

7 December 2011

Ms Jane Portman  
Executive Director, Children and Families Services  
Bournemouth Borough Council  
Bourne Avenue  
Bournemouth  
BH2 6DY

Dear Ms Portman

**Annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within Bournemouth 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 Bournemouth Borough Council which was conducted on 8 and 9 November 2011. The inspection was carried out under section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. It will contribute to next year's annual review of the performance of the authority's children's services, for which Ofsted will award a rating. 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 for development identified at the previous inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements in May 2010 have all been addressed.

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

<b>Strengths</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Managers at all levels have a high profile within contact, referral and assessment services and provide clear and recorded direction on cases which is of high quality.</li><li>▪ Careful attention is given to work pressures and fluctuations, case allocations</li></ul>



and staff experience. As a result workforce capacity, stability, skill and motivation are all very good. Consequently staff are able to undertake a high level of effective work with children and young people and their families.

- Partnership working between children's social care and the police is highly effective in ensuring services are timely and responsive to the needs of vulnerable children and families. Quarterly meetings of key managers from these agencies serve to promote joint safeguarding activity.
- Information on individual cases is systematically used to develop a comprehensive picture of need and risk based on history and cumulative intelligence. This contributes well to the quality of assessments and care planning.

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

- Children and young people who are at risk of significant harm are appropriately identified and timely action is taken to safeguard their welfare.
- Strategy meetings and core groups are appropriately convened and along with child protection conferences are well attended by partner agencies.
- Children and young people who are the subjects of safeguarding actions are assisted to express their views and feelings and are seen alone where appropriate.
- Contact and referral processes are explicit within policies, procedures and thresholds and are clearly understood across the partnership.
- Information sharing and case recording are of good quality. Assessments and plans are routinely shared with parents, children and young people. Appropriate attention is given to the diverse needs of children and families including the use of interpreters.
- A range of useful audits are undertaken to assess the effectiveness of individual strategies to support children and families.
- Initial and core assessments are timely, comprehensive and contain good analyses of need and risk.
- Staff supervision is regular, recorded well and includes opportunities for case reflection.
- The information and recording system is effective and used well by staff.
- Domestic violence cases are processed through a single point within the police and are robustly checked and prioritised for action where children and young

people are involved.

**Areas for development**

- The process and format for sharing the outcome of strategy meetings does not consistently ensure that the police and out-of-hours service have immediate and full access to agreed plans and contingencies such as the use of police powers.
- Early help services are not fully established across the borough to support those children and families who require step down provision below the statutory children's social care threshold.

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

Yours sincerely

**Martin Ayres**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

Copy: Pam Donnellan, Chief Executive, Bournemouth Borough Council  
Andrew Spencer, Department for Education