

16 September 2010

Ms Anne-Marie Carrie  
Executive Director of Family and Children's Services  
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea  
Kensington Town Hall  
Hornton Street  
London  
W8 7NX

Dear Ms Carrie

**Annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea children's services**

This letter summarises the findings of the recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea which was conducted on 17 and 18 August 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:

<b>Strengths</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Clear leadership demonstrates a culture of continuous improvement in an already highly performing service, supported by well-motivated staff whose morale is high.</li><li>▪ Social workers maintain casework records to a good professional standard through a fully functional electronic case management system, developed</li></ul>



specifically by the council, which is regularly monitored by supervisors and senior managers.

- Regular high quality casework supervision at key stages in work with children and young people and their families achieves the aim of minimising risk to children and maximising opportunities for families.
- A competent workforce receives good training and staff development to help improve their practice and achieve greater levels of responsibility.

### **Satisfactory practice**

- Appropriate decisions on whether to accept a contact as a referral for a children's social care service are made within 24 hours. Decisions comply with the thresholds for intervention agreed by the council and partner agencies.
- Managerial decisions about cases are clearly recorded with the rationale for the decision explained in the relevant record.
- Assessments are carried on time to a satisfactory standard with examples of good practice seen, including for those children who have a disability. Children are seen, and seen alone as necessary when making an assessment of their needs.
- Social workers promptly identify risk of significant harm to children and have access to consistent input from specialist social work advisors. Strategy discussions involve appropriate partner agencies and quickly establish an initial investigation plan.
- Child protection investigations are all allocated to suitably qualified and experienced workers.
- Initial child protection case conferences are all held within the recommended timescale.
- The Emergency Duty Team addresses safeguarding concerns out of office hours effectively. Actions taken are immediately recorded and available to daytime services through the shared client record system.
- The Local Safeguarding Children Board receives regular performance reports and monitors the quality of the child protection process.
- Regular casework and periodic themed audits are used to monitor the quality of assessments and intervention and to inform service improvement plans.

Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Diverse inter-racial and cultural factors play a part in the assessment of safeguarding needs of families living in an area displaying both great wealth and social deprivation. The impact of these factors is not thoroughly explored in some assessments.</li><li>▪ It is not always clear how children's views are taken into account and ultimately influence the outcome of some assessments.</li></ul>



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

Yours sincerely

**Steve Briggs**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

Copy: Derek Myers, Chief Executive, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea  
Sue Beer, Independent Chair, Executive Safeguarding Children Board, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea  
Cllr Baroness Ritchie, Lead Member for Children's Services, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea  
Andrew Spencer, Department for Education