

21 May 2010

Ms Joy Hollister  
Director of Community and Children's Services  
City of London  
PO Box 270 Guildhall  
London  
EC2P 2EJ

Dear Ms Hollister

**Annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within City of London 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 City of London Council which was conducted on 15 April 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.

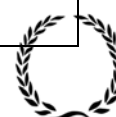
The inspection sampled the quality and effectiveness of contact, referral and assessment arrangements and their impact on minimising any child abuse and neglect. Inspectors considered a range of evidence, including: electronic case records; supervision files and notes; observation of social workers and 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:

**Strengths**

- Staff are well motivated and value the professional advice and support provided by managers, who are readily accessible for formal and informal consultation.
- Low levels of referrals enable staff caseloads to be manageable and for most assessments to be timely.



- Managers have commissioned a good range of audits of the service which have been appropriately used to focus service development and to take action to address issues identified.

### Satisfactory practice

- Clear procedures and practices are in place to ensure that statutory requirements to safeguard children and young people are met.
- Systems for receiving referrals are effective. Administrative processes work well to support work within the team.
- Contacts and referrals are promptly responded to with effective decision making on required actions.
- All cases held within referral and assessment services are allocated to suitably qualified staff. Child protection referrals are responded to promptly and are assessed by suitably experienced qualified social workers.
- Children are routinely seen during assessments.
- Equality and diversity issues are satisfactorily addressed in casework assessment and planning.
- Communication and liaison with partner agencies are satisfactory. This contributes towards prompt referral and exchange of information.
- Most assessments are of a satisfactory quality. Some are good, but others lack sufficient analysis or detail.
- Managers at all levels routinely audit cases.
- Managers have promptly identified and acted swiftly on unsatisfactory casework and managerial oversight issues within the team.

### Areas for development

- Recording of case discussion and personal development undertaken in supervision is variable in quality. A new supervision policy has recently been introduced but has yet to be embedded.
- Managerial oversight and case planning, including the recording of management decision making on case files, are not sufficiently robust or consistent.
- Staff have access to safeguarding training opportunities. However most staff within the team have not recently participated in safeguarding training to maintain up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding developments and practice.

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

Yours sincerely

**Pietro Battista**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

Copy: Mr Chris Duffield, Chief Executive, City of London Corporation  
Ms Fran Pearson, Chair of City Hackney Safeguarding Children Board  
Mr Billy Dove, MBE, Chairman of Community and Children's Services, City of London Corporation  
Andrew Spencer, Department for Children, Schools and Families