

Joint area review

Report for children and young people in Bury

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

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 Bury at the beginning of 2008 so that they could see 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, headteachers and school staff, youth workers, nurses, doctors, police officers and councillors)
- ❖ spoke to parents and other people caring for children
- ❖ met with school councils' representatives and other representative groups of young people
- ❖ heard what the council and other agencies think about the services they provide for children.
- ❖ visited a number of neighbourhoods and projects in the area.

The inspectors looked at how well services make sure that children and young people are properly protected from harm and kept safe as well as looking at specific services for children who are being looked after by the local authority and those for children and young people with a learning difficulty and/or disability. They also looked at how good services are for children and young people who have emotional or mental health needs and at what the council and its partners are doing to improve things for children during their early years.

How well are children and young people safeguarded in Bury?

The council and its partners pay a lot of attention to the need to make sure that children and young people are safeguarded and enjoy healthy lifestyles. Children and young people generally say that they feel safe in Bury. Some of the systems used to manage and check the quality of services are not as good as they should be.

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

Children and young people who are looked after by the council live in stable placements, mainly with families. A lot is being done to help them to keep healthy. The council knows that it needs to do more to improve the standards achieved by looked after children in school. Young people who are looked after are being consulted by the council but more needs to be done to make sure things are acted upon. Council members recognise that they need to do a lot more to help children and young people who are in their care and to act as a good parent would.

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

Specialist services and support to children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good but the council and its partners don't have the capacity to provide enough support for all children and young people who need it. Too many children and young people cannot have their needs met within the borough and too high a number are excluded from school. There is very good provision and support for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at Bury college and Holy Cross college.

How good are local services for children and young people who have emotional and mental health needs?

The council and its partners have a strong commitment to tackling the mental health needs of vulnerable children and young people and inspectors found signs that this is beginning to happen. A lot of strategies have been developed to help provide better services but some of these are still being finalised before it is possible to see how well they work in practice. The access to specialist services for children and young people under 14 years has improved but there is not enough provision for those who are aged between 14 and 19.

How good are local services in improving the quality of early years provision?

The council and its partners know that they have not done enough to make sure that the services providing health care, childcare and education for young children are working closely enough together. They are in the middle of plans to improve this. Some things are getting better, for example the quality of provision in early years settings such as crèches and childminders but

other developments have yet to make a difference, There is good support for young children and their families with the most complex needs.

How well are local services led and managed?

Children and young people are a central part of Bury's plans and ambitions for the future. Unfortunately, the council and its partners have not had sufficient resources (staff and money directed to children's services) to make things happen quickly enough and to the needs of vulnerable children and young people. There have been gaps in the senior management team and there has not been enough leadership by councillors, particularly in their role in supporting looked after children and young people. The council and its partners have started to tackle these issues.

Things that need doing straight away

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

Make sure that council members get training and support so that they can carry out their parenting responsibilities to looked after children and young people properly and are able to monitor how well they are doing.

Identify the resources needed to achieve the key priorities contained in the Children and Young People's Plan and to make sure the plan is available to children and young people in the area in a form that enables them to understand these priorities.

Things that need doing over the next six months

Strengthen the capacity of independent reviewing officers so they can act to monitor and develop good practice. This role should act to make sure plans are in place for children in need, who need protection and who are looked after, and that the plans are regularly updated and carried through.

Identify how the needs of individual children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities will be met so this will influence planning and make sure that the work is properly monitored.

Make sure early years services are coordinated between health, childcare and education and improve the ways in which services are supported and monitored.

Finalise the plans to support the child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) so that partners are able to put them into practice.

For action in the longer term

Find ways that vulnerable children can be engaged with and take part in all aspects of service development and delivery so that their views are routinely acted upon.