

## Waltham Forest – Inspection of child protection

**7–16 January 2013**

### Summary report for children and young people

The purpose of the inspection is to look at how well the council and other organisations help and protect children and young people to be safe from harm and to be well cared for.

Overall we rated Waltham Forest as adequate for how effective child protection services are. All of our grades are explained in the table below:

Outstanding	A service that is significantly better than required at keeping children and young people safe
Good	A service that is better than required at keeping children and young people safe
Adequate	A service that is doing what is required to keep children and young people safe
Inadequate	A service that is not doing what is required to keep children and young people safe

Here is a summary of the things we found at the inspection that were generally **adequate or good** and the things we told the Director:

Services for children and young people are improving in Waltham Forest and, as a result, children and young people are more likely to get the help they need and be protected from harm. Over the past year people have worked hard to make things better for families.

When children and their families first need help at an early stage, before big problems happen, the council and the agencies it works with give advice on how to improve things. Children's centres are good places where help is given to parents who have very young children. For older young people, teachers in schools and workers in the youth service make sure that they get the advice they need, for example to improve their health or their attendance at school.

Social workers take concerns about the safety of children and young people seriously. They work hard to make sure that children and their families get the help and support they need. Children who have a child protection plan are visited

regularly. Social workers speak to children and see them alone to listen carefully to what they have to say.

When parents have difficulties in looking after their children, professionals get together to discuss what needs to be done. They organise a meeting with the family fairly quickly to agree a plan about who needs to do what to help and by when.

Social workers and other people who have contact with children and young people get the training they need to help them to understand more what they need to do to keep children safe.

Here is a summary of the things we found at the inspection that **needed improving** and the things we told the Director:

The people who are writing the plans to protect children do not always record clearly enough what young people say and about their feelings and views. Sometimes parents and children are not clear about the plan for the future and they are confused about what they have to do to put things right. This makes it harder for some families to make things better for their children

Few children and young people are invited to attend their own child protection conference and the council is keen to improve this, so that all the adults can hear what children want to say. However, children and parents will need to be supported to understand what is going on so they can take part. Currently, families do not have access to an independent person to explain things to them.

The people who check the work of the social workers are not always doing this well enough. The social workers told inspectors that they discuss their work with their manager. However, what is discussed is not always written down. For example, support for some families has been stopped and the case closed to social care services but there is no explanation to say why. Also when people, for example teachers or health visitors, tell social care services about a child being at risk of harm, they are not receiving an update to reassure them that things have been dealt with.

The council also needs to find more social workers to work in Waltham Forest because not everyone who needs to speak to a social worker can do so. There are many temporary social workers and this is not good for families because their social workers change too often and this makes it more difficult to develop trusting

relationships and to make sure children are always kept safe.

Social workers should they think about the different backgrounds of the families they are helping, for example their race, language, religion and culture, so that they can take this information into account to can make sure that the help and protection children receive is suitable for them.

The full inspection report was published on 15 February 2013. The council will now prepare a plan to show how they will improve things. It will also say when they are going to talk to children and young people about what they are going to do and which groups they are going to talk to.

If you would like to look at the full inspection report you can find this at

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/local-authorities/waltham-forest>