

28 May 2010

Mr Cliff Turner
Director of Children's Services
The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Room 25
Town Hall
St Ives Road
Maidenhead
Berks
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Dear Mr Turner

Annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead children's services

This letter summarises the findings of the recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within local authority children's services in The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council which was conducted on 28 and 29 April 2010. The inspection was carried out under section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. It will contribute to the annual review of the performance of the authority's children's services, for which Ofsted will award a rating later in the year. I would like to thank all of the staff we met for their assistance in undertaking this inspection.

The inspection sampled the quality and effectiveness of contact, referral and assessment arrangements and their impact on minimising any child abuse and neglect. Inspectors considered a range of evidence, including: electronic case records; supervision files and notes; observation of social workers and senior practitioners undertaking referral and assessment duties; and other information provided by staff and managers. Inspectors also spoke to a range of staff including managers, social workers, other practitioners and administrative staff.

The inspection identified areas of strength and satisfactory practice, with some areas for development.

From the evidence gathered, the following features of the service were identified:

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none">There is good morale in the referral and assessment service. Social workers have access to a good range of training and development opportunities which



are highly valued.

- Social workers receive good managerial support and supervision which lead to clear and effective case planning.
- Good recruitment processes have been effective in securing permanent social workers to the referral and assessment team reducing the reliance on agency staff.
- Management information and audit arrangements of practice in the referral and assessment service are effective and used by managers and the Local Safeguarding Children Board to improve service delivery.

Satisfactory practice

- Arrangements for responding to contact and referrals are robust, with good evidence of clear management decision making on cases.
- Child protection cases are identified well and responses are timely. There is good partnership working between social care and the police child abuse investigation unit in response to child protection referrals.
- Children and parents are seen in a timely way and their views taken into account in assessment and planning. When children are not seen alone clear reasons are recorded.
- The quality of initial assessments is at least satisfactory, although they are not always sufficiently analytical.
- Core assessments are at least satisfactory with evidence of clear risk assessments on cases.
- Arrangements for identifying and responding to children with complex disability needs are clear and effective, with evidence of some good quality initial and core assessments.
- Arrangements for transferring cases between social work teams are effective and efficient. A majority of cases are transferred in a timely manner and at an appropriate point within the casework plan.
- There is robust management information which enables effective monitoring of performance indicators relating to front line practice.

Areas for development

- There is inconsistent recording and consideration of the identity, ethnicity, religion and cultural needs of children and their families in assessment and planning.

- Agencies do not always respond promptly to requests for information, which results in delay for some families and children knowing the outcome of their assessments.
- The quality of chronologies on case files is variable which makes it difficult in some cases for social workers and managers to ascertain the family history from reading the file.
- Some social worker caseloads are too high which impacts upon their capacity to complete the recording of assessments and the closure of cases in a timely way. The needs of children identified in sibling groups are not always recorded separately.
- The common assessment framework is not well established, resulting in some children and families not receiving timely and effective support in the community.

Yours sincerely

Paul d'Inverno
Her Majesty's Inspector

Copy: Ian Trenholm, Chief Executive, The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Donald McPhail, Chair of Windsor and Maidenhead Safeguarding Children Board
Eileen Quick, Lead Member for Children's Services, The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Andrew Spencer, Department for Children, Schools and Families