

Herefordshire – Inspection of child protection

11-19 September 2012

Summary report for children and young people

The purpose of the inspection is to look at how well the council and other organisations help and protect children and young people to be safe from harm and to be well cared for.

Overall we rated Herefordshire as **inadequate** for how effective child protection services are. All of our grades are explained in the table below:

Outstanding	A service that is significantly better than required at keeping children and young people safe
Good	A service that is better than required at keeping children and young people safe
Adequate	A service that is doing what is required to keep children and young people safe
Inadequate	A service that is not doing what is required to keep children and young people safe

Here is a summary of the things we found at the inspection that were generally **adequate or good** and the things we told the Director:

Help given to children and their families before their worries and problems get out of hand is available nearby to people's homes across the county. Children's centres, youth services and schools give good advice to stop problems building up.

Staff who give help at an early stage get to know the children and their families very well so that usually the right type of help is offered for their needs. Parents take up courses that help them become more confident to look after their children properly. Young people improve their school attendance after they have been absent a lot. This keeps them safer from risky behaviour.

Herefordshire now has more permanent social workers. This means that children will not experience so many changes. When children get to know one social worker it makes a big difference.

Organisations working with children and young people get together regularly to talk about problems that families are having in their local areas. This helps organisations to understand what is going on locally, offer practical help and share out the work.

Here is a summary of the things we found at the inspection that **needed improving** and the things we told the Director:

Although the council has done a lot lately to improve their work to help and protect children and young people, we found that children and young people do not always get the right help from social workers when they need it. Sometimes social workers and managers do not follow the right procedures quickly enough. Some children have not been kept as safe as they should have been. The council needs to sort this out immediately.

People working with children in Herefordshire know what to do when they think any child or young person is at risk of harm. But they do not always follow up the signs of children and young people being at risk or provide the type of help that will match what they need. Sometimes not all of the right people meet to discuss how they can help. We have given a very full list of the different tasks that the council and other organisations need to do to put things right. Some must be done straight away and others may take three months. The council and other organisations will need to go on checking regularly that these changes are happening all the time and are making the difference they need to.

Sometimes social workers who are working with children leave too long between visits to children who are at risk of harm. Some social workers do not get to know children and young people as well as they should do. Social workers must always carry out visits to children regularly and must see them at the time. This must start happening immediately and managers must check that social workers are doing this. In the longer run, the council must make sure that children and their families views are taken into account and that there are always back-up plans.

The managers and other organisations do not check thoroughly enough that things are done as well as they should be. At the end of the inspection, we gave the board that is responsible overall for ensuring that children are protected a time limit of six months to improve. We asked them to make sure that the proper information is collected for them to monitor and ensure that good quality work is done to help and protect children.

The full inspection report was published on 19 October 2012. The council will now prepare a plan to show how they will improve things. It will also say when they are going to talk to children and young people about what they are going to do and which groups they are going to talk to.

If you would like to look at the full inspection report you can find this at

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/local-authorities/herefordshire>