

Joint area review

Report for children and young people in Dorset

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

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 Dorset in September 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 protected from harm as well as looking at services for children who are being looked after by the local authority and those for children and young people with a learning difficulty or disability. They also looked at how well local services are working together to improve children and young people's sexual health and to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies.

How well are children and young people safeguarded in Dorset?

Most children feel safe and the arrangements for protecting them from harm are OK. The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has the right members who will make sure young people get the best services.

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

Arrangements for children and young people who are looked after by the council are OK. The council and its partners do a lot to try to prevent children from coming into care. The council isn't always good at working out what children need if they do come into care.

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

Local services are generally good. Children and young people who have a learning difficulty or disability do well in school. They have clear plans for the future and take part regularly in talks about what they need. There are not enough education and training opportunities for young people aged 16 and over.

How well are services working together to improve children and young people's sexual health and to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies?

These services are not good enough. The information collected about young people's sexual health is not accurate enough for the local authority and its partners to be able to plan properly and decide where they need to offer the highest level of support. Young people living in the most rural areas of Dorset can't easily get to the places where sexual health services are available.

How well are local services led and managed?

The council and its partners know how they want to help improve things for children who aren't doing well because of what is going on in their lives. They make sure that they talk to children and young people to find out how they think services should be designed, but they don't yet do enough to make sure that all children get what they need right across the county and that the service they do get is good enough.

What should services do to improve further?

Things that need doing straight away

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

Things that need doing over the next six months

Make sure there is a good way to find out what individual children and young people need and that everyone uses it.

Make sure that all children and young people who come into the care system can live in one place with the same people until they are adults.

Keep checking the quality of services for children who might come into care or who might be harmed.

Make sure that all the information collected about children is good enough.

Make sure that the adults who work with children and young people know where all children aged 0-16 live and go to school.

Make sure that all the adults who work with children and young people agree what to do to make services better and measure how good they are.

Make sure that children and young people who have real difficulty learning and the adults who look after them have a say in the services being planned for them.

Things that need doing over the longer term

Make sure that short break care and services to help young people say what they need actually do help young people and their families.

Make sure that all young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have access to a good range of education and training opportunities at age 16 plus.

Make sure there are fewer teenage pregnancies by looking carefully at what services are needed, making sure young people know about them and that they work properly.

Make sure that all young people can get access to the places where high-quality sexual health services are provided.