

# Joint area review

Report for children and young people in Gloucestershire

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

## Why should I read this?

All children and young people have a right to find out about the services provided for them and how they might be improved.

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, [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk), to find out what they had to say.

## What did the inspectors do?

Eight inspectors visited Gloucestershire in September and October 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 members of school councils and the Youth Parliament
- ❖ heard from the council and other agencies, such as NCH, schools, health visitors, children's centres, youth clubs etc., what they think about the services that are provided for children
- ❖ read a lot of reports
- ❖ visited a number of rural and urban areas in Gloucestershire

The inspectors looked at how well services make sure that children and young people are safe. They also looked at services for children and young people who are either being looked after by the council or have a learning difficulty and/or a disability.

## How well are children and young people kept safe in Gloucestershire?

Most children and young people said that they felt safe in Gloucestershire. However, some are worried about bullying. There is a group of agencies, called The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), who oversee services and also help and support children and young people to be safe. The LSCB is working well and provides many good chances for children and young people to get advice about healthy living and safety. However, inspectors found that it was

not always clear when children and young people should be given a social worker and that this could vary across the county. The council has more work to do to make sure that it is clear to everybody when a young person should be able to get social work support.

The council's figures did not always show how long some young people really have to wait before social workers can give them the service they need. During the inspection, the council improved the way that it makes sure that all staff working with children and young people are safe.

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

Most children and young people who are looked after do well and receive good support from their social workers and carers. Children and young people are asked their views about the quality of the services provided for them, and are involved in planning those services for the future. However, there is not a wide enough choice of places to live. The standards of the buildings and the care of children and young people in most of Gloucestershire's children's homes are not good enough. Children and young people who are looked after do not have good enough access to mental health services. Although the council said that all children and young people who are looked after are given a social worker, not all those social workers are the ones who visit the children. The council needs to be clearer about who is the main support worker for the children and young people.

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

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities generally do well at school. Children and young people with the most needs receive speedy and well co-ordinated support. However, those who have less complicated needs, and those young people who are older teenagers do not always get the same good service. A number of changes are being made to improve this, but it is too early for this to have made a big enough difference to the children and young people. Too many children and young people with a learning difficulty and/or a disability are excluded from school for short amounts of time, so inspectors asked that schools try harder not to exclude these children.

## How well are local services led and managed?

The council and its partners are working well together, and have lots of good ideas and plans for making things better for children and young people in Gloucestershire. Inspectors think that local services have a good chance of getting better in the future.

## What should services do to improve their services further in Gloucestershire?

Perhaps have the 'Council and its partners' phrase here rather than repeated. Would be good to include here some general sentence which continues the theme that this is about all services in an area, continuing to work together.

### Things that need doing straight away

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

Make sure that everybody can be clear about when children and families should be referred to social care services, and that those children and young people who are at risk, but who do not need child protection services, are offered a quick and good service.

Make sure that decisions about which children and young people will receive a service from a social worker are always made by a social work manager.

### Things that need doing over the next six months

Make sure that all the data that the council and its partners provide show exactly what is being measured, so everyone is clear about the figures.

The council must make sure that all their children's homes are of good quality.

Mental health services should provide a service to all those children and young people who need them.

Make sure that services are available equally to all children with a learning difficulty and/or a disability who need them.

Make sure that schools reduce the number of children and young people with a learning difficulty and/or a disability who are excluded for short amounts of time.

Make sure that senior managers in all services have good methods of gathering information on how well services are doing.

Continue to make sure that all staff who work with children and young people are safe to do so.

#### Things that need doing over the longer term

Make sure that children and young people with a learning difficulty and/or a disability can have an independent person to speak on their behalf if they wish to have one.

The council and its partners should keep reviewing how they use budgets so they get the best value for money and provide the best services.

The council and its partners should involve small local groups better in providing services.