

Inspection of children's services: grade descriptors

Every Child Matters

The joint area reviews and annual performance assessments evaluate and report on the outcomes for children in an area, and assess and judge the contributions made by public services, including the council, to sustaining and improving them.

Grade descriptors have been developed to support the overall judgement of councils' children's services, as well as the capacity to improve judgements and the judgements for the Every Child Matters outcomes – being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; achieving economic well-being – and also service management.

The grade descriptors identify key aspects in determining the contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people.

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Introduction

The joint area reviews (JARs) and annual performance assessments (APAs) evaluate and report on the outcomes for children in an area, and assess and judge the contributions made by public services, including the council, to sustaining and improving them.

Grade descriptors were first published in April 2006 to support the overall judgement of councils' children's services, as well as the capacity to improve judgements, and the judgements for the Every Child Matters outcomes – being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; achieving economic well-being – and service management.

The grade descriptors identify key aspects in determining the contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people. They have been devised to:

- make inspection judgements transparent
- enable judgements to be derived securely from a consideration of outcomes
- ensure consistency in gathering evidence and making judgements.

For each grade, the descriptors are built on a series of generic demands around the following three themes:

- the impact of actions on sustaining/improving outcomes
- the response and engagement of children and young people
- factors that contribute to outcomes.

Partnerships and/or councils may find the criteria helpful in supporting their self-evaluation processes and as a guide to identifying areas for improvement.

The descriptors will be used to support the graded judgements for APAs and for the investigations undertaken in JARs. Inspectors will use the illustrative examples to decide on the appropriate grade on the balance of evidence on a 'best fit' model. It is not necessary to have met all of the descriptors to be awarded a particular grade, nor, in a complex system, does failure in one aspect necessarily lower the overall judgement. An authority will not necessarily be judged inadequate on the basis of a failure to meet one requirement, although inspectors will need to consider the potential effect of the weakness on children and young people, particularly for the most vulnerable. Judgements will be made in a rounded way, balancing all of the evidence and giving due consideration to outcomes, local and national contexts, priorities and decision-making.

Judgement terms

Grade 4: Outstanding

A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users

Grade 3: Good

A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users

Grade 2: Adequate

A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users

Grade 1: Inadequate

A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users.

Section 1. Guidance and descriptors for grading the overall effectiveness of the council's children's services for APA

1. The overall effectiveness of the council's children's services

The overall judgement for the council's children's services incorporates the contribution made to delivering all five Every Child Matters outcomes. The grade is based on inspectors' professional judgement, and is made by taking a balanced view of the full range of key judgements and evidence in the five outcome areas and in service management. The judgement encompasses more than the activities in Staying safe and Enjoying and achieving and is not, therefore, a simple aggregation of those two judgements. This having been said, social care and education activities can obviously be expected to contribute substantially to the overall score.

Due weight should be given within each of the five outcome areas and in service management, to the contributions the council can reasonably be expected to make, emphasising outcomes for the most vulnerable and progress in meeting priorities, objectives and challenging targets. Similarly, an assessment needs to be made of the extent to which the effectiveness in delivering the outcomes can be attributed to the activities of the council, rather than to those of its partners.

Examples of activities within the five outcome areas in which the council can be expected to make a contribution include:

- promoting healthy lifestyles for children and young people, for example ensuring sexual health, reducing incidence of teenage pregnancy, preventing them from taking illegal drugs
- ensuring that children and young people with mental health problems have access to services, and that their additional needs are supported in schools
- ensuring that proper social care support is provided to protect children and young people at risk of abuse and neglect
- ensuring children and young people are safe from bullying, discrimination and anti-social behaviour in schools and within the wider community

- contributing to raised standards and improved performance, through, for example, early years education and effective monitoring, challenge and support for schools, and ensuring the success of pupil referral units
- ensuring sufficient school places and robust admission arrangements through, for example, a consideration of vulnerable children and young people and those who do not attend school
- involving children and young people in making key decisions about their future, in the council's decision making and in enterprising behaviour
- supporting the preparation of young people for employment and helping to ensure that they engage in further education, employment or training on leaving school
- ensuring that community regeneration strategies take proper account of the needs of children and young people
- promoting increased social and educational inclusion, particularly for vulnerable groups such as looked after children and young people and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, for example, through high quality preventative and support services, early identification and assessment of need and smooth transition to adult services.

Inspectors should consider performance compared with similar areas/authorities, whether there is sustained progress over time and whether high standards of performance are being maintained in the five outcome areas. For councils to be graded good overall, clear evidence is needed of demonstrable and sustained impact on outcomes. In particular, they must be having a strong impact in narrowing the gap between the outcomes for most children and young people and the most vulnerable children and young people.

Where there is wide variation in the quality of service functions inspectors will consider key factors that contribute to improving outcomes. These include:

- the quality of political control and corporate leadership, including the capacity to improve
- the quality of strategic action planning, especially the extent to which corporate policy and strategic planning defines and determines well focused actions
- the extent to which challenging but realistic targets for improvement are set
- the effectiveness of the use of resources, especially in supporting and sustaining improvement in a cost effective way
- the effectiveness of performance management and the use of evaluation and review to secure improvement
- the effectiveness of partnership working across services within and beyond the local authority, and the extent to which solutions to problems cut across traditional sector and area boundaries
- the extent to which children and young people are consulted and engaged in decision-making.

In reaching the overall judgement inspectors will:

- consider the impact of any differences in the quality of various services on children and young people overall, and the combined overall impact
- not give different weightings to universal and specialist/targeted services
- place emphasis on strengths or weaknesses found regularly in systems, procedures and practice as opposed to more isolated examples of success or problem areas
- recognise the rights of councils and their partners to set local priorities, as well as their responsibilities to respond to national and regional priorities
- identify the key elements from the trail of evidence that lead to the final judgement
- take account of the pace of developments and the rate of progress.

Grade descriptors: the overall effectiveness of the council's children's services

<p>Outstanding (4)</p> <p>Services are having a very strong impact on improving outcomes for children and young people. In particular, there is a clear and demonstrable narrowing of the gap between the outcomes for most children and young people and those who are the most vulnerable.</p>	<p>The council's contribution to improving outcomes for children and young people is at least good across the five outcome areas, and is outstanding in the majority of service functions. High performance is maintained. Outcomes are considerably better than in other similar areas/authorities. Services contribute clearly to narrowing the gap between outcomes for most children and young people and the most vulnerable. No service function is inadequate, and for any graded adequate there are clear signs of marked improvement in outcomes for children and young people. Young people, including those from vulnerable groups, contribute routinely, widely and effectively to decision-making and to judging the effectiveness of provision. The responses of children and young people to almost all service provision and delivery are very positive. Capacity to improve is at least good.</p>
<p>Good (3)</p> <p>Services are having a strong impact on improving outcomes for children and young people. In particular, there is a clear narrowing of the gap between the outcomes of most children and young people and those who are the most vulnerable.</p>	<p>The council's contribution to improving outcomes for children and young people is good in most service functions across the five outcome areas. Services are making a discernible difference and are of clear benefit to most children and young people, and are narrowing the gap between outcomes for most children and young people and those who are the most vulnerable. Outcomes are mostly better than in other similar areas/authorities. Children and young people are engaged in strategic planning, and can make a notable difference in key areas. The responses of most children and young people to service delivery and provision are positive. Capacity to improve is at least good.</p>

<p>Adequate (2)</p> <p>Services are having a positive impact on improving outcomes for children and young people. A number of important initiatives are beginning to show that they are narrowing the gap between the outcomes of most children and young people and those who are the most vulnerable. Some initiatives are more recent and have not yet had a discernible impact on outcomes.</p>	<p>The council's contribution to improving outcomes for children and young people is at least adequate in almost all service functions across the five outcome areas. Services are making some difference to the majority of children and young people, including vulnerable children and young people. Services are beginning to narrow the gap between outcomes for most children and young people and those who are the most vulnerable. Outcomes are mostly in line with other similar areas/authorities. There is regular consultation with representative groups of children and young people and some evidence that this has made a difference. Vulnerable and other minority groups of children and young people are involved fully in making decisions that make a difference to their own lives. The responses of the majority of children and young people to questions about service provision and delivery are positive. Most service functions are adequate. Service management is at least adequate. For any service functions graded inadequate there are clear signs of progress and improvement. Capacity to improve is at least adequate.</p>
<p>Inadequate (1)</p> <p>Services are having limited impact on improving outcomes for children and young people. The gap between the outcomes of most children and young people and those who are the most vulnerable is not closing.</p>	<p>There is a failure in one or more respects to meet the requirements for a grade 2.¹ Key features of this failure might be that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is limited evidence of the impact of service functions, or discernible benefits for only a few children and young people • there is little evidence that services are narrowing the gap between most children and young people and the most vulnerable • children and young people are not consulted regularly or sufficiently engaged in decisions that affect them as individuals. Conversely children and young people are repeatedly asked similar things by a range of services to no discernible effect. Children and young people report that consultation is no more than tokenistic • there has been limited improvement in key service functions graded inadequate • there is little or no improvement in service functions, or outcomes compare poorly with other similar areas/authorities; or there may be deterioration in key aspects of performance • capacity to improve may be adequate or better • if one outcome area is judged to be inadequate, serious consideration must be given to whether children's services is inadequate overall • if two outcome areas are judged to be inadequate, the children's services is inadequate.

¹ Failure to meet one requirement does not necessarily result in a grading of inadequate. The seriousness of the failure is considered carefully to determine whether it should affect the overall judgement. Inspectors' professional judgement is used to weigh and balance the issues against other aspects and judgements.

2. The capacity for improvement

Judgements about capacity for improvement are not just a matter of how services are planned and managed; they also encompass the effectiveness of arrangements for delivering improvement. The grades awarded are based on inspectors' professional judgement, and are made by taking a balanced view of the full range of key judgements and evidence.

The basis for making 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 services
- the accuracy of self-review and its application to evaluation and performance management to secure continuous improvement
- the quality of leadership, and especially the extent to which senior managers have a track record in securing improvements
- the strength and quality of strategic planning and the extent to which there is clear and sustained focus on value for money;
- the effectiveness of workforce planning and development.

For this area to be graded good there must be clear evidence of the council, or the council and its partners, delivering improvement.

Outstanding (4)	In addition to meeting the requirements for a grade 3:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 services. • Whether there is timely and effective action to remedy weaknesses. 	<p>There is a history of delivering innovative solutions to problems, particularly intractable ones, which has resulted in secure, sustainable and notable improvements in outcomes for children and young people.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strength and quality of strategic planning. • Proven ability to prioritise issues, target resources and secure improvements. 	<p>Vision and priorities are supported by comprehensive, coherent, carefully resourced and deliverable multi-agency plans. High quality services are maintained.</p> <p>Young people contribute routinely to strategic planning and in judging the effectiveness of provision.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of leadership. • Leadership with vision, with substantial capacity and strong capability to drive improvement. • The extent to which senior managers have a track record in securing improvements. 	<p>There is very active, visible and highly effective leadership at all levels which empowers staff to contribute fully to the planning and delivery of key priorities.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The accuracy of self-assessment/review and its application to evaluation and performance management to secure continuous improvement. • The robustness of performance management. 	<p>Self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate and is used to make improvements consistently and effectively. Performance management is comprehensive and highly effective, including financial management and planning.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a clear and sustained focus on value 	<p>Financial management is a strength. Informed choices are made about the balance of cost and quality when planning at all levels and in</p>

for money.	commissioning and decommissioning services. Optimum use is made of joint commissioning and partnership working to improve economy, efficiency and effectiveness of local services.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which there is clear workforce planning and development. • A strategy for recruitment, retention and staff development that seeks to anticipate difficulties and identifies relevant training needs. 	A high quality workforce development strategy is in place that contributes to long-term forward planning. There are the people, skills and capability in place at all levels to deliver service priorities and to maintain high quality core services. The workforce is fully integrated and there is an appropriate programme of staff training.
Good (3)	In addition to meeting the requirements for a grade 2:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 services. • Whether there is timely and effective action to remedy weaknesses. 	There is a strong track record of improvement in key service function areas and performance data, including satisfaction data and outcomes for minority ethnic, vulnerable and other groups. This is sustained and compares well with similar areas/authorities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strength and quality of strategic planning. • Proven ability to prioritise issues, target resources and secure improvements. 	Vision and priorities are supported by well coordinated and deliverable multi-agency plans, which remedy weaknesses and secure continuous improvement, including efficiency and effectiveness (value for money), all within a realistic timeframe. Medium term financial plans are in place and demonstrate the financial capacity to deliver the priorities in the plans and sustain good quality services. Children and young people are increasingly consulted on provision as part of strategic planning.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of leadership. • Leadership with vision, with substantial capacity and strong capability to drive improvement. • The extent to which senior managers have a track record in securing improvements. • • The accuracy of self-assessment/review and its application to evaluation and performance management to secure continuous improvement. • The robustness of performance management. 	<p>There is effective leadership and direction resulting in a shared vision and agreed sharply targeted priorities for improvement, which are understood within and beyond the organisation. Change is implemented well and has delivered clear benefits to service users, in particular vulnerable groups. Self-evaluation and learning is used effectively to make improvements. Performance management is effective. Arrangements are secure, and mostly consistently comprehensive, with ambitious targets, which are met in most cases.</p> <p>Progress is monitored, reported and timely, and effective remedial action is taken when slippages occur.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a clear and sustained focus on value for money. 	<p>Financial management is secure and integrated with strategic and service planning. Information about costs in relation to quality is used in some areas of strategic and service planning, joint commissioning and procurement, and changes to services, to improve economy, efficiency and effectiveness.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which there is clear workforce planning and development. • A strategy for recruitment, retention and staff development that seeks to anticipate difficulties and identifies relevant training needs. 	<p>Systematic forward planning ensures that there are the people, skills and capability in place to deliver service priorities. The HR framework and workforce development strategy maximise internal capacity and ensures that service developments are provided for, through staff training and development and also absence management policies.</p> <p>Plans for an integrated workforce are in place and being implemented, with multi-agency working a common feature of service delivery.</p>
<p>Adequate (2)</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The trend in improvement and whether this is consistent and improvements sustained. • The extent to which improvements in outcomes are linked to improvements in services. 	<p>There is a track record of some improvement in services and performance data, including in outcomes for vulnerable groups, in line with similar areas/authorities.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether there is timely and effective action to remedy weaknesses. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strength and quality of strategic planning. • Proven ability to prioritise issues, target resources and secure improvements. 	<p>Vision is shared and understood and priorities are emerging on the basis of a clear analysis of need. Plans are increasingly comprehensive and linked strategically and address key developmental areas. Financial planning is clearly linked to priorities. Realistic targets are set and the majority are met.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of leadership. • Leadership with vision, with substantial capacity and strong capability to drive improvement. • The extent to which senior managers have a track record in securing improvements. 	<p>Leadership in key areas is clear and staff, service users and partner agencies participate in some service planning and improvement.</p> <p>Necessary changes are made and result in some improved services or outcomes for service users.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The accuracy of self-assessment/review and its application to evaluation and performance management to secure continuous improvement. • The robustness of performance management. 	<p>Self-evaluation is generally accurate and is used to secure continuing improvements. There are some strategies to maximise and share learning within and across organisations. Performance management arrangements are in place and are increasingly comprehensive. There is some evidence of impact. Progress is monitored and reported and there is some satisfactory remedial action.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a clear and sustained focus on value for money. 	<p>Financial management is satisfactory at all levels. Some use is made of information about costs and quality but the focus on value for money is not embedded within and across services. Joint commissioning and procurement are leading to some improvement.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which there is clear workforce planning and development. • A strategy for recruitment, retention and staff development that seeks to anticipate difficulties and identifies 	<p>Sufficient people, skills and capability to deliver plans and improvement are mostly in place. Clear human resource (HR) frameworks and workforce development strategy are in place and are suitably targeted on key areas with evidence of impact. Plans for an integrated workforce are being developed and multi-agency working is a feature of some services.</p>

relevant training needs.	
Inadequate (1)	There is a failure in one or more respects to meet the requirements for a grade 2. ² Key features of this failure might be that:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The trend in improvement and whether this is consistent and improvements sustained. • The extent to which improvements in outcomes are linked to improvements in services. • Whether there is timely and effective action to remedy weaknesses. 	There is little or no improvement in services or performance data compared with similar areas/authorities or there may be deterioration in key aspects.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strength and quality of strategic planning. • Proven ability to prioritise issues, target resources and secure improvements. 	Vision and priorities are not sufficiently shared or well matched to need. Key plans are not in place to deliver improvements in priority areas.

² Failure to meet one requirement does not necessarily result in a grading of inadequate. The seriousness of the failure is considered carefully to determine whether it should affect the overall judgement. Inspectors' professional judgement is used to weigh and balance the issues against other aspects and judgements.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of leadership. • Leadership with vision, with substantial capacity and strong capability to drive improvement. • The extent to which senior managers have a track record in securing improvements. 	<p>Leadership is insufficiently clear or effective. Lead roles have not been identified clearly. Change is not always implemented effectively and there is limited evidence of positive improvement for service users, in particular vulnerable groups. Internal changes do not always lead to service improvement.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The accuracy of self-assessment/review and its application to evaluation and performance management to secure continuous improvement. • The robustness of performance management. 	<p>Self-evaluation is inaccurate or incomplete in important areas and learning is not maximised. There is a lack of suitable arrangements in place to manage performance and performance is inconsistent.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a clear and sustained focus on value for money. 	<p>There is insufficient knowledge of the costs of some key services and a lack of understanding of how costs and quality of services compare with national and/or other similar areas/authorities. There are notable gaps in financial management and procurement and commissioning.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which there is clear workforce planning and development. • A strategy for recruitment, retention and staff development that seeks to anticipate difficulties and identifies relevant training needs. 	<p>Workforce capacity is insufficient to meet the needs of local children and young people. There are notable gaps in key areas, for example, staffing, skills capability. An adequate workforce development strategy has not been developed.</p>

Section 2. Grade descriptors for the five outcome areas and service management

Being healthy

<p>Outstanding (4)</p> <p>Services are having a very strong impact on improving outcomes for children and young people. In particular, there is a clear and demonstrable narrowing of the gap between the outcomes for most children and young people and those who are the most vulnerable.</p>	<p>In addition to meeting the requirements for a grade 3:</p> <p>For NHS bodies. Most child-specific health targets were met in the most recent Annual Health Check. In the Children’s Hospital Improvement Review hospital(s) were rated excellent. There is compliance with Core Standards C2 and C23</p> <p>Health needs, including health inequalities, are known and linked to provision of services through effective joint commissioning leading to improved health outcomes for vulnerable groups of children.</p> <p>There is an appropriate emphasis on prevention/early intervention leading to improved health outcomes for vulnerable groups of children. Services are accessible to all and resourced to provide timely access. Maternity provision is targeted to need, leading to improved outcomes for vulnerable groups. Targeted advice/support is given to parents at risk, leading to demonstrable improvements in the health of their children.</p> <p>Multi-agency health promotion work, including the private and voluntary sectors, is effectively targeted at the most vulnerable groups of children, leading to a significant impact on healthy lifestyles; for example, there are reductions in smoking, drugs, alcohol, obesity, sexually transmitted diseases and teenage pregnancies. Through effective targeting, the Child Health Promotion Programme is leading to improved outcomes for the most at risk groups of children.</p> <p>Physical health needs of children and young people are identified early, accurately assessed and addressed taking into account social, educational and emotional needs, leading to improved outcomes for vulnerable groups of children.</p> <p>Young people contribute routinely to strategic planning.</p> <p>Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) are multi-agency, easily accessible, and offer a very good range of support/training to partner agencies, for example, behaviour support in schools, leading to demonstrably improved outcomes. It addresses all four tiers of service, and has targeted services for vulnerable groups, leading to improved outcomes for these groups.</p> <p>Looked after children receive the necessary health assessments and checks and their health outcomes are improving strongly. An effective audit programme is in place to continually improve their health. Targeted services for looked after children lead to demonstrable improvements in their health, for example, emotional/mental health, sexual health.</p> <p>There is effective joint commissioning of services for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as part of an overall multi-agency strategy for these children. Almost all have multi-agency care plans and lead professionals, leading to demonstrably improved outcomes. Agencies work very effectively together to provide clear and confident transition for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or long term health conditions to adult services, and user feedback is positive.</p>
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	<p>Health outcomes for children and young people are considerably better than in other similar areas/authorities.</p>
<p>Good (3)</p> <p>Services are having a strong impact on improving outcomes for children and young people. In particular, there is a clear narrowing of the gap between the outcomes of most children and young people and those who are the most vulnerable.</p>	<p>In addition to meeting the requirements for a grade 2:</p> <p>For NHS bodies. Most child-specific health targets were met in the most recent Annual Health Check. In the Children’s Hospital Improvement Review hospital(s) were rated good. There is compliance with Core Standards C2 and C23</p> <p>Health needs, including health inequalities, are known and linked to provision of services through effective joint commissioning for vulnerable groups of children. There is an appropriate emphasis on prevention/early intervention in meeting the health needs of vulnerable groups of children.</p> <p>Waiting times and service accessibility levels are acceptable. There is a wide range of maternity providers offering genuine choice. Parents at risk are offered targeted advice/support which promotes a healthy lifestyle for their children.</p> <p>Multi-agency health promotion work is effectively targeted at the most vulnerable groups of children, leading to good impact on healthy lifestyles, for example, reductions in smoking rates and teenage pregnancies. The Child Health Promotion Programme is effectively implemented and targeted to vulnerable groups of children.</p> <p>Physical health needs are identified early, accurately assessed and addressed in vulnerable groups of children, taking into account the child’s social, educational and emotional needs. Young people are frequently engaged through surveys and focus groups.</p> <p>CAMHS are multi-agency, easily accessible, and offer a range of support/training to partner agencies, for example, behaviour support in schools. Services address all four tiers, and target vulnerable groups, such as young offenders and looked after children.</p> <p>Looked after children receive necessary assessment and checks, including sensory and developmental checks. Healthy care programme is used to audit and improve the health of looked after children.</p> <p>There is joint commissioning of services for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as part of an overall multi-agency strategy for these children. Almost all have multi-agency care plans and lead professionals. There is good multi-agency support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or long term conditions as they move to adult health services.</p> <p>Health outcomes for children and young people are better than in other similar areas/authorities.</p>

<p>Adequate (2)</p> <p>Services are having a positive impact on improving outcomes for children and young people. A number of important initiatives are beginning to show that they are narrowing the gap between the outcomes of most children and young people and those who are the most vulnerable. Some initiatives are more recent and have not yet had a discernible impact on outcomes.</p>	<p>For NHS bodies. The majority of child-specific health targets were met in the most recent Annual Health Check.</p> <p>In the Children's Hospital Improvement Review hospital(s) were rated fair. There is compliance with Core Standards C2 and C23.</p> <p>Health needs are known and linked to provision of services through effective joint commissioning. There is an appropriate emphasis on prevention/early intervention for health needs. There are long waits for some services and/or access issues. There is an accessible range of maternity providers and range of community support tailored to needs of population.</p> <p>Parents are advised/supported adequately in promoting healthy lifestyles in their children. There is an effective multi-agency approach to health promotion activities e.g. smoking, drugs, sexual health.</p> <p>The Child Health Promotion Programme is implemented effectively and on a multi-agency basis for most children. Physical health needs are identified early, adequately assessed and addressed taking into account the child's social, educational and emotional needs. There is some attempt to engage with young people.</p> <p>CAMHS are multi-agency, easily accessible and adequately address all four tiers of service.</p> <p>Looked after children receive the necessary health assessments and checks. A designated doctor/nurse has been appointed who produces an annual report on their health needs.</p> <p>There is joint commissioning of services for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most have multi-agency care plans, or lead professionals. There are clear policies and procedures for transition planning of care to adult services for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or long term health conditions.</p> <p>Health outcomes for children and young people are in line with those in other similar areas/authorities.</p>
<p>Inadequate (1)</p> <p>Services are having a limited impact on improving outcomes for children and young people.</p>	<p>There is a failure in one or more respects to meet the requirements for a grade 2.³</p> <p>For NHS bodies. There was failure to meet the majority of child-specific health targets in the most recent Annual Health Check. Hospital trust(s) were rated weak in Children's Hospital Improvement Review. Core standards C2 and C23 are non-compliant, or there is insufficient assurance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health needs are not known and/or not linked to provision of services through joint commissioning. There is limited or inadequate emphasis on prevention/early

³ Failure to meet one requirement does not necessarily result in a grading of inadequate. The seriousness of the failure is considered carefully to determine whether it should affect the overall judgement. Inspectors' professional judgement is used to weigh and balance the issues against other aspects and judgements.

<p>The gap between the outcomes of most children and young people and those who are the most vulnerable is not closing.</p>	<p>intervention for health needs. Many services are inappropriately located and/or waiting times are a significant problem.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is limited provision of community-based maternity care and/or inadequate recognition of the diverse communities on provision of maternity and postnatal care. • There is minimal or no advice/support given to parents in promoting healthy lifestyles in their children. There are minimal health promotion activities, and/or they are not multi-agency. The Child Health Promotion Programme is not implemented effectively and is having limited impact in improving health outcomes for children and young people. • CAMHS is not multi-agency, and / or easily accessible. It does not address adequately all four tiers of service. • Looked after children have limited access to necessary health assessments and checks. There is no designated doctor/nurse with inadequate information on their health needs. • There is no joint commissioning of services for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Few have multi-agency care plans, or lead professionals. There is poor planning between agencies for the transition of care to adult health provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or long term conditions. • Health outcomes for children and young people compare poorly with those in other similar areas/authorities.
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Staying safe

<p>Outstanding (4)</p> <p>Services are having a very strong impact on improving outcomes for children and young people. In particular, there is a clear and demonstrable narrowing of the gap between the outcomes for most children and young people and those who are the most vulnerable.</p>	<p>In addition to meeting the requirements for a grade 3:</p> <p>Almost all children report feeling safe, are consulted with and believe that their concerns are listened to and responded to suitably and in ways that promote self-protection and personal empowerment.</p> <p>Safeguarding outcomes are reviewed regularly, ensuring that information, support and guidance is targeted sharply to meet all needs and is increasingly empowering individuals, groups and the community as a whole in ensuring local children stay safe. Outcomes for children on the child protection register are significantly better than in similar areas/authorities. There is a sustained trend of significant improvement and/or high performance is maintained.</p> <p>Children, their families and professionals report that referral and assessment workers are highly effective in identifying children in need of services, and those at risk of significant harm, and gather the evidence needed for timely and effective intervention.</p> <p>In all cases assessments are effective and timely, fully inclusive of the child and his/her family or carers, and lead to well focused work that demonstrably improves the circumstances of the child and his/her parents or carers.</p> <p>All workers are aware of, and routinely use, a wide range of high quality preventative support services, and this has led to a discernible, significant and sustainable reduction in the incidence of child abuse and neglect, and is clearly enabling children to become well cared for who would otherwise become looked after.</p> <p>Life chances of looked after children and young people leaving care have improved significantly through access to leisure, healthy living, education, training and employment opportunities and suitable accommodation.</p> <p>Children, young people and their families fully understand the safeguarding measures in place in all aspects of the service that they receive and feel confident about the response they would receive if they had to report a concern.</p> <p>The number of serious case reviews is low due to preventative and acute services working effectively. Action from all reviews has been highly effective.</p> <p>Relevant agency and inter-agency strategies, policies, procedures and standards are very well established. They are effective and comply fully with statutory requirements, current government guidance and local standards.</p> <p>Strategies and protocols are well established for routinely sharing information, and for the consistent application of agreed individual and inter-agency thresholds and responsibilities for safeguarding children. This leads to the early identification of potential risk and the prompt provision of cohesive and versatile support services that appropriately enable children to be safely cared for within the family unit.</p> <p>There is a comprehensive awareness of safeguarding issues; the local arrangements for response are understood across the partnership, and there is consistent confidence in their effectiveness.</p> <p>Staying safe outcomes are considerably better than in other similar areas/authorities.</p>
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<p>Good (3)</p> <p>Services are having a strong impact on improving outcomes for children and young people. In particular, there is a clear narrowing of the gap between the outcomes of most children and young people and those who are the most vulnerable.</p>	<p>In addition to meeting the requirements for a grade 2:</p> <p>Most children report feeling safe and feel that their concerns are listened to and responded to promptly. Children and young people's views and comments are helping to improve the service.</p> <p>Safeguarding outcomes are reviewed frequently to ensure that information, support and guidance are targeted well to meet needs., They empower individuals, groups and the community to ensure that local children stay safe. In most cases outcomes for children on the child protection register are higher than in similar authorities and/or the rate of improvement in outcomes exceeds the average improvement rate in similar authorities.</p> <p>Referral and assessment workers promptly and accurately identify children in need of services and those at risk of significant harm, and gather relevant information to enable work to commence. Cases of assessments of need are undertaken in an inclusive and timely way. Well focused support or intervention is put in place and most cases are closed appropriately so there are very few unnecessary re-referrals and reassessments.</p> <p>Nearly all workers are aware of and use a wide range of preventative support services, and this is reducing the incidence of child abuse and neglect and preventing children having to be looked after.</p> <p>Outcomes for looked after children are reviewed regularly to ensure that information, support and guidance are well targeted to meet their needs and helps to empower them to lead successful lives.</p> <p>Looked after children have a secure and stable placement, and have easy access to secure and stable education and health provision that is contributing to improved outcomes. There are effective contracting, support and monitoring arrangements for children placed outside their local areas.</p> <p>Children, young people and their families understand the safeguarding measures in place in all aspects of the service that they receive and feel confident about the response they would receive if they had to report a concern.</p> <p>The culture of safeguarding is firmly embedded and there are clear remits for partners including those from the voluntary and private sectors.</p> <p>There is evidence that practices across all partner agencies are significantly improved as a result of learning from practice, management and serious case reviews, and the experiences of service users and their families.</p> <p>Relevant agency and interagency strategies are in place and comply fully with requirements.</p> <p>Almost all groups of workers are trained to identify and respond to safeguarding issues in accordance with national and local arrangements.</p> <p>A wide range of information, support and guidance is easily accessible to children and their carers that reflect the well targeted action being taken to combat the local safeguarding issues and the diversity of needs.</p> <p>Staying safe outcomes are better than in other similar areas/authorities.</p>
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<p>Adequate (2)</p> <p>Services are having a positive impact on improving outcomes for children and young people. A number of important initiatives are beginning to show that they are narrowing the gap between the outcomes of most children and young people and those who are the most vulnerable. Some initiatives are more recent and have not yet had a discernible impact on outcomes.</p>	<p>The majority of children report feeling safe and that their concerns are listened and responded to.</p> <p>All children on the Child Protection Register are allocated a suitably qualified and experienced social worker, who is actively coordinating a multi-agency child protection plan which is regularly reviewed in accordance with standards set out in national guidance. There is some sustained improvement in outcomes for children. Outcomes for children on the child protection register are in line with similar authorities or the trend is one of sustained improvement.</p> <p>Referral and assessment workers identify children in need of services and those at risk of significant harm.</p> <p>Multi-agency assessments of need, involving children and their families, are undertaken in a timely way to inform support or intervention; cases are closed appropriately to minimise the incidence of unnecessary re-referrals and reassessments.</p> <p>Many workers from a range of settings are aware of and use a suitable range of preventative support services to minimise the incidence of child abuse and neglect and prevent children having to be looked after.</p> <p>All children who are looked after are allocated a suitably qualified worker, who is actively coordinating a care plan which is regularly reviewed in accordance with standards set out in national guidance. There is sustained improvement in outcomes for children.</p> <p>Looked after children have generally stable placements, are safe from abuse and exploitation, and are regularly monitored.</p> <p>All services comply with the requirements to detect and deter people who are unsuitable to work with children.</p> <p>There is an established culture of safeguarding which is evident in the routine work of individual agencies and key partnerships, such as the Children's Strategic Partnership and the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Partnership working involves voluntary and private sector agencies and improves outcomes for children and young people.</p> <p>Serious case reviews have resulted in action plans that have been agreed and implemented to address identified concerns.</p> <p>Relevant agency and inter-agency strategies, policies, procedures and standards are mostly in place and comply with statute and current government guidance.</p> <p>Key groups of workers are trained to identify and respond to safeguarding issues in accordance with national and local arrangements.</p> <p>A range of safeguarding information, support and provision is readily available to the majority of children and their carers, including the most vulnerable. This range reflects the diversity of needs and the action being taken to combat the local safeguarding issues.</p> <p>Staying safe outcomes are in line with those in other similar areas/authorities.</p>
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<p>Inadequate (1)</p> <p>Services are having limited impact on improving outcomes for children and young people. The gap between the outcomes of most children and young people and those who are the most vulnerable is not closing.</p>	<p>There is a failure in one or more respects to meet the requirements for a grade 2.⁴</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children do not feel safe and report that their concerns are not heard or responded to. • The incidence of child abuse and neglect of children on the child protection register is higher than it is in other similar areas/authorities, or the trend is not one of sustained or notable improvement. Referral and assessment workers fail consistently to identify or respond to children in need of services or those at risk of significant harm. Some children on the child protection register are unallocated or allocated to an insufficiently qualified social worker. • Assessments are not completed in timely ways, or fail to involve the child, the family or other professionals. Cases are closed inappropriately and there are unnecessary re-referrals and re-assessments. There is a lack of suitable resources, or a lack of knowledge about how they can be used to prevent family breakdown or incidents of child protection. • Not all children who are looked after are allocated to a suitably qualified worker or there is no sustained improvement in their outcomes compared to similar authorities. Looked after children experience too many changes of placement, or are in placements that are not regularly monitored. • Human resource and recruitment practices are failing to identify people who are unsuitable to work with children. Partnership working is not evident or is disjointed and safeguarding cultures are not established across all agencies. • Serious case reviews and management reviews are not appropriately commissioned, or are ineffective and fail to produce reports that lead to improved safeguards or protection for children. • Relevant agency and interagency policies, procedures and standards are absent or do not comply with statute or current government guidance. • Insufficient numbers of workers are trained or have received insufficient training in the identification of safeguarding issues. • Safeguarding information, support and provision are insufficient or are not accessible to children and their carers. • Staying safe outcomes are notably poorer than in similar areas/authorities.
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⁴ Failure to meet one requirement does not necessarily result in a grading of inadequate. The seriousness of the failure is considered carefully to determine whether it should affect the overall judgement. Inspectors' professional judgement is used to weigh and balance the issues against other aspects and judgements.

Enjoying and achieving

<p>Outstanding (4)</p> <p>Services are having a very strong impact on improving outcomes for children and young people. In particular, there is a clear and demonstrable narrowing of the gap between the outcomes for most children and young people and those who are the most vulnerable.</p>	<p>In addition to meeting the requirements for a grade 3:</p> <p>Progress in raising standards, improving attendance and reducing exclusions is impressive against similar areas/authorities in all or nearly all respects. It is sustained over time in notable elements, such as the value added across key stages; high standards are maintained; any gaps in performance between minority ethnic groups are being successfully eradicated; and other vulnerable groups achieve very well.</p> <p>Looked after children achieve very well and the gap between their performance and the national average for all pupils has closed dramatically or been eradicated. They thoroughly enjoy their lives and have very high aspirations.</p> <p>The overall effectiveness of nearly all nursery, primary, secondary, special schools, pupil referral units (PRUs) and early years settings is good or better, and the progress made by children and young people in schools, including those in PRUs, is also good or better.</p> <p>Attendance is consistently well above local and/or national averages and exclusions are well below average, or show a sustained improvement over time, especially for vulnerable, minority ethnic and other groups.</p> <p>Children and young people consistently indicate that life is enjoyable and they are extremely happy at school.</p> <p>A well conceived strategy supports an integrated approach to development in the early years and this contributes strongly to provision that is of very good quality.</p> <p>Recreational, cultural and leisure facilities are wide-ranging, imaginative and accessible. They demonstrably meet the needs, wishes and diverse interests of most children and young people and consequently are used very well.</p> <p>Enjoy and achieve outcomes are considerably better than in similar areas/authorities.</p>
<p>Good (3)</p> <p>Services are having a strong impact on improving outcomes for children and young people. In particular, there is a clear narrowing of the gap between the outcomes of most children and young people and those who are</p>	<p>In addition to meeting the requirements for a grade 2:</p> <p>Most children and young people, including those from vulnerable groups, make better progress than expected given their starting points, and achieve well in relation to their capability. Children and young people from minority ethnic groups achieve well.</p> <p>Looked after children achieve well compared to similar authorities and the gap between their performance and the national average for all pupils is closing rapidly. They enjoy their lives and have high aspirations.</p> <p>The overall effectiveness of the majority of nursery, primary, secondary and special schools, PRUs and early years settings is good or better, and the progress made by most children and young people is also good or better. No early years settings are deemed to be unsatisfactory.</p> <p>Attendance is consistently above local and/or national averages and exclusions are below average, or show a rapid improvement over time, especially for vulnerable, minority ethnic and other groups. Attendance and behaviour are judged as good in</p>

<p>the most vulnerable.</p>	<p>nearly all schools. The numbers of children unable to attend schools by reason of illness, exclusion or otherwise is low and schools manage different needs effectively. There are thorough and efficient procedures agreed between education and other agencies to exchange information at an early stage and effective preventative measures are taken.</p> <p>The responses of the majority of children and young people indicate that life is very enjoyable and that they feel very happy at school.</p> <p>Provision in the early years is of good quality and there is a wide and flexible choice for most parents in balancing their children's needs, their work commitments and family life. Provision of childcare support and training for staff who work in the early years is closely matched to needs, and deprived areas are especially well served.</p> <p>Most providers, parents and children and young people are clear about the range of alternative provision available, and referral systems and costs are transparent. Re-integration is prompt, planned carefully and supported well.</p> <p>Support for parents and carers is coordinated effectively across different agencies and is well targeted, especially for traditionally hard-to-reach groups such as single or teenage parents. Information is readily available in the full range of community languages and is accessible to most users.</p> <p>Very productive use is made of local, regional and national data to monitor the progress made by children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and to ensure that they achieve the highest possible standards of attainment. Statements are of high quality and reviews are thorough and lead to improvements in school practice and provision.</p> <p>There is a clearly defined and successful strategy for securing improvements to recreational, leisure and cultural facilities based on a clear audit of needs and wishes of children and young people and the identification of gaps in provision. Strenuous and successful efforts are made to ensure targeted groups of vulnerable children and young people benefit from the facilities on offer.</p> <p>Enjoy and achieve outcomes are better than in similar areas/authorities.</p>
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<p>Adequate (2)</p> <p>Services are having a positive impact on improving outcomes for children and young people. A number of important initiatives are beginning to show that they are narrowing the gap between the outcomes of most children and young people and those who are the most vulnerable. Some initiatives are more recent and have not yet had a discernible impact on outcomes.</p>	<p>Progress and enjoyment are inadequate in no major respect, and may be good in some. Standards of attainment are at least in line with similar areas/authorities or show a clear and sustained improvement. Attainment and progress for vulnerable groups are at least in line with similar areas/authorities, or the trend is one of improvement over time and the gap is closing. No significant ethnic minority group is underachieving.</p> <p>Looked after children achieve satisfactorily and the gap between their performance and the national average for all pupils is closing. They enjoy their lives and have high aspirations.</p> <p>The overall effectiveness of most nursery, primary, secondary, special schools and PRUs and the progress made by their pupils are at least satisfactory. Statutory requirements are met, or reasonable steps are taken to meet them. Monitoring and well focused intervention and support in schools are improving outcomes for pupils.</p> <p>Rates of attendance and exclusions are in line with national averages, or the trend is one of improvement over time and any gaps are closing. Attendance and behaviour are at least satisfactory in most schools.</p> <p>The responses of children and young people indicate that almost all of them feel that life is at least quite enjoyable and that they are at least quite happy at school.</p> <p>Provision in the early years is at least adequate. Nursery provision is freely available for all 3- and 4-year-olds whose parents request places. Those working in early years settings have access to valued training which improves their ability to raise standards and to meet the needs of vulnerable or underperforming groups.</p> <p>There are sufficient, suitable and accessible school places. Admission arrangements give priority to the most vulnerable groups of children and young people.</p> <p>A broad range of recreational, leisure and cultural facilities are available and used well by many children and young people.</p> <p>The range of alternative and flexible provision for pupils educated other than at school (EOTAS) meets the needs of most learners and allows them to make at least satisfactory progress. The children and young people are reintegrated into mainstream provision in a timely way. There is a shared and up-to-date list of those on the EOTAS register and those children and young people educated otherwise, with clear details of their current educational placement and provision.</p> <p>The majority of parents know where they can seek help and support, and guidance is readily available and accessible, including for parents whose children have specific learning needs.</p> <p>There is early identification and assessment of the needs of vulnerable groups, especially looked after children and children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Parents, carers and children and young people receive support to contribute to this process.</p> <p>Vulnerable groups of children and young people receive a full entitlement to education which meets their needs, including out-of-school hours learning opportunities, and</p>
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	<p>participate in recreational and enrichment activities in line with their wishes (for looked after children this includes a comprehensive personal education plan). Education and social care staff (including those working in schools) work in close partnership with children and young people and their parents to make satisfactory improvement to educational attainment. Most children and young people have their needs met within their local neighbourhood.</p> <p>For children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities there is a broad range of support for low incidence needs which reduces the number of out-of-area placements. Statement procedures are efficient. Intended outcomes for pupils are clearly stated and the provision specified is made. Placements outside the authority are monitored as a matter of course.</p> <p>Enjoy and achieve outcomes are broadly in line with similar areas/authorities.</p>
<p>Inadequate (1)</p> <p>Services are having limited impact on improving outcomes for children and young people. The gap between the outcomes of most children and young people and those who are the most vulnerable is not closing.</p>	<p>There is a failure in one or more respects to meet the requirements for a grade 2.⁵</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, many children and young people do not achieve high enough standards when set against their capability and starting points. A significant number of ethnic minority pupils achieve below the performance of most other pupils. • Looked after children do not achieve well and the gap between their performance and the national average for all pupils remains stubbornly wide. Some do not enjoy their lives and have low aspirations. • In a significant minority of schools, including PRUs, the overall effectiveness and progress are unsatisfactory. • Support for improving attendance and reducing exclusions, especially among the most vulnerable, is not targeted or matched to the needs of schools or groups of children and young people. • Children and young people have major and well founded reservations about the quality of key services. • Provision in the early years is variable and some is inadequate. • Insufficient action is taken to reduce school places. Admissions criteria lack objectivity and/or clarity. • Partnership working is not well coordinated and some key partners are not engaged fully. • There are limited procedures for tracking, identifying and arranging provision for children of school age not on a school roll or who are unable to attend school for medical reasons. • Enjoy and achieve outcomes are notably poorer than in similar areas/authorities.

⁵ Failure to meet one requirement does not necessarily result in a grading of inadequate. The seriousness of the failure is considered carefully to determine whether it should affect the overall judgement. Inspectors' professional judgement is used to weigh and balance the issues against other aspects and judgements.

Making a positive contribution

<p>Outstanding (4)</p> <p>Services are having a very strong impact on improving outcomes for children and young people. In particular, there is a clear and demonstrable narrowing of the gap between the outcomes for most children and young people and those who are the most vulnerable.</p>	<p>In addition to meeting the requirements for a grade 3:</p> <p>Children and young people and their parents/carers report that services closely meet their needs and have resulted in real change and in high levels of satisfaction. Children and young people and their parents/carers, including looked after children and those with learning disabilities and/or difficulties are routinely involved in quality assurance and evaluation and their contributions are leading to the continual improvement and design of services.</p> <p>Services are having a demonstrable impact on children and young people's ability to work through, cope with and manage difficulties before they become problems.</p> <p>Mechanisms for consultation with children and young people, including looked after children and those with learning disabilities and/or difficulties, are embedded in practice, ensure that their voice is heard and include formalised links at strategic level. Agencies have agreed key principles for engagement, and standards against which the success of active involvement can be judged and training and participation accredited. Children and young people, including looked after children and those with learning disabilities and/or difficulties, are involved fully in issues that affect them and that their views are built into decision-making processes and demonstrably inform the shaping of services.</p> <p>Strategies include capacity building to ensure that there is a regular number of children and young people, including looked after children and those with learning disabilities and/or difficulties, who are willing and able to take on lead roles. The responses of most children and young people indicate it is easy to involve them in decision-making and that they are able to make a notable difference in key areas.</p> <p>Accreditation programmes are widely used to recognise children and young people's achievements and these are celebrated and promoted across communities. There is effective in-depth family work by appropriate agencies, based on clear assessment of need, service agreements and monitoring of progress, leading to improved outcomes.</p> <p>Children and young people report there are places to go, things they like to do, and that they are highly satisfied with services. There has been a sustained reduction in youth offending and re-offending rates, and levels of offending are lower than in similar areas/authorities. There are much higher numbers of supervised juveniles in full time education, training and employment than in similar areas/authorities. There is very little anti social behaviour and/or a sustained reduction in levels of antisocial behaviour.</p> <p>Mechanisms for consulting looked after children are embedded in practice and include formalised links at a strategic level. The views and opinions of looked after children are increasingly informing strategic planning and the range of provision available. These children are routinely involved in the QA/evaluation process and their contributions are leading to the continual improvement of services. Looked after children demonstrate effective communication skills and have the confidence to speak out on issues that matter to them. Care leavers report positive in-care experiences and high satisfaction with their continued support. Looked after children, and particularly care leavers, have</p>
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	<p>high aspirations and are achieving well in further and higher education.</p> <p>Consultation opportunities for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are embedded in, and integrated with, wider systems for consulting children and young people, and this ensures their voice is heard.</p> <p>Outcomes are considerably better than in similar areas/authorities.</p>
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<p>Good (3)</p> <p>Services are having a strong impact on improving outcomes for children and young people. In particular, there is a clear narrowing of the gap between the outcomes of most children and young people and those who are the most vulnerable.</p>	<p>In addition to meeting the requirements for a grade 2:</p> <p>There is close and successful targeting of mentoring and other support from a wide range of multi-agency services for individuals and groups of children who are not developing socially and emotionally.</p> <p>Highly valued, sharply focused parenting programmes are available for those that need them. Children and young people, including looked after children and those with learning disabilities and/or difficulties, are involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of training and support programmes.</p> <p>Effective inter-agency work is informed by a shared understanding of community safety issues. Anti-bullying strategies are well established, effective and linked clearly to the wider agenda of keeping children and young people safe and healthy. Ongoing support is offered to children and young people considered vulnerable to anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>There are sharply focused and successful parenting programmes for those that need them. Information, advice and counselling provision is signposted well and targeted effectively. Young carers can access specialist support and study support; they can socialise, participate in out-of-school activities and have time for themselves.</p> <p>All groups of children and young people are encouraged strongly to participate in decisions that affect them across health, education and social care. All children and young people know and understand, and have experience of, the decision-making processes that affect them, and know how to make representation. Consultation is routine, frequent and inclusive, and engages traditionally hard-to-reach, vulnerable and other groups of children and young people. Consultation builds on successful models of active involvement of children and young people, including local and national initiatives, for example, school councils, the British Youth Council, the youth parliament, the National Council for Voluntary Youth Service and the National Looked After Children Youth Forum. The views and opinions of children and young people have helped to shape and make a discernible difference to services.</p> <p>There is a comprehensive range of activities that all children and young people, including looked after children and those with learning disabilities and/or difficulties, can access. Services are concentrated in trouble spots at times when they will be most effective. Children and young people respond well to services, and there is increased take-up, for example, of places at youth clubs. Accreditation programmes are used to celebrate children and young people's involvement/achievement.</p> <p>Attendance and school exclusion figures are better than in similar areas/authorities. Services target and provide effective support for the hard to reach, vulnerable and most difficult children and young people and their families. More children and young people are in education, employment and training than in similar areas/authorities. Incentives are effective in promoting sport and leisure.</p> <p>Youth offending trends indicate offending rates are reducing over time. Compared with similar areas/authorities, an above average proportion of young people who offend are in full time education and attend regularly. There is very effective intervention when young people first offend, efficient procedures from arrest to sentence, and highly focused support to help offenders, and their parents, face up to offending behaviour and take responsibility for it. The use of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and similar measures is well coordinated and effective.</p>
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	<p>Looked after children and young people and those with learning disabilities and/or difficulties report that their views and opinions are listened to by adults and acted on. They feel fully involved in making decisions about their own life and they, and their parents/carers, value independent advocacy services and the representation and complaints procedure. They believe that foster and residential placements take account of their diverse needs and that transition support is effective and valued. Looked after children and those with learning disabilities and/or difficulties are consulted on procedures and provision and their views taken into account. Effective mechanisms are in place to hear their individual and collective views and opinions and these are integrated within wider systems for children and young people's consultation. These children and young people's successes are celebrated and strengthen self-esteem.</p> <p>Children and young people with learning disabilities and/or difficulties report they have clear plans for their future and feel well prepared and supported. Their parents/carers have access to and highly value impartial information, advice and guidance on ETE opportunities. These children, and their parents/carers, report that extended day and respite care is sufficiently comprehensive to meet their needs.</p> <p>Outcomes are better than in similar areas/authorities.</p>
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<p>Adequate (2)</p> <p>Services are having a positive impact on improving outcomes for children and young people. A number of important initiatives are beginning to show that they are narrowing the gap between the outcomes of most children and young people and those who are the most vulnerable. Some initiatives are more recent and have not yet had a discernible impact on outcomes.</p>	<p>There is a wide range of opportunities for children and young people within schools and the wider community to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - learn - share - be tolerant - listen to others - communicate thoughts and feelings positively - develop responsibility - experience team working - develop secure relationships with adults - care for others and the environment around them. <p>Mentoring and other support, including that given by children and young people themselves, is provided for those having difficulty in developing and maintaining positive relationships with others. Parenting programmes are available, when needed, to help promote positive relationships between parents/carers and their children.</p> <p>The assessment and review of vulnerable and other groups of children and young people is supported by clear criteria for accessing services and undertaking assessments. Children and young people and their parents/ carers are supported well at key transition points, especially at times of transfer of schools. Children and young people coping with traumatic events and major changes are supported satisfactorily in dealing with the issues affecting them, can access specialist service where necessary, and plan and move on in their lives.</p> <p>Vulnerable and other groups of children and young people, including those who are looked after by the council, are involved fully in making decisions about their own lives. They and their parents/carers have access to independent advocacy services and procedures for making representations and complaints. Young carers are known and have access to some support, especially someone to talk to who will listen. There is regular consultation with children and young people, especially through representative groups, and some evidence that their views have made a difference. Children and young people are encouraged to take part in and to initiate voluntary activities and the majority feel involved in and well supported by their local communities.</p> <p>Successful action is taken to identify those at risk and to reduce anti-social behaviour. Agencies cooperate well, know where services are needed and deliver successful programmes in local trouble spots. Services effectively target hard to reach, vulnerable groups and problem families. Interventions are leading to improved attendance and exclusion from schools. Children and young people report that relationships with care and other workers are good and that their work with them results in changed behaviour.</p> <p>Policing methods complement work by other agencies and have impact on antisocial behaviour. There are only a few signs of antisocial behaviour in communities (for example graffiti). Rates of youth offending are in line with similar areas/authorities and/or are not increasing. Strategic oversight is provided by a management board at which all the statutory partners and other relevant bodies are actively represented. The youth offending team is resourced according to statutory requirements. Interventions are targeted at local trouble spots. Arrangements are in place to ensure that those who offend receive specific guidance and support. Offending rates are in line with similar areas/authorities. Services are available to address the specific mental and physical</p>
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	<p>health needs of young offenders. Work with families and individual young people are satisfactory, helping to reduce offending behaviour and strengthen children and young people's self-esteem. Arrangements are in place to support offenders on release from custody that include the areas of health, family support and use of leisure time.</p> <p>Elected members know and understand their duties and responsibilities as corporate parents, and their actions and responses are sound. They meet children and young people regularly to hear their views. Looked after children receive sound support at key transition points.</p> <p>Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are involved in making decisions about their own lives. These children and their parents/carers have access impartial information, advice and guidance on ETE opportunities. They know how to make formal representations and complaints and receive appropriate responses and receive sound support at key transition points. Opportunities for the integration of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities into the community are being developed and promoted.</p> <p>Outcomes are broadly in line with similar areas/authorities.</p>
<p>Inadequate (1)</p> <p>Services are having limited impact on improving outcomes for children and young people. The gap between the outcomes of most children and young people and those who are the most vulnerable is not closing.</p>	<p>There is a failure in one or more respects to meet the requirements for a grade 2.⁶</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are insufficient opportunities for children and young people, including looked after children and young people and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to receive the support they need to develop secure and positive relationships with adults and other children. Support for parents/carers having difficulties in maintaining positive relationships with their children is limited or they report that services do not meet their needs and are having little or no effect. Children and young people, including looked after children and young people and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are not supported sufficiently at key transition points in their lives or in coping with traumatic events and major changes. Children and young people, including looked after children and young people and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, report their needs are not being met and the lack of support is affecting their social and emotional well-being. Children and young people, including looked after children and young people and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are not consulted regularly or sufficiently engaged in decisions that affect them as individuals. The majority of children and young people report consultation is no more than tokenistic. • Antisocial behaviour is not reducing. Agencies are not working effectively together to tackle issues. Rates of youth offending are above those in similar areas/authorities and/or are increasing. There is insufficient action to help offenders, and their parents, to face up to their behaviour and take responsibility for it.

⁶ Failure to meet one requirement does not necessarily result in a grading of inadequate. The seriousness of the failure is considered carefully to determine whether it should affect the overall judgement. Inspectors' professional judgement is used to weigh and balance the issues against other aspects and judgements.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looked after children and young people and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are not involved making decisions made about their own life and do not have access to an independent advocacy service. They do not know how to make formal representations and complaints. Most elected members do not know or understand their duties and responsibilities as corporate parents. Foster and residential placements do not take into account the diverse needs of looked after children. Contact and access arrangements for those placed away from home are not promoted appropriately. • Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and their parents/carers, do not have access to impartial information, advice and guidance on ETE opportunities. They do not know how to make formal representations and complaints. Extended day care and respite care for with children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is insufficient. • Outcomes are notably poorer than in similar areas/authorities.
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Achieving economic well-being

<p>Outstanding (4)</p> <p>Services are having a very strong impact on improving outcomes for children and young people. In particular, there is a clear and demonstrable narrowing of the gap between the outcomes for most children and young people and those who are the most vulnerable.</p>	<p>In addition to meeting the requirements for a grade 3:</p> <p>High quality childcare provision is based on a comprehensive needs analysis, which is effective at predicting future needs. It meets the needs of diverse groups of parents and carers, with a good range of flexible and affordable places.</p> <p>Economic renewal programmes are innovative and significantly improve employment opportunities. The benefits service promotes entitlement effectively and take-up is very good.</p> <p>There is very good access to adult and community learning and family learning, which has improved job prospects and learning skills markedly. There are very effective links between childcare provision, Jobcentre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council.</p> <p>The economic well-being of families, children and young people is evident in the low number of children living in poverty, or the rapid reduction in the number to a figure below the national average.</p> <p>The numbers of young people in education, training and employment are well above the average found in similar areas/authorities; or there is a sustained and significant trend of improvement; or high standards are maintained, including for all vulnerable, disaffected, minority ethnic and other groups.</p> <p>Very high quality partnership working leads to very effective advice and guidance to all groups of young people, including disaffected, vulnerable and minority ethnic groups, and those with complex needs.</p> <p>Outstanding collaborative working has led to a very effective 14–19 strategy which sets and meets targets to meet identified needs. The strategic partnership has made very good progress towards collective delivery of the new 14–19 vocational diplomas. The innovative curriculum and good quality of teaching and learning in schools and colleges 14–19 lead to high retention rates and consistently high performance,</p>
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	<p>including well above average outcomes when compared with similar areas/authorities at levels 2 and 3 by age 19. Value added information indicates that young people are achieving well above expectations based on their prior attainment.</p> <p>Outstanding quality, coordination and range of advice empower young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those that are looked after to be independent, achieve highly and be well prepared for adult life.</p> <p>There is a wide choice of pathways and flexibility to meet diverse needs, including hard-to-reach groups. Vocational pathways are actively promoted, including to high-achieving young people. There are very good links with employers, which result in good work placement opportunities and work-related learning.</p> <p>Almost all young people live in accommodation that meets the Decent Homes Standard and action is taken to ensure that all young people are housed quickly. High quality accommodation and tenancy support for young people and homeless families is readily accessible. Housing strategies and plans in relation to vulnerable groups are comprehensive and are having a notable impact.</p> <p>Partnership working is embedded and coherent for all key partners, including the voluntary and private sectors. It has led to a range of sustainable initiatives which are having a demonstrable impact across a broad range of issues. Almost all services are high quality, innovative, diverse and accessible.</p> <p>There has been very effective planning to ensure the necessary facilities and workforce to deliver the new 14–19 curriculum entitlements.</p> <p>Economic well-being outcomes are considerably better than in similar areas/authorities.</p>
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<p>Good (3)</p> <p>Services are having a strong impact on improving outcomes for children and young people. In particular, there is a clear narrowing of the gap between the outcomes of most children and young people and those who are the most vulnerable.</p>	<p>In addition to meeting the requirements for a grade 2:</p> <p>There is a wide range of childcare provision, with clear plans to develop it further. Access issues are addressed well, particularly for disadvantaged families and vulnerable children.</p> <p>Economic renewal programmes improve employment opportunities significantly. The benefits service promotes entitlement and take-up is good. There is good access to effective programmes of adult and community learning and family learning, which are helping parents and families to develop their potential. There are effective links between childcare provision, Job Centre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council.</p> <p>The children's information system is effective in providing comprehensive, reliable and up-to-date information, which is readily accessible to parents and young people.</p> <p>There has been a positive impact on the economic well-being of young people, such as an increase in employment opportunities and a decreasing proportion of children living in poverty.</p> <p>The numbers of children and young people in education, training and employment are above the average in similar areas/authorities, or the rate of improvement in outcomes exceeds that in similar areas/authorities, including the majority of vulnerable, minority ethnic and other groups.</p> <p>There is a good 14–19 strategy based on effective collaboration. Good progress has been made towards collective delivery of new 14–19 vocational diplomas. There are effective procedures to assess learning needs, which result in a relevant 14–19 curriculum for all groups, including the disaffected and vulnerable groups, with well matched vocational options. There are good employer links and a wide range of work placements, including for hard-to-place young people. There is effective quality assurance. Partners ensure that young people have informed and impartial advice and guidance at all key transition points. Rigorous referral systems between agencies ensure that young people with complex needs receive good advice.</p> <p>The 14–19 strategy has led to notable improvement in participation, retention, attainment and success rates; these are above those of similar areas/authorities or the trend is one of substantial and notable improvement. Value added information indicates that young people are achieving above expectations based on prior attainment.</p> <p>High quality teaching and learning lead to good progress of young people 14–19. Effective action is taken to improve poor performance.</p> <p>The clear routes of progression at 16+ enable the great majority of young people 14–19 to participate in education or training of their choice and help them to acquire the self-confidence and key literacy/numeracy/ICT and leadership/team skills which they need.</p> <p>The proportion of young people who achieve a level 2 qualification by 19 is above that found in similar areas/authorities and is rising.</p> <p>Pathway and transition plans for vulnerable and other groups are monitored effectively and reviews are used to make improvement. Almost all young people contribute to</p>
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	<p>their reviews and are positive about service provision and delivery.</p> <p>Transition to adult services is well coordinated and successful. Young people are able to participate in the education or training of their choice.</p> <p>Most young people have access to decent affordable housing. No homeless families are in bed and breakfast/hostels. Temporary accommodation is good and there is good availability of supervised semi-independent housing for vulnerable groups. There is good support for vulnerable young tenants and families that have been homeless to help them maintain their tenancies. There are robust plans to meet the housing needs of vulnerable groups and some impact is evident.</p> <p>There has been effective planning to ensure the necessary facilities and workforce to deliver the new 14–19 curriculum entitlements.</p> <p>Economic well-being outcomes are better than in similar areas/authorities.</p>
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<p>Adequate (2)</p> <p>Services are having a positive impact on improving outcomes for children and young people. A number of important initiatives are beginning to show that they are narrowing the gap between the outcomes of most children and young people and those who are the most vulnerable. Some initiatives are more recent and have not yet had a discernible impact on outcomes.</p>	<p>Childcare provision is available and is geographically distributed over the area. Action is taken to fill gaps and to meet the needs of disadvantaged families.</p> <p>Employment opportunities are improved through targeted action and economic renewal, while parents and carers are encouraged to take up their benefit entitlement. There is satisfactory access to adult and community learning and family learning, which is having some beneficial impact for parents and families. Links between the Learning and Skills Council, Jobcentre Plus and childcare provision are generally effective. The children's information system meets the National Standards.</p> <p>The numbers of children and young people in education, training and employment are in line with the average for similar areas/authorities, or the trend is one of notable and substantial improvement, including for the majority of vulnerable groups. Action is taken to ensure that most groups are represented in these figures and the proportion of young people not in education, employment and training is reducing.</p> <p>The development of the 14–19 strategy is collaborative and based on a sound needs analysis. The area can meet the September Guarantee of training or learning places for all young people who seek one. Effective monitoring ensures that most providers meet the minimum standard. A local prospectus for 14–19 provision is in place.</p> <p>Participation, retention, attainment and success rates for 16–19-year-olds are in line with the average for similar areas/authorities. Value added information indicates that young people are achieving in line with expectations based on prior attainment.</p> <p>Teaching and learning in schools and colleges 14–19 are monitored and action is taken to improve poor performance.</p> <p>The curriculum includes a range of vocational pathways and progression routes relevant to the needs of most learners. Partners ensure that most children and young people, including children in care and care leavers, have sound advice and guidance at all key transition points. The quality and range of advice to children and young people are evaluated and the range of opportunities is extended accordingly to ensure that services reflect the diversity of need. Transition to adult services is mostly satisfactory.</p> <p>The proportion of young people who achieve a level 2 qualification by the age of 19 is at least comparable with similar authorities or is significantly improving. Children and young people are quite positive about service provision and delivery.</p> <p>Vulnerable and other groups of young people have Pathway and transition plans which are regularly reviewed and most young people contribute to their reviews. Most vulnerable young people make steady progress post-16 against their predicated targets and are successful in obtaining a range of accredited qualifications.</p> <p>The majority of young people have access to decent affordable housing. The length of stay for homeless families in bed and breakfast/hostels meets national targets and is in line similar area/authority averages. There is sufficient semi-independent housing for vulnerable groups. The housing needs of vulnerable groups are known and there are plans to address any shortfall.</p> <p>Planning has included attention to facilities and workforce for new 14–19 curriculum entitlements.</p> <p>Economic well-being outcomes are in line with similar areas/authorities.</p>
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<p>Inadequate (1)</p> <p>Services are having limited impact on improving outcomes for children and young people. The gap between the outcomes of most children and young people and those who are the most vulnerable is not closing.</p>	<p>There is a failure in one or more respects to meet the requirements for a grade 2.⁷</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is insufficient childcare provision and gaps remain across the area. • Employment opportunities are limited. Advice on entitlement to benefits is inadequate and the proportion of parents/carers taking up benefits is low. There is inadequate access to adult and community learning and family learning. • There is insufficient coherence between the work of the Learning and Skills Council and Jobcentre Plus. Childcare provision is underdeveloped and the Children's Information Service does not meet minimum requirements. • The numbers of children and young people in education, employment or training are below the average for similar areas/authorities and the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training is too high, especially for some vulnerable, minority ethnic and other groups. • Advice and guidance are not sufficiently available to young people at key transition points. Collaboration between the partners in providing advice and guidance is limited. • There is little effective collaboration to develop 14–19 provision. The 14–19 strategy is weak and not based on sound needs analysis. Too little progress has been made towards collective delivery of new 14–19 vocational diplomas. There is no local prospectus of 14–19 provision or it is incomplete. There is little effective monitoring and a notable number of providers do not meet minimum standards. • Participation, retention, attainment and success rates for 16–19 year olds are below average for similar areas/authorities. Value added information indicates that young people are achieving below expectations based on their prior attainment. • The quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent which means that young people, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, do not make adequate progress. The proportion of young people achieving at least a level 2 qualification by age 19 is low and action to improve the position is ineffective. • Support to help children in care, and care leavers, to secure places in education, employment and training is weak. Children and young people have major and well-founded reservations about the quality of some services. • The range of vocational pathways is narrow. Vocational pathways are limited to young people who underachieve or are disaffected. Access to education and training opportunities for young people seeking entry and level 1 qualifications post-16 is very limited. • The majority of vulnerable young people are not housed and/or homeless families are housed for too long in temporary accommodation. Robust plans are not in place to address weaknesses.
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⁷ Failure to meet one requirement does not necessarily result in a grading of inadequate. The seriousness of the failure is

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic well-being outcomes are notably poorer than in similar areas/authorities.
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Service management

Outstanding (4)	
Ambition	<p>The council and the partnership, where appropriate, champion the needs of children and young people in the area by providing innovative and creative community leadership to tackle local and national challenges. The council and the partnership share common objectives and targets which are specified clearly in the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). These are reflected in other corporate and partnership plans. There is widespread understanding and support for the council's/partnership's ambitions and priorities among the community and among children and young people. Almost all of the ambitions of the council and the partnership are realistic but challenging.</p> <p>Ambitions and priorities of the council/partnership are based on a comprehensive analysis of needs. Gaps in service provision have been identified and inform the development of priorities. There is a prompt response to emerging needs, especially through integrated service delivery or commissioning of new services. These reflect fully the range, diversity and complexity of the needs of children and young people. Children and young people and their carers are involved fully in the development of services.</p>
Prioritisation	<p>Priorities have been set by the council/partnership in improving outcomes for children and young people. These are shared with parents and carers, children and young people. The council/partnership moves resources from areas that are not priorities towards those that are. It actively considers the impact of resource shifts on particular groups of children and young people. All partnership activities are compliant with equality duties.</p> <p>The CYPP sets out clearly focused activities across the five outcome areas, which demonstrate the contribution made by almost all services and partners. The CYPP includes a realistic assessment and identification of the resources required from almost all partners, where appropriate, for implementation, and consideration of actions to achieve value for money across services and/or the partnership. Almost all service providers/partners are clear about their roles and responsibilities within various planning frameworks.</p> <p>Priority is given to providing a wide range of high quality preventive services for children and young people and needs are addressed before problems become intractable. Services provided for children and young people take account of almost all equality and diversity issues. Partners are effectively promoting race and disability equality and there is a beneficial impact on outcomes for children and young people. The common objectives and targets specified in the CYPP are translated into a wide range of highly focused and well resourced activities that are designed carefully to</p>

considered carefully to determine whether it should affect the overall judgement. Inspectors' professional judgement is used to weigh and balance the issues against other aspects and judgements.

	<p>secure improvement or to maintain high standards. Reviewing risks and opportunities is a fundamental part of almost all planning, delivery and review of services. Councillors and senior officers maintain their focus, are proactive and are not distracted by minor operational matters.</p>
<p>Capacity</p>	<p>Decision-making Almost all decision-making processes within the council's services/partnership are transparent, timely and anticipate need.</p> <p>Reviewing risks and opportunities is a fundamental part of almost all decision-making, planning, delivery and review of services across the council's services/partnership. Almost all of the responsibilities placed on the Director of Children's Services, and the lead member of Children's Services, are discharged effectively.</p> <p>Partnership working Councillors and officers are committed to partnership working, and have created and maintained very effective working relationships across services and with almost all partners based on trust, openness and constructive challenge. Voluntary and community sector capacity to provide services is enhanced by local cooperation. Governance arrangements within the partnership are sound and procedures are effectively followed. Children's trust arrangements are in place and are resulting in improved outcomes for children and young people.</p>
	<p>Use of resources Within the council and the partnership, service strategies are linked to the medium term financial strategy. Budgets are aligned or pooled where this provides improved impact. The council and the partnership have the financial capacity it needs to deliver its priorities. Local joint commissioning strategies ensure that children's services are developed in a flexible way to cover the gaps in local services and meet needs as they arise.</p> <p>Value for money There is strong commitment within the council and the partnership to delivering and improving value for money in services. Almost all services are of outstanding quality and provide very good value for money. Effective policies and processes for reviewing and further improving value for money have been implemented across the partnership. Unintended high spending is speedily identified and addressed effectively.</p> <p>Workforce The council and the partnership have the people, skills and suppliers it needs to deliver almost all its priorities for services for children and young people. Key post-holders are in place and almost all are of good calibre to provide leadership, challenge and support. Workforce planning across the partnership anticipates future needs of services. Innovative action is taken in areas where there are particularly intractable recruitment and retention issues. Training and other development activity for councillors and staff from the council and the partnership is well attended and valued, and leads to improvements in the way they carry out their roles.</p> <p>Almost all vulnerable children and young people and their carers are actively involved in identifying their needs and planning, reviewing and evaluating the services they receive. A single assessment and recording system is in place and is being used effectively across council services and the partnership. There are effective inter-agency processes for planning and reviewing provision for individual children and young people which have led to improved outcomes.</p>

Performance management	<p>There are highly effective performance management arrangements in place across and within organisations which inform the improvement of services and outcomes and which have led to significant improvement in outcomes. Scrutiny is strong and has led to improvements. Services are aware of strengths and weaknesses, and effective use is made of internal and external evaluation and challenge. Children and young people are routinely involved in the performance management process.</p>
	<p>Regular, robust and balanced intelligence and information about performance across council services and the partnership is produced routinely. It links budgetary and value for money information clearly with performance. Key performance information is regularly scrutinised; underperformance is tackled effectively.</p> <p>Comparison and benchmarking are used well to increase the self-awareness and success of the council and the partnership. The council and the partnership can demonstrate that their review of progress has led to reassessment of plans and improvement in outcomes for children and young people.</p>
Good (3)	
Ambition	<p>The council and the partnership provide effective leadership for children's services in the area. The council and the partnership share common objectives and targets for safeguarding the welfare and improving the well-being of children and young people in the local area which are clearly set out in the CYPP. These objectives and targets are reflected in other corporate and organisational plans.</p> <p>There is understanding of the council's ambitions among the community and among children and young people. Most of the ambitions of the council and the partnership are realistic but challenging.</p> <p>The ambitions and priorities of the council and the partnership are mostly based on a thorough analysis of needs which takes into account the view of parents, carers, and children and young people. Gaps in service provision have been identified and used to develop further local provision.</p> <p>The council and the partnership consult well with hard to reach and vulnerable groups of children and young people. Outcomes of consultation have made a difference to the support provided for children and young people. The council and the partnership are responsive to the range and complexity of the needs of children and young people and provide for greater choice in planning for these.</p>
Prioritisation	<p>Priorities have been set by the council in improving outcomes for children and young people and these are shared by partner agencies, parents and carers, children and young people. The priorities are based on the findings of the analysis of need. The priorities give significant attention to the full range of equality and diversity issues. There is clarity about which things are, and are not, priorities, and why. There is some evidence of resource shift to priority areas. Councillors, officers, other staff and partners know these priorities.</p> <p>The CYPP sets out clearly focused activities across the five outcome areas which demonstrate the contribution of most partners. The CYPP includes a realistic assessment and identification of the resources required for implementation and consideration of actions to achieve value for money. Service strategies are linked to the medium term financial strategy to provide a robust planning and delivery framework.</p> <p>Most partners are clear about roles and responsibilities within various planning frameworks.</p>

	<p>Priority is given to providing a range of preventive services for children and young people so that needs are addressed before problems become intractable. Services provided for children and young people take account of most equality and diversity issues. Partners are promoting race and disability equality actively and some impact is evident on outcomes for children and young people. Action plans clearly state lead responsibilities, resource requirements, milestones, and target outcomes, as are the contributions expected from majority of partners. Councillors and senior officers maintain their focus and are not distracted by minor operational matters.</p>
<p>Capacity</p>	<p>Decision-making Most decision-making processes within the partnership are transparent, timely and anticipate need. Reviewing risks and opportunities is a fundamental part of most decision-making, planning, delivery and review of services across the council's services partnership. Most of the responsibilities placed on the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services are discharged effectively.</p> <p>Partnership working Councillors and officers are committed to partnership working, and have created and maintained effective working relationships with most partners based on trust, openness and constructive challenge. There is substantial involvement of the voluntary and community sector. The council ensures that the partnership reviews and updates its governing documents, and follows procedures for dispute resolution. Partners have established or are working effectively towards a Children's Trust arrangement.</p>
	<p>Use of resources Within the council and the partnership, service strategies are mostly linked to the medium term financial strategy. Budgets are aligned or pooled where this provides improved impact. The council has the financial capacity it needs to deliver its priorities. It is innovative in accessing funding. The council and its partners have developed effective joint commissioning.</p> <p>Value for money There is commitment among councillors, senior and service managers to delivering and improving value for money in services. Overall comparable unit costs are low, allowing for local factors and the quality of services is above average. There is a strategic focus on securing value for money and there are clear policies and processes for reviewing and improving value for money. The council has made successful efforts to improve value for money in services. Most unintended high spending is identified and generally addressed effectively.</p> <p>Workforce The council and the partnership have the people, skills and suppliers it needs to deliver most of its priorities for services for children and young people. Key post-holders are in place and most are of sufficient calibre to provide leadership, challenge and support. Workforce planning takes account of the needs of the service and collective action is taken to recruit and retain staff. Training and other development activity for councillors and council staff is well attended and valued, and leads to improvements in the way they carry out their roles. Most vulnerable children and young people and their carers are actively involved in identifying their needs and planning, reviewing and evaluating the services they receive. A single assessment and recording system is in place, or being developed, to ensure that information about individuals is provided to local services once only and that the actions which agencies take are well coordinated and facilitate tracking of individuals. Most inter-agency processes for planning, delivery and reviewing provision for individual children and young people are effective.</p>

<p>Performance management</p>	<p>The council and the partnership review service performance to ensure that needs are identified, value for money is provided and services are contributing to improving outcomes for children and young people. Scrutiny of most services for children and young people is effective and services are aware of most strengths and weaknesses. The council is open to external evaluation and challenge and makes the most of opportunities to learn in this way. Children and young people contribute to service management and their views are listened to.</p> <p>Regular, robust and balanced intelligence and information about performance is produced throughout the council and the partnership. It includes financial, budgetary and value for money information. The council and the partnership make good use of opportunities to capture learning and is aware of most of its strengths and weaknesses.</p> <p>The council and the partnership compare and evaluate processes, costs and outcomes. It uses comparison and benchmarking to increase its self-awareness and efficiency. The council's continual review of progress ensures that it is able to reassess plans and respond effectively to the needs of local children and young people.</p>
<p>Adequate (2)</p>	
<p>Ambition</p>	<p>The council and the partnership provide mostly effective leadership for children's services in the area. The council and the partnership have a vision of what they want to achieve for children and young people and this is set out clearly in the CYPP. The council communicates decisions about these ambitions to councillors, officers and staff, and to children and young people, local people and communities, partners and stakeholders. The council and the partnership can demonstrate that the majority of their ambitions are realistic.</p> <p>The council and its partners have carried out a needs analysis and have an understanding of the local context. The council has some level of self-awareness and understanding of the problems it faces and how its forward planning will address these. Children, young people and parents and carers are consulted and steps have been taken to improve the level and quality of engagement with those from minority ethnic groups and groups at risk of disadvantage.</p>
<p>Prioritisation</p>	<p>Priorities have been set by the council in improving outcomes for children and young people. There has been some sharing of these with partner agencies, parents and carers, children and young people. The priorities are based on an understanding of the local context and the needs of children and young people.</p> <p>The priorities give some attention to equality and diversity issues. The council has taken steps to ensure that councillors, staff, service users and other stakeholders understand key strategic objectives.</p> <p>Strategic objectives, targets, actions and resources are set out in the CYPP and/or related plans. Review mechanisms are in place to ensure that agreed contributions and accountability for each priority are clearly understood by partners.</p> <p>Consideration is given to providing a range of preventive services for children and young people so that needs are addressed before problems become intractable. Services provided for children and young people take account of a limited range of equality and diversity issues and the partners are meeting the requirements of race and disability legislation. Lead responsibilities, resource requirements, action milestones and target outcomes are identified in action plans, as are the contributions expected from the majority of partners.</p>

	<p>Reviewing risks and opportunities is a strand of the majority of planning, delivery and review of services. At times, changes in the council's ambitions and priorities are reactive rather than proactive.</p>
<p>Capacity</p>	<p>Decision-making The majority of decision-making processes within the councils' services and the partnership are transparent, timely and result in some notable improvement. Reviewing risks and opportunities is a strand of the majority of decision-making, planning, delivery and review of services. The responsibilities placed on the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services are understood and the majority are discharged.</p> <p>Partnership working The council has taken steps to build financial and other capacity through the strategic use of partnerships.</p> <p>There is involvement of the voluntary and community sector. Relationships with the majority of partners are effective, with evidence of trust and challenge. Within the partnership accountabilities, roles and responsibilities are set out with effective procedures for resolving disputes. Early work is being done to establish children's trust arrangements.</p> <p>Use of resources The council and its partners have identified links between service strategies and medium term financial strategy. There is some alignment or pooling of budgets. The council and its partners have developed some joint commissioning.</p> <p>Value for money Overall costs and the majority of unit costs for services to children and young people are consistent with other councils providing similar levels and standards of service, allowing for local factors. The costs of key services are known and there is some benchmarking of costs and quality against national comparators and similar authorities. The council and its partners are developing its processes for improving value for money. The majority of unintended high spending is identified and generally addressed.</p> <p>Workforce Within services for children and young people in most areas, the council and its partners have the people, skills and capability it needs to deliver its priorities. Workforce planning is being developed in the council but in an uncoordinated way across the partnership. There are training and development programmes for council staff and councillors involved in services for children and young people.</p> <p>The majority of vulnerable children and young people and their carers are actively involved in identifying their needs and planning, reviewing and evaluating the services they receive. The needs of individual children and their families are recorded and there is some sharing of information. There are some inter-agency processes for planning and reviewing provision for individual children and young people.</p>

<p>Performance management</p>	<p>The council and the partnership are starting to develop rigorous and effective performance management and there are clear signs of a discernible impact. Scrutiny is beginning to develop its effectiveness. Consultation processes with children and young people are in place.</p> <p>Information about key areas of performance is produced within the partnership and this is generally regular, robust and balanced. It includes some financial, budgetary and value for money information. The council and the majority of its partners make some use of opportunities to capture learning and have some awareness of strengths and weaknesses.</p> <p>The council and the partnership understand the benefits of working with others to compare and evaluate processes, costs and outcomes.</p>
<p>Inadequate (1)</p>	
<p>Ambition</p>	<p>The council and its partners have an unclear vision of what they want to achieve for children and young people.</p> <p>There is limited needs analysis and little understanding of where there are gaps in provision. There is limited engagement with children and young people to identify needs and evaluate services. The council and the partnership take few steps to improve the level and quality of the engagement with groups at risk of disadvantage.</p>
<p>Prioritisation</p>	<p>Priorities for services for children and young people are unclear and/or have not been shared with partners. The council or the partners are not meeting the requirements of race and disability equality legislation.</p> <p>Strategic objectives, targets, actions and resources are not set out clearly in the CYPP and/or related plans.</p> <p>There is limited focus on preventive services. A significant number of key action plans fail to identify lead responsibilities, resource requirements, action milestones and target outcomes. The service is mainly reactive.</p>
<p>Capacity</p>	<p>Decision-making Decision-making processes are neither transparent nor timely. There is little evidence of reviewing of risks prior to decision making.</p> <p>Partnership working Some key partners are not fully engaged. There is no involvement of the voluntary and community sector.</p> <p>Use of resources Financial management is poor. Local joint commissioning strategies are not being developed.</p> <p>Value for money Outcomes for key services are poorer than similar areas/authorities and value for money is generally poor in children's services. There is insufficient knowledge of the costs of some key services and a lack of understanding of how costs and quality of local services compare with national and/or other areas/authorities.</p> <p>Workforce planning There is inadequate workforce planning to address current and future needs of the</p>

	<p>service.</p> <p>The needs of individual children, young people and their families are not effectively identified, recorded and communicated.</p>
<p>Performance management</p>	<p>Performance management and evaluation processes are underdeveloped within services and do not always lead to improvement. Scrutiny is ineffective.</p> <p>Partnership working and work is not well coordinated and is built insufficiently on shared ambitions, priorities and knowledge of each other's performance.</p> <p>There is limited evidence of partnership working making a difference to outcomes for children and young people.</p>