

18 June 2010

Mr David Goddard
Director Children's Services
Council of the Isles of Scilly
Carn Thomas Children's Centre
St Mary's
Isles of Scilly
TR21 0PT

Dear Mr Goddard

Annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within the Council of the Isles of Scilly 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 Council of the Isles of Scilly which was conducted on 20 May 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 the inspector 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. The inspector considered a range of evidence, including: electronic case records; supervision files and notes; observation of the social worker and senior practitioner undertaking referral and assessment duties; and other information provided by them and yourself. The inspector also spoke with an administrator.

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:

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Children's social care, in partnership with other agencies, provides a good range of preventative work to respond to child welfare concerns. This is complemented by the implementation in 2009 of the common assessment framework and the increased confidence of professionals to undertake the lead role.The capacity to move seamlessly between preventative work and higher levels



of intervention enables children and young people's needs to be addressed appropriately and in a timely manner.

- There is good evidence of clear, managerial decisions, guidance and direction on children's case files. Decisions made in both formal and informal case discussions are recorded on case files. This ensures clarity of purpose and minimises drift.
- All case records sampled were up to date and evidenced child-centred practice. However, desired outcomes are not always clearly defined. Each child within a family has their own individualised case recording. Case management supervision is clear and well recorded.
- The council provides funding to ensure children, young people, parents and carers from the other islands can attend children in need meetings, parenting training or other children's services as needed.
- To ensure take up and to facilitate attendance, the Local Safeguarding Children Board provides a rolling programme of multi-agency basic child protection training on the island including 'twilight' sessions. More advanced and specialist training takes place on the mainland providing staff with the opportunity to meet other professionals.

Satisfactory practice

- The threshold criteria for social care eligibility criteria are now clearly established, known and used appropriately by referring agencies.
- Local understanding of island life enables close partnership working, particularly with the police, health visitor and school to ensure early identification of family difficulties. For example, since the last annual review in 2008 Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences have been established providing an increased focus on domestic abuse.
- Child protection systems are in place and accountabilities are clear. Policies and procedures are followed in accordance with the south west regional child protection policies and procedures. There are no children subject to a child protection plan. The inspector reviewed the only one section 47 inquiry referred during 2009-2010 and concluded that the investigation and outcome were appropriate.
- Multi-agency practice to comprehensively assess the needs of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is at an early stage of development. Recorded assessments, actions and service provision demonstrate a satisfactory quality of work. However, there is a challenge to island staff in ensuring specialists from the mainland contribute fully to planning meetings.
- The quality of initial and core assessments was good and demonstrated

assessed need was being met appropriately and in a timely manner. Risk and protective factors were appropriately identified and addressed.

- Independent arrangements for the monitoring and auditing of case files have recently been implemented. These are carried out by an external and independent practitioner who provides a satisfactory level of scrutiny.
- Awareness of equality and diversity is recorded and appropriately evidenced in casework practice and planning.
- The views of children and young people and their parents or carers are taken into account and fully recorded in their assessments. A high priority is given to working in partnership with families.
- Both of the Isles of Scilly social workers are qualified and registered social workers. Formal supervision structures are in place and frequency of supervision is carried out in accordance with council policy. Professional supervision for the supervising social worker is commissioned externally and well regarded. Opportunities for continuing professional development training off-island are provided by the council.
- Comparison of the island's performance against national performance indicators is of limited value because of the small child population and numbers of referrals. Cases reviewed clearly indicate early preventative work is the main focus of children's social care interventions. This is successful in reducing the need for statutory intervention.

Areas for development

- Data collection and performance management information do not provide sufficient information on consistency of response to all lower level social care work or on impact of interventions.
- Currently, there is inconsistency of practice in providing referrers with written notification of the outcome of referrals. Too great a reliance is placed on informal feedback.
- The completion of amendments to the electronic records system, which will ensure lower level preventative work can be recorded electronically and all records are maintained in one system, has yet to be achieved.
- There are insufficient arrangements for acquiring feedback from service users and encouraging their input into service development on the islands.

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

Yours sincerely

Lynne Staines
Her Majesty's Inspector

Copy: Philip Hygate, Chief Executive, Council of the Isles of Scilly
David Ellis, Chair of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Safeguarding Children Board
David Pearson, Lead Member for Children's Services, Council of the Isles of Scilly
Andrew Spencer, Department for Education