

## Kent Council – Inspection of child protection

**26 November – 5 December 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 Kent Council as 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:

The people in charge of Kent County Council want to make life better for children and families. They have employed some good leaders to make important changes and have taken firm action so that staff are better at spotting children who need to be kept safe. Because of this, children in Kent are now more likely to be safe from harm than they used to be.

As part of the changes, some new services have been set up to provide help and support to parents, children and young people before problems become really bad. The people who work in these services try to make sure that worries and concerns are sorted out early so that children do not need to go into care. There is also help and support for families from different cultures and backgrounds.

When someone tells children's social services that a child and their family might need help, social workers get involved without delay. In most cases, social services

give a lot of care and thought to finding out what the main worries are. This helps them to make important decisions about the best way to sort out the problems. They always work closely with other services to provide help and support.

Parents told inspectors that the people responsible for helping them solve their worries or concerns do a good job. They said that help comes at the right time and that it has made their lives better. Children and young people we spoke to made similar comments about the help they receive. They also said that they know what to do if things do not improve.

Social workers and staff from other agencies almost always meet with children on their own to listen to their wishes and feelings before a decision is made about how to sort things out. When children and families speak to social workers and other staff their views are used to write a plan of action. Some of these plans really help parents, children and young people understand what is going to be done to make things better.

If families need help at night or weekends they can get it from a special team. People who work in this team make sure that they let staff who work in the daytime know what they have done straight away so that any remaining concerns can get sorted out.

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 gives careful thought to cases when children are on child protection plans, they are not as good at getting the right help to children who are not at risk of harm but who need extra help. They need to start giving a better and quicker service to these children and young people

Social workers and other people who work with them need to make sure that all plans are clearly written down and have enough detail so that children, young people, parents and others involved in the case know what they have to do by when.

The managers in charge of children's services need to make sure that all meetings for children on child protection plans are run well so that children and their parents or carers are given enough time to think about all that has happened.

The council needs to make sure that social workers do not stop providing help to children, young people and their families too soon. Where children have been at risk

of harm, social workers and other professionals need to make sure that the problems really have got better and that there is other help available.

Managers need to get better at checking the quality of work that staff are doing and letting staff know whether they are doing a good job or not. They also need to make sure that when they make decisions about a child, they write them down in the child's file and give a clear reason for the decision.

Staff need to ensure that they take into consideration children, young people's and families' race and culture when making an assessment of their needs so that suitable help can be provided.

The full inspection report was published on 15 January 2013. 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/kent>