

East Sussex County Council

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

and

Review of the effectiveness of the local safeguarding children board¹

Inspection date: 14 January 2014- 5 February 2014

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| <p>The overall judgement is good</p> <p>The local authority leads effective services that meet the requirements for good.</p> <p>It is Ofsted's expectation that, as a minimum, all children and young people receive good help, care and protection.</p> | |
| 1. Children who need help and protection | Good |
| 2. Children looked after and achieving permanence | Good |
| 2.1 Adoption performance | Outstanding |
| 2.2 Experiences and progress of care leavers | Requires Improvement |
| 3. Leadership, management and governance | Good |

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| <p>The effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is good.</p> <p>The LSCB coordinates the activity of statutory partners and has mechanisms in place to monitor the effectiveness of local arrangements.</p> |
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¹ Ofsted produces this report under its power to combine reports in accordance with section 152 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. This report includes the report of the inspection of local authority functions carried out under section 136 of the Education and Inspection Act 2006 and the report of the review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board carried out under the Local Safeguarding Children Boards (Review) Regulations 2013.

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Section 1: the local authority

Summary of key findings

This local authority is good because:

1. Elected members, who are well informed, and a highly effective senior management team provide a range of good quality services to children and families. They know their service well based on a wide-ranging performance and monitoring framework that has helped to identify effectively areas of need across the county.
2. Focused investment in early help services effectively targets the most vulnerable families. The support provided identifies those families who do not have the capacity to change. This enables the local authority to seek statutory intervention much earlier to protect children and secure permanence arrangements for them.
3. A good range of support services for children and young people are targeted in areas where they are most needed. For example, Wise (What is Sexual Exploitation), a mentoring service to support 13-25 year olds who are experiencing or who are at risk of experiencing sexual exploitation.
4. Social workers are confident and skilled in assessing children's needs and protecting them from harm. Looked after children told inspectors that they both feel safe and are safe, where they live and in school, and that they enjoy good relationships with their social workers.
5. Concerns about children are managed well through two area based multi-agency hubs. The system for receiving and screening contacts and referrals is timely, robust and clear. Thresholds for services for children and families are known and understood across the partnership. This means that children are better protected and the risk to them identified early and managed through effective partnership arrangements.
6. Child protection enquiries are thorough and timely. Information-sharing is an effective part of the assessment process. Inspectors saw good use of chronological information in case files to inform current practice and decision-making.
7. Care proceedings are properly focused on those children who are unlikely to remain living with their families. The requests for specialist assessments are made at an early stage in the legal process. Good quality assessments are now beginning to support earlier conclusions to care proceedings. As a consequence, decisions to protect children and secure stable homes for them to live in are more timely. Effective decision making about children becoming looked after are founded on a thorough assessment of need and risk. The right children are identified as needing care.

8. Social workers work hard to secure permanent and stable homes for looked after children when they can no longer live with their own families. Effective communication between social workers and specialist family finding teams results in securing timely permanence arrangements for children.
9. Managers and staff of the adoption service have an excellent understanding of adoption and its complexities. Staff explore innovative ways to achieving permanence and adoption as evident in their 'fostering to adopt' initiative, the 'no detriment policy' and 'DVD' recruitment days. They are well qualified and demonstrate a strong and driving passion for achieving excellent outcomes for children and their adoptive families. A significantly higher number of adoptive families are waiting less than three months from the date of approval until the date when they are matched to children. As a result, children are moving into adoptive families much sooner.
10. A 'no detriment' policy gives foster carers the confidence to consider a long-term commitment to children, without losing financial support from the local authority. More children are now living in stable, long-term family placements as a result of this.
11. Child Adolescence Mental Health Service (CAMHS) provides highly effective support to children and a responsive consultation service to social workers and carers. This means that looked after children are supported in developing and sustaining meaningful relationships with both their carers and their peers.
12. Increased capacity in the looked after nursing service means that children are now receiving a better response to their health needs, with their annual health assessments completed on time.
13. Children are protected from sexual exploitation through an effective multi-agency approach to ensure that the signs of child exploitation are recognised and addressed early. There is a good coordinated response across the partnership to children going missing, and extensive awareness training has been provided to professionals on child sexual exploitation.
14. An increasing proportion of looked after children are achieving at least five good GCSEs, and are making their expected progress. Children's progress is carefully tracked, and good packages of individual support are provided if looked after children fall behind in their studies.
15. The East Sussex Children in Care Council is a lively and effective group of children and young people. It is well supported by elected members and senior managers, and as a result looked after children are able to influence decisions made in respect of them.
16. The 'Young Inspectors' programme provides opportunities for children and young people to influence the services that they use. They are passionate about the work they do and can clearly see that their inspections make a difference.

17. There is a strong evidence-based culture of learning from case audits, serious case reviews and complaints to support improvement in social work practice. Action plans as a result of serious case reviews are well constructed and monitored to ensure that learning is embedded in practice. For example, as a result of a recent serious case review, better recording systems have been put in place to support the role of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
18. The Principal Social Worker is having a positive influence on developing social work practice. The quality of chronologies and assessments are examples of where social work practice has significantly improved and is now of a good standard.

What does the local authority need to improve?

Areas for improvement

19. Ensure that all children in need cases are allocated promptly and where this is not immediately possible strengthen management oversight of risk and vulnerability issues.
20. Ensure that there is suitable and sufficient accommodation available for all vulnerable young people, to avoid the continued use of bed and breakfast provision as a last resort.
21. Ensure that the Independent Reviewing Service produces an annual report to comply with statutory guidance, to enable senior managers and elected members to properly consider how this service effectively challenges children's care planning arrangements
22. Improve training opportunities for all staff to ensure that the quality of pathway planning for care leavers aged 16 and 17 is improved so that the plans are clearer and are much more meaningful to help in supporting young people as they move towards independent living.
23. Ensure that consent to share information about children and families with other professionals is recorded on family assessments. Where a child is at immediate risk and a decision has been taken to dispense with parental consent, this should be recorded with a full explanation of why such a decision was made.
24. Ensure that children know that they have a right to seek independent support from the advocacy service should they wish to make a complaint and that this includes care leavers.
25. Ensure that a better range of employment and training opportunities are available for post-18 care leavers.
26. Ensure that all care leavers receive appropriate independence training to equip them with sufficient skills to help them to live independently.

27. Ensure that in the planning and the development of services for children and families the diverse needs of the community and workforce are appropriately considered.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences of children and young people who have needed or still need help and/or protection. This also includes children and young people who are looked after and young people who are leaving care and starting their lives as young adults.

Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children, young people and families. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with families and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition the inspectors have tried to understand what the local authority knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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

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

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

The inspection team consisted of seven of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) one contracted inspector and a shadow inspector from Ofsted.

The inspection team

Lead inspector: Helen Cawston HMI

Team inspectors: Karen Mckeown HMI, Bill Wallace HMI, Dominic Stevens HMI, Janet Fraser HMI, Adesua Osime HMI, Nick Stacey and Anji Parker

Information about this local authority area²

Children living in this area

- Approximately 104,285 children and young people under the age of 18 years live in East Sussex. This is 19.8% of the total population in the area.
- Approximately 17.4% of the local authority's children are living in poverty.
- The proportion of children entitled to free school meals:
 - in primary schools is 15.7% (the national average is 18.1%)
 - in secondary schools is 12.4% (the national average is 15.1%)
- Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 8.7% of all children living in the area, compared with 16.3% in the country as a whole.
- The largest minority ethnic groups of children and young people in the area are of mixed ethnicity and Asian or Asian British.
- The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language:
 - in primary schools is 4.9% (the national average is 18.1%).
 - in secondary schools is 4.1% (the national average is 13.6%).

Child protection in this area

- At 31 March 2013, 4,863 children had been identified through assessment as being formally in need of a specialist children's service. This is a reduction from 4,901 at March 2012.
- At 31 March 2013, 546 children and young people were the subject of a child protection plan. This is a reduction from 674 at 31 March 2012.
- At 31 March 2013, 19 children lived in a privately arranged fostering placement. This is an increase from 17 at 31 March 2012.

Children looked after in this area

- At 31 March 2013, 600 children are being looked after by the local authority (a rate of 57 per 10,000 children). This is a reduction from 620 (60 per 10,000 children) at 31 March 2012.
 - Of this number 70 (or 12%) live outside the local authority area

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

- 45 live in residential children’s homes, of whom 29% live out of the authority area
 - 5 live in residential special schools³, of whom 80% live out of the authority area
 - 475 live with foster families, of whom 9% live out of the authority area
 - 20 live with parents, of whom 5% live out of the authority area
 - 5 children are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- In the last 12 months:
- there have been 45 adoptions
 - 45 children became subject of special guardianship orders
 - 200 children have ceased to be looked after, of whom 1% subsequently returned to be looked after
 - 30 children and young people have ceased to be looked after and moved on to independent living.
 - 4 children and young people have ceased to be looked after and are now (at 31 March 2013) living in houses of multiple occupation.

Other Ofsted inspections

- The local authority operates 6 children’s homes. All were judged to be good or outstanding in their most recent Ofsted inspection.
- The previous inspection of East Sussex’s safeguarding arrangements was in January 2011. The local authority was judged to be good.
- The previous inspection of East Sussex’s services for looked after children was in January 2011. The local authority was judged to be good.

Other information about this area

- The Interim Director of Children’s Services has been in post since June 2013.
- The chair of the LSCB has been in post since June 2010.

³ These are residential special schools that look after children for fewer than 295 days.

Inspection judgements about the local authority

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection are good.

28. The local authority's 'Thrive Transformation Strategy' is a well-known and understood plan for early help and the reconfiguration of services in East Sussex. The strategy's overarching aim is to support children and families through a comprehensive range of early help services. It is clearly having a positive impact on improving outcomes for children and families. Investment in early help services, targeting the most vulnerable children and families, has contributed to a significant reduction of up to 40% in the number of referrals to children's social care over the last year. The number of re-referrals is reducing. It is an effective strategy which shows that a growing number of children and families are receiving help and support at a much earlier stage. As a direct consequence of high levels of investment, statutory interventions are declining overall. There has been an overall decrease in the number of children subject to a Section 47 child protection enquiry, fewer children are on child protection and children in need plans and there is a steady fall in the number of looked after children.
29. Two multi-agency hubs act as a point of entry for all contacts and referrals into children's social care where safeguarding concerns or requests for early help are being raised about children and families. Social care and early help managers, including health partners are part of the daily hub meetings and contribute effectively to the sharing of information and the decisions being made about the level of help required to support children and families. This leads to a prompt offer of early help or assessment of their needs. The 'continuum of need', a threshold for services document endorsed by the partnership, is well-embedded in practice. It provides clarity and a common language for all professionals to use in order to assess need and risks in families. As a result, professionals across the partnership are clear at what point a service is required to safeguard children and know how to refer children for a service. There is a consistency in practice, and the risk to children is identified early and acted upon.
30. Where children and families would benefit from early help services, suitably trained and skilled Family Keyworkers deliver high quality early help support packages. They act as a single point of contact for the family, providing direct support and coordinating additional interventions from a range of services and organisations. Early help assessments are effective in determining the level of need and are suitably outcome-focused. As an example, parents spoke to inspectors about the skills they had gained from attending parenting courses which help them to support and parent their children more effectively.
31. Most referrals which meet the threshold for children in need intervention are allocated promptly following good decision-making by managers. Where allocation is not immediate, as was seen in 14 cases in the Youth Support

Teams, those cases were managed through duty visits with support from partner agencies. This has meant that in the short-term some children and families have experienced some delay in accessing a timely service to meet their assessed need. Management oversight was observed on these cases and risk was managed effectively, although the quality of recording of actions taken was too variable. This has been acknowledged by children's services as an area for development, and a review of the current policy for the transfer of cases is being undertaken by the service.

32. Systems are in place to share information between agencies. In some cases seen, it was not always clear from the recording in case files if the necessary agreement and consent had been given by parents for this to happen.
33. The screening of domestic abuse referrals by the police is effective in identifying where children and young people may be at risk. Notifications are immediately discussed with professionals in the hub so that a full assessment of risk is undertaken to safeguard children and other vulnerable adults living in the house. Links with adult social care are clear and information is appropriately considered across the service where there are perceived risks. Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) arrangements across the partnership are working well to identify those children and families most at risk. The response to domestic abuse is effective, with Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) meetings being used as a multi-agency planning forum to reduce the risks to those families where such abuse is a significant risk.
34. Where children are assessed as being at risk, child protection enquiries are acted on immediately. Strategy discussions are always undertaken with the police and, where necessary, other professionals engaged with the family. This process has been strengthened considerably over the last twelve months following the recent findings from a multi-agency management review where procedural shortcomings in the process were identified. The outcomes of the discussions are now recorded well, and actions are agreed to ensure the safety of the child or young person. Inspectors saw consistent practice in all strategy discussions. In complex cases, strategy meetings are convened and include other professionals to ensure that investigations are either undertaken jointly between the police and social workers or as a single agency investigation.
35. Suitably experienced and qualified social workers undertake child protection enquiries. Safety plans are put in place at the first opportunity so that parents are clear about the risks to their children and what they need to do to protect them and prevent harm. The large majority (95%) of initial and review child protection conferences are held within statutory timescales. Managers closely monitor any shortfalls in meeting statutory timescales through monthly performance data, and take effective action to minimise any delays.
36. Child protection plans and children in need plans have clear aims and objectives for the work that is required to effect change and reduce risk to children. Plans are workable documents for both the family and for a range of professionals.

They are used to monitor the progress being made. However, timescales for achieving compliance to ensure the plan is working could be clearer in some cases. In a small number of cases children have been on plans for over two years. However, there is effective management oversight to review the progress and consider alternative ways to support the children. Statutory visits are regular and case recordings show that children are seen and seen alone. Child protection conferences observed are well chaired, reports to the conference were seen to be of a good standard, and those parents spoken to by the inspectors confirmed that social workers went through the report with them prior to the meeting and responded well to their questions. Core groups are well attended by families and professionals, and the progress children and families are making is closely monitored.

37. Contacts and referrals are effectively screened within the Children's Disability Service duty system to ensure that children receive a service commensurate with their needs from qualified social workers who are knowledgeable in this specialised field. Good multi-agency representation has resulted in comprehensive, well-understood plans for children with disabilities.
38. Where appropriate, children's needs are escalated up to statutory services and, when safe to do so, stepped down to children in need services. As a result, families are offered services that meet their assessed level of need. The SWIFT parenting practitioner service has demonstrated a positive impact for children and young people living in households where parents have mental health or substance misuse or where domestic abuse is a prevalent factor.
39. East Sussex has changed from the two stage assessment process, removing the potential for different social workers undertaking each stage, towards a single family assessment, single worker approach, to support a more comprehensive overview of children's and families' needs. All assessments seen by inspectors across children's services are of a very good standard. A clear and thorough analysis of risk and protective factors informs the planning and decisions being taken to protect children. However, the time taken to complete family assessments at the level of children in need remains too variable across the county. Effective performance data supports managers to identify where delays may be affecting children and families and to support a timelier conclusion to the assessment. Inspectors saw assessments where the help and protection provided was particularly sensitive to the issues of disability and sexual orientation.
40. Case file audits are routinely undertaken by all managers within the workforce, including on occasions by the Chief Executive, to ensure that practice is robust and lesson learnt from all quality assurance processes are improving practice. As a result of this work, the level of management oversight in case files has improved with clear case direction being given to social workers.
41. Chronologies are used to good effect as part of the assessment process so that historical information informs and contributes to the conclusions being reached

about children's safety and well-being. Where children and families have access to their chronology it has had a significant impact on helping them to understand their situation. As an example, one young woman having seen her chronology spoke to the inspector about 'the cycle of neglect' she had experienced as a young child. Further examples show chronologies being used effectively in planning meetings to enable parents to understand how historical events inform current decisions being made to protect children. The use of chronologies as part of the assessment process is highly effective practice, and well regarded by children and families.

42. Social workers recognise the need to see children alone to ensure that they can express their wishes and feelings. A number of imaginative ways are being used to capture younger children's views, including the use of Bear Cards and children's drawings to identify their wishes and feelings. The benefits of developing meaningful relationships with children and families were illustrated in a number of cases. Children and young people were equally positive about services provided by other professionals such as CAMHS, and examples show remarkable commitments to maintaining a regular visiting arrangement which was highly valued by one particular young person seen by an inspector.
43. The development of meaningful relationships with children and families, good quality assessments and the effective use of chronologies result in social workers knowing their children and families well. Social workers are confident and skilled in protecting children. Children and young people told inspectors that they both feel safe and are safe, and that they enjoy good relationships with their social workers.
44. An out-of-hours service is in place to support families in crisis outside normal working hours. Effective liaison is undertaken with the police to ensure that families considered to be at risk receive a timely service. Good liaison with daytime services ensures that outstanding concerns are responded to promptly.
45. The potential vulnerability of children in private fostering arrangements is recognised by the local authority and partner agencies. Awareness-raising activities, including work with local language schools, have resulted in an increased number of notifications of children who are living in such arrangements. These children have positive relationships with their social workers, who ensure that their needs are properly understood and met. Interpreters are used when necessary, and support children with issues such as their immigration status and parental relationships.
46. Arrangements for monitoring and tackling children missing from home or care and vulnerable to child sexual exploitation are robust and include a range of services commissioned through the voluntary sector, including Wise (What is Sexual Exploitation), a service to support 13-25 year olds who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing sexual exploitation and Barnardo's. The local authority commissions a service from Catch 22, which provides a helpline service for young people thinking about running away or currently missing. The service

provides independent return interviews which look at the reasons why they chose to run away. They evaluate their findings from the return interviews and report on any patterns and trends emerging that may be affecting children. These services are well integrated with other services, such as Substance Abuse Service Specific To Youth ('SASSY'), the sexual health nurse and under-19 substance misuse services. The impact of this work is the reported increase by young people in accessing the specialist support services provided by WISE.

47. The East Sussex Safeguarding Children Board (ESSCB) sub-group on Child Sexual Exploitation, Trafficking and Missing is aware that this is a relatively new area of work for all social workers and professionals across the partnership. The voluntary sector who provides specific services to work exclusively with young people affected by sexual exploitation are key members of the sub-group, and they bring an expertise to it through their work with young people at risk of sexual exploitation. Through regular training and workshops the ESSCB continues to raise the awareness of professionals to the possible signs of child sexual exploitation. The local authority acknowledges that there is still more work to do across key agencies to collate and improve data collection to gain a more accurate understanding of the scale of the problem and how to address it. The ESSCB is proactive in trying to raise awareness across the partnership and it has started to produce a newsletter twice yearly which includes information for professionals about child sexual exploitation, runaways and domestic abuse.
48. The local authority is meeting statutory requirements in relation to children missing education. A database of all those not on a school roll is maintained and systems for reporting are well-established and used by schools. The local authority is proactive in raising awareness of the issue and encouraging reporting, for example, with children's centres and general practitioners as well as schools. When a child is reported as missing education, procedures, including the cross-checking of data bases, are swiftly and effectively implemented. Performance is effectively monitored by the ESSCB.
49. Flexible Learning and Education Support Services (FLESS) provide support for all children who are too ill to attend school, either through the three teaching centres across the county or in hospitals. The quality of the teaching centres is monitored by the local authority. Tracking of pupils leaving these centres shows that none are in the NEET category and there is a 30% re-integration rate. Pupils continue to be monitored by FLESS following re-integration.
50. 391 pupils across the county receive elective home education. Of these, only one is known to children's social care and a child protection plan is in place. Effective tracking systems ensure that when families refuse visits from the Elective Home Education team, referrals are checked with children's social care and the children index database to see if they are known to any services. The high number of families (97%) which are accepting of a visit indicate that good relationships have been established with parents. Safeguarding is built into visits and inspectors saw a good example of effective joint work between the

elective home education team and children's services to protect a young person living in unsuitable accommodation. No looked after children are currently home-educated. Allegations of abuse, mistreatment or poor practice by professionals and carers are addressed promptly. Professionals understand the role of the LADO. Recommendations from a recent serious case review have been implemented, and are subject to rigorous review and scrutiny. There has been a marked increase in referrals from across the partnership but notably from schools. Children and young people are therefore safer as a result of an improved understanding, and application, of policies on potential abuse from those entrusted to care for them.

51. Children and young people have access to an independent advocacy service through a national provider commissioned by the local authority. A number of children have sought support through this and found the service to be effective. A specialist advocacy service is in place for disabled children.

The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence are good.

52. Decisions about children becoming looked after are appropriately made in the light of their assessed risk and needs. There is a clear process for children to come into care. On occasions where there may be professional disagreements about children coming into care, social workers and Child Protection Advisors can use the dispute resolution process to escalate any concerns to senior managers. This is an effective process that supports robust debate.
53. Effective care planning arrangements mean that the issuing of proceedings is properly focused on those children who are unlikely to be able to remain living with their families. When the local authority is considering the use of care proceedings, specialist family services and assessments, for example from "SWIFT", are being used much earlier in the process to inform the decisions being made to safeguard children. As a result, this is now beginning to support a timelier conclusion to care proceedings. Recent evidence shows that some care proceedings are now completed in less than 20 weeks. This is significant progress when set against an average of 39 weeks for the completion of most care proceedings in the county. There remains some historical long-standing work with a few children and young people and their families which needs to be brought to a timelier conclusion by the courts. The local authority works well within the family justice partnership. This good liaison has contributed to the significant reduction in the time taken to complete complex cases in public law proceedings. East Sussex has the lowest completion time for care proceedings within the local Designated Family Judge area.
54. Children's services recognise the benefits to children of being cared for by people who know them. Special Guardianships and Residence Orders are increasingly used, and used effectively, to secure permanent arrangements for children.

55. Social workers are given sufficient time to work more directly with children and families, providing the opportunity to build meaningful relationships with them. As a consequence of good social work intervention, children develop strong attachments to significant people in their lives and they have a good understanding of what is happening to them.
56. Effective and on-going fostering recruitment campaigns have helped to ensure that the majority of looked after children are placed with East Sussex foster carers. The 'Skills to Foster' pre-assessment preparation course is run at regular intervals during the year to ensure that participants are clear about the standards and skills required of them to be foster carers. The Children in Care Council help and facilitate these groups and assist in recruitment campaigns. Foster carers commented very favourably about the quality of the training and the help it had given them to understand some of the challenges children face when separated from their family, and what it feels like to live with a new family.
57. Looked after children's reviews and care plans are consistently reviewed within statutory timescales. The Independent Reviewing Officers provide consistency and a continuity of oversight of the progress children make. Children know their reviewing officers well. The service provides effective challenge to some care planning arrangements, for example, through challenging the quality of provision in an agency children's home or through delaying a young person's move to a new home until their exams had finished.
58. There are effective and strong links between social work teams and specialist fostering and adoption teams. This results in a coherent and robust response to family finding for children. Social workers report feeling supported by their managers, who are highly visible and readily available. Social workers are clear about the high standards of professional practice required by senior managers and are committed to, and working hard to achieve, good outcomes for all looked after children. Seeing children and families regularly and writing good quality assessments that focus on achieving the best possible outcomes are good examples of how they use their skills to help children. The local authority is highly committed to, and provides, a good range of training opportunities for all staff, ensuring that they are well trained in this specialist area of work.
59. Securing permanence for looked after children through a range of options in East Sussex is outstanding. There is a sense of urgency across children's services in ensuring that care planning arrangements achieve the right permanence option at an early stage for children and young people. Accelerating discharges from care through the conclusion of care proceedings and the use of Adoption Orders, Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) and Residence Orders (RO) confirms a determination to succeed in achieving long-term stability for all looked after children. Social workers and the independent reviewing service are active in moving forward decisions where permanence is considered to secure stability for children. Progress is tracked further at twice-yearly workshops to provide an additional level of scrutiny to ensure that

timescales for securing permanent arrangements for children are progressing swiftly. As a result of this increased focus and drive, achieving permanence for all children looked after is outstanding and the potential for drift and delay significantly reduced.

60. Children's health care assessments have been an area of sustained improvement over the last year. All are now completed on time. The progress made has been achieved by recognising an issue of capacity within the looked after children's health team and addressing this shortfall. Children's health is now better understood and monitored. There is a robust system for following up the health needs of children from other local authorities placed in East Sussex.
61. CAMHS provides highly effective support to children and a responsive consultation service to social workers and carers. Foster carers spoke of the meaningful relationships social workers have with children and of high levels of support from the CAMHS service. Effective support and management strategies help to reduce reckless, impulsive and aggressive behaviours exhibited by some young people. As a result, carers believe that this is helping to achieve better placement stability and to secure strong attachments with the children they care for.
62. Children who live some distance away from East Sussex are well supported and receive the same level of services as those children who live within the county. Social workers visit them regularly and their looked after reviews are held within statutory timescales. In one particular case, a young person visited by an inspector said she had the same Independent Reviewing Officer over a number of years and as a consequence she was confident in the decisions being made about her. Children's health care is monitored by the looked after health care team and their educational progress is monitored effectively through the East Sussex virtual school support. CAMHS have mobilised services in a neighbouring county to offer additional support to one young person's host local authority.
63. Where the plan is for children to return home, there is evidence of good assessments in place that effectively consider and address the risks. Effective packages of support help children and families and as a result the number of children coming back into care is very low.
64. The Children in Care council is a lively group of looked after children and young people across all ages. It is involved in a number of national initiatives, such as the Children's Minister's advisory group, where they are able to represent the views of looked after children. They are engaged locally in the training of foster carers and interviews for social care staff, including senior appointments. The contribution they make at training events is highly valued by foster carers. The Children in Care council has re-written the Pledge in a clear and accessible format which is appropriate for both young and older children. It is easy to read and sets out very clearly how the local authority will meet its corporate parenting responsibilities for looked after children. This is distributed to all

looked after children and promoted by the Children in Care council members at events such as PGL trips and adventure holidays. This increases the awareness of looked after children about their rights to services such as access to advocacy. Children are able to talk about gaining more confidence from being a member of the care council. For example, one young person explained how a sense of belonging had boosted his confidence and self-esteem so that he was able to deal with and overcome bullying that he had experienced in school as a result of being in care.

65. The Young Inspectors programme provides opportunities for children and young people with a disability to influence the services that they use. They are passionate about the work they do and can clearly see that they are listened to and that their inspections make a difference to the lives of other young people. For example, visiting an outdoor activity centre to see how accessible activities are for children with a disability, and whether there are books available in braille at local libraries for children with a visual impairment.
66. Educational outcomes are improving in most areas. Data for 2013 show that a high proportion of young people made the expected progress in both English and maths in comparison to the most recently reported national figure. Key Stage 4 results are improving, with 25% of looked after children achieving five good GCSEs including English and maths. The gap with their peers has narrowed. Over 80% of young people end Key Stage 4 with an accreditation of some form and the large majority achieve at least one GCSE. Reading and maths results are good at Key Stage 2 but less so in writing, and this is an identified priority for this year. Overall, 81% of the cohort made the expected progress in reading and 69% the expected progress in writing. In maths, 75% of the cohort made the expected progress compared to 66% of the national looked after cohort last year. A high proportion of each cohort has identified special educational needs.
67. 94% of looked after children who left Year 11 last summer are in education, employment or training. The young people who spoke to inspectors were overwhelmingly positive about the support from the virtual school, especially regarding support with university places. Children's services recognise that there is more to do to re-engage young people and as of 31st March 2013 40% of care leavers were NEET (82/206).
68. Not all looked after children attend good schools, but the reasons for this are well argued, with careful consideration given to each individual child's needs and the strengths of individual schools. Seven out of 381 pupils are not receiving 25 hours of education each week. The virtual school knows these individual pupils well and persistent efforts are made to break down the barriers to their education. Staff demonstrate a good knowledge of their pupils' needs and carefully track their progress. School moves are minimised as decisions to change children's home placements must be agreed by the Virtual School Head Teacher.

69. The Virtual School is well placed within the looked after children's service. It adds value to the service, as does the fact that it holds and manages the pupil premium centrally for all looked after children. Strengths include being able to target children whose progress is faltering quickly and effectively, for example, by providing one-to-one tuition. Young people told inspectors that they valued this greatly.
70. The virtual school provides a named link to both in-house residential provision and out-of-authority provision to ensure that children are receiving their educational entitlement and to monitor the progress they make, wherever they are living. The service has been extended to provide support to adopted children and young people and their families. Performance is reported to a board of governors and the corporate parenting panel to ensure that effective management oversight of pupils' progress is maintained.

The graded judgement for adoption performance is outstanding.

71. The leadership and management of the adoption service is exceptionally strong, visible and stable. There is effective management oversight of the service and an excellent understanding of adoption and its complexities. As a result, the performance on the DFE adoption score card is on an upward trajectory. Improving performance by reducing the timescales in matching children to families has been a key focus for the service in 2012–13. This has resulted in a far better performance than most other local authorities in achieving shorter timescales for children coming into care and moving into an adoptive family. Across East Sussex a significantly higher number of adoptive families are waiting less than three months from their date of approval and the date when they are matched to children. As a result, children are moving into adoptive families quicker.
72. Managers and staff explore innovative ways to achieving permanence and adoption as evident in their 'fostering to adopt' initiative, the 'no detriment policy' and 'DVD' recruitment days. Staff are well qualified and demonstrate strong and driving passion for achieving excellent outcomes for children and their adoptive family. They receive regular good quality reflective supervision which gives them time to consider the decisions they are taking to find suitable families for children. Well organised and specialist training further strengthens their professional expertise and practice in adoption.
73. Higher levels of investment in the adoption service through the 'Thrive Transformation' project has enabled the service to recruit and appoint three additional qualified social workers. As a consequence, this is leading to sustained improvement in all areas of adoption practice within East Sussex. These include more focused recruitment activity to increase the number of adoptive placements, an increase in family finding for children and a significant reduction in the use of expensive and geographically distant interagency placements.

74. There continues to be a significant number of children requiring adoptive placements in East Sussex. The number of children placed for adoption has remained high and represents a rise of 29% from the previous year, including higher numbers of older children and of sibling groups. Good use of the Government's Adoption Reform Grant has enabled an increased recruitment of adopters. Alongside the local authority's own investment to increase the workforce capacity in the adoption service this will provide a continued, sustained response to family finding for children.
75. There are currently 49 children with a plan for permanence and effective family finding is being undertaken in all cases, including those children who may be considered harder to place because of their special needs and/or large sibling groups. The service does have a small number of children who are awaiting placements for over one year. There are sound reasons for this in each child's case, with clear evidence of on-going family finding activities underpinning the service's view that all children should have the opportunity to grow up in a permanent family.
76. Where recommendations are to be made that brothers and sisters should not live together CAMHS undertake a full assessment of need and contribute to the decisions being made. Sensitive assessments explore the impact of such decisions and record clearly how professionals reach their conclusions. Where children cannot be matched locally they are placed on the national adoption register to ensure that as wide a search as possible is made to secure a permanent family. Membership of the South East consortium offers a wider placement choice and compliments in-house family finding activities. Learning outcomes from the recent national 'Activity Days' are being considered to further enhance possible opportunities for matching children to families.
77. Specific recruitment campaigns are targeted at the needs and profile of those children waiting. In addition, 'DVD' events are part of the new approach to match children to families. They provide an opportunity for approved adopters and children's social workers to meet and discuss children waiting for permanent families, particular those children with more complex needs and larger family groups. Sharing information, including photos, DVDs, art and written work by children and anecdotal evidence helps adopters to influence and play a significant part in their own matching arrangements.
78. Recruitment campaigns to attract adoptive families are on-going using advertising space on local radio stations and in local newspapers. Using other media forums to capture prospective adopters' interest are through the multimedia 'Fillaspace.com' " promoting all aspects of 'care' including permanent fostering and adoption. The local authority has seen an increased level of interest as a result. A dedicated telephone number for enquires from prospective adopters, a specific email address and an on-line enquiry form ensure that anyone making an initial enquiry to be considered as an adoptive family receives a prompt and personal response.

79. The local authority is seeing the benefits of introducing the two stage assessment and approval process. Most prospective adopters in East Sussex are approved between six and nine months from registration of interest to approval at the adoption panel. Panel dates are now secured early in the assessment process to ensure a more timely completion for the approval of prospective adopters. Adopters told inspectors that they considered the assessment process to be timely, fair and thought provoking. They spoke highly of the training programme in place to support them.
80. Prospective adopters reports are thorough and of a very high standard. Children's placement reports are detailed and comprehensive. The views of birth parents regarding the plans for adoption are sensitively reported on. Effective quality assurance processes ensure that all reports presented to the panel are of a high quality.
81. Adoption Panels are effective in ensuring the timely approval of prospective adopters and the matching of children to families. Panel minutes are of a very high quality, with a detailed recording of discussions that take place. They accurately reflect where challenges have been made by panel members.
82. Life story work supports children in understanding their past. They are completed in a timely way and are imaginative and interactive. Life story books seen by inspectors were of a good quality. In one example, an inspector saw an excellent illustration of life story activity between a social worker and young child.
83. The local authority has extended the support of the Virtual School for all children who have left care either through an SGO or adoption order. Support is properly focussed on meeting a child's particular educational needs where adoption in a new family may be affecting their ability to achieve in class. An adoptive parent and a foster carer are parent governors on the Virtual School's governing body which strengthens the role of the school in supporting and understanding the impact children experience living in a new family. Through the Adoption Support grant the Virtual School has appointed a former headteacher as an adoption support coordinator. Their role is specifically to help adopted children, families and teachers understand about attachment issues and how these can affect children's behaviour and capacity to learn in the classroom. The Virtual School is currently working with local schools to ensure that the Pupil Premium paid to schools in April 2014 for children who have left care through either an SGO or an adoption order is used effectively.
84. Adoption support services are excellent, and the level of support provided for adoptive families is exceptionally strong. The service demonstrates an impressive commitment to adoption support, one that is well tailored and individualised at all stages of the adoption journey. A commissioned CAMHS service that sits within the adoption team provides effective support to children and families, for example through 'Theraplay', which helps families to stay together during the early days of placement and assists in the prevention of

family breakdown. These effective approaches to adoption, which are now embedded in practice, provide children and adoptive families with a good level of security and support at a time when relationships are new and vulnerable. Families regard adoption support to be of a high quality and, as a consequence, disruptions following placement have been consistently low.

85. Post-adoption support is provided through excellent bespoke support packages following robust post-adoption assessments. CAMHS provide consultation surgeries for professionals and adopters involved in some very complex family issues. The children's guide to post-adoption support services includes ways that children can make a complaint and informs them of their right to the support of an advocate. Time limited groups for young adopted people have been run to provide additional support when they are dealing with some challenging concerns post placement. Another strength of the adoption support team is that they have facilitated a number of support groups and workshops for adopters and children, including Parenting Teenagers. This particular group led on to the development of the Adoptive Families Group with a focus on raising awareness at a national level about post-adoption support. East Sussex continues to work closely with the group to further develop their own post-adoption support offer. Workshops relating to specific issues such as social networking have been run to provide additional advice and guidance on how children can stay safe. As a result of excellent post-adoption support the service placement stability is good, with no placement disruptions in the last twelve months. A service contract with Adoption UK enables adopters to secure additional support if required through an independent provider.

The graded judgement for the experiences and progress of Care Leavers requires improvement

86. The experiences and progress of care leavers requires improvement. Managers are clear from their assessment of the service that improvements are required in order to support and improve outcomes for all care leavers. The service is supporting some young people who lead challenging lifestyles which affect their ability to sustain stable accommodation, employment and education opportunities. A recent improvement plan for the care leaving service has enabled some significant developments in the service, such as increasing the workforce capacity to support these young people. A reduction in the number of personal advisors and an increase in the use of qualified social workers and senior practitioners are strengthening the capability of the service to meet the needs of care leavers. The care leaving service is now based on one site to enable greater management oversight of the service and easier access for young care leavers to seek advice and support.
87. Regular audits of the service by senior managers show that all care leavers are now allocated to a suitably qualified worker. There has been a significant improvement in pathway planning. However, the format and content of plans are not yet of sufficient detail and quality to ensure that they remain meaningful to young people. Training for social workers and personal advisors

on pathway planning is not fully embedded in practice, which impacts on their ability to produce suitable plans.

88. Young people commence their transition planning early, which enables them to develop a good relationship and a degree of consistency with their social workers and personal advisors. A small number in higher education are supported until their 25th birthday. Care leavers confirmed to inspectors that the support given by their worker was helpful.
89. The 'staying put in foster care' policy means that a third of care leavers continue to live with their foster carer's post-18. This figure is notably higher than both statistical neighbours and the England average and confirms the determination by children's services to secure better arrangements for young vulnerable care leavers.
90. The local authority is improving the number and range of accommodation options for care leavers. For example, a joint project with the YMCA has secured an additional 10 new placements in 2013/2014 for care leavers with more complex needs. Bed & breakfast accommodation, although only used for a small number of young people and as a last resort, is still considered a possible option which leaves them potentially vulnerable to risk. Where young homeless aged 16+ are assessed as being vulnerable, supported lodgings are available and used effectively.
91. The frequency of training to assist 16 to 18 year olds and care leavers with independent living skills is variable. Although it is recognised that some care leavers do receive independence training through their accommodation providers the care leaving service has not yet provided sufficient programmes on budgeting and other essential life skills.
92. The provision of health services for post-18 care leavers is good. There is a defined pathway to access substance misuse services and a sexual health nurse. A new dedicated mental health nurse for post-18s is in the process of being recruited to build on an existing high quality CAMHS service.
93. Care leavers who spoke to inspectors were very positive about the support from the virtual school, particularly about the help they receive with university places. Children's services know that there is more to do to encourage young people to gain access to higher education.
94. There are too many post-18 care leavers who are 'NEET', representing 41% of the current group. The Care 2 Work programme and a contract with the Medway Youth Trust has commenced, although both are still in their infancy and their impact is not yet demonstrable. A multi-agency board tracks and monitors the education and training of all care leavers to ensure that they are taking full advantage of the opportunities available to them. The local authority provides apprenticeships and work experience for care leavers and is looking,

through the 'Work Rite' project, to expand these opportunities further to ensure that care leavers are prioritised.

95. The care leaving service does not sufficiently monitor and assess some older care leavers with more complex needs, who are harder to reach. The new panel arrangement to review this cohort is a positive step, but is yet to have an impact.
96. Some care leavers who spoke to inspectors were unclear on their rights and entitlements as care leavers and the process to make a complaint.

Leadership, management and governance are good

97. Elected members and senior officers know their service well and work hard to ensure that good quality services to children and young people are prioritised. The 'Thrive Transformation' plan is driving the local authority's improvement for children and families. Its impact is beginning to show improved outcomes for children and families, with early help services being provided to more children in 2013 than in previous years. The success of the strategy is underpinned by good partnership arrangements, a high quality workforce strategy and a robust system of external review and evaluation. The Troubled Families Initiative has now been effectively assimilated into the THRIVE strategy to ensure the integration of this service and its future sustainability.
98. The Children and Young People's Plan 2011–2014 is a clear and well written overarching plan to improve outcomes for all children and young people across East Sussex. It is coordinated through the East Sussex Children and Young People's Trust (CYPT). Recently revised, it sets out clearly the partnerships aspirations for all children and young people across the county and establishes twelve priorities, including looked after children. Children and young people have made a significant contribution and their comments have been effectively incorporated into the plan.
99. Lead members work well with senior managers to understand the messages from performance information. They receive regular briefings so that they can discharge their statutory roles and act as champions for children's services within the authority. They are knowledgeable about recent findings from serious case reviews and, through the scrutiny committee and the corporate parenting board, they monitor effectively the progress being made against the actions set.
100. The Children's Scrutiny Committee focuses well on key areas, and offers robust challenge and public accountability for the quality of children's services in the authority. Therefore the quality of the work of children's services is properly understood so that decision-making at a senior level is transparent and based on a thorough knowledge of the service and its needs.
101. The Interim Director for Children's Services (IDCS) has been in post since June 2013. He has been instrumental in maintaining the momentum for the

implementation of the 'Thrive' agenda. He has secured the continued commitment of the local authority and partner agencies for financial investment in services and a belief and enthusiasm for the project from the children's social care workforce and the partnership.

102. Links between the Chief Executive, the IDCS and LSCB Chair are good. The interim DCS has used his role successfully to promote the learning from recent SCRs to all partners, to ensure that the messages are understood and directly influence improving practice. The development in front line practice, for example, the improved quality of family assessments, the use of chronologies in direct work with children and families, and the impact of the early help agenda, are significant achievements. The recent overview report of the Care Leaving Service to the senior management team identified a number of shortcomings in this service area. An effective response, including financial investment, is now showing that some significant steps have been made, including increased capacity in the workforce to support some very vulnerable young people.
103. Corporate parenting responsibilities are known and well understood across the service, and regular management reports to the board enable members to have an effective oversight of services to looked after children and young people. As a consequence they are acutely aware of the challenges all looked after children and care leavers face if they are to achieve their full potential. They work well with senior managers and social workers to ensure all East Sussex children and families receive the right level of support to help them, including those who live out of the county in placements some distance from home. As a large county they know they are the host authority to a significant number of children from other local authorities who live in the area. Through partner agencies such as the police and area health they know the demand this places on local services, including when children go missing. Achievements by East Sussex children and young people and foster carers are celebrated and reported on to full council.
104. An established East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) assumed its full statutory powers in April 2013, bringing together key partners across Health and Social Care. The HWB strategy 2012–2016 focusses on a small number of key priorities, with several intrinsically linked to the 'Thrive' agenda. Based on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment it provides a clear focus for the Board across a range of health and care issues. Progress of the strategy is monitored at the quarterly HWB meetings. Generally, planning for services is robust and is based on an examination of all available information, consultation with partners and service users and a review of evidence-base research and practice. However, within planning processes it is not always clear that the diverse needs of the community and the workforce are considered sufficiently. For example, in the analysis of the work force, ethnicity is not considered nor how this impacts on children and families where 8.7 % of all children living in the county are from an ethnic minority group.

105. The commissioning of services is undertaken well with good partnership arrangements in place. This has resulted in some good outcomes for children and young people, for example, the re-commissioning of the Children's Integrated Therapy Service has ensured a more targeted and timely service to families. There are some effective services to meet the diverse needs of children and young people living in rural areas, such as mobile youth services. However, the diverse needs of children are not always given sufficient consideration in planning. For example, the Sufficiency Statement does not consider whether the profile of the resources available to accommodate looked after children effectively meets their diverse needs.
106. Performance management information is scrutinised well by all managers to ensure that a consistently high quality of service is provided to meet the needs of children, young people and their families. Performance information effectively focuses on the priorities of the local authority and data are used well at all levels of the organisation to monitor and report on this. However, the performance of the independent reviewing service (IRO) has not been properly scrutinised. Due to capacity issues an annual report on the performance of the IRO service has not been prepared in line with national guidance. As a result, senior managers, elected members and partners are unable to properly consider how this service effectively challenges children's care planning arrangements.
107. Quality assurance is undertaken at all levels of the authority through both routine case file audits and thematic 'deep dives' to accelerate and drive up practice improvement. As a result of this work, the level of management oversight in case files has been improved and is now more robust. The role of the Principal Social Worker has been well planned to support the organisation's commitment to learning. Regular workshops and direct one-to-one support with social workers and front line managers supports their development.
108. Learning from serious case reviews, complaints and research is good and helps to develop services and shape practice to ensure that they focus on best outcomes for children, young people and their families. The data held by the authority have been used effectively to consider which children may be potentially at risk of child sexual exploitation through plotting the findings from research against data held about individual children. As a consequence, this has helped to improve local knowledge, operational practice and to inform the monthly missing children's meetings. As a result, information sharing across the partnership is robust.
109. An established and stable workforce results in many children and young people enjoying good relationships with their social worker. Good working relationships with local education providers and an effective system of induction and support mean that new staff have a good understanding of the arrangements for services to vulnerable and looked after children. A strong workforce development strategy is in place which ensures that staff from all agencies are suitably equipped to undertake their roles.

110. Training is commissioned taking into account evidence-based practice to ensure that workers at all levels can undertake their roles effectively. The importance of the multi-agency Family Keyworkers programme within Early Help settings has been underpinned by offering accredited training and structured, on-going support across the partnership to a wide range of professionals. These include staff from other statutory agencies where children are not the primary focus of their role, for example the probation service.

111. The local authority works well within the family justice partnership and is an active member of the Family Justice Board. Effective work with partners to address some long-standing issues has resulted in the development of a joint pre-proceedings protocol. As a result, East Sussex has the lowest completion time within the Designated Family Judge area and children within the family justice system are able to achieve a permanent status in a timely manner.

What the inspection judgements mean: the local authority

An **outstanding** local authority leads highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** local authority leads effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and those who are looked after and care leavers have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a local authority that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the authority is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children, young people and families.

A local authority that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after or care leavers not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Section 2: The effectiveness of the local safeguarding children board

The effectiveness of the LSCB is good

Areas for improvement

112. Improve the partnership performance monitoring arrangements to ensure that the Board is able to provide effective challenge across all agencies where shortfalls in provision and practice occur.
113. Ensure that procedures are in place to measure the impact of training on frontline practice.

Key strengths and weaknesses of the LSCB

114. East Sussex Safeguarding Children's Board (ESSCB) is an effective, well established and mature safeguarding Board. The Board has an independent chair who has been in post for over 3 years and is a member of the South-East network of independent chairs, and is influential in driving improvement in practice across the partnership. A full-time business manager supports the work of the Board.
115. The ESSCB is well attended by representatives from across the partnership who are committed to the protection of children and families. Appropriate governance relationships are in place with clear lines of communication between the Independent Chair, Director of Children's Services and the Chief Executive of the council. A protocol has been developed between the Health and Well-Being Board and the ESSCB. Although this has been only recently agreed, early discussions between the chairs of each body have established clarity of relationship between the Boards.
116. The chair of the ESSCB is a member of the executive board of 'THRIVE' and has played a significant role in developing this agenda and the interface between early help and statutory children's social care.
117. The ESSCB business plan has four key priorities that are in line with local priorities. The plan gives a strategic focus across the partnership on safeguarding children and families and improving practice. Reducing the number of children and young people requiring statutory interventions, by ensuring that they receive appropriate early help at a time when they most need it remains critical to the overall focus of the Board and the partnership.
118. The ESSCB has faced considerable financial challenge in resourcing a number of serious case reviews commissioned recently. ESCC has allocated additional exceptional funding to support this work and other agencies unable to increase their financial contribution to the Board's budget, have increased their support

in kind, for example, providing experienced managers to support the work of the sub-groups. The commitment to work collectively as a group when there are challenges demonstrates the effectiveness of the partnership in protecting children.

119. ESSCB produces and publishes an annual report that meets statutory requirements. The report sets out the progress made against the business plan and describes the challenges that remain. It considers the impact of the Board's work in relation to challenging and influencing the quality of practice and the protection of children in the preceding year.
120. Effective arrangements for the review of child deaths are in place. The panel is comprised of appropriate professionals and has an independent chair. Regular reports are made to the executive committee of the ESSCB as well as contributions to the annual Child Death Overview Panel report which is presented to the Board. Reports identify issues of concern, themes or trends that require action. The ESSCB receives performance monitoring reports about early help and social care. These reports support further investigation and challenge, such as a recent report to the Board about the increase in the number of children on a second child protection plan. However, although the ESSCB data report has been extended to some additional areas of performance, it requires further development. As a result, the Board is not able to identify fully, and challenge shortfalls in, provision or practice in relation to all agencies. The ESSCB is aware of this issue and is addressing it.
121. The ESSCB demonstrates effective challenge to partners through a range of activities including Section 11 audits, case reviews and action plans arising from Serious Case Reviews. The Section 11 audit for 2014 has been widened to include scrutiny of the measures that agencies have in place to recognise, report on and, where relevant, work with young people who may be at risk of child sexual exploitation. New arrangements for peer scrutiny and quality control of the Section 11 audit are planned to be introduced this year.
122. A robust learning and improvement framework is in place which includes a regular programme of multi-agency case file audits. Such audits are undertaken regularly, with areas for development and good practice identified. Agencies report to the Board on the changes made as a result. An example is of bank staff being employed by NHS Sussex to file a backlog of child protection minutes on children's health notes. Shortfalls in the completion of social work chronologies, identified in audits in the summer of 2013, have been addressed, with inspectors seeing good examples of chronologies and their use in assessment. The ESSCB conducts a range of reviews into cases that do not meet the threshold for a serious case review. A range of methods are used to review such cases to ensure the appropriate lessons are learned. Learning arising from serious case reviews, case reviews and audit are embedded into the ESSCB training and disseminated through bi-monthly lunchtime sessions. Partners are required to report the actions taken or processes put in place that address the issues arising.

123. The ESSCB has recently had to respond to a higher than usual number of incidents that have met the threshold for a serious case review. The ESSCB has addressed these with rigour and the Board has quality-assured the reports arising from the reviews. Although the number of SCRs has increased, no common cause was identified for the incidents leading to the reviews. Action plans arising from serious case reviews are scrutinised and monitored and partner agencies are called to account in relation to their implementation. This process has included representatives from organisations attending Board meetings and the Board exerting influence on the development and implementation of these plans.
124. The ESSCB is currently refreshing its child sexual exploitation strategy. Extensive awareness training has been provided to all professionals, including those who do not work directly with children, for example, environmental health officers who may be in a position to identify situations of concern about children through their work. Further work is being planned to raise awareness with people working in the night-time economy including taxi drivers, staff in hotels and take-away food establishments.
125. ESSCB has been influential in developing services for children and young people who have been exposed to domestic abuse. The Board funded a domestic abuse project officer responsible for raising awareness of domestic abuse among professionals and the public. The officer worked with colleagues to develop the Building Safer Relationships programme. It is a community-based perpetrator project, as well as providing support for children and mothers who have suffered abuse. To ensure the continuity of this post, funding has now moved from the ESSCB to East Sussex children's services, with the role being brought into mainstream services.
126. The Board benefits from the membership of lay members, who have led on developing communications between the ESSCB and the community, agencies and young people. Working directly with young people, they have revised and refreshed the ESSCB website which has experienced a three-fold increase in the number of hits.
127. The ESSCB provides a highly valued and wide ranging training programme that is responsive to emerging local and national issues. Some work has been undertaken to identify the impact of the training on practice, although the Board recognises that there is further work to be done to ensure that training continues to meet the needs of practitioners.

What the inspection judgments mean: the LSCB

An **outstanding** LSCB is highly influential in improving the care and protection of children. Their evaluation of performance is exceptional and helps the local authority and its partners to understand the difference that services make and where they need to improve. The LSCB creates and fosters an effective learning culture.

An LSCB that is **good** coordinates the activity of statutory partners and monitors the effectiveness of local arrangements. Multi-agency training in the protection and care of children is effective and evaluated regularly for impact. The LSCB provides robust and rigorous evaluation and analysis of local performance that identifies areas for improvement and influences the planning and delivery of high-quality services.

An LSCB **requires improvement** if it does not yet demonstrate the characteristics of good.

An LSCB that is **inadequate** does not demonstrate that it has effective arrangements in place and the required skills to discharge its statutory functions. It does not understand the experiences of children and young people locally and fails to identify where improvements can be made.

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