

Joint area review

Report for children and young people in Hertfordshire

Report for children and young people about the services they receive in Hertfordshire

Why should I read this?

The law says that inspectors must look at and then report on how well local services serve children and young people in an area. This is called a "review". Inspectors visited your area recently. You might like to read this, or the full report which you can find on Ofsted's website, to find out what they had to say.

What did the inspectors do?

14 inspectors visited Hertfordshire in April and May 2007 so that they could get a feel of what life is like for children and young people in the area. They:

- ❖ talked/listened to a number of children and young people
- ❖ talked with adults working with children and young people (such as social workers, teachers, youth workers, nurses, doctors, police officers and councillors)
- ❖ spoke to parents and other people caring for children
- ❖ met with school councils' representatives and members of the Youth Parliament
- ❖ heard from the council and other agencies what it thinks about the services it provides for children
- ❖ read a lot of reports; and
- ❖ visited a number of neighbourhoods in the area.

The inspectors looked at how well services make sure that children and young people were properly safeguarded as well as looking at specific services for children who are being looked after by the local authority and those for children and young people with a learning difficulty and/or disability. They also looked at how well Black and minority ethnic children and young people are doing and what opportunities are offered for young people aged 16 to 19 to achieve well.

How well are children and young people safeguarded in Hertfordshire?

They are not safeguarded well enough. The council needs to do more to ensure that the staff they employ to work with children and young people are safe to work with them. They also need to do more to make sure that they supply help more quickly when it is needed. The council is getting better at working out the kind of help some children and young people need to keep them safe but has more to do to make sure that this is always as good as it should be.

How good are local services for children who are being looked after by the council in Hertfordshire?

There are many good things that the council does for looked after children but some services are not good enough. Children and young people who are looked after by the council don't always get enough help and support to make their lives better, The council is doing a lot of things to improve. Children and young people told inspectors that they are beginning to get better help and to have more opportunities to do well.

How good are local services for children and young people who have a learning difficulty and/or a disability in Hertfordshire?

Most children and young people who have a learning difficulty and/or a disability do well in school but not all of them get enough help to keep them healthy or to support them when they need extra care.

How good is the provision made for Black and minority ethnic children and young people and how well do they do?

Black and minority ethnic children and young people are starting to do better at school up to the age of 14 but after that some of them don't go on to achieve as well as they could. The council and its partners need to find out more and understand why this is happening. They need to know this to help them plan how to improve things.

How well have local services worked together to improve the quality of provision and achievement for young people aged 16-19?

Although young people do well at school up to the age of 16 quite a lot of them aren't so successful when they go into school sixth forms. Some schools with smaller sixth forms don't give young people enough opportunities to achieve as well as they could.

How well are local services led and managed?

The council and its partners have lots of good ideas and plans for making things better for children and young people in Hertfordshire. Inspectors think that local services have a good chance of getting better in the future, Services that haven't been doing well enough are starting to improve but

there are still problems in making sure that all children and young people are safe.

What should services do to improve services further?

Things that need doing straight away

Find good ways of telling children and young people in the area about this report.

Make sure that staff and volunteers are properly checked to make sure they are safe for children and young people to be in their care

Make sure that children and young people who are on the child protection register and those who are looked after are visited often and seen alone and that the managers make sure the social workers are doing this

Make sure that there are accurate facts and figures available to help put plans together for making services better.

Make sure there is enough money to make services better for children and young people who have mental health needs.

Make sure that children and young people are asked what they think about services and are involved in helping to check how good services are and in plans for improving them

Be clear who is responsible for making sure services are right for children and young people who come from vulnerable groups, such as those who are from Black and minority ethnic communities.

Find out how much bullying is happening and make sure something is done to stop it.

Things that need doing over the next six months

Make sure that all services for children and young people provide good value for money.

Find ways of making sure that services are of good quality across the county and that there are enough of them for children and young people living in

different parts of the county, whether they live in towns or in the country areas.

Find better ways for services to work together so that everyone knows their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding children and young people.

Make sure that services work together to provide better health and social care support for children and young people who have a learning difficulty and/or a disability.

For action in the longer term

Make sure that teachers and other people working in schools are trained to deal with racist incidents and take their responsibilities for race equality seriously enough.

Do more to improve young people's achievement after the age of 16.

Provide a better range of opportunities for young people aged 16-19 who come from vulnerable groups, including those from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

Make sure that children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have better opportunities to have their say about the services that are provided for them and to be involved in making them better.