

3 August 2011

Ms Penny Penn-Howard
Director of Community Services
Council of the Isles of Scilly
Carn Thomas Children's Centre
St Mary's
Isles of Scilly
TR21 0PT

Dear Ms Penn-Howard

Annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within the Council of the Isles of Scilly 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 Council of the Isles of Scilly which was conducted on 5 July 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 I 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. A range of evidence was considered, including electronic case records; supervision files and notes; and other information provided by social workers and yourself.

The inspection identified areas of strength and areas of practice that met requirements, with some areas for development.

Three of the four areas for development identified at the previous inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements in May 2010 have been met. The completion of amendments to the electronic records system remains an area for development.

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

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The council and partner agencies provide a wide range of high quality preventative services to children and families across the islands. The services



provided are sensitive to the specific identity of the Isles of Scilly. The emphasis on multi-agency preventative work is very effective in ensuring that few children need high level social work intervention such as child protection Section 47 enquiries. Partnership working with the children's centre is particularly strong and preventative work with the families of younger children is highly effective.

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

- Child protection procedures are kept up to date and comply with statutory requirements. They are understood and applied by staff consistently, with effective management oversight to ensure the safety of children and young people.
- Early preventative action is taken to ensure that the safety of children and young people is secured. All assessments are conducted in a thorough and timely manner by suitably experienced and qualified social workers.
- Effective use is made of the common assessment framework which provides for appropriate and early multi-agency intervention. Thresholds for services are understood and applied consistently by partner agencies to protect children and young people. Referrers now routinely receive written notification of the outcome of their referral which was an area for development at the previous inspection.
- Assessments are clear and analytical, risk and protective factors are identified and effective plans implemented.
- Assessments demonstrate that the views of children are considered and their wishes and feelings are routinely taken into account. Staff are skilled in enabling children with disabilities to ensure their voices are heard in the plans and decisions that affect their lives.
- Record keeping is up to date and demonstrates sound decision making and effective planning.
- Out of hours duty arrangements are clear and robust. They are undertaken by either of the two on site social workers who provide services across the islands. Consequently the out of hours service links very well with the day referral services to enable a prompt, informed and effective response to safeguard children and young people.
- A highly imaginative consultation exercise using age appropriate materials was conducted recently with service users across the islands. Although it is too soon to show impact the exercise was designed to acquire feedback and influence improvements to the provision of safeguarding services to children and their families. This was an area for development at the previous

inspection.

- The department is very small which enables effective communication and close working relationships at all levels. Regular supervision and the management oversight of decision making in cases ensure that risk of harm is managed appropriately.
- Staff report that workloads are manageable and that training is accessible and relevant with good opportunities for professional development.

Areas for development

- The completion of amendments to the electronic records system to ensure efficient working and accountability in service delivery has yet to be achieved. This was an area for development at the previous inspection. Management plans are in hand to ensure that improvements are made.
- Although the inspector saw examples of good quality auditing of case files these are not translated into effective action plans to improve practice in the safeguarding of children and young people.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen Hunt
Her Majesty's Inspector

Copy: Philip Hygate, Chief Executive, Council of the Isles of Scilly
Andrew Spencer, Department for Education