



GATED PROVIDER GUIDE

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT LESSONS FOR CHILDREN'S HOMES

A practical guide for children's home providers reviewing training impact, staff capability and future development priorities.

Use the research to reflect on how training is building the capability Ofsted evidence points to.

3,529

published reports

114,035

evidence extracts

11

recurring themes

4

judgement outcomes

Findings can be read across inspection outcomes, from Outstanding through to Inadequate.

For children's home providers reviewing future training requirements

midhurstlearning.org

Building futures through learning



What the research helps you ask

Children's home providers invest heavily in training, qualifications and CPD. The useful question is how that learning is translating into everyday practice, staff confidence, leadership oversight and the evidence inspectors expect to see in the home.

Midhurst Learning has reviewed 3,529 published Ofsted children's home reports and 114,035 tagged evidence extracts from its current research dataset, compiled in June 2026 from published inspection reports available at the point of analysis. The findings can be grouped by recurring practice themes and considered by inspection outcome, from Outstanding through to Inadequate. That gives providers an evidence-informed way to reflect on a practical question: what could the national evidence mean for your home, your staff capability and your future training requirements?

Reflect on staff development through the evidence

How is training helping staff demonstrate the capability, confidence and evidence of impact your homes need? How does it support leadership, safeguarding, supervision, recording and children's progress in practice - not just completion of training?

Section	Purpose
Executive summary	The core argument: large-scale Ofsted evidence can help providers reflect on training impact and future development priorities.
Evidence at a glance	The research base, the 11 recurring evidence themes, and how the findings can be considered by inspection outcome.
What the evidence is showing	The full 11-theme picture, followed by selected workforce-linked themes that have clear relevance to staff development and practice improvement.
Three initial findings	Leadership grip, safeguarding confidence, and the capability loop connecting training, supervision, learning, recording and practice.
What this means for providers	How the findings can support training review, governance, supervision and improvement conversations without criticising existing provision.
Workforce Development Value Check	A practical self-review tool for internal discussion across homes.
Applying the findings	How the research can support workforce-development planning and an evidence-informed conversation with Midhurst Learning.

Use this guide as a development benchmark

The guide highlights recurring evidence themes that can support reflection on training impact. It helps you consider whether learning is building the capability associated with stronger practice and supporting the development priorities that appear across the evidence.



Executive summary

A single Ofsted inspection report describes one home at one point in time. Analysed at scale, published inspection evidence can show broader patterns: what stronger homes evidence in practice, where weaker outcomes repeatedly expose gaps, and which staff-development themes appear across leadership, safeguarding, supervision, recording, learning and children's progress.

Midhurst Learning has reviewed **3,529 published Ofsted children's home reports and 114,035 tagged evidence extracts** from a research dataset covering published inspection evidence available up to **January 2026**. The dataset was then compiled, tagged and analysed through to **June 2026**, with the findings made available from **July 2026**. Because the evidence can be considered by inspection outcome, from Outstanding through to Inadequate, it gives providers a sharper way to reflect on training impact rather than simply track training completion.

The practical value is not just knowing that these themes appear in Ofsted reports. The value is using the findings to reflect on whether training arrangements, qualification pathways and internal development plans are helping staff demonstrate the capability, confidence and evidence of impact your homes need.

This guide highlights selected initial findings and turns them into practical questions for children's home providers: what does this mean for our home, where is training already supporting strong practice, and which areas may benefit from further focus? Where providers choose to explore the findings in more depth, Midhurst Learning can support a constructive discussion about future development priorities.

The key training question

How does this research help your home(s), your staff capability, your current training and your future development priorities?

1. Evidence at a glance

Evidence area	Current evidence base
Published reports reviewed	3,529, from the current research dataset compiled in June 2026 from published Ofsted children's home reports available at the point of analysis.
Tagged evidence extracts	114,035
Recurring evidence themes	11 themes identified. This guide focuses on the workforce-linked themes that are most useful for training, supervision, leadership practice and development reflection.
Main analysis lens	Concern/risk evidence, positive-practice evidence and neutral/context evidence; findings can also be considered by inspection outcome, from Outstanding through to Inadequate.
Training impact lens	Themes can be used to reflect on training impact across leadership, safeguarding, supervision, recording, learning, professional working, staff confidence and children's progress.

The evidence should be read as a guide to recurring themes and training-development signals, not as a judgement on any individual provider or any existing training arrangement. The full analysis identifies 11 recurring evidence themes. This guide then focuses on the themes that are most useful for reflecting on staff development, supervision, leadership practice and how learning is applied in the home.

2. What the evidence is showing

The chart below shows the 11 recurring evidence themes identified in the initial analysis. Not all of those themes are direct training categories, and that is precisely why they matter. Workforce development is often visible through leadership oversight, safeguarding follow-through, supervision, records, professional working, staff understanding, children's voice, stability and whether children are making progress.

Evidence themes appearing across the initial analysis

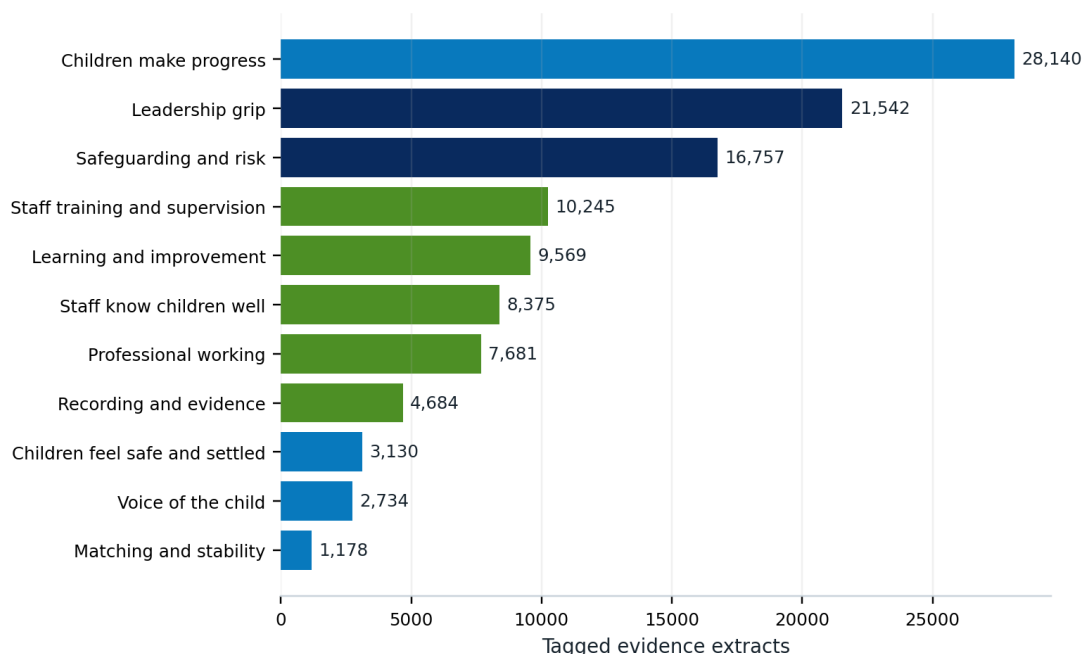


Figure 1. Evidence theme volumes from the initial analysis. The table below focuses on the themes with the clearest workforce-development link.

Evidence theme	Why it matters for workforce development
Leadership grip	The clearest management and culture signal. It connects to oversight, learning, staff confidence, safeguarding follow-through and whether training becomes visible in practice.
Safeguarding and risk	A core confidence theme that links to risk assessment, escalation, recording, supervision and staff response.
Staff training and supervision	A direct workforce-development theme, but its value increases when read alongside leadership, safeguarding and recording.
Learning and improvement	Shows whether incidents, audits, feedback and inspection findings are translated into visible change.
Recording and evidence	A practical capability theme: records need to show the child, the risk, the response and the management oversight.
Professional working	Shows whether staff communicate, escalate and work with other professionals in ways that support safeguarding, planning and stability.
Children's progress	An outcome-focused theme that helps providers consider whether staff development is supporting better care, planning, relationships and progress for children.

3. Initial workforce-development signals

When positive practice and concern/risk extracts are viewed together, the evidence points towards a practical development agenda: strengthening leadership confidence, safeguarding practice, supervision quality, recording, professional working, learning from incidents and the way staff support children's progress. These are the areas providers can use constructively to reflect on how current and future training can add value.

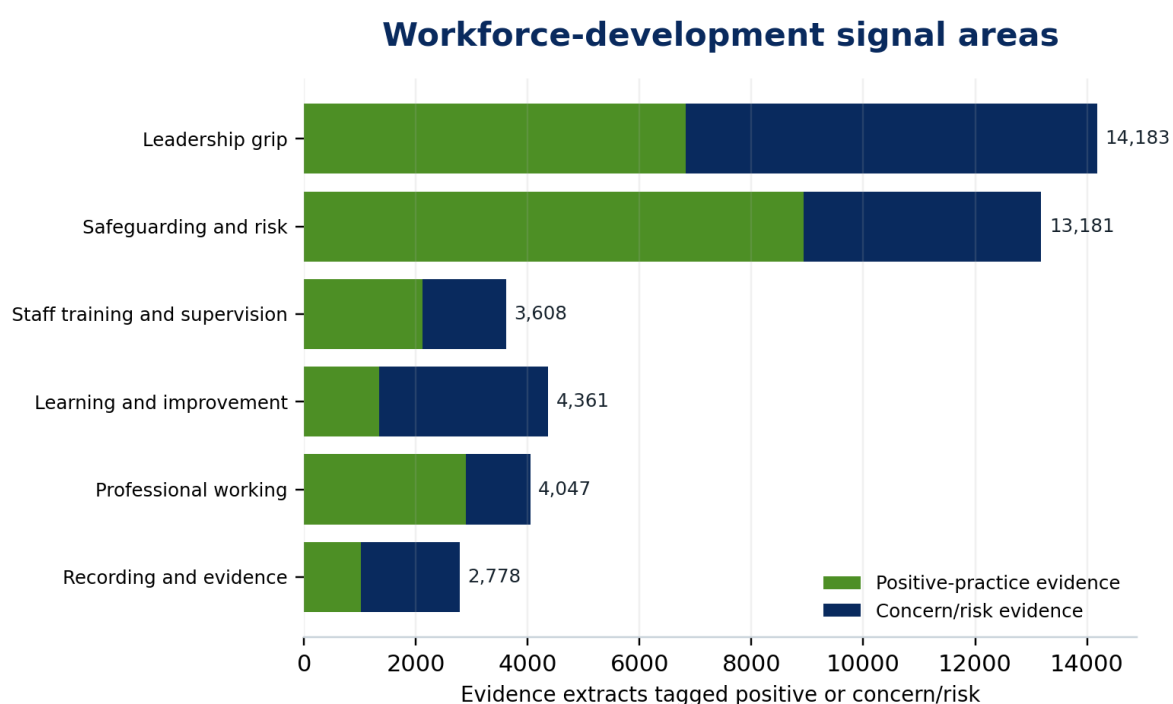


Figure 2. Selected workforce-development signal areas. Figures show positive-practice and concern/risk extracts only; neutral/context extracts are excluded from this visual.

Finding one: leadership grip is a staff development issue, not just a management phrase

Leadership grip appears strongly across both concern/risk evidence and positive-practice evidence. That dual signal matters because it suggests leadership is not only where homes can struggle; it is also where stronger practice becomes visible.

Conversation prompt for your team

Can you evidence that leaders understand what is happening in the home, that staff know what good practice looks like, and that training is helping managers follow improvement through to impact?



4. How leadership grip links to training need

Development area	Provider question
Management oversight	Can managers evidence the line of sight from incident, audit or concern through to action, review and impact?
Supervision quality	Do supervision conversations help staff understand risk, plans, expectations and practice standards?
Learning culture	Are incidents, complaints and feedback used to improve practice, not simply recorded?
Staff confidence	Do staff know what good practice looks like and how to respond when risks change?

Finding two: safeguarding confidence depends on staff practice being understood and followed through

Safeguarding and risk remains one of the strongest themes in the evidence. The useful point for workforce development is how often safeguarding connects to other areas of practice: risk assessment, recording, escalation, professional curiosity, management oversight and staff confidence.

This means safeguarding development should not sit only as annual compliance training. Providers need to test whether staff can apply safeguarding knowledge in the home, in records, in supervision, in professional conversations and in decisions made around children.

Conversation prompt for your team

Do records, supervision, management oversight, staff practice and professional communication show that safeguarding training is being applied, tested and followed through?

5. Where safeguarding links to workforce development

Practice area	Development question
Risk assessment	Do staff understand current risks and what changes the risk picture?
Escalation	Do staff know when, how and why to escalate concerns?
Recording	Do records show the risk, the response, the rationale and the follow-up?
Professional working	Is there evidence of effective communication with social workers, schools, health and other professionals?
Management oversight	Can leaders evidence timely review, challenge and learning?

Finding three: training, supervision, learning and recording form one capability loop

Staff training and supervision is a direct evidence theme, but the wider workforce-development story becomes clearer when it is read alongside learning and improvement, recording and evidence, and professional working. In practice, these themes form one capability chain: staff learn expectations, supervision tests understanding, practice shows whether learning has been embedded, records evidence the response, and improvement activity shows whether learning has changed what happens next.

That matters because a training plan can look complete while the evidence of application remains inconsistent. The useful question is where the chain is strongest and where it may need support: content, confidence, supervision, daily practice, recording, management review or learning from incidents.



Conversation prompt for your team

Can staff apply learning, can managers evidence that application, and where could future support strengthen the link between training, supervision, recording and practice impact?

6. The staff development capability loop

The staff development capability loop provides a practical way to apply the research without turning it into criticism of existing training provision. It starts with your own priorities, looks at the evidence staff need to show, and then considers how training, qualifications, CPD and supervision are helping staff apply learning in the home.

Step	What should happen	Evidence to check
1. Training	Staff understand the knowledge, expectations and practice standards required in the home.	Training plan, induction, CPD, mandatory learning, role-specific development
2. Supervision	Managers test understanding, confidence and application in relation to real children, real risks and current plans.	Supervision records, reflective practice notes, management challenge, action follow-up
3. Practice	Staff apply learning consistently in the home, including safeguarding, relationships, communication and routines.	Daily records, incident responses, direct observations, child feedback, professional feedback
4. Evidence	Records show the child, the risk, the response, the rationale and management oversight.	Case records, risk assessments, plans, audits, chronology, QA reviews
5. Improvement	Learning from incidents, complaints, audits and inspection themes leads to visible change.	Action plans, lessons learned, governance minutes, re-audit, impact review

For providers, the opportunity is to use the research as a structured prompt: where is training already supporting stronger practice, where is learning not yet visible enough, and which development priorities should shape future planning? The companion Value Tool can be used to turn these questions into a practical meeting discussion.



7. Workforce Development Value Check

Use this Value Check in leadership meetings, quality assurance discussions, responsible individual reviews, registered manager supervision, improvement planning and training-development reflections. It is designed to help you move from national evidence to the practical implications for your own homes and staff development plan.

Evidence theme	Question to ask	Evidence to check
Leadership grip	Do leaders have a current understanding of risks, strengths and improvement priorities in each home?	Management oversight, audits, supervision notes, action plans
Safeguarding and risk	Do staff understand risks, escalation routes and how to evidence follow-through?	Risk assessments, incident records, escalation records, supervision
Staff training and supervision	Does supervision test whether learning is being applied in practice?	Supervision records, reflective discussions, observation, CPD records
Recording and evidence	Do records show the child, the risk, the response and the management oversight?	Daily notes, plans, chronologies, QA checks
Learning and improvement	Are incidents, complaints, patterns and feedback translated into visible change?	Lessons learned, action tracking, re-audit, impact reviews
Professional working	Is staff communication with other professionals timely, clear and well evidenced?	Meeting notes, emails, escalation records, multi-agency plans
Children's progress	Can staff evidence how care, planning and relationships are helping children move forward?	Progress records, education links, goals, direct work, child feedback

8. From research to future development priorities

The next step is to consider what the findings may mean for your future development priorities. Is learning helping staff apply knowledge in real homes, with real children, real risks and real records? Is supervision strengthening understanding? Are leaders able to evidence impact? Could further support help connect training, supervision and practice more clearly to the themes inspectors repeatedly identify?

Midhurst Learning can help you explore those questions if you choose to look deeper. That may mean strengthening what you already have, identifying where further support could help, reviewing qualification pathways, or building a more evidence-informed approach to CPD and leadership development.

From evidence to development priorities

**What does this research suggest about your home, your staff capability and your future training plan?
Use the findings to reflect on how training and development are aligned to inspection evidence and future priorities.**



9. Next step: explore what the findings mean for your homes

If this guide has raised questions about leadership confidence, safeguarding practice, supervision, recording, qualification pathways or whether learning is being embedded across your homes, a useful next step is to review what that means for your own workforce development plan.

This can be useful whether you already have in-house training, work with an external provider, or are exploring future options. The aim is not to criticise existing provision; it is to use the research to identify what is working, where further support may help, and how future development could be tailored to your requirements.

Review area	What it means
Who it is for	Owners, responsible individuals, registered managers, operations leads, quality leads and provider groups reviewing training impact or future workforce development.
What we can discuss	Training provision, Level 3 and Level 5 pathways, leadership development, safeguarding confidence, supervision, recording, evidence quality and whether learning is being embedded in practice.
What you will get from the conversation	A clearer view of potential workforce-development priorities, practical reflection points for future planning, and next steps for strengthening training impact.
Why speak to Midhurst Learning	Midhurst Learning brings residential childcare training expertise, sector understanding and practical qualification pathways that can help providers turn evidence into a future development plan. To discuss the guide, contact info@midhurstlearning.org or call 0808 168 2005.

Start with the research. Then review your training.

Book a workforce development consultation with the Midhurst Learning team to explore what these findings mean for your homes, your staff and your future training requirements.

Web: midhurstlearning.org | **Email:** info@midhurstlearning.org | **Telephone:** 0808 168 2005

Source and responsible use note

This guide is based on independent analysis of published Ofsted children's home inspection reports and tagged evidence extracts. It is not an Ofsted product and is not endorsed by Ofsted. It should not be read as Ofsted guidance, endorsement or judgement. The purpose is to support constructive thinking about workforce development, training impact, staff capability and better outcomes for children.