based adopter-run charity. This was the preference of adopters in Hackney and shows that the local authority listens to families, and is also an example of a proactive service where the manager now sits on the charity's steering group. This adopter-led charity also co-facilitates parenting courses for adopters jointly with the adoption team, reflecting strong partnerships with adopter-led services.

<p><b>The graded judgement about the experience and progress of care leavers is that it is outstanding</b></p>
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77. Young people leaving care in Hackney have exceptionally positive outcomes. In 2014–15, the proportion of care leavers in employment, education or training, at 70%, is much higher than Hackney's statistical neighbours (49%) and care leavers nationally (48%). The proportion for 2015–16 remains high at 69%. The proportion of care leavers who entered higher education last year was also very good: at 13% this was almost twice the average for care leavers nationally. The figure for this year has further increased to 16%. The proportion of care leavers graduating each year is increasing.
78. The local authority employs social workers to provide the personal adviser role with care leavers. Social workers are in touch with 94% of care leavers, maintaining regular, and appropriate, contact with them wherever they live across the country. This means that they have an extremely detailed knowledge about individual care leavers, including any risks associated with their behaviours. Through purposeful work, based on solid and trusting relationships, care leavers are well supported to understand how their life

choices may affect their safety and well-being. Social workers work very well with care leavers to identify and monitor actions to reduce risks.

79. Care leavers told inspectors that social workers are extremely effective at managing the balance between interventions to help them and letting them help themselves. Care leavers said that they are safe, and feel safe. A regular theme in discussion with care leavers is their sense of improvement in the quality of services over the last few years, for example the introduction of the use of 'WhatsApp' so that young people can contact their social worker without using their text or phone credits. Care leavers spoken to about the support that they receive were unanimously positive, including statements such as 'my social worker was probably the only stable figure in my life'.
80. The local authority works extremely well to ensure that care leavers are in suitable accommodation. In 2014–15, 83% of care leavers were in suitable accommodation, a figure that is higher than statistical neighbours and the national average. Social workers have a very good knowledge about the availability and cost of housing in Hackney. They provide excellent support to help care leavers find, and move into, independent or semi-independent accommodation. Unit meetings focus well on the detail of each care leaver's case, including discussions about furniture needs and other key issues. Care leavers have an opportunity to bid for council accommodation as part of an innovative quota system developed in the borough. The local authority has not used bed and breakfast accommodation in the past year.
81. The local authority provides key work support to young people living within semi-independent accommodation. Care leavers report that these key workers provide highly effective additional support for them. The local authority has robust plans in place to address tenancy breakdown and pay for emergency beds. Since November 2015, they have had 13 referrals to assist care leavers with emergency accommodation. The local authority is increasingly effective in encouraging young people to 'stay put' with their foster carers until they feel ready to move on. In 2015–16, 22% of young people stayed put and in the first quarter of this year, the proportion is higher at 24%. Care leavers report that the initiative is effective and helpful for them to further develop their independent living skills.
82. Pathway planning is strong, with nearly all plans providing a rich picture of the young person and their needs. Detailed analysis is recorded well and actions to improve outcomes for care leavers are detailed. In many cases, where appropriate, these actions are time-bound. In a small number of cases, actions are recorded as 'ongoing' and these plans would be enhanced by establishing a completion date. Transition planning for young people, particularly those with learning difficulties and disabilities, is recorded well.
83. The local authority acknowledges some pathway plans are due for review and that the education elements of the young person's pathway are not

always recorded in sufficient detail. The local authority has introduced a 16+ learning contract, which it plans to include in the pathway plans. Where these exist, they provide sufficient educational detail. The local authority ensures that pathway plan review documents are scrutinised by the case worker's line manager.

84. Staff focus exceptionally well on ensuring that the health needs of care leavers are met. Health records in pathway plans are particularly good: they are detailed, actions are clear and social workers routinely follow them up. Social workers have established good partnership working with other agencies and the local authority has established a lead clinician post who works well to provide immediate support to enhance care leavers' emotional well-being. Care leavers have access to, and understand well, their health history. From the age of 14 years, when they are still looked after, they get a copy of their health assessments. Care leavers are fully involved in discussions about their health needs and access a wide range of information, for example about substance misuse and sexual health.
85. Young people have good access to effective child and adolescent mental health services. Care leavers make the transition to adult services smoothly and with minimal delays in receiving support as a result of good working relationships and a lead clinician working with the care leavers' team. However, in a few cases where care leavers are living outside of the borough, access to adult mental health services are not as swift.
86. Staff work exceptionally well to help young people at all transition points. Arrangements to ensure that continuity is maintained are highly effective. On reaching 16 years old, children transfer to a different virtual school case worker, who stays with them for the rest of their journey. Then, at age 18 years, care leavers transfer from their children looked after social worker to one in the leaving care team. This means that there is always consistency of support at each key transition point.
87. The local authority is very successful at establishing apprentice places. In the last three years, 29 care leavers have started an apprenticeship, with an additional nine planning to start this year. Apprenticeships are with a range of local and international firms. For example, effective negotiations with a major international consultancy firm have resulted in a number of places for care leavers within this company. The borough is planning to establish their own apprenticeship programme.
88. Staff work well with care leavers to help those who want to follow other routes to employment. A high proportion of them are studying vocational or employability qualifications, such as curriculum vitae (CV) writing, job search and interview skills, which will help them gain employment. Overall, 83% of care leavers who started a qualification at level 2 or above completed it last year, with 2% being helped to change courses.

89. Care leavers benefit from a wide range of events and activities. For example, the local authority uses its own outward bound property, Kench Hill, to provide such opportunities. Staff organise other events, which are informative and well attended, to help care leavers develop independent living skills, such as how to budget and how to cook. The local authority has appropriately started to further develop this service and focus even more closely on care leavers.
90. Most young people are clear about their rights and entitlements. Staff work closely with them to ensure that they have the correct information about their rights and entitlements. The Hackney Promise to children looked after and care leavers is clearly stated in a well-written and informative document. Care leavers speak highly of their understanding of the promise and the way in which the local authority delivers its promise. A small number of care leavers reported that the process for accessing their records was too complex.
91. The voice of care leavers is evident across the service area. They are included in the development of relevant documents and leaflets and are represented on most of the groups that affect them. For example, care leavers are participants on the commissioning group working on new contracts for housing. The local authority holds regular events to celebrate care leavers' achievements. Not only do care leavers attend, but all children looked after aged 16 years and over are also invited, along with foster carers and former foster carers. Young people value these celebrations. The local authority also shows that it is extremely proud of the achievements of children looked after and care leavers in other ways. For example, it ensures that successes are celebrated in the local media. In addition, the virtual school has an active YouTube channel with uploaded videos of information and celebratory items.

<b>Leadership, management and governance</b>	<b>Good</b>
<p><b>Summary</b></p> <p>Political and senior leaders in Hackney have high aspirations for Hackney’s children and this leads to good outcomes. However, there is a continued need to focus on the fundamental elements of strong social work practice, such as good-quality assessments and planning for all children, and clear and timely recording.</p> <p>The chief executive, director of children’s services (DCS) and Mayor provide effective leadership. They have developed a clear strategic vision and a strong theoretical framework to support practice. Clear governance arrangements ensure that a strong interface between relevant boards and priorities are well translated into strategic plans that are responsive to the diverse needs of children.</p> <p>The children and young people scrutiny commission is effective in maintaining a critical oversight of services for children. The local authority takes its corporate parenting responsibility seriously and is ambitious for children looked after and care leavers.</p> <p>The local authority actively seeks to develop and design creative services to improve outcomes for children, evidenced through the strong and wide range of services that are commissioned.</p> <p>The performance management framework is established and systematic. It draws on a wide range of approaches and enables senior managers to have a comprehensive understanding regarding the quality of services provided to children and families. The local authority makes effective use of the information that it receives from children, families, complaints and audits to improve services.</p> <p>The clinical service teams are a considerable strength and provide specialist expertise and assessments, as well as offering a broad range of therapeutic interventions that evidence a positive impact on children’s lives.</p> <p>Supervision is undertaken regularly and provides good support to social workers. However, it is not always effective in evidencing decision making, ensuring that assessments are completed in a timescale that meets individual children’s needs or that all plans are of a consistently good quality. In addition, there are weaknesses in respect of the quality and consistency of recording across the service.</p> <p>A comprehensive workforce development plan supports a strong focus on recruitment, performance management and practice development. This provides firm foundations for a confident, high-calibre workforce. Priority is effectively given to learning and empowering social workers to practise with confidence. This sustained and systematic approach has led to a reduction in vacancies and a more consistent, stable workforce, particularly evident over recent months.</p>	

## Inspection findings

92. Political and senior leaders have high aspirations to improve outcomes for Hackney's children. Long-term investment and ambitious leadership have led to the continued delivery of good services that provide the right help at the right time for the large majority of children and their families. Senior managers have addressed almost all areas for improvement identified at the Safeguarding and Looked after Children inspection in 2012. There is still work to do to strengthen the quality and consistency of chronologies but there has been considerable investment to address this.
93. During a period of change and transition, strong relationships are emerging across the senior leadership team. The recently appointed interim DCS has demonstrated strong leadership skills and is quickly recognising where to focus Hackney's priorities. The DCS, chief executive and LSCB chair work effectively together and meet regularly to ensure clear communication. The lead member for children's services keeps abreast of safeguarding issues through regular formal meetings with the LSCB chair. During the inspection, the DCS responded swiftly and comprehensively to emerging inspection findings, particularly in respect of visits to families in a small number of cases prior to decisions regarding the threshold for children's social care. This resulted in changes in practice and strengthened management oversight.
94. Clear communication and governance arrangements are in place between senior officers and leaders in Hackney. The lead member has regular contact with the DCS to maintain oversight of children's services. She effectively maintains political oversight of children's services to ensure that she understands the views of children and parents and also those of front-line staff. Comprehensive children's social care biannual reports to members ensure that leaders have a detailed understanding of developments and priorities across the service.
95. The children and young people scrutiny commission is providing effective oversight of children's issues and scrutinises practice and data across a wide range of areas. Membership is strong and includes three young people from the Youth Parliament. There is regular reporting into the commission by children's services and the LSCB, which helps to strengthen members' understanding of how well children are helped and cared for across the borough. The commission brings challenge and is confident to tackle complex and sensitive issues. There is a detailed work programme, with a plan to review unregistered settings and the impact of temporary accommodation on children and young people within the next six months.
96. The local authority takes its corporate parenting responsibilities seriously and has high aspirations for children looked after and care leavers. There is political and senior officer commitment to delivering the corporate parenting

role, with the lead member for children's services chairing the corporate parenting board and councillors sitting as members of the fostering and adoption panels. The corporate parenting board engages effectively with Hackney Gets Heard. An example of their work together is the development of the Hackney Promise. However, some actions within the corporate parenting action plan have taken too long to reach a positive outcome, for example improving timeliness of health assessments. A housing representative has only very recently joined the corporate parenting officer group in order to strengthen the focus on housing needs of care leavers.

97. Strategic priorities are translated effectively into action plans. Arrangements between senior leaders, elected members, the Health and Well-being Board (HWB) and the LSCB are clear and ensure that there is a shared focus across the partnership. For example, partners have worked effectively together over the past year to increase immunisation rates for babies and small children within the Orthodox Jewish community. Relationships between the local authority, the local judiciary and the child and family court advisory support service (Cafcass) are constructive. The chief executive holds biannual inter-board meetings with the LSCB chair and partners from the Adult Safeguarding Board, HWB and the police to ensure that local issues are proactively taken forward through shared priorities.
98. Commissioning arrangements are strong. Tenders are managed well and are overseen by the corporate commissioning and cabinet procurement committee when corporate commissioning threshold values are met. The joint strategic needs assessment (JSNA) is adult focused and currently provides limited consideration of the needs of vulnerable children, such as those at risk or in need of specialist social care services. The local authority is already addressing this weakness, with thematic chapters currently being developed in respect of 0–25 year olds, as well as safeguarding. All contract arrangements appropriately consider safeguarding practice and are subject to rigorous quarterly contract management and performance monitoring. Young commissioners receive training and support to contribute to the commissioning process and evaluate tenders and interview providers. These young people provide an additional layer of rigour as well as ensuring that the voice of young people informs service developments.
99. Effective commissioning mechanisms are utilised to secure a good selection of services for children looked after. This area of practice remains subject to rigorous oversight in order to drive forward practice improvements. A comprehensive sufficiency strategy demonstrates a clear understanding of need in respect of children looked after and care leavers. The accompanying action plan outlines a range of approaches to strengthen preventative work for children on the edge of care through early help and innovation projects. While good-quality placements are commissioned, there are not sufficient in-house local foster placements to meet demand in respect of children who need to be placed within the local area. A placement improvement board is



in place to respond to these issues and regularly monitors progress against the action plan.

100. There is a comprehensive and effective child sexual exploitation strategy in place, which is effective in leading to a reduction in risk for children. The well-attended MASE panel considers individual cases and proactive work with partners helps to identify themes, hotspots and trends. The appointment of a specialist child sexual exploitation analyst ensures that information shared across the partnership is amalgamated to provide a coherent and comprehensive oversight of risk. Wider risks, such as sexually harmful behaviour, as well as child sexual exploitation, risks relating to gangs, involvement in youth crime and radicalisation are given equal weight and are considered holistically.
101. The local authority is creative in seeking to actively develop and design innovative services to improve outcomes for children. It has widened the service offer through a number of projects, some of which are evidencing real impact for children and families. Examples of this include working with the PAUSE project, where successful outcomes are being realised for parents who have had children removed from their care previously. Only one of 20 parents involved in the groups has gone on to have further pregnancies and there has been increased take-up of education and voluntary or paid work opportunities for the cohort. Further examples include social workers in schools, the family learning intervention project (FLIP) and the innovative 'Coach' programme, aimed at seven- to 12-year-olds at risk of gang involvement, which is evidencing real change in families, improving outcomes for children's education and social relationships. There is also a council-wide corporate programme, led by the lead member for children's services, to explore and improve outcomes for young black men in Hackney, who are disproportionately represented in the care or youth justice system or who experience poor educational outcomes. This work is at early stages and is informing the development of a strategy to support improved outcomes for this group of young men.
102. There is a well-developed performance and quality assurance framework in place across the service. Strong performance information, including live reports, enables managers to track progress of key aspects of work in real time. An updated version of the children's information system, implemented in 2015, is still under development to meet the specific needs of the local authority. The local authority is not yet able to report effectively on return home interviews and visits to children, both of which remain under development and are adversely impacted by inconsistent recording practices by practitioners.
103. A well-embedded audit programme is in place across the service, which involves all managers from the assistant director (AD) through to consultant social workers and also social workers. Regular and themed audits take place and are subject to internal moderation to ensure consistency. Themed audits

have included audits of assessment team cases and child sexual exploitation, as well as case review days focused on identity/diversity and another on the involvement of fathers in assessment and ongoing intervention. Findings from audits are systematically monitored to ensure that actions are progressed and learning is widely disseminated. Although the audits provided for the purpose of the inspection were comprehensive, inspectors found that a minority were over-optimistic in respect of the quality of social work practice.

104. The local authority responds appropriately to complaints and ensures that learning is effectively disseminated through a range of communications. Practice is developed as a result. The local authority gathers further feedback from children and their families through its family feedback programme to gain an understanding of users' experience of the services provided. Audits and case review days provide another detailed layer of scrutiny and evaluation. These help to further develop a realistic understanding of issues affecting children and their families. Findings from these audit days inform thematic analysis, and learning is widely disseminated through a range of forums, including regular champions meetings, learning bulletins and development days. Learning systematically informs the workforce development plan.
105. The local authority has developed an exemplary clinical service, which comprises clinicians from a range of backgrounds and offers direct work, consultation and training to staff and carers. It undertakes specialist assessments and a comprehensive range of specialist therapeutic individual and group work. The service runs without a waiting list and provides support to children whose cases are open to children's services, including children looked after placed out of area. The service routinely and systematically collects outcome data and service user feedback to ensure that it is measuring effectiveness. The service is having a positive impact, evidenced through a reduction in difficulties that children exhibit at the conclusion of the intervention, overall satisfaction feedback from service users and positive feedback from the judiciary, which identifies the service as a strength.
106. While senior managers reach decisions about significant and lifelong decisions regarding children's lives through a range of rigorous processes, inspectors found it much more difficult to understand the rationale for day-to-day decision making by consultant social workers and practice development managers. Unit meetings, chaired by consultant social workers and practice development managers, are intended to be the forum in which children's cases are discussed and progressed, and where effective oversight of practice is maintained. They should also provide the opportunity for appropriate challenge and a shared understanding of the issues and needs for particular children across the social work unit.
107. However, the quality of these meetings is variable. Some demonstrate effective oversight of practice, while others lack the focus and rigour needed

to effectively progress children's plans. Not all operational managers are consistently ensuring compliance with fundamental areas of social work practice. This includes setting timescales, and maintaining robust management oversight of these, for all assessments so that they are completed in a time consistent with individual children's needs, or ensuring that good-quality written plans are in place for all children.  
(recommendation)

108. Recording in children's case files is inconsistent, including the recording of unit meetings. The local authority has worked to strengthen recording practice over the last three-year period in response to internal audit findings which have identified persistent weaknesses. Various approaches, such as the development of a 'write it right' guide, workshops and training have led to some progress. However, issues regarding the quality, consistency and timeliness of recording remain: it was identified as an area of concern by inspectors, and in some cases, key records were absent from children's records. (recommendation)
109. Professional supervision is in place for staff and, in the vast majority of cases, happens regularly. Supervision considers training, development and learning needs. Appraisals are carried out and development needs are fed into wider workforce planning, effectively informing practice development plans. Although some supervision records evidence personalised goals and clear and relevant actions, some would be improved if they were to record follow-through actions from previous supervisions and include more personalised targets.
110. Caseloads are shared by team members across social work units and are not held individually. Variation was identified, particularly in respect of assessment teams, with some higher caseloads identified. Caseloads in child in need and looked after units were appropriately lower and within manageable limits. The vast majority of staff spoken to by inspectors reported that they feel well supported by managers and really value the unit way of working, which enables a shared ownership of cases. Social workers spoke about choosing to work in Hackney because of the culture of support and shared accountability.
111. A comprehensive workforce strategy ensures a coordinated approach to learning, professional development and recruitment. The workforce development board, chaired by the AD, ensures that learning from across the service is effectively triangulated and informs workforce planning. Over the last two years, the local authority has sought to strengthen its approach to recruitment, implementing a more rigorous approach, which includes online testing in verbal reasoning, role play and written assessments as a prerequisite to interview. This sustained and coordinated approach has resulted in considerable progress, with vacancies reduced to its lowest in three years, at 11% at the time of the inspection.

## The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)

### The Local Safeguarding Children Board is outstanding

#### Executive summary

This is an outstanding LSCB. It is a dual board covering both the City of London and Hackney. The board demonstrates an unwavering determination to safeguard children, with a firm commitment to sustaining and improving partnerships.

The board has an ambitious resolve to be the best it can and to learn from itself, external sources and, most importantly, from children in its communities. As a result, it is making a real difference to children's lives. An example is the chair's persistent escalation to the Home Office, the Department for Education and the National Police Chief's Council of a recommendation from a serious case review.

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 responses that positively influence children's lives. The board robustly reviews progress and takes decisive and prompt action where 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. The LSCB scrutinises agencies' compliance with safeguarding policies and procedures through effective biannual 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. Serious case reviews (SCRs) are initiated appropriately, and learning from these, in addition to SCRs 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 are systematically cascaded to front-line staff through a wide range of creative and highly effective opportunities. The board's analysis and evaluation of performance is effective and helps partners to understand the impact of services, the quality of practice and to identify areas for improvement. However, the board cannot be assured that children receive timely return home interviews following episodes of being missing.

## Recommendations

112. Review the existing data set to ensure that it includes the timeliness of return home interviews to enable the board to maintain effective oversight of this critical provision for vulnerable children.

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

113. 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 of London 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 shared subgroups.
114. The independent chair provides strong and credible 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 independent 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 subgroups and a strong culture of constructive challenge and debate.
115. Governance arrangements are robust, with clear lines of communication between the chair, DCS, lead member and the chief executive. A productive inter-boards' chairs meeting, alongside clear protocols, links the chair of LSCB, chief executive of the local authority, Health and Well-being Board (HWB), Adult Safeguarding Board (ASB) and Community Safety Partnership (CSP). These include the sharing of 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 priorities.
116. The senior professional adviser, board manager and community partnership adviser provide highly effective support to the board. The senior professional adviser has been pivotal in strengthening the board's scrutiny function, as well as providing a valued resource to partners.
117. 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, the board is committed to innovation concerning technology, and has secured agreement from the local metropolitan police borough commander to pilot a 'Missing' mobile telephone application (app) to alert professionals of children missing in the

area. It has also developed an online booking system for training, with a wide range of online training modules available through its website.

118. 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 to proactively and systematically investigate emerging evidence, which might pose new and future safeguarding threats to children. For example, the partnership has commissioned independent research on effective intervention to tackle disproportionate outcomes for young black men in Hackney. 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.
119. Serious incident notifications are thoroughly scrutinised by board partners through the joint SCR subgroup. 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 SCRs and multi-agency case reviews are comprehensive. Lessons concerning neglect, sexual abuse and domestic abuse are widely disseminated 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 during the inspection had attended briefings and almost all articulated lessons learned.
120. The board demonstrates respectful, rigorous and tenacious challenge to partners and agencies. There is significant evidence of the board holding partner agencies to account. The board has an impressive and up-to-date log that identifies challenges raised, and persistent tracking of recommendations until sustained evidence of improved practice occurs. For example, the board has successfully challenged, through the chair, a child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) provision in another local authority for a child looked after living out of borough. In addition, the board continues to challenge the Home Office with regard to their position on a recommendation arising from a serious case review. 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.
121. Hackney is a borough with a diverse range of communities and 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 adviser (CPA), 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. The work of the CPA is highly valued in delivering a comprehensive range of training to children, parents and carers, schools, foster carers and the voluntary sector, including bespoke safeguarding training to the Orthodox Jewish community. The board's evaluation of the training delivered by the CPA demonstrates direct impact on safeguarding children. For example, safeguarding training provided by the CPA to housing staff such as gas fitters and electricians following a recommendation from a multi-agency case review has led to an increase of referrals from these employees to children's social care.

122. 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 are proactive in engaging with children who have experienced services, and from a wider group, to inform practice developments. As a result, children's views are central to improving safeguarding practice. For example, the engagement of Hackney Youth Parliament by the board led to children making a successful bid, via Hackney's Safer Neighbourhood Board, to access funding from the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime to design, develop and deliver an awareness raising campaign on child sexual exploitation. The 'Say Something if you See Something' campaign was launched at Hackney's Youth Conference, following consultation with children who challenged professionals about their original ideas for communication. The focus of the campaign changed from raising awareness in the local communities to spot the signs of child sexual exploitation to encouraging children to identify friends who may be at risk of, or experiencing, exploitation.
123. 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, child sexual exploitation, preventing radicalisation and female genital mutilation. Subgroup 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 robustly drive through the priorities for children.
124. 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 to influence and monitor the multi-agency response to female genital mutilation. The chair has hosted a number of 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 female genital mutilation strategy.
125. The board closely monitors the local authority's 'Prevent' duty and holds agencies and the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to account for driving the response, including awareness raising and recognition. There has been comprehensive work in building resilience for children through work in

schools as part of the 'Prevent' duty to combat extremism. A 'Prevent' project to increase resilience among vulnerable children has been rolled out in educational settings and community organisations. Innovation is evident, with discussions and challenge regarding the link of radicalisation to mental health needs, as well as the use of social media to raise awareness. Extensive awareness raising using a variety of mediums has been effective. For example, it resulted in a foster carer reporting a concern of radicalisation. Schools have been provided with a risk assessment template to assist in early identification of children who may be at risk of radicalisation.

126. The board continues to effectively drive the child sexual exploitation strategy and action plan and coordinates the partnership response to child sexual exploitation through a highly effective child sexual exploitation and missing working (CSEMW) group. The appointment of a data analyst has ensured that comprehensive information about children who go missing, have gang affiliation or offending behaviours informs the detailed local child sexual exploitation profile. Intelligence is mapped against local areas to identify children at risk and to inform subsequent interventions. The remit of the CSEMW group is being extended to address the needs of vulnerable adolescents. This will include child sexual exploitation, missing children, harmful sexual behaviour, radicalisation and gang and youth violence. A task and finish group is currently working to develop a vulnerable adolescents strategy and action plan.
127. 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, sexual exploitation leaflets for parents and young people and free sessions of the 'Chelsea's Choice' play attended by over 1300 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 of London 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 with the business community, including hotels, taxi companies and licensed premises. Hackney children's services and the NSPCC, in conjunction with the LSCB, launched a helpline aimed at encouraging parents and carers, families, friends and members of the public and professionals to phone in with concerns or information about the exploitation of children especially regarding sexual exploitation, extremism and gang involvement.
128. The board utilises a comprehensive range of multi-agency performance information, which includes information on children with disabilities, unregistered schools and, more recently, attendance and reports received by partner agencies at child protection conferences. The data set is clear. It represents all agencies' contribution to safeguarding, and fully supports an understanding of effective practice across the whole partnership. Data and commentary are thoroughly scrutinised by the quality assurance subgroup,



executive group and the main board, with a particular focus on the board's strategic priorities. The board has rightly recognised and challenged the low number of children with disabilities subject to child protection plans and has undertaken a multi-agency audit. The board receives regular reports regarding children who go missing and the actions taken when they return, including return home interviews. However, it is not receiving data regarding the timeliness of these interviews, and so has missed the opportunity to assure itself that all children receive a timely response after they have been missing. (recommendation)

129. The board comprehensively monitors multi-agency front-line 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 and children who go missing, the journey of the child and the experience of children with disabilities. Learning from audits is carefully fed back to staff and findings are incorporated into additional courses in the training and development offer.
130. 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 partner agencies, including schools. One member who sits on other boards said that this board 'is the most challenging, rigorous and child-focused' of all he attends. Bespoke training to support multi-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, with recent take-up by voluntary agencies and independent schools in the Orthodox Jewish community. Previous section 11 audit returns have been comprehensively analysed by the quality assurance subgroup and reported to the board.
131. Early help remains a firm priority for the board, with the effectiveness of early help services evaluated through the learning and improvement framework. The board rigorously monitors the numbers of children receiving early help assessments through its multi-agency monitoring data set. 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 were widely disseminated through TUSK briefings.
132. The board has adopted pan-London LSCB policies and procedures, which are adapted to Hackney where necessary and reviewed regularly. The board's threshold document, 'The Hackney well-being framework', and 'the children and young people's resource guide' are effective documents to help professionals refer children to the right service for their needs. They provide exceptionally good practical guidance for professionals and clearly set out options for supporting children and families.

133. 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 within 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 of London and Hackney. The panel identified the need to discuss a range of issues with the senior coroner. As a result, all local coroner reports concerning the prevention of future deaths are now sent to the panel to ensure that learning is widely circulated.
134. The board has created and fostered an effective learning culture that extends to front-line practitioners and embraces the community. The board delivers a comprehensive range of training for managers and practitioners relating directly to multi-agency improvement priorities. The training and development subgroup 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 and relevant themes are shared effectively with trainers. As a result, 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 their practice.
135. 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 has engaged with children, young adults from the group Talent Match, schools, Hackney Youth Parliament and the children in care council to produce a young person-friendly version of the LSCB annual report. The board’s website is accessible, mobile telephone friendly, easy to navigate and well used. It includes a comprehensive, up-to-date set of procedures, with links to research information, legislation and practice guidance. The website highlights the latest news from the board on the home page and through monthly TUSK briefings. It also uses a twitter account with regular tweets 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 adults make to the lives of children, young people and families. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with families and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the local authority knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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

The review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board was carried out under section 15A of the Children Act 2004.

Ofsted produces this report of the inspection of local authority functions and the review of the local safeguarding children board under its power to combine reports in accordance with section 152 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

The inspection team consisted of nine of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one Social Care Regulatory Inspector (SCRI) from Ofsted.

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