

## London Borough of Brent – Inspection of child protection

**22 October to 31 October 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 Brent **adequate** 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:

Senior staff in the council have a good idea about what they need to do to keep children in Brent safe. This is because they often check what is working well and what needs to be better. They generally listen to what parents and children think about the help they get when they are having difficulties and use all of this information to put plans in place to improve children's safety and care.

When young children and families have problems and need help quickly, staff in children's centres, like family support workers, early years helpers and health visitors, usually get together to provide activities to try help to stop things getting worse. Parents who use children's centres told the council and inspectors they think the support they get is good.

Staff in different organisations across Brent are getting better at doing things together and sorting out who will be the best to help families look after their children safely, especially when mums or dads are having problems themselves and struggling to keep their children well-cared for and safe.

When children get help from social workers, they usually get the chance to talk to

them on their own, to tell them how they are feeling and what needs to happen in their families to keep them safe. We liked the 'signs of safety' sheets social workers use to let children explain in pictures what they think is happening in their lives.

Parents who get help from social workers generally say that they understand why social workers are working with them and they are involved in the plans that social workers put in place to help them to improve their skills to look after their children.

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

Some records which staff keep to show what they are doing to help families who are struggling to keep their children safe are not clear enough so it is sometimes hard to see whether actions they have taken to protect children are good enough.

Occasionally child protection plans which social workers write to help parents care for their children safely have stopped too quickly. This meant some children had to have another plan shortly afterwards when the family had problems again.

Some child protection plans are too long and it is not always clear what difference the actions in the plans are going to make to keep children safe. Some are quite difficult for children and parents to understand and do not explain clearly enough what progress parents are making in keeping their children safe and well-cared for.

Although senior staff in the council regularly check that staff working with children whose families need help are doing the right things, they have not always been careful enough to make sure the actions they have taken have been recorded accurately or have been taken in good time to help families across all areas of Brent.

Inspectors looked at some cases which staff had closed because they felt the work with families had been completed. This was to check whether managers had made the correct decision and taken the right action. In some of the cases, it was clear more work with the families should have been done before the case was closed. However, generally, this did not mean that children were not being protected.

The full inspection report was published on **30 November 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/brent>