

8 December 2010

Ms Ann Baxter
Director of Children, Schools and Families
London Borough of Camden
Crowndale Centre
218 Eversholt Street
London
NW1 1BD

Dear Ms Baxter

Annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within the London Borough of Camden 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 London Borough of Camden Council which was conducted on 9 and 10 November 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 areas of practice that met requirements, with one area for development.

The areas of development and the priority area for action identified at the previous inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements in October 2009 have been addressed.

From the evidence gathered, the following features of the service were identified:

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Good arrangements are in place for liaison with adult services on referrals regarding parental mental health, with good examples of joint working between



the two services. The duty team can call on the expertise of a dedicated approved social worker when required.

- Strong partnership work is evident, including effective commissioning of third sector support services, bringing additional expertise to the duty service to meet the needs of Camden's diverse population. This is underpinned by widespread use of the common assessment framework (CAF) to inform the referral process.

The service meets the requirements of statutory guidance in the following areas

- All interpreters are now checked with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and staff are aware of this requirement when using interpreters. This was an area for priority action in the last unannounced inspection.
- The quality of initial and core assessments are satisfactory, risk factors are clearly identified, although some contained insufficient analytical detail. There is good evidence of management oversight and all assessments seen were signed off by managers. This was an area for development in the last unannounced inspection.
- The ethnic composition of the duty teams reflects the diversity of Camden's population. Social workers can call on additional resources when required, for example, translation services, and this allows children and families to be routinely involved in assessment processes.
- Effective duty team arrangements are in place, with a clear system for prioritising referrals. Referrals seen were either progressed or closed appropriately and all were timely.
- Child protection enquiries are passed to duty managers who allocate work immediately to qualified social workers.
- There are good procedures for recording detailed information on the Integrated Children's System, which is used efficiently to assist day to day running of the duty service and there is a good workflow to the children in need teams, leading to minimal delay in case transfer and manageable workloads.
- Out-of-hours arrangements are satisfactory, with effective information sharing with daytime services and access to line management support and decision making when required.
- Staff are supervised and supported by experienced and competent managers. Supervision is regular and recorded and includes a good balance between casework and personal development.
- Staff in the duty team are suitably qualified and experienced and have good training opportunities to support and develop their practice. Good induction

arrangements are in place and staff undertaking the newly qualified and post-qualifying programmes feel well supported.

- Good arrangements are in place to undertake specialist assessments of specific service user groups including pre-birth assessments of children at risk, homeless young persons and children with disabilities, with clear thresholds for intervention and pathways for service provision in each case.
- There is a clear system in place for dealing with domestic violence referrals and contingency for taking those cases where lower level intervention is deemed necessary to a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference.
- A culture of quality assurance is embedded and includes routine consideration of performance management data and regular auditing of cases.

Areas for development

- Administrators, including recently appointed staff, provide oral prioritisation of contacts to duty managers when they are not qualified to perform this task.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Young
Her Majesty's Inspector

Copy: Moira Gibb, Chief Executive, London Borough of Camden
 Dominic Clout, Independent Chair of Camden Safeguarding Children Board
 Heather Johnson, Lead Member for Children's Services, London Borough of Camden
 Andrew Spencer, Department for Education