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Ms Gillian Palmer
Director of Children's Services
London Borough of Greenwich Council
Riverside House West
Woolwich High Street
London
SE18 6DF

Dear Ms Palmer

Annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within the London Borough of Greenwich 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 London Borough of Greenwich Council which was conducted on 23 and 24 March 2011. 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 one area 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 August 2009 and further considered by the Safeguarding and Looked After Inspection August 2011 have all been addressed other than the reconfiguration of the Emergency Duty Team service which is due to commence from the 3 May 2011.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well developed and effective multi-agency preventative services include a pre-birth assessment and support team and multi-agency children in need panel. Both are very effective in promoting partnership working with parents through team around the child and common assessment framework processes.
The service meets the requirements of statutory guidance in the following areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice and procedures conform to statutory requirements and guidance. Revised arrangements for the screening of initial contacts enable the consistent application of inter-agency threshold criteria and facilitates effective signposting to other services. Workloads are manageable and cases are allocated promptly to ensure timely safeguarding of children and young people. Decision making within the contact and referral team is effective in identifying child protection concerns ensuring the timely delivery of services within statutory timescales. There is some delay in screening a small number of child in need cases while additional information is sought to inform decisions. Child protection enquiries are prioritised and undertaken by staff who are suitably qualified and experienced. There is evidence of management oversight and decision making on individual case files. Senior managers have developed an effective range of quality audit, case monitoring and performance assessment mechanisms to identify and report on the effectiveness of service processes and workforce related issues. These support service improvement plans. Social workers receive regular supervision and report that there is a good range of training available that they can access. A review of workforce recruitment and retention has been completed and welcomed by social workers. This has led to the appointment of more permanent staff and contributes to the strong morale evident within the service. Newly qualified social workers are well supported; they receive a clear induction and have access to additional supervision and training. The co-location of the children and disability team with health provides an integrated approach to the provision of services to children and families who receive effective assessment. Out-of-hours duty arrangements are effective and appropriately linked to the

<p>daytime referral processes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Case records and assessments generally reflect the impact and relevance of culture, ethnicity or beliefs when considering the needs of children and young people.
<p>Areas for development</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The quality of analysis within assessments although generally adequate is variable and in some cases does not reflect sufficient focus on key risk and protective factors. Although children and young people are safeguarded weaknesses in analysis means that case planning for some children is insufficiently robust and timely. ▪ The technology that supports the integrated children's system remains problematic as it can be slow and unreliable and does not support front line workers to meet the needs of children and young people most efficiently.

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

Yours sincerely

Sean Tarpey
Her Majesty's Inspector

Copy: Mary Ney, Chief Executive, London Borough of Greenwich Council
 Andrew Spencer, Department for Education