

Joint area review

Report for children and young people in Northumberland

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

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?

Eight inspectors visited Northumberland 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 for children and young people made sure they were properly safeguarded as well as looking at specific services for children who are being looked after by the local authority, those for children and young people with a learning difficulty or disability. They also looked at how well local services are supporting children and young people with mental health needs; the quality of service provided and the outcomes achieved by children and young people to help develop their sexual health and children's achievement at Key Stage 2.

How well are children and young people safeguarded in Northumberland?

They are safeguarded well. The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) gives a good lead in this area of work. Most children and young people say they feel safe in school and in their local community. Staff are well trained and deal well with any safeguarding issues. The number of children needing extra help to make sure they are safe is falling and those receiving extra support

receive it for a shorter period of time. The work of social workers is good but sometimes the views of children and young people are not included in their reports often enough.

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

Children and young people who need looking after by the council get the right help and support to make their lives better, They live in safe placements and receive good support. Those looked after children who responded to the council's 'Having a Life' survey were more likely to feel confident and be happy at school than children in Northumberland generally. They do well at school and attend regularly. The quality of support for physical and emotional health is good for looked after children.

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

Most children and young people who have a learning difficulty and/or a disability do well in school and receive good service from other agencies. Statements for special educational need are produced on time and involve children and young people well. Parents report they are generally happy with the service offered although better help for young people as they move to adult services is needed.

How well are services supporting children and adolescents with mental health needs?

They are doing well. Recent improvements have increased the number of professionals able to help at an early stage those requiring support. All workers are pulling together to improve things and this is having a big impact particularly on young people who offend. More needs to be done, however, to improve the arrangements when young people move to adult services.

How well have do local services work together to improve children and young people's sexual health?

This is good. Health workers and schools work well to provide the right sort of education programmes. Many schools have achieved the Healthy Schools Award. The number of teenage mothers is falling. The accommodation for these young people should be improved.

How well do local services help children to achieve at Key Stage 2?

This is adequate. Pupils in Northumberland generally do well at school and often gain results that are better than the national average but 11 year-olds often do less well in their summer tests. This dip in performance particularly affects middle and lower ability pupils. The council is replacing middle schools as part of a plan to try and improve this issue.

How well are local services led and managed?

They are led and managed well. Every effort is made to involve children and young people and to make sure that the right sort of help is offered as early as possible by a range of agencies. The leadership of children's services is good.

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 all children and young people have an equal chance of succeeding and doing well.

Things that need doing over the next six months

Make sure social care workers improve their assessments.

Make sure the children and young people's plan has clear targets that are checked regularly to make sure they are being reached.

Improve results at Key Stage 2 and those for looked after children.

Make sure young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and their families get the right support when they transfer to adult services.

Make sure the plan for 14-19 year olds includes improvements for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Things that need doing over the longer term

Improve accommodation for young mothers and other vulnerable groups.