

Illustrative grade descriptors for inspecting safeguarding and looked after children services

Grade descriptors illustrate what outstanding, good, adequate and inadequate are in relation to the judgements made. Grade descriptors are not exhaustive, but illustrate the level of service or outcome linked to that particular grade.

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Illustrative grade descriptors for safeguarding

1. Grade descriptors illustrate what outstanding, good, adequate and inadequate are in relation to the judgements made. Grade descriptors are not exhaustive, but illustrate the level of service or outcome linked to that particular grade.
2. Judgements will be made on a 'best fit' approach. However, the grade descriptors will not need to be met in respect of every single aspect of service before a grade is awarded. For example, a judgement is likely to be inadequate if any of the criteria for inadequate are met. Moreover, inspectors should consider if the criteria for 'adequate' are met before considering if the criteria for 'good' are met.

Overall effectiveness

3. Inspectors will consider evidence and judgements from across the evaluation schedule before arriving at the overall effectiveness judgement, taking into account *Inspections of safeguarding and looked after children services: full evaluation schedule*¹ and:
 - the extent to which the council and its partners are meeting their statutory responsibilities as set out in *Working together to safeguard children*² and in relevant statute and guidance
 - the extent to which the council and its partners are contributing to improving outcomes for children and young people in all aspects of their safeguarding and child protection work
 - the extent to which the leadership and management of those responsible for safeguarding and protecting children and young people deliver effective services which provide value for money and are efficient and effective in their use of resources
 - the application of the two limiting judgements:
 - overall effectiveness must be inadequate if either of the two safeguarding outcomes is judged as inadequate
 - overall effectiveness cannot be good or better if either of the two safeguarding outcomes is not judged as good.

¹ *Inspections of safeguarding and looked after children services: full evaluation schedule*, Ofsted, 2009; www.ofsted.gov.uk/090025.

² *Working together to safeguard children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children*, HM Government, 2006; <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00060>.

Outstanding
Grade: 1

Overall effectiveness is likely to be outstanding when leadership at all levels across the partnership is active, visible and effective in sustaining high-quality safeguarding services and outcomes for children and young people. Change is implemented very effectively and delivers clear benefits to service users. Quality assurance and performance management are comprehensive, systematic and demonstrably effective. There are the people, skills and capability in place (including sufficient numbers of qualified and experienced social workers) throughout safeguarding and child protection services to maintain high-quality services. Partnership with stakeholders, community groups and commissioned services are effective across all aspects of safeguarding provision. All children and young people receiving services are aware of how to complain and make representations and have easy access to advocacy services. There is good value for money.

Good
Grade: 2

Overall effectiveness is likely to be good when those responsible for the leadership and management of safeguarding and child protection have identified and secured demonstrable improvements to services which contribute to improving outcomes for children and young people. Leadership results in a shared vision and agreed priorities for improvement. Targets for improving services are ambitious and most are met. Change is implemented effectively and delivers clear benefits to service users. Quality assurance and performance management systems have led to improvements in service provision. Workforce planning and knowledge, learning and development are effective in securing a skilled, capable and knowledgeable workforce (including sufficient numbers of qualified and experienced social workers). The views of children and young people and their parents and carers contribute routinely to planning and evaluating the effectiveness of provision and inform service improvements. Partnership with stakeholders, community groups and commissioned services are effective. There is sustained satisfaction from service users with the quality of service delivery.

There is good value for money.

Adequate
Grade: 3

Overall effectiveness is likely to be adequate when statutory requirements are at least met and managers have a track record of achieving some improvements in service provision. No services are deteriorating. Effective plans are in place to improve the contribution by the council and its partners to better outcomes for children and young people. Quality

assurance and performance management processes are effective. The views of children and young people contribute to evaluating the effectiveness of some provision and inform service improvements. Staffing resources, including the number of qualified and experienced social workers, are sufficient to deliver the service area priorities. Processes for recruitment and retention of staff are effective. Knowledge, learning and development meet the development needs of the majority of staff. Partnerships with stakeholders, community groups and commissioned services are effective. Funds are allocated to activities most likely to be effective. Financial plans are in place with sufficient capacity to deliver priorities and sustain good-quality services.

Inadequate

Grade: 4

Overall effectiveness is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.

- There is no track record of achieving continuous improvement in service provision and/or outcomes.
- Plans are not in place or are ineffective in delivering improvements in priority areas.
- Quality assurance and performance management processes are ineffective.
- Staffing resources are not sufficient to deliver the safeguarding and child protection duties, responsibilities and priorities.
- The views of children and young people are not systematically taken into account.
- Processes for recruitment and retention of staff are ineffective.
- The training plan does not meet the development needs of staff. There are significant gaps in skills capacity.
- Communication with partner agencies and key stakeholders is ineffective.
- The costs of delivering key services are not understood.
- Procurement and commissioning does not demonstrate value for money.
- Financial management does not meet auditing requirements.

Capacity to improve

4. Judgements about capacity to improve consider how safeguarding and child protection services are planned and managed and the effectiveness of arrangements for delivering improvement. The basis for making these judgements includes:
 - the trend in improvement and whether this is consistent and improvements are sustained
 - the extent to which improvements in outcomes are linked to improvements in the quality of services
 - the quality of leadership, its ambition and the effectiveness of prioritisation
 - the strength and quality of planning
 - the effectiveness of workforce planning and development
 - the effectiveness of service user engagement.
5. For this aspect to be graded good or better there must be clear evidence that the council and its partners are delivering sustainable improvement.

Outstanding Leadership at all levels across the partnership is active, visible and effective.

Performance management is comprehensive, systematic and demonstrably effective.

There are the people, skills and capability in place (including sufficient numbers of qualified and experienced social workers) throughout safeguarding and child protection services to maintain high-quality services.

All children and young people receiving services are aware of how to complain and make representations and have easy access to advocacy services.

Statutory guidelines in relation to complaints made against staff working with children are incorporated into a local policy which is implemented in full, is user friendly and consistently followed.

Children, young people and their parents and carers are involved in all aspects of safeguarding and child protection planning and intervention and have opportunities to contribute to key strategic processes.

The council and its partners set ambitious targets for improving

services and achieve almost all of these.

There is a sustained track record of delivery of high-quality services or of significant improvement.

Good

Those responsible for the leadership and management of safeguarding and child protection have identified and secured demonstrable improvements to services which contribute to improving outcomes for children and young people.

Leadership results in a shared vision and agreed priorities for improvement.

Trends demonstrate sustained improvement in the quality of services.

Targets for improving services are ambitious and most are met.

Change is implemented effectively and delivers clear benefits to service users.

Quality assurance and performance management systems have led to improvements in service provision.

Workforce planning and knowledge, learning and development are effective in securing a skilled, capable and knowledgeable workforce which includes sufficient numbers of qualified and suitably experienced social workers.

The views of children and young people and their parents and carers contribute routinely to planning and evaluating the effectiveness of provision and inform service improvements.

Partnership with stakeholders, community groups and commissioned services are effective.

There is sustained satisfaction from service users with the quality of service delivery.

There is evidence of good value for money.

Adequate

Statutory requirements are met.

Managers have a track record of achieving some improvements in service provision. No services are deteriorating.

Effective plans are in place to improve the contribution by the council and its partners to better outcomes for children and young people.

Quality assurance and performance management processes are effective.

The views of children and young people contribute to evaluating the effectiveness of some provision and inform service improvements.

Staffing resources are sufficient to deliver the service area priorities and include sufficient numbers of qualified and experienced social workers.

Processes for recruitment and retention of staff are effective.

Knowledge, learning and development meet the development needs of the majority of staff.

Partnerships with stakeholders, community groups and commissioned services are effective.

Funds are allocated to activities most likely to be effective.

Financial plans are in place with sufficient capacity to deliver priorities and sustain good-quality services.

Inadequate The judgement is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.

- There is no track record of achieving continuous improvement in service provision and/or outcomes.
- Plans are not in place or are ineffective in delivering improvements in priority areas.
- Quality assurance and performance management processes are ineffective.
- Staffing resources are not sufficient to deliver the safeguarding and child protection duties, responsibilities and priorities.
- Processes for recruitment and retention of staff are ineffective.
- The training plan does not meet the development needs of staff.
- There are significant gaps in skills capacity.
- Communication with partner agencies and key stakeholders is ineffective.
- The costs of delivering key services are not understood.

- Procurement and commissioning does not demonstrate value for money.
- Financial management does not meet auditing requirements.

Meeting the need to safeguard the welfare, development and life chances of children and young people

Leadership and management

Ambition and prioritisation

Outstanding Safeguarding strategies, policies and procedures are at the leading edge of best practice and are demonstrably used to deliver outstanding quality of service which is fully compliant with statutory requirements and guidance.

Highly competent, ambitious and determined leadership of senior officers and elected members champion the needs of children, and respond proactively and effectively to needs. Senior officers make sure there is effective staff contribution to safeguarding services, both within the organisation and across partnerships, to planning and delivery of key priorities and to meeting suitably ambitious outcomes.

Extensive, ambitious and realistic targets are being set and almost all are being met. Coordinated working arrangements with external partnerships are reflected in strategic planning across all safeguarding services. A culture of continuous improvement in the council and its partners is leading to improvements in practice and sustained high performance.

All plans for safeguarding services, including in local area agreements, are comprehensive, linked strategically and address key areas for improvement in line with national and local priorities. Extensive, ambitious and realistic targets are set and almost all are met.

Effective self-evaluation of progress leads to continuous improvement. Well-coordinated working arrangements with external partnerships are reflected in strategic planning. There is clear evidence that partnership working is improving outcomes.

Senior officers ensure staff from across the council and its partners contribute to the planning and delivery of key priorities and to the achievement of sustainable and excellent

outcomes.

Good

Safeguarding strategies, policies and procedures effectively support practice with all vulnerable groups and comply with statutory requirements and guidance.

Information-sharing protocols are well established and there is clear evidence of regular open and appropriate exchange. Local priorities are identified and acted on so that safeguarding outcomes improve.

ContactPoint is well established and demonstrably supports and facilitates effective safeguarding services across the partnership.

The council and the partnership provide strong, visible leadership to safeguard children across all services. All key partners, including the voluntary and community sectors, are well engaged.

Local commissioning, including joint commissioning of safeguarding services, is well established across the council and its partners.

Adequate

Safeguarding strategies, policies and procedures identify vulnerable groups, support practice in most respects and comply with statutory requirements and guidance.

Reviewing risks to all children and young people is a fundamental part of all planning, delivery and review.

Information-sharing protocols are in place across the partnership and are understood and implemented in most cases.

Resource deficits are understood and risk assessed.

Local commissioning, including joint commissioning of safeguarding services, has been developed and there is evidence that it is contributing positively to delivery of the Children and Young People's Plan and to improving outcomes for those using safeguarding services.

Leadership in only some key areas is clear. The vision is not shared and understood across all staff groups and priorities are only beginning to emerge on the basis of a clear analysis of need.

There are effective lines of accountability that secure improved

outcomes throughout the council and in partnership arrangements.

Inadequate The judgement is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.

- Safeguarding strategies, policies and procedures do not effectively support practice or comply with statutory requirements or guidance.
- Senior managers and elected members are ineffective in delivering service improvements.
- Processes for information sharing and recording between professionals and agencies are unclear.
- ContactPoint does not support or facilitate effective safeguarding services across the council and its partners.
- Performance and financial management and evaluation do not lead to sustained improvements in safeguarding outcomes.
- The council and its partners do not provide effective leadership to safeguard children. Some key partners are not engaged or do not fulfil their duty to cooperate.
- Local commissioning, including joint commissioning of safeguarding services, is underdeveloped and/or ineffective.
- Lines of accountability are unclear or ineffective.

Evaluation, including performance management, quality assurance and workforce development

Outstanding Performance and financial management and evaluation are well established across the partnership and very effective and lead to systemic and sustained improvements in safeguarding outcomes.

Effective use is made of internal evaluation of strengths and weaknesses and external challenge. They are used to identify and address pressure points and weaknesses in safeguarding to improve services and outcomes.

The council and its partners assure the quality and effectiveness of safeguarding services.

The views of children routinely inform service improvement.

Targets are met or exceeded and performance is better than that found nationally.

Effective workforce planning has led to the people (including sufficient numbers of qualified and experienced social workers), skills and capability being in place to deliver service priorities and to maintain high-quality safeguarding services.

Relevant professional and occupational standards for integrated services are secured and monitored regularly, whether commissioned or provided by the local authority.

Staffing and resource capacity is used dynamically to respond to new demands.

Senior managers in all agencies exercise robust management oversight and offer focused support to staff at all levels.

Staff have confidence in leaders and managers.

Good

Almost all performance indicators are met.

Performance and financial management and evaluation are well established and mostly lead to sustained improvements in safeguarding outcomes.

The services identify weaknesses early and take effective action to address these.

Workforce planning ensures that a competent workforce is continuously maintained and that staffing and resource capacity (including qualified and experienced social workers) is sufficient to meet the needs of the service and used dynamically to deliver good-quality services, jointly with other agencies where appropriate.

Processes to ensure safe recruitment exceed statutory minimum requirements.

Adequate

Performance targets are mostly met and achievement is in line with similar areas and/or with national figures.

Performance and financial management and evaluation arrangements are in place and lead to improvements in safeguarding outcomes.

Processes to ensure safe recruitment comply with statutory

minimum requirements.

Workforce strategy, training and staff development arrangements are in place to ensure sufficient capacity (including sufficient numbers of qualified and experienced social workers) and to enable staff to acquire the skills to safeguard and protect children. There is evidence of positive impact on outcomes.

Inadequate The judgement is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.

- There is no effective performance management system in place, or it is ineffective and does not contribute to improving outcomes.
- Processes to ensure safe recruitment fail to comply with statutory minimum requirements.
- There is no effective workforce strategy underpinned by a training and staff development programme to enable staff to acquire needed skills and this has an impact on their ability to deliver a service that improves outcomes to safeguard and protect children.
- Staffing and resource capacity is insufficient to meet the needs of the service.
- Achievement against performance indicators is well below that in similar areas and/or nationally.

User engagement

Outstanding Children and young people and their parents and carers are active participants in planning processes for universal and targeted safeguarding services and there is consistent evidence that their contributions lead to sustained improvement in outcomes.

The partnership has regular and good opportunities for children, young people and their parents and carers to have an independent voice on key strategic processes in relation to safeguarding and child protection.

Good There is regular and systematic participation of service users, including those who are most vulnerable, in all child protection planning processes, which has led to some improved outcomes. Service users report a consistently high level of satisfaction with the quality of services.

- Adequate** The partnership has a range of appropriate opportunities for children and young people and their parents/carers, including those who are most vulnerable, to be involved in child protection planning processes.
- There is some evidence that the views of children and young people and their parents and carers have made a difference to outcomes.
- Service users report satisfaction with the quality of services.
- Service users consistently report that they are heard and that they are treated with dignity and respect.
- Inadequate** The partnership is ineffective in promoting opportunities for children and young people and their parents/carers to contribute to child protection planning processes.
- There is little or no evidence that children, parents and carers have systematically influenced service improvement.
- Service users report that they are not heard or are not treated with dignity and respect.

Partnerships

- Outstanding** The Local Children Safeguarding Board (LCSB), and where relevant the Children's Trust, provides highly effective community and professional leadership in relation to universal, targeted and specialist safeguarding services and demonstrates high levels of influence across all areas where the safety and well-being of children and young people need to be considered.
- Good** The LCSB, and where relevant the Children's Trust, provides good leadership and fulfils its statutory duties and responsibilities well in relation to universal, targeted and specialist safeguarding services. It adopts a robust approach to quality-assuring and auditing the provision, which is leading to improved safeguarding outcomes. Serious case reviews undertaken by the LCSB have mostly been judged to be good or better and none have been judged to be inadequate.
- All action plans following serious case reviews have been implemented and are reflected in practice and service delivery.
- Partnerships with stakeholders, relevant community groups and commissioned services have led to improvements in service design and delivery.
- Some cross-boundary partnerships are in place and are

effective in improving outcomes.

Adequate The LSCB, and where relevant the Children's Trust, provides adequate leadership and fulfils its statutory duties and responsibilities. Partners fulfil their statutory duty to cooperate. There is evidence of impact in improving safeguarding outcomes.

Serious case reviews undertaken by the LSCB have all been judged to be at least adequate.

A multi-agency strategy for the commissioning of services secures delivery in line with the strategy.

The council monitors commissioned services in line with policy and procedure and ensures delivery to service and quality standards.

Inadequate The judgement is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.

- The LSCB, and where relevant the Children's Trust, does not provide sufficient leadership and/or adequately monitor the quality of safeguarding arrangements
- Serious case reviews undertaken by the LSCB have not all been judged to be adequate or better.

Equality and diversity

6. Leadership and management are not likely to be adequate if equality and diversity are judged inadequate.

Outstanding Outcomes for children from minority groups are good overall and at least consistent with those of all other children and young people in the area.

Effective and innovative use of different methods of communication ensure that all children and young people have their views represented in planning for their future.

Management information is used effectively to deliver continuous improvement and to sustain high-quality safeguarding and child protection services that are sensitive to the diverse needs of local communities.

Good There is evidence that a diversity and equality strategy has led to improvements in safeguarding and child protection provision

and outcomes.

Effective action is taken to tackle inequalities.

Almost all children and young people and their parents and carers report that their needs are understood in the context of their culture, religion and identity.

Where necessary, specific services are provided to service users from minority ethnic groups.

The workforce reflects the diversity of the population.

Adequate

The relevant diversity and equality strategy, policy and procedures are implemented effectively.

Children and young people and their parents and carers report that they are treated with dignity and respect.

The profile of children and young people and their parents and carers is known and used to inform service planning and delivery.

User feedback is analysed differentially for equality and diversity.

The workforce plan addresses staffing requirements to meet the needs of the local community.

Inadequate

The judgement is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.

- The diversity and equality strategy, policy and procedures are not implemented effectively.
- Service planning and delivery does not take effective account of the outcome from equality impact assessment.
- Diversity and equality are not effectively considered in assessment and intervention.
- A significant minority of children and young people report a lack of understanding of their needs relevant to their culture, religion and identity, or report that some services being provided to them are not fair, respectful and relevant.

Value for money

Outstanding There is strong commitment to deliver and improve value for money in services, and effective policies and processes have been implemented across the partnership.

Local commissioning, including joint commissioning of safeguarding services, is flexible, responsive and effective. It is well established across the partnership and evidence about placement outcomes, including those from placements in the private and voluntary sectors and in other local authority areas, is central to the way that services are developed and delivered.

The quality of almost all services is consistently high, provides very good value for money and is often based on evidence-based programmes.

Systems to evaluate value for money have been developed across the partnership and are well embedded.

Good Informed choices are made about the balance of cost and quality in, for example, planning, commissioning and decommissioning services, including out of authority placements.

Assessment data is aggregated to inform effective commissioning of services.

Services can demonstrate consistently good or better value for money.

There is evidence of some efficiency savings having been made.

Most unintended high spending is identified and addressed effectively.

There is evidence that effective monitoring of financial arrangements has led to improvements in the quality of provision.

The partnership and the LSCB actively consider how safeguarding and child protection objectives can be achieved effectively, efficiently and economically.

Safeguarding and child protection services can demonstrate that they are cost-effective and are delivered efficiently and effectively. Unit costs are benchmarked.

Adequate Local resource allocation reflects priorities and supports the delivery of statutory responsibilities.

Funds are allocated to activities most likely to be effective.

The costs of services are known and monitored effectively.

Additional resources are allocated to services where necessary.

There are some examples where economy, effectiveness and efficiency have been improved.

Contracting and commissioning arrangements deliver desired outcomes and lines of accountability are clearly understood.

Effective tendering, contracting and purchasing arrangements are in place for all financial transactions.

The partnership or the LSCB specifies and monitors the quality of provision when purchasing or grant-aiding provision for service users, including provision of out of authority placements.

Inadequate The judgement is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.

- Local resource allocation does not sufficiently follow national and local priorities.
- Budgets are not yet aligned or pooled.
- Financial management is poor and is not delivering to clear priorities.
- Strategies to secure value for money within the council and with partners are unclear.
- The costs of services are not known or not monitored effectively.
- The quality of provision is not specified when purchasing or supporting the provision of services by means of financial grants to the service provider.
- Financial arrangements lack clear tendering, contracting and purchasing arrangements.

Quality of provision

Service responsiveness, including complaints

Outstanding Suitably appropriate, clear and agreed thresholds for access to safeguarding services are well embedded, understood and

implemented across the partnership, which reviews and updates them regularly.

There is strong evidence of well-established appropriate partnership working and communication, at all levels, which promotes safeguarding.

The council and its partners are routinely professionally challenging and collaborative, and focused at all times on the needs of the local child population, including those who have been excluded from school.

Partners have strong performance management systems which enable them to identify changing needs or areas for development at an early stage.

Timely and robust action is taken to improve safeguarding services where necessary.

There is a well-established complaints and representations process, which is valued by children and young people.

The outcomes of complaints, including those made by children and young people about staff, and concerns raised about services are systematically used to inform service development.

There is a sustained track record of good outcomes for children and young people.

Good

Clear and agreed thresholds for access to safeguarding services are in place and are widely understood and implemented.

There is good partnership working and communication at all levels between partners which promotes safeguarding.

The council and its partners are challenging and collaborative, and focused at all times on the needs of the local child population, including those who have been excluded from school.

Partners have good performance management systems which enable them to identify changing needs or areas for development.

Action to improve safeguarding services is usually timely and robust.

All children and young people receiving services are aware of how to complain and make representations and are appropriately encouraged and enabled to do so, supported

where necessary by specialist advocacy services.

Statutory guidelines in relation to complaints made against staff working with children are consistently followed. The role and function of the local authority designated officer is effectively utilised to ensure that children are properly safeguarded and the service learns from complaints.

Children and young people express satisfaction with, and confidence in, the complaints processes and there is demonstrable evidence that concerns are addressed.

There are good outcomes for most children and young people.

Adequate

Clear and agreed thresholds for access to safeguarding services are in place and are understood and implemented by most agencies and professionals.

There is clear evidence of partnership working and communication and liaison with relevant agencies is generally effective.

Partners use performance management information to identify changing needs or areas for development.

Action is taken to improve safeguarding services.

All children and young people receiving services are aware of how to complain and make representations and have sufficient access to advocacy services.

Statutory guidelines in relation to complaints made against staff working with children are consistently followed.

Arrangements for children who have been excluded from school help to keep them safe.

There are good outcomes for many children and young people.

Inadequate

The judgement is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.

- Thresholds are inappropriate, insufficiently clear and/or not widely understood. They are inconsistently applied.
- Partnership working is weak and communication is ineffective.
- The council and its partners are not challenging and collaborative and the focus on the needs of the local

child population is poor.

- Partners have poor performance management systems which do not enable them to identify changing needs or areas for development or are not used for this purpose.
- Action to improve safeguarding services is not timely or robust.
- Too few children and young people are aware of how to complain or make representations.
- Children and young people are not informed about their access to advocacy services to support them in making complaints and representations or express a lack of confidence in the complaints system.
- Statutory guidance in relation to complaints about staff by children and young people are insufficiently well understood and followed.
- There are poor outcomes for many children and young people.

Assessment and direct work with children and families

Outstanding Referrals are responded to promptly and in accordance with statutory timescales.

There are no delays in allocating cases.

Children most at risk are identified and receive a prioritised and timely response.

Assessments are timely and involve other professionals appropriately.

Children and families are usually involved in assessments and their views reflected in the decisions and plans.

Assessments include a robust analysis and clear and appropriate objectives. Risk and protective factors impacting on children's welfare and safety are identified well.

Good Most referrals are responded to promptly and in accordance with statutory timescales.

Cases are allocated promptly.

Most assessments are timely; many secure the participation of the child and family, appropriately involve other professionals,

and contain clear analysis. Children most at risk are identified and action is taken in a timely way.

Section 47 enquiries are thorough and timely. Findings in relation to significant harm are clear. The action needed to ensure the child's safety is identified and implemented promptly.

Assessments include a good analysis and appropriate and clear objectives follow. Risk and protective factors impacting on children's welfare and safety are identified.

Assessments are regularly reviewed and updated.

Section 47 investigations are thorough and timely and always conducted by a qualified and experienced social worker. Findings in relation to significant harm are clear and the protective action needed to ensure a child's safety is identified and implemented. Where appropriate, the child and the family are involved.

There are strong multi-agency arrangements and practices to identify and safeguard children missing from home, school and care which are effective and widely understood across the partnership.

There is good evidence of appropriate managerial involvement.

Adequate

Most assessments are timely, seek to involve the child and the family, involve other professionals appropriately and contain clear analysis.

Risk and protective factors impacting on children's welfare and safety are identified.

Conclusions flow logically from the analysis and most of the appropriate actions are identified.

Section 47 enquiries are timely and always conducted by a qualified and experienced social worker. Findings in relation to significant harm are clear and adequate action is identified and implemented to ensure the child's safety.

There is some evidence of appropriate managerial involvement.

Inadequate

The judgement is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.

- The response to referrals is not timely or effective. Decisions in response to referrals are not made in

accordance with statutory timescales. Children most at risk are not identified and/or do not receive a sufficiently prioritised response.

- Section 47 investigations are insufficiently planned, are not timely and lack professional rigour. Findings in relation to significant harm lack clarity and as a result the action needed to ensure the child's safety is not clearly identified and implemented.
- Too many assessments are of poor quality and fail to identify the necessary issues to secure the safety and well-being of children and young people.
- There is insufficient involvement of the child and family in assessments.
- The multi-agency arrangements and practices to identify and safeguard children missing from home, school and care are ineffective.
- There is no evidence of appropriate managerial involvement.

Case planning, reviews and recording

Outstanding Almost all plans include clear and robust planning and identify the intended outcomes for the children.

Rigorous and timely reviews and monitoring of cases ensures that the service responds to changing needs of the child and family and assesses risk accordingly.

Partners contribute well to achieving good outcomes for children.

There is evidence of strong and effective management oversight.

There is a sustained track record of continuous improvement, and almost all performance in relation to safeguarding and child protection case planning and recording meets, or exceeds, the 'good' criteria.

Record-keeping is routinely up-to-date and supports high-quality practice. It demonstrates sound assessment, decision-making, including decisions made in supervision, and effective planning. Recording demonstrates good work to show that the plan is being fully implemented. All decisions and actions are recorded.

Good	<p>Most plans include clear and robust planning and identify the intended outcomes for the children.</p> <p>Most reviews are rigorous and timely and monitoring of cases ensures that the service responds to changing needs of the child and family and assesses risk accordingly.</p> <p>Partners contribute appropriately to achieving good outcomes for children.</p> <p>There is evidence of good and effective management oversight.</p> <p>There is a track record of continuous improvement and most performance in relation to safeguarding and child protection case planning meets or exceeds the good criteria.</p> <p>Most records are up-to-date and support high-quality practice. They demonstrate sound assessment, decision-making, including decisions made in supervision, and effective planning. Recording demonstrates good work to show that the plan is being fully implemented. All decisions and actions are recorded.</p>
Adequate	<p>Many children receiving a service have comprehensive and up-to-date plans, which are regularly reviewed. Actions are identified and implemented.</p> <p>Partners' contributions to achieving good outcomes for children are variable.</p> <p>There is some evidence of a track record of continuous improvement and most performance in relation to safeguarding and child protection case planning and recording meets or exceeds the good criteria.</p> <p>Record keeping is generally up to date, demonstrates sound assessment, decision-making, including those made in supervision, and effective planning. Recording demonstrates that the plan is being implemented. Most decisions and actions are recorded.</p> <p>There is some evidence of managerial oversight.</p> <p>All children receiving a service are allocated a suitably qualified worker, who actively coordinates their plan, visits regularly and sees children alone.</p>
Inadequate	<p>The judgement is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.</p>

- Plans are poor and/or show unclear, unsound or absent decision-making and/or are not reviewed in accordance with statutory requirements.
- Partners do not contribute to achieving good outcomes for children.
- Plans are not reviewed in a timely way.
- There is little or no evidence of continuous improvement.
- Record keeping is incomplete and/or of poor quality.
- There is little or no evidence of effective managerial oversight.

Safeguarding outcomes for children and young people

7. Based on all the evidence, how well does the contribution made by the council and its partners improve child protection and safeguarding outcomes for children and young people?

Children and young people are safe: the effectiveness of services in taking reasonable steps to ensure that children and young people are safe

Outstanding The council and its partners make a highly effective contribution to safeguarding and protecting all children and young people in its area.

The LSCB and the partnership are highly effective in informing its communities, professional and voluntary groups about child protection and safeguarding.

Most safeguarding provision is judged outstanding in service, setting and institutional inspections. There is a sustained upward trend in performance against ambitious targets.

Good The safeguarding and child protection needs of children and young people are identified and responded to effectively and in a timely way.

The LSCB and partnerships provide good leadership and contribute significantly to the development of services which are regularly audited for effectiveness.

Almost all safeguarding provision is judged good or better in service, setting and institutional inspections.

Adequate Safeguarding needs are assessed effectively.

Effective intervention is taken to ensure that children and young people are safe.

Safeguarding is judged at least adequate in service, setting and institutional inspections, including inspection of private fostering arrangements.

Inadequate The judgement is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.

- Safeguarding services fail to identify the needs of children and young people and afford them insufficient protection.
- The LSCB is ineffective and fails to provide effective leadership to the community and professionals.
- There is insufficient engagement by partners at all levels to provide an effective safeguarding service.
- Safeguarding is judged inadequate in service, setting and institutional inspections.

Children and young people feel safe: effectiveness of services in taking reasonable steps to ensure that children and young people feel safe

Outstanding Effective and ongoing work engages children and young people and their parents or carers. Their views are consistently sought on a wide range of safeguarding issues, and these confirm that almost all children feel safe in the area. Direct and immediate action is taken to tackle any fears that children and young people may have.

Where safeguarding concerns about a child are identified, highly effective and coordinated work is undertaken and children and young people fully understand what is happening to them.

Good All surveys undertaken indicate that children largely feel safe and that almost all know where to access help and advice if they need it.

Children and young people report that their views are taken into account and inform nearly all assessments and planning undertaken through common assessment, child in need and child protection arrangements.

Processes for ensuring the views of children and young people inform strategic development and service delivery in safeguarding are effective and services are improved as a

consequence.

Consultation with children and young people is routine, frequent and inclusive, and engages vulnerable children and young people, including those from minority ethnic groups. The views of children, young people and parents/carers have helped to shape and make a measurable difference to services and their outcomes.

Adequate

Surveys undertaken indicate that the majority of children feel safe and that most know where to access help and advice if they need it.

Children's views are obtained and taken into account and inform almost all assessment and planning undertaken through common assessment, child in need and child protection arrangements.

Processes for gathering and listening to the views of children and young people are in place and have some impact on service delivery. There is regular consultation with children and young people, including those from vulnerable groups and minority ethnic groups, through representative groups and some evidence that their views have made a difference.

Inadequate

The judgement is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.

- Surveys undertaken indicate that a significant minority of children do not feel safe and that they do not know where to access help and advice if they need it.
- In a significant minority of cases, children are not seen alone and their views are not taken into account well and do not sufficiently inform all assessments and planning undertaken through common assessment, child in need and child protection arrangements.
- Children are not helped to understand what is happening to them at all stages of the safeguarding process.
- Processes for ensuring that the views of children and young people inform strategic development and service delivery in safeguarding are not sufficiently in place and/or are not used effectively.
- Children and young people, including those from vulnerable groups or from minority ethnic groups, are not consulted regularly. Consultation is tokenistic.

Illustrative grade descriptors for looked after children

8. Grade descriptors illustrate what outstanding, good, adequate and inadequate are in relation to the judgements made. Grade descriptors are not exhaustive but illustrate the level of service or outcome linked to that particular grade.
9. Judgements will be made on a 'best fit' approach. However, the grade descriptors will not need to be met in respect of every single aspect of service before a grade is awarded. For example, a judgement is likely to be 'inadequate' if any of the criteria for inadequate are met. Moreover, inspectors should consider if the criteria for 'adequate' are met before considering if the criteria for 'good' are met.

Overall effectiveness

10. Inspectors will consider the evidence and judgements from across the evaluation schedule before arriving at the overall effectiveness judgement, taking into account the illustrative grade descriptors and particularly:
 - the extent to which the council and its partners meet statutory responsibilities
 - the extent to which the council and its partners are contributing to improving Every Child Matters outcomes for looked after children and care leavers in relation to:
 - being healthy
 - staying safe
 - enjoying and achieving
 - making a positive contribution
 - achieving economic well-being
 - the extent to which the leadership and management of the council and its partners delivers effective services that provide value for money and efficient and effective use of resources
 - the application of the two limiting judgements:
 - overall effectiveness may be inadequate where one or more inadequate grades have been awarded
 - overall effectiveness cannot be better than inadequate if either of the staying safe or enjoying and achieving outcomes is judged inadequate.

Outstanding**Grade: 1**

Overall effectiveness is likely to be outstanding when there is a sustained history of delivering effective innovative solutions to problems which result in improved outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. Leadership at all levels across the partnership is active, visible and effective. Performance management is comprehensive, systematic and demonstrably effective.

There are the people, skills and capability in place for looked after children and care leavers to maintain high-quality services. All looked after children and care leavers are aware of how to complain and make representations and have easy access to advocacy services. Statutory guidelines in relation to complaints made against staff working with children are incorporated into a local policy which is implemented in full, is user-friendly and consistently followed.

Looked after children and care leavers, and their parents and carers, are involved in all aspects of planning and intervention and have opportunities to contribute to key strategic processes. The council and its partners set ambitious targets for improving services and achieve almost all of these.

Good**Grade: 2**

Overall effectiveness is likely to be good when those responsible for the leadership and management of services for looked after children and care leavers have identified and secured demonstrable improvements to services which contribute to improving outcomes for children and young people.

Leadership results in a shared vision and agreed priorities for improvement.

Trends demonstrate sustained improvement in the quality of services.

Targets for improving services are ambitious and most are met. Change is implemented effectively and delivers clear benefits to service users.

Quality assurance and performance management systems have led to improvements in service provision.

Workforce planning and knowledge, learning and development are effective in securing a skilled, capable and knowledgeable workforce.

The views of looked after children and care leavers, and their parents and carers, contribute routinely to planning and evaluating the effectiveness of provision and inform service improvements.

Partnership with stakeholders, community groups and commissioned services are effective. There is sustained satisfaction from service users with the quality of service delivery. There is evidence of good value for money.

Adequate

Grade: 3

Overall effectiveness is likely to be adequate when statutory requirements are met. Managers have a track record of achieving some improvements in service provision. No services are deteriorating. Effective plans are in place to improve the contribution by the council and its partners to better outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. Quality assurance and performance management processes are effective. The views of looked after children and care leavers contribute to evaluating the effectiveness of some provision and inform service improvements.

Staffing resources are sufficient to deliver the service area priorities. Processes for recruitment and retention of staff are effective. Knowledge, learning and development meet the development needs of the majority staff.

Partnerships with stakeholders, community groups and commissioned services are effective. Funds are allocated to activities most likely to be effective. Financial plans are in place with sufficient capacity to deliver priorities and sustain good-quality services.

Inadequate

Grade: 4

Overall effectiveness is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.

- There is no track record of achieving continuous improvement in service provision and/or outcomes.
- Plans are not in place or are ineffective in delivering improvements in priority areas.
- Quality assurance and performance management processes are ineffective.
- Staffing resources are not sufficient to deliver statutory duties for looked after children.
- Processes for recruitment and retention of staff are ineffective.
- The training plan does not meet the development needs of staff.

- There are significant gaps in skills capacity.
- Communication with partner agencies and key stakeholders is ineffective.
- The costs of delivering key services are not understood.
- Procurement and commissioning does not demonstrate value for money.
- Financial management does not meet auditing requirements.

Capacity to improve

11. Judgements about capacity for improvement consider how services are planned and managed and the effectiveness of arrangements for delivering improvement. The basis for making this judgement includes:
- the trend in improvement and whether this is consistent and improvements are sustained
 - the extent to which improvements in outcomes are linked to improvements in the quality of services
 - the accuracy of self-assessment and its application to evaluation and performance management to secure continuous improvement
 - the quality of leadership, its ambition and prioritisation
 - the strength and quality of planning
 - the effectiveness of workforce planning and development
 - the effectiveness of service user engagement.
12. For this aspect to be graded good or better there must be clear evidence that the council and its partners are delivering sustainable improvement.

Outstanding There is a sustained history of delivering effective innovative solutions to problems which result in improved outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.

Leadership at all levels across the partnership is active, visible and effective.

Performance management is comprehensive, systematic and demonstrably effective.

There are the people, skills and capability in place throughout safeguarding and child protection services, and for looked after children and care leavers, to maintain high-quality

services.

All looked after children and care leavers are aware of how to complain and make representations and have easy access to advocacy services.

Statutory guidelines in relation to complaints made against staff working with children are incorporated into a local policy which is implemented in full, is user friendly and consistently followed.

Looked after children and care leavers, and their parents and carers, are involved in all aspects of planning and intervention and have opportunities to contribute to key strategic processes.

The council and its partners set ambitious targets for improving services and outcomes and achieve almost all of these.

Good

Those responsible for the leadership and management of services for looked after children and care leavers have identified and secured demonstrable improvements to services which contribute to improving outcomes for children and young people.

Leadership results in a shared vision and agreed priorities for improvement.

Trends demonstrate sustained improvement in the quality of services and outcomes.

Targets for improving services and outcomes are ambitious and most are met.

Change is implemented effectively and delivers clear benefits to service users.

Quality assurance and performance management systems have led to improvements in service provision.

Workforce planning and knowledge, learning and development are effective in securing a skilled, capable and knowledgeable workforce.

The views of looked after children and care leavers and their parents and carers contribute routinely to planning and evaluating the effectiveness of provision and inform service improvements.

Partnership with stakeholders, community groups and commissioned services are effective.

There is sustained satisfaction from service users with the quality of service delivery.

There is evidence of good value for money.

Adequate

Statutory requirements are met.

Managers have a track record of achieving some improvements in service provision. No services or outcomes are deteriorating

Effective plans are in place to improve the contribution by the council and its partners to better outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.

Quality assurance and performance management processes are effective.

The views of looked after children and care leavers contribute to evaluating the effectiveness of some provision and inform service improvements.

Staffing resources are sufficient to deliver the service area priorities.

Processes for recruitment and retention of staff are effective.

Knowledge, learning and development meet the development needs of the majority staff.

Partnerships with stakeholders, community groups and commissioned services are effective.

Funds are allocated to activities most likely to be effective.

Financial plans are in place with sufficient capacity to deliver priorities and sustain good-quality services.

Inadequate

The judgement is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.

- There is no track record of achieving continuous improvement in service provision and/or outcomes.
- Plans are not in place or are ineffective in delivering improvements in priority areas.
- Quality assurance and performance management

processes are ineffective.

- Staffing resources are not sufficient to deliver statutory duties for looked after children.
- Processes for recruitment and retention of staff are ineffective.
- The training plan does not meet the development needs of staff.
- There are significant gaps in skills capacity.
- Communication with partner agencies and key stakeholders is ineffective.
- The costs of delivering key services are not understood.
- Procurement and commissioning does not demonstrate value for money.
- Financial management does not meet auditing requirements.

Meeting the needs of looked after children and young people

Leadership and management

Ambition and prioritisation

Outstanding Looked after children strategies, policies and procedures are at the leading edge of best practice and are demonstrably used to deliver outstanding quality of service which is fully compliant with statutory requirements and guidance and secures significantly improved outcomes.

Highly competent, ambitious and determined leadership of senior officers and elected members champions the needs of children, and responds proactively and effectively to needs. Senior officers make sure there is effective staff contribution to looked after children services, both within the organisation and across partnerships, to planning and delivery of key priorities and to meeting suitably ambitious outcomes.

Extensive, ambitious and realistic targets being set and almost all are being met. Coordinated working arrangements with external partnerships are reflected in strategic planning, where appropriate, across looked after children services. A culture of continuous improvement in the council and its partners is leading to improvements in practice or sustained

high performance.

All plans for looked after children services, including in local area agreements, are comprehensive, linked strategically and address key areas for improvement in line with national and local priorities. Extensive, ambitious and realistic targets are set and almost all are met.

Effective self-evaluation of progress leads to continuous improvement. Well-coordinated working arrangements with external partnerships are reflected in strategic planning. There is clear evidence that partnership working is improving outcomes.

Corporate parenting is embedded very well. Senior officers and elected members provide highly competent, ambitious and determined leadership that champions the needs of looked after children and care leavers, and anticipates and responds to their needs.

Senior officers ensure staff from across the council and its partners contribute to the planning and delivery of key priorities and to the achievement of sustainable and excellent outcomes.

Good

Corporate parenting strategies, policies and procedures effectively support practice for looked after children and care leavers and comply with statutory requirements and guidance.

The council and its partners provide strong, visible leadership to safeguard looked after children and care leavers and to ensure they make good educational progress, including through setting ambitious targets.

All key partners, including the voluntary and community sector, are engaged well and focused on improving outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. Evaluation of practice used to secure improvement.

Adequate

Resource deficits are understood and risk assessed.

Local commissioning, including joint commissioning of looked after placements, has been developed and there is evidence that it is contributing positively to delivery of the Children and Young People's Plan and to improving outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.

The council and its partners provide leadership for looked after children and care leavers that is focused on improving

outcomes, and there has been some positive impact.

Reviewing risks for looked after children and care leavers is fundamental to almost all planning, delivery and review.

Leadership in only some key areas is clear. The vision is not shared and understood across all staff groups and priorities are only beginning to emerge on the basis of a clear analysis of need.

There are effective lines of accountability that secure improved outcomes throughout the council and in partnership arrangements.

Inadequate The judgement is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.

- Senior managers and elected members are ineffective in delivering service improvements and the resources necessary to improve outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.
- Local commissioning, including joint commissioning of services for looked after children and care leavers, is underdeveloped and/or ineffective.
- Corporate parenting is not effectively championed by the lead member and elected members have not been trained effectively to undertake this role.
- Planning is not clearly focused on improving outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. Provision is mainly reactive and ambition too low.
- Lines of accountability are unclear or ineffective.

Evaluation, including performance management, quality assurance and workforce development

Outstanding Performance and financial management and evaluation are well established across the partnership and very effective and lead to systemic and sustained improvements in outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.

Effective use is made of internal evaluation of strengths and weaknesses and external challenge. They are used to identify and address pressure points and weaknesses in looked after services and to improve services and outcomes.

The council and its partners assure the quality and effectiveness of services for looked after children and care

leavers.

The views of looked after children, care leavers and carers routinely inform service improvement.

Targets are met or exceeded and performance is better than that found nationally.

Effective workforce planning has led to the people, skills and capability being in place to deliver service priorities and to maintain high-quality looked after children services.

Relevant professional and occupational standards for integrated services are secured and monitored regularly, whether commissioned or provided by the local authority.

Staffing and resource capacity is used dynamically to respond to new demands.

Senior managers in all agencies exercise robust management oversight and offer focused support to staff at all levels.

Staff have confidence in leaders and managers.

Good

Almost all performance indicators are met.

Performance and financial management and evaluation are well established and mostly lead to sustained improvements in outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.

The services identify weaknesses early and take effective action to address these.

Workforce planning ensures that a competent workforce is continuously maintained and that staffing and resource capacity is sufficient to meet the needs of the service and used dynamically to deliver good-quality services, jointly with other agencies where appropriate.

Processes to ensure safe recruitment exceed statutory minimum requirements.

Adequate

Performance targets are mostly met and achievement is in line with similar areas and/or with the national figures.

Performance and financial management and evaluation arrangements are in place and lead to improvements in outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.

Processes to ensure safe recruitment comply with statutory

minimum requirements.

Workforce strategy, training and staff development arrangements are in place to ensure sufficient capacity and to enable staff to acquire the skills to deliver service priorities for looked after children and care leavers. There is evidence of positive impact on outcomes.

Inadequate The judgement is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.

- There is no effective performance management system in place, or it is ineffective and does not contribute to improving outcomes.
- Processes to ensure safe recruitment fail to comply with statutory minimum requirements.
- There is no effective workforce strategy underpinned by a training and staff development programme to enable staff to acquire the skills and this has an impact on their ability to deliver a service that improves outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.
- Staffing and resource capacity is insufficient to meet the needs of the service.
- Achievement against performance indicators is well below that in similar areas and/or well below that found nationally.

User engagement

Outstanding Almost all looked after children, care leavers and their carers, including from different age groups and with diverse needs and backgrounds, have participated in the review and development of provision. Procedures are embedded in practice and result in numerous improvements that have had significant positive impact on outcomes.

The partnership has regular and good opportunities for children, young people and their parents and carers to have an independent voice on key strategic processes in relation to services for looked after children and care leavers.

Good There is regular and systematic participation of looked after children and care leavers in all care planning processes that has led to improved outcomes.

Service users report a consistently high level of satisfaction

with the quality of services.

Adequate There is some evidence that the views of looked after children and care leavers and their parents and carers have made a difference to outcomes.

Service users report satisfaction with the quality of services.

Service users consistently report that they are heard and that they are treated with dignity and respect.

Inadequate There is little or no evidence that looked after children and care leavers, and their parents and carers, have systematically influenced service improvement.

Service users report that they are not heard or are not treated with dignity and respect.

Partnerships

Outstanding The council and its partners, and where relevant the Children's Trust, provide highly competent and effective leadership of services for looked after children and care leavers. Productive partnerships with key stakeholders contribute to improvements in all outcome areas.

Cross-area partnerships for looked after children and care leavers with high levels of need are highly effective and improve outcomes.

Good The council and its partners, and where relevant the Children's Trust, provide effective leadership for looked after children and care leavers. Vision and priorities are clearly articulated. Well coordinated and deliverable multi-agency plans address weaknesses and secure continuous improvement.

Partnerships with stakeholders, relevant community groups and commissioned services have led to improvements in service design and delivery.

There is an embedded culture of strong engagement of all relevant partners in corporate parenting and commissioning of services for looked after children and care leavers.

Some cross-boundary partnerships are in place and are effective in improving outcomes.

Adequate The council has established secure arrangements with local stakeholders, relevant community groups and commissioned

services. Most key partners, including the voluntary and community sector, are involved in corporate parenting activity.

As a result, children and young people are taken into care only when necessary and suitable plans, placements and support are in place.

A multi-agency strategy for the commissioning of services secures delivery in line with strategy.

The council monitors commissioned services in line with policy and procedure and ensures delivery to service and quality standards.

Inadequate The judgement is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.

- The council and its partners, and where relevant the Children's Trust, do not provide effective leadership of services for looked after children and care leavers. Some key partners, including the voluntary and community sectors, are not engaged and there is a lack of focus on improving outcomes.
- Multi-agency partnerships to commission and deliver services for looked after children and care leavers with high levels of need are not in place and/or are ineffective.

Equality and diversity

13. Leadership and management are not likely to be adequate if equality and diversity are judged inadequate.

Outstanding Outcomes for looked after children and care leavers from minority groups, including unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are good overall and at least consistent with those of all other children and young people in the area.

Management information is used effectively to sustain high-quality services or to deliver continuous improvement that is sensitive to the diverse needs of looked after children and care leavers.

Good There is evidence that a diversity and equality strategy has led to better outcomes for looked after children, care leavers, children from minority ethnic groups and those with learning

difficulties and/or disabilities.

Effective action is taken to tackle inequalities.

Almost all children and young people and their parents and carers report that their needs are understood in the context of their culture, religion and identity.

Where necessary, specific services are provided to service users from minority ethnic groups.

Workforce reflects the diversity of the population.

Adequate

The relevant diversity and equality strategy, policy and procedures are implemented effectively.

Children and young people and their parents and carers report that they are treated with dignity and respect.

The profile of children and young people and their parents and carers is known and used to inform service planning and delivery.

User feedback is analysed differentially for equality and diversity.

The workforce plan addresses staffing requirements to meet the needs of the local community.

Inadequate

The judgement is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.

- The diversity and equality strategy, policy and procedures are not implemented effectively.
- Equality and diversity strategies are not fully implemented for groups of looked after children and care leavers and outcomes are not improving as a result. There is a gap between outcomes for these groups and all other looked after children.
- Service planning and delivery does not take effective account of the outcome from equality impact assessment.
- A significant minority of looked after children and young people and their parents and carers report little or no understanding of their needs relevant to their culture, religion and identity or of fair, respectful and relevant services being provided to them.

Value for money

- Outstanding** There is strong commitment to deliver and improve value for money in services and effective policies and processes have been implemented across the partnership.
- Local commissioning is flexible, responsive and effective. It is well established across the partnership and evidence about placement outcomes is central to the way that services are developed and delivered.
- The quality of almost all services for looked after children and care leavers is consistently high and provides very good value for money and is often based on evidence-based programmes.
- Systems to evaluate value for money have been developed across the partnership and are well embedded.
- Good** The area has a thorough understanding of the local social care market and some innovative and imaginative measures with providers meet the needs of looked after children and care leavers.
- Informed choices are made about the balance of cost and quality in, for example, planning, commissioning and decommissioning services.
- Assessment data is aggregated to inform effective commissioning of services.
- Services can demonstrate consistently good or better value for money.
- There is evidence of some efficiency savings having been made. Most unintended high spending is identified and addressed effectively.
- There is evidence that effective monitoring of financial arrangements has led to improvements in the quality of provision.
- Adequate** Local resource allocation reflects priorities and supports the delivery of statutory responsibilities.
- Funds are allocated to activities most likely to be effective.
- The costs of services are known and monitored effectively. Additional resources are allocated to services where necessary.
- There are some examples when economy, effectiveness and

efficiency have been improved.

Contracting and commissioning arrangements deliver desired outcomes and lines of accountability are clearly understood.

Effective tendering, contracting and purchasing arrangements are in place for all financial transactions.

Inadequate The judgement is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.

- Local resource allocation does not sufficiently follow national and local priorities.
- Budgets are not yet aligned or pooled.
- Financial management is poor and is not delivering to clear priorities.
- Strategies to secure value for money within the council and with partners are unclear.
- The costs of services are not known or not monitored effectively.
- The quality of provision is not specified when purchasing or supporting the provision of services by means of financial grants to the service provider.
- Financial arrangements lack clear tendering, contracting and purchasing arrangements.

Effectiveness in promoting safeguarding

Outstanding The council and its partners make a highly effective contribution to safeguarding and protecting all looked after children and care leavers that they are responsible for.

The council and its partners are highly effective in working with the private and voluntary sectors and other council areas where looked after children may be placed in order to secure the best outcomes for those children and care leavers.

Most safeguarding provision for looked after children and care leavers is judged outstanding in service and settings inspection.

There is a sustained upward trend in performance or sustained high level performance against ambitious targets.

Good The safeguarding and child protection needs of all looked after children and young people and care leavers are identified and

responded to effectively and in a timely way.

The Children's Trust, LSCB and corporate parenting group provide good leadership and contribute significantly to the development of services, which are regularly audited for effectiveness.

Almost all safeguarding provision for looked after children and care leavers is judged good in service and setting inspections.

Adequate

Safeguarding needs and risks in relation to all looked after children and care leavers are assessed effectively and effective action is taken when necessary.

Safeguarding is judged at least adequate in service and setting inspections.

The council and its partners have established working relationships with the private and voluntary sectors and other council areas where looked after children may be placed.

Inadequate

The judgement is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.

- The safeguarding, child protection and other services fail to identify the safety needs of looked after children and care leavers and afford them sufficient protection.
- The Children's Trust, LSCB and corporate parent group are ineffective and fail to provide effective leadership to safeguard children.
- There is insufficient engagement by partners at all levels to provide an effective safeguarding service for looked after children.
- Key safeguarding judgements are inadequate in a significant number of service and setting inspections.

Quality of provision

Service responsiveness, including complaints

Outstanding

The changing needs of looked after children and care leavers are routinely monitored to ensure that the services provided meet these needs effectively. Management information is used very well to improve the quality of services. Partners develop services in a timely way to adapt and meet changing needs.

Sustained good outcomes demonstrate good-quality care which

includes comprehensive and highly effective direct work to meet the needs of looked after children and care leavers.

Partners contribute well to meeting the needs of looked after children and care leavers.

Resources are managed very effectively to ensure that the needs of looked after children and care leavers are met.

There is a well-established complaints and representations process which is valued by looked after children and care leavers.

The outcomes of complaints, including those made by children and young people about staff, and concerns raised about services are systematically used to inform service development.

The complaints system is regularly reviewed involving children and young people, and information on effectiveness is part of the work of the corporate parenting panel.

Strong arrangements are in place to commission good-quality placements and services and these result in positive outcomes for children.

Good

The looked after children population is kept under review to identify trends and new needs. Management information is used well to improve the quality of services. Services are developed to meet changing needs.

Good outcomes for most demonstrate good-quality care which includes comprehensive and highly effective direct work to meet the needs of looked after children and care leavers.

Partners contribute to meeting the needs of looked after children and care leavers.

Resources are managed well to ensure that the needs of looked after children and care leavers are met.

Looked after children and care leavers are aware of how to complain and make representations and are appropriately encouraged and enabled to do so, supported where necessary by specialist advocacy services.

Statutory guidelines in relation to complaints made against staff working with children are consistently followed. The role and function of the local authority designated officer is effectively utilised to ensure that children are properly

safeguarded and the service learns from complaints.

Looked after children and care leavers express satisfaction with, and confidence in, the complaints processes and there is demonstrable evidence that concerns are addressed.

Good commissioning arrangements ensure the quality of placements and services and these result in positive outcomes.

Adequate

There is some evidence that the needs of the looked after population are reviewed and that this leads to changes in the services provided.

Good outcomes for many demonstrate good-quality care, which includes comprehensive and highly effective direct work to meet the needs of looked after children and care leavers

Partners make some contribution to meeting the needs of looked after children and care leavers.

The management of resources ensures needs are met.

Looked after children and care leavers are aware of how to complain and make representations and have sufficient access to advocacy services.

All looked after children and care leavers have access to effective independent advocacy services as required.

Statutory guidelines in relation to complaints made against staff working with children are consistently followed.

Commissioning arrangements are adequate.

Inadequate

The judgement is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.

- Management information is not up to date, accurate or used to inform service development for looked after children and care leavers.
- Services are often of poor quality.
- Outcomes for a significant number of looked after children and care leavers are poor.
- Too few looked after children and care leavers are aware of how to complain or make representations.
- Looked after children and care leavers are not informed about their access to advocacy services to support them in making complaints and

representations or express a lack of confidence in the complaints system.

- Statutory guidance in relation to complaints about staff by looked after children and care leavers are insufficiently well understood and followed.
- Commissioning arrangements do not ensure the quality or safety of placements and services.
- A lack of good local provision results in children being placed unnecessarily far from their homes, leading to poorer outcomes.

Assessment and direct work with children and families

Outstanding Assessments result in a comprehensive understanding of the needs of looked after children and routinely include the views of children and their parents/carers.

Effective support to those on the edge of care results in good decisions to only look after those with needs that can be best met through care provision.

Clear and agreed processes for assessing risk and making decisions on whether a child needs to be admitted to and remain in care are well embedded, understood and implemented consistently across the partnership.

Timely decisions and action ensure that children and young people who need to be looked after are appropriately accommodated. There is routine evidence of appropriate managerial involvement.

Many looked after children and care leavers experience direct work which leads to improved outcomes.

Effective work is undertaken with looked after children and their families to enable those children who can return home to do so in a timely way.

Children are prepared well for placement changes.

Prompt action is taken to assess and secure looked after children in permanent placements.

Good Most assessments result in a comprehensive understanding of the needs of looked after children and routinely include the views of children and their parents/carers.

Good arrangements, including good knowledge about placement opportunities in the private and voluntary sectors and in other local authority areas, ensure that appropriate decisions are made to accommodate children.

Children are usually prepared well for placement changes.

There is strong evidence of appropriate managerial involvement.

There is evidence that effective support enables children to return home where appropriate.

Direct work with looked after children and care leavers leads to improved outcomes

Adequate

Assessments result in a good understanding of the needs of many looked after children and usually include the views of children and their parents/carers.

Assessments of children and young people who are on the edge of being looked after are usually timely and thorough, and identify the necessary actions to prevent them from becoming looked after.

There is some evidence of appropriate managerial involvement.

Some direct work is undertaken with looked after children and care leavers that leads to some evidence of improved outcomes.

Many looked after children and care leavers receive additional support which is appropriate to their assessed needs.

Inadequate

The judgement is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.

- Assessments are not timely and/or of poor quality and/or do not regularly involve the child and other significant people.
- Decision-making processes and criteria for assessment lack focus.
- There are significant delays in placing children.
- Children and young people are not prepared for placement changes or there are delays in their return home after it is safe for them to do so.
- Few looked after children and care leavers receive

additional support to meet their assessed needs.

- There is little or no effective managerial oversight.

Case planning, reviews and recording

Outstanding Almost all plans for looked after children and care leavers are comprehensive and underpinned by thorough needs assessment and analysis, and are implemented, monitored and evaluated.

Plans effectively address consideration of permanent alternative placement or return home where appropriate.

Planning ensures that there is no drift in care for looked after children.

Plans are regularly reviewed to ensure timely interventions and progress against outcome goals.

There are very few unplanned changes of placement.

Records are up to date and support high-quality practice.

Records demonstrate sound assessment and decision-making, including those made in supervision, effective planning, and good practice to implement plans.

All decisions and actions are recorded.

Systematic quality assurance and auditing procedures to improve practice and develop services.

There is a track record of continuous improvement and almost all aspects of case planning and recording meet or exceed good performance.

Good Most plans for looked after children and care leavers are comprehensive and underpinned by thorough needs assessment and analysis, and are implemented, monitored and evaluated. Plans are regularly reviewed to ensure timely interventions and progress against outcome goals.

Supervision, management audit and oversight at all levels is systematic, recorded and results in improving practice.

Record keeping is routinely up to date and supports high-quality practice. Records demonstrate sound assessment and decision-making, including those made in supervision, and effective planning. Recording demonstrates good work to show

the plan is being fully implemented. All decisions and actions are recorded.

Good and up-to-date records relating to looked after children and care leavers support the effective delivery of integrated care packages.

Adequate

Requirements set out in statute, guidance and national minimum standards are met.

The majority of looked after children and care leavers have comprehensive and up-to-date plans that are recorded and reviewed in line with statutory guidance. Actions are identified and implemented.

Supervision, management audit and oversight is mostly systematic, recorded and results in improving practice.

Action is taken to minimise inappropriate and unnecessary changes of placement. The majority of changes are planned to improve outcomes.

Effective action ensures looked after children return to their family in a timely way when this is in the child's best interests.

Where children cannot return to their birth family or extended family, care planning secures other stable and secure placements via adoption, special guardianship, residence orders, long-term fostering or appropriate residential placements.

Looked after children are allocated to an appropriate worker, who actively coordinates a care plan (including the provision of direct work), visits regularly and sees them alone.

Inadequate

The judgement is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.

- There is evidence that too many plans are poor, reviews are not carried out on time, and too often partner agencies do not make sufficient contribution.
- Actions are not timely and there is significant evidence of drift in care.
- Record keeping is incomplete and/or of poor quality and/or shows unclear, unsound, or absent decision-making.
- Supervision, management audit and oversight make limited or no contribution to improving practice.

- Looked after children are not allocated to a suitably qualified worker.

Every Child Matters outcomes for looked after children

14. Based on all the evidence, how well does the contribution made by the council and its partners improve outcomes for looked after children and young people?

Being healthy

Outstanding Innovative and accessible multi-agency targeting, planning, reviewing and monitoring of health services for all looked after children and care leavers has led to a sustained upward trend or high performance in outcomes for physical, emotional and sexual health.

Effective joint agency commissioning has improved outcomes for looked after children and care leavers with complex needs.

Good arrangements are in place to ensure that looked after children and care leavers can achieve timely access to health services, including specialist services, when required.

Good Effective information-sharing across agencies ensures consistency in meeting the health needs of looked after children and care leavers.

An annual report identifies the health needs of looked after children and this contributes to service improvement.

Health outcomes for looked after children and care leavers are better than in similar areas/authorities.

Adequate Looked after children and care leavers have access to a comprehensive health needs assessment, which they are encouraged to attend.

Targeted health promotion services are in place for looked after children and care leavers.

Most looked after children and care leavers have access to timely support for their assessed emotional and mental well-being needs. This includes targeted specialist support from child and adolescent mental health services.

Looked after children in external placements have access to a full range of health provision. There are clear and effective

systems in place to ensure that looked after children placed out of authority receive healthcare that addresses their physical and emotional needs.

Inadequate The judgement is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.

- Health needs are either not identified effectively or not targeted for improvement so that physical and emotional health needs are not met.
- There are gaps in access to health care provision for looked after children in external placements.

Staying safe

Outstanding Risk is managed very well to ensure that all children and young people who need to be in care are admitted.

Looked after children, families and professionals report referral and assessment workers as highly effective in identifying children in need of services and offer timely intervention.

There is sufficient choice to meet local need, with regulatory inspections showing good and outstanding provision.

Looked after children live in stable placements which provide very high-quality care and support.

Thorough arrangements for monitoring care placements, including those outside of the local area, have an impact on improving safeguarding outcomes for all looked after children.

Good Good arrangements for referral and assessment result in timely interventions and effective action.

Multi-agency care planning ensures outcomes are regularly reviewed. All agencies are actively engaged and held to account for their responsibilities in delivering quality services. Information, support and guidance are well targeted to need.

Looked after children live in stable and appropriate placements that provide generally good-quality care and support. The quality of placements is regularly monitored.

Adequate A comprehensive range of services for looked after children support placements and prevent breakdowns or placement disruption.

Most service users report that referral and assessment is

effective and appropriate action is taken to help them address their needs.

There are effective strategies that are understood and implemented by all agencies to support children missing from care.

Looked after children and care leavers report feeling safe in their placement and/or where they do not, this is being addressed.

Looked after children have comprehensive and up-to-date care plans which are reviewed regularly. Most agencies are actively engaged and actions are suitable and implemented.

Looked after children are allocated a suitably qualified social worker, who actively coordinates a care plan, visits regularly and sees children alone.

Looked after children live in generally stable placements that meet their needs.

Inadequate

The judgement is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.

- There is insufficient diversity in the availability of placements to meet needs.
- A minority of looked after children and care leavers report not feeling safe in their placement and not being heard.
- There are gaps in the quality of multi-agency care planning so that outcomes for some are not regularly reviewed. There are gaps in the involvement of key staff and agencies. Information, support and guidance are insufficiently targeted to meet needs.
- Looked after children do not have comprehensive and up-to-date care plans, and care plans are not reviewed regularly. Actions identified are not always implemented.
- Insufficient monitoring of looked after children means that those who are missing from placements are not identified early enough or that follow-up action is not sufficiently timely.
- Not all looked after children are allocated a suitably qualified social worker who actively coordinates a care plan. A minority or more do not receive regular visits and/or are not seen alone.

- Placements do not provide stability and/or they are of poor quality and/or the level of support provided is poor.

Enjoying and achieving

15. Enjoying and achieving cannot be good unless children and young people are making good educational progress overall.

Outstanding Looked after children and care leavers have very good support to access the best possible education to meet their particular needs and are fully included in school life.

Looked after children make very good progress in relation to their starting point, underpinned by effective and up-to-date personal education plans that have been agreed with the child's full involvement. The gap between the attainment of looked after children and all children is being significantly closed.

Partners have very high aspirations for looked after children and care leavers.

Looked after children and care leavers have very good access to leisure activities of their choice. Promoting access to leisure and recreation is high priority. Positive action overcomes barriers to participation.

Good Educational support and guidance are well targeted to need, and help looked after children achieve well. Looked after children are given priority for school places and receive high-quality support to attend regularly and stay in school. Carers and/or parents have access to good-quality information and support.

Looked after children and care leavers have an up-to-date personal education plan that they have been involved in producing. This is regularly monitored and audited and is effective at identifying the support required.

Looked after children and care leavers make good educational progress in relation to their starting points. The gap between the attainment of looked after children and all children is being significantly closed.

Monitoring arrangements for looked after children and care leavers educated outside the area ensure that they are

supported well and achieve well.

Attendance is above average nationally compared to other looked after children and fixed-term and permanent exclusion rates are low compared to all other children.

Looked after children have access to a wide range of educational provision and/or vocational programmes, which are of good quality.

There is a comprehensive range of outdoor and extra-curricular activities that all looked after children can access.

Adequate

Educational support and guidance is in place.

The progress made by looked after children and care leavers is regularly monitored and individual targets are set. Children enjoy their lives and have aspirations for their future.

Looked after children and care leavers achieve at least in line with those in similar authorities and make adequate or better progress in line with their starting points. Looked after children enjoy a stable education, particularly during examination time.

All looked after children have an up-to-date personal education plan that is regularly monitored. They are involved in its preparation. Although audit arrangements are in place, the outcomes are not used well.

Support and monitoring arrangements for children educated outside the area are in place.

The attendance of looked after children is at least in line with those in similar authorities and the gap between their attendance and the national average for all pupils is closing. Rates of fixed-term and permanent exclusion are in line with similar areas. Where high, there is evidence of a reduction.

Looked after children who are excluded have timely access to full-time education or receive full-time alternative learning and/or vocational programmes that meet their needs.

Looked after children benefit from out-of-school hours learning opportunities. Most participate in recreational and enrichment activities in line with their wishes.

Inadequate

The judgement is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.

- Looked after children are not achieving well enough

and have not made demonstrable progress in improving educational outcomes in relation to their starting point. There is no evidence that the attainment gap is closing.

- The progress made by individuals is not regularly or carefully monitored and not supported by an up-to-date personal education plan.
- Support and monitoring arrangements for children educated outside the area are not in place or not implemented appropriately.
- Attendance is below that in similar areas and action to tackle this is not effective. Rates of exclusion are high and/or rising.
- Looked after children have limited access to out-of-hours learning and many do not participate in recreational and enrichment activities.

Making a positive contribution

Outstanding Consultation with looked after children and care leavers is formalised at strategic level and well embedded in practice, ensuring that their voices are heard. The views of looked after children and care leavers routinely inform strategic planning and provision. A strong and active looked after children council (or equivalent) has developed a pledge for children in care and actively monitors its progress and relevance.

The views of looked after children and care leavers routinely inform quality assurance, training and evaluation. Their involvement has led to a sustained and significant improvement in service provision.

A significant number of looked after children and care leavers are willing and able to take on lead roles. They are very well supported to develop effective communication skills and speak out on issues that matter to them.

Multi-agency action to prevent offending and re-offending is well embedded, has led to significant reductions and improved life chances for those at risk.

Good Looked after children and care leavers report their needs are met well and the support they receive improves social and emotional well-being, including at key transition points.

Looked after children, whatever their needs and abilities, are

regularly and effectively involved in making decisions about their own lives. They have good access to a proactive advocacy service.

Some looked after children and care leavers are routinely involved in quality assurance, training and evaluation. Their contributions have led to sustained improvements in service provision.

Multi-agency action to prevent looked after children and care leavers offending and/or re-offending is leading to improved outcomes.

Adequate

Looked after children have opportunities to develop secure and positive relationships with adults and other children.

Agencies consult regularly with looked after children and care leavers, and service delivery is influenced by their views.

All looked after children and care leavers have access to independent advocacy services.

Looked after children and care leavers receive appropriate multi-agency support to prevent them offending or re-offending.

Inadequate

The judgement is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.

- The views of looked after children and care leavers are not sought and/or are not taken into account and so do not influence service delivery.
- There is limited support to prevent offending and/or re-offending or support available is not resulting in a reduction and the reasons for this have not been tackled.

Achieving economic well-being

Outstanding

Outcomes for economic well-being are well above those in similar areas. The performance gap between looked after children and the national average for all pupils post-16 has closed dramatically or been eradicated.

Care leavers receive strong support to access high-quality provision that enables them to continue their education or training post-16. They are very well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. Learning

needs are very well assessed. The 14–19 curriculum for care leavers offers a wide range of well-matched vocational options.

Transition planning for looked after children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receiving services is very thorough, timely and regularly evaluated to ensure smooth transition to adult services and further education, employment or training.

Care leavers have high aspirations and a high proportion are achieving well in further and higher education.

All care leavers, including older care leavers, contribute routinely to their pathway plan reviews. Pathway plans are of high quality and comprehensive. Care leavers are very positive about the plans in place to support their transition to adulthood.

All care leavers have access to a range of high-quality permanent and affordable accommodation which meets their needs.

Good

Outcomes for economic well-being are better than in similar areas. The performance gap between looked after children and the national average for all pupils post-16 is closing more rapidly than similar areas.

Care leavers receive good support to access good-quality provision that enables them to continue their education or training post-16. They are prepared well for the next stage of their education, training or employment. Learning needs are well assessed. The 14–19 curriculum is relevant for care leavers, with well-matched vocational options.

Transition plans for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receiving services are thorough, timely and regularly updated to ensure smooth transition to adult services and further education, employment or training.

Care leavers have high aspirations and a good proportion are achieving in further and higher education. The proportion is increasing steadily.

Numbers of care leavers, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, not in education, employment or training is low. Care leavers know what support is available for them.

All care leavers, including older care leavers, contribute

routinely to their pathway plan reviews. Pathway plans are of good quality and comprehensive. Care leavers are positive about the plans in place to support their transition to adulthood.

The large majority of care leavers have access to decent, affordable and permanent accommodation which meets most of their needs. The range of accommodation available means that there is no use of temporary accommodation, including bed and breakfast.

Care leavers receive good advice to manage their finances and additional support is well matched to need.

Adequate

Outcomes for economic well-being post-16 are in line with similar areas. The performance gap between looked after children and the national average for all pupils post-16 is closing well and/or remains in line with similar areas.

Care leavers receive appropriate support to access provision that enables them to continue their education or training post-16. They are appropriately prepared for the next stage of their education and/or employment. Learning needs are appropriately assessed. The 14–19 curriculum is relevant for care leavers, including some vocational options.

Transition plans for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receiving services are timely and ensure smooth transition to adult services and further education, employment or training.

Care leavers aspire to achieve. An adequate proportion is in further and higher education and/or this is increasing.

Numbers of care leavers, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, not in education, employment or training are in line with similar areas. Some targeted support is in place.

All care leavers, including older care leavers, contribute regularly to their pathway plan reviews. Pathway plans are of adequate quality and the majority are comprehensive. Care leavers are positive about the plans in place to support their transition to adulthood.

Most care leavers have access to decent, affordable and permanent accommodation. There is infrequent use of temporary accommodation, including bed and breakfast.

Care leavers receive sound advice to manage their finances. Additional support is available.

Inadequate The judgement is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following criteria apply.

- Outcomes for economic well-being are significantly below those in similar areas. The performance gap between looked after children and the national average for all pupils at post-16 is not closing or is closing less rapidly than in similar areas.
- Care leavers receive insufficient support to access provision that enables them to continue their education or training post-16. They are not well prepared for the next stage of their education and/or employment. Learning needs are not assessed. The 14–19 curriculum is not relevant for care leavers. There are limited vocational options.
- Transition planning for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receiving services is variable and does not consistently support young people's transition into adult services or further education, employment or training.
- Post -16 aspirations are low and a very low proportion of young people enter higher education.
- Numbers of care leavers, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, not in education, employment or training are high and/or have increased significantly. There is limited targeted support in place.
- Some care leavers, including older care leavers, do not contribute regularly to their pathway plan reviews. Pathway plans are of poor quality and the majority are not comprehensive. Care leavers are dissatisfied with the plans in place to support their transition to adulthood.
- A minority of care leavers do not have access to decent, affordable and permanent accommodation. Their needs are not met. There is too much use of temporary accommodation, including bed and breakfast.
- Care leavers receive limited advice to manage their finances. Additional support is not readily available.