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10 September 2009

Ms Kath Tunstall
Strategic Director for 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 Bradford Metropolitan District Council children's services.

This letter contains the findings of the recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within local authority children's services in Bradford Metropolitan District Council which was conducted on 18 and 19 August 2009. The inspection was carried out under section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. It will contribute to Ofsted's annual review of the performance of the authority's children's services, for which Ofsted will award a rating later in the year.

The inspection identified an area for priority action and a number of areas for development, which are detailed below.

The inspection sampled the quality and effectiveness of contact, referral and assessment arrangements and their impact on minimising the incidence of 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. I am grateful to you and your staff for your help and the time given during this inspection.

From the evidence gathered, the inspection identified a number of areas where the contact, referral and assessment arrangements were delivered satisfactorily in accordance with national guidance, in particular:

- Staff reported that they feel well supported by managers and senior managers. They receive regular formal supervision with a strong focus on case management and individual personal development, and good quality training opportunities are readily available.



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- Social work practice ensures the views of parents and children are being actively encouraged and records show that parents and children attend case conferences and that their views are appropriately considered.
- The responses made by the service are appropriately sensitive to ethnic, cultural and linguistic needs, for example good use is made of interpreting services.
- The council has committed additional resources to increase the capacity of the contact, referral and assessment social work team to respond to increasing demands for service. Managers take prompt and effective action to ensure designated social work staffing levels are maintained.
- From the cases sampled, where child protection concerns are identified, social workers, including those working in the out-of-hours team, take appropriate action to ensure children are safe.

From the evidence gathered, the following strengths and areas for development were also identified:

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Local Safeguarding Children Board has been proactive in responding to lessons learned from serious case reviews and has been effective in implementing multi-agency training to support learning across all agencies. Staff and managers spoken to by inspectors were alert to findings from serious case reviews and could identify resulting changes to practice. ▪ There are good performance management systems in place and managers know the strengths and weaknesses of the service.
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Managers recognise that the Common Assessment Framework is insufficiently used to provide early support for children and families. ▪ The quality of referrals made by some agencies is not always sufficiently detailed to enable an appropriate risk assessment to be promptly undertaken. ▪ There has been a recent reduction in the proportion of initial assessments of children in need completed within timescale and the quality of some assessments is poor in both the rigour of analysis and assessment of risk. ▪ Management decisions are not always effectively recorded with regard to the level of risk or the action required to be taken. ▪ The number of re-referrals has increased and the rate is too high.

This visit has identified the following area for priority action:

Area(s) for priority action
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The arrangements for receiving and responding to initial contacts involving anonymous referrals, where the child's name and address are not known by the referrer, do not ensure all child protection concerns are assessed by a qualified social worker.

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

Yours sincerely



Heather Brown
Divisional Manager, Social Care Safeguarding

Copy: Mr Tony Reeves Chief Executive, Bradford Metropolitan District Council
Ms Kath Tunstall, Chair of Bradford Safeguarding Children Board
Mr Dale Smith, Lead Member for Children's Services, Bradford Metropolitan District Council
Mr Andrew Spencer, Department for Children, Schools and Families