

Freshford House
Redcliffe Way
Bristol BS1 6NL

T 0300 1231231
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 03000 130570

Safeguarding.lookedafterchildren@ofsted.gov.uk



22 December 2010

Ms Kath Tunstall
Strategic Director, Services to Children and Young People
City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
City Hall
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD1 1HY

Dear Ms Tunstall

Annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council 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 Bradford Metropolitan District Council which was conducted on 23 and 24 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 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 some areas for development.

The areas of development identified at the previous inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements in 2009 have all been effectively addressed.

The area of priority action identified at the previous inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements in 2009 has been effectively addressed.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Managers' decisions and good detailed directions for staff at each stage of the assessment process are routinely and well recorded on individual case files along with the decisions and outcomes from regular supervision sessions. These support social workers very effectively to maintain and enhance the quality of their casework. ▪ Staff report a very good range of well-focused and very regular training provided by different agencies which they are encouraged and enabled to attend and which effectively supports them to deliver good quality services. ▪ The children with disabilities team use a wide range of methods to communicate with children in child protection enquiries which enables them to identify the children's concerns more precisely and effectively.
The service meets the requirements of statutory guidance in the following areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commonly agreed thresholds issued by Bradford Safeguarding Children Board are specific, underpinned by helpful guidance, and are applied by partner agencies. ▪ Effective arrangements are in place to respond promptly and appropriately to contacts and referrals and these safeguard children well. ▪ All cases are allocated promptly and appropriately prioritised and no children were found to be at risk during the inspection. Child protection enquiries are always undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced social workers. ▪ Out-of-hours arrangements for receiving and responding to referrals are effective and appropriate links to daytime services are in place. ▪ Initial and core assessments and child protection enquiries are completed in a timely way. ▪ Referrers are routinely informed of the outcomes of their referrals. ▪ The quality of assessments, analyses and conclusions in the files inspected is at least adequate and in many cases is good. ▪ Work is focused well on the needs of children and the views of children and families inform case planning. ▪ Staff address diversity issues well in their assessments and work with families. ▪ Recording in cases seen by inspectors is kept up-to-date and the quality is at least adequate and in many cases is good. ▪ Assessment teams are appropriately resourced, workloads are manageable,

and effective arrangements ensure the timely transfer of cases to other teams.

- Accessible and supportive managers provide good day-to-day support and regular supervision.
- Learning from serious case reviews is well disseminated to enhance awareness and practice.
- Partner agencies are working well to extend the use of the common assessment framework and the number of assessments has doubled in the past year although it is acknowledged that further work is needed to fully and effectively engage all agencies and staff.
- Senior and middle managers demonstrate strong ambition and commitment to continually improve outcomes and effectively use good performance information with staff to drive improvement.
- Service users' views are routinely sought and used well to influence service delivery.
- Well-established partnership arrangements work effectively at strategic and operational levels.

Areas for development

- Case files do not always include chronologies.
- The number of domestic violence notifications sent to social care by the police results in a higher than necessary workload for assessment teams and both partners recognise the need to streamline this process so that referrals are clearly differentiated from notifications sent for information purposes.

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

Yours sincerely

Tony Dewhurst
Her Majesty's Inspector

Copy: Tony Reeves, Chief Executive, City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
Professor Nick Frost, Chair of Bradford Safeguarding Children Board
Ralph Berry, Lead Member for Children's Services, City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
Andrew Spencer, Department for Education