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Ms Deborah Brownlee
Corporate Director, Trafford Children and Young People's Service
Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council
Trafford Town Hall
Talbot Road
Stretford
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Dear Ms Brownlee

Annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within Trafford Metropolitan Borough 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 Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council which was conducted on 13 and 14 April 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 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 September 2009 have been addressed.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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

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| Strengths |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The multi-disciplinary approach to safeguarding children is strong. Strategy meetings held as part of enquiries under Section 47 have high impact. They are timely and are particularly well attended by the multi-agency partnership. This results in jointly owned decision making and highly effective planning for children's safety. ▪ Highly effective arrangements are in place between children's services and the police for screening domestic abuse referrals. This leads to timely and appropriate intervention to safeguard children and young people. |
| The service meets the requirements of statutory guidance in the following areas |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The multi-agency referral and assessment team (MARAT) is fully staffed with appropriately qualified and experienced workers and workloads are manageable. The team is supported well by managers to ensure that risk of harm to children and young people is assessed and prioritised effectively. ▪ Most initial and core assessments are of good quality and case transfer is effectively risk managed. The majority of assessments are completed within the required timescale and there is a high standard of record keeping with clear evidence of management sign off. This leads to effective planning to meet children and young people's needs. ▪ Children and young people are seen as part of the initial and core assessment process and their views are taken into consideration when developing inclusive plans for their safety and wellbeing. ▪ Good preventative and early intervention practice is in evidence through improved and increasing inter-agency usage of the common assessment framework which is working well. ▪ The equality and diversity needs of children and young people are addressed well. Referrers comment positively on the level of understanding of cultural issues by social workers undertaking child protection enquiries and state that this leads to better safeguarding outcomes for children and young people. ▪ The integrated children's system (ICS) has been successfully replaced and the new system is now fully implemented. Staff and managers are positive about its effectiveness in assisting service delivery. This was an area for development at the previous inspection. ▪ Arrangements are in place for performance monitoring by senior managers using the new version of ICS, which shows a demonstrable impact on the improvement of key performance indicators. This was an area for development |

at the previous inspection.

- Regular case auditing by managers, including senior managers, accurately identifies areas for practice improvement. This includes audit of cases causing significant safeguarding concerns. This was an area for development at the previous inspection.
- Staff report that training is accessible and relevant and, for those joining the organisation, including newly qualified social workers, induction training and support is good with a phased introductory programme.
- The overall quality of initial and core assessments undertaken by the complex and additional needs team is good and joint working arrangements with the MARAT in terms of child protection cases are robust.

Areas for development

- Recording of formal supervision and personal development sessions remain underdeveloped. Although managers are regularly available for informal supervision, decision making is not always reliably recorded. The frequency of formal sessions is too variable and the emphasis is on case management rather than critically reflective practice.
- The recording practice of the out of hours service does not meet the required standard as the transfer of information by email between the daytime and the out of hours service varies in quality and reliability.
- Although referrers receive an acceptable level of verbal communication with MARAT they do not receive consistent written feedback on the outcome of referrals and whether their concerns have been effectively dealt with.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian G Young
Her Majesty's Inspector

Copy: Janet Callender, Chief Executive, Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council
Andrew Spencer, Department for Education