

20 October 2010

Ms Debbie Jones
Executive Director, Children and Young People's Service
London Borough of Lambeth
International House
Canterbury Crescent
London
SW9 7QE

Dear Ms Jones

Annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within the London Borough of Lambeth 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 London Borough of Lambeth Council, which was conducted on 21 and 22 September 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 areas of practice that met requirements, with some areas for development.

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

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The Local authority has well-developed and effective multi-agency responses for the protection and safeguarding of children and young people, including a multi-agency rapid response team and multi-agency risk management panel. Specialists in health, housing and domestic violence issues are integrated fully into the contact, referral and assessment service. Thresholds are understood and consistently applied across all agencies, leading to improved consistency in



timely referral and intervention to safeguard children and young people.

- Implementation of innovative working arrangements in high risk, high profile cases of domestic violence, those involving guns and gangs, and with the Lambeth Black Parents Forum provide a preventative service to children and young people who are at risk of harm.
- Efficient use of resources and good systems to deliver timely and focused responses to child protection, supported by an effective electronic case management system that is used consistently by all staff to enable accountability, accuracy of information and monitoring of the quality and progress of cases.
- Highly motivated staff that are supported by knowledgeable, experienced and accessible managers at all levels to ensure effective assessment and intervention to safeguard children and young people.
- Good quality assessments are undertaken to ensure that the needs of children and young people are met. Risk and protective factors that impact on a child's safety are assessed consistently.

The service meets the requirements of statutory guidance in the following areas

- Child protection procedures comply with statutory requirements. They are understood and applied by staff consistently, with effective management oversight to ensure the safety of children and young people.
- Workloads are manageable and cases are allocated promptly to enable timely safeguarding of children and young people.
- Section 47 enquiries are comprehensive and timely and lead to appropriate safeguarding actions.
- Out-of-hours duty arrangements demonstrate effective responses and timely referral to the contact and assessment service.
- Assessments ensure that the views of children are considered and their wishes and feelings are routinely taken into account.
- Record-keeping is up-to-date, leading to good accountability, maintaining accurate information and enabling management oversight to develop best safeguarding practice.
- Staff are suitably qualified and have good opportunities for professional development to ensure they remain up-to-date with best practice and their safeguarding responsibilities.

Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Case records do not consistently reflect the impact and relevance of culture, ethnicity or beliefs when assessing the needs of children and their families.▪ Arrangements for obtaining the views of children and young people to contribute to service improvement are underdeveloped.

Any areas for development identified above will be specifically considered in any future inspection of services to safeguard children within your area.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Hunt
Her Majesty's Inspector

Copy: Derrick Anderson Chief Executive, London Borough of Lambeth
David Sanders, Independent Chair of London Borough of Lambeth
Safeguarding Children Board
Cllr Peter Robbins, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
Andrew Spencer, Department for Education