

Inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children

Derby City Council

Inspection dates: 3 – 12 December 2012

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Age group: All

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Inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children

The inspection judgements and what they mean

1. All inspection judgements are made using the following four point scale.

Outstanding	a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
Good	a service that exceeds minimum requirements
Adequate	a service that meets minimum requirements
Inadequate	a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Overall effectiveness

2. The overall effectiveness of the arrangements to protect children in Derby is judged to be **good**.

Areas for improvement

3. In order to improve the quality of help and protection given to children and young people in Derby, the local authority and its partners should take the following action.

Within three months:

- ensure that all plans for children include timescales for actions to be completed to enable progress to be measured effectively
- implement a system for the analysis of service user feedback in early help and preventative services.

Within six months:

- accelerate plans to provide a more effective ICS system to support practice and set out a detailed timescale for implementation
- ensure social workers complete and use chronologies to more effectively inform their practice.

About this inspection

4. This inspection was unannounced.
5. This inspection considered key aspects of a child's journey through the child protection system, focusing on the experiences of the child or young person, and the effectiveness of the help and protection that they are offered. Inspectors have scrutinised case files, observed practice and discussed the help and protection given to these children and young people with social workers, managers and other professionals including members of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Wherever possible, they have talked to children, young people and their families. In addition the inspectors have analysed performance data, reports and management information that the local authority holds to inform its work with children and young people.
6. This inspection focused on the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements for identifying children who are suffering, or likely to suffer, harm from abuse or neglect; and for the provision of early help where it is needed. It also considered the effectiveness of the local authority and its partners in protecting these children if the risk remains or intensifies.
7. The inspection team consisted of five of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI).
8. This inspection was carried out under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Service information

9. Derby has approximately 53,094 children and young people under the age of 19 years. This is 22% of the total population. Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 32.4% of the total population, compared with 23.4% in the country as a whole. The largest minority ethnic groups are Pakistani (10.4%) and Indian (5.0%). The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is 19% and above the national figure.
10. Contacts and referrals from the public and agencies are dealt with by a central contact team, First Contact, which forwards referrals to three reception teams that carry out initial assessments. Children's social care services are delivered via three localities and each locality is supported by three co-located multi-agency teams (MATs). MATs support the coordination of the early help offer including; coordinating partnership working and support with schools supporting common assessment framework (CAF) and team around the child (TAC) activity. CAF advisors deliver training, advice and monitoring and SPA (single point of access) clerks provide access to information and signposting to involved professionals. In addition a children with disabilities team undertakes the

complete range of referral, assessment and child protection enquiries for this group of children. Careline provides an out of hours children's social care services for the whole city. At the time of the inspection 218 children were subject to a child protection plan.

11. In addition there are 18 children's centres offering a wide range of activities and services such as stay and play groups, Parents Early Education Partnership (PEEPS), a certificated parenting course, adult learning and child development clinics.

Overall effectiveness

12. The overall effectiveness of the arrangements to protect children in Derby City Council is judged to be good. Strong leadership with clear strategic vision is demonstrated by the delivery of an effective early help offer and the co-location of statutory social work and integrated multi-agency teams. Work to manage and address issues of child sexual exploitation (CSE) is robust and effective with full engagement of all partner agencies at both strategic and operational levels. Good improvements to the quality of child protection plans and the implementation of effective quality assurance systems are contributing to improved outcomes for children and young people. Successful recruitment and retention of social workers along with robust caseload management ensure timely, good quality assessments of risk. Senior managers have a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses in services and acknowledge that the electronic case file system must be replaced urgently to effectively reflect both social work undertaken and a child's journey. Elected members are knowledgeable, support officers effectively and place appropriate scrutiny and focus on child protection and preventative work.
13. Agencies in Derby have a good shared understanding of thresholds and they are consistently applied. The early help offer is good, easily accessible and provides effective early identification of children and young people of all ages who may need additional or targeted support. Partner agencies work well together and common assessments frameworks (CAF) of satisfactory quality are increasingly being used to inform plans for team around the child services. CAF advisors provide valuable advice to support the growth in this work. Partner agencies have a shared understanding of early help and the need to prevent escalation to statutory services where appropriate. The First Contact team provides a prompt, appropriate response to contacts and referrals from the public and partner agencies in the vast majority of cases. However, assessment and decision making in relation to notifications of incidents of domestic abuse assessed as medium and low risk from the police has not been sufficiently timely. Managers have taken immediate, effective action to address this delay and all notifications where risk to children is identified are assessed by the First Contact team on the day that they are received. Arrangements and standards of practice within children's social care to protect children from immediate risk of harm are good. Assessments are of a good standard overall and provide comprehensive consideration of a child's circumstances, fully considering their individual, diverse needs.
14. Children subject to child protection and child in need plans benefit from well-coordinated, multi-agency work which reduces risk of harm and supports improvements in their health and wellbeing. Plans are generally outcome focused and take all aspects of the child and family into account. However, they do not always include clear timescales, so progress cannot be easily measured. A good quality commissioned advocacy service

effectively supports children involved in child protection processes and powerfully represents their views and feelings at case conferences.

15. Children and young people at risk of, or being, sexually exploited benefit from highly effective work coordinated through the child sexual exploitation (CSE) strategy that is overseen by a dedicated and specialist Child Protection Manager. The young people and their families are fully engaged in strategy meetings, plans and reviews. Evidence demonstrates the successful reduction of risk and disruption of harmful activity.
16. Derby Safeguarding Children Board (DSCB) is appropriately constituted and has very effective governance arrangements. The multi-agency priorities of DSCB are appropriate and are set out in detail in their good quality annual report and business plan. A strong, independent Chair has led the Board through an impressive programme of policy and practice improvement by adopting an uncompromising approach to protecting children at risk of sexual exploitation. Learning from recent serious case reviews has underpinned all service developments and is demonstrated both at strategic and operational levels. Multi-agency case auditing is effective, routinely undertaken and appropriately focused on child protection.

The effectiveness of the help and protection provided to children, young people, families and carers

17. The effectiveness of help and protection for children, young people and their families is good. Prompt, effective action is taken to protect children and young people at risk of harm and no evidence was found of children being left at risk of harm. Good work is undertaken to reduce risks and evidence demonstrates this has a positive impact on children's outcomes. Where young people are at risk of CSE very effective work has reduced levels of risks in the vast majority of cases.
18. Locality based teams with co-located MAT enables professionals to have good access to each other's expertise and share knowledge about vulnerable families within localities. This ensures better coordination of services to meet the needs of vulnerable children, young people and families. Where children and young people are subject to child protection or child in needs plans key agencies contribute to an effective case planning process which leads to good outcomes. For example, the vulnerable children's meeting (VCM) ensures that children, young people and family's needs are addressed and that they receive the right level of support and intervention from the most appropriate agencies. The wide range of professional expertise at VCM ensures that children and young people subject to a CAF or child in need plan are fully considered enabling accurate evaluation of whether cases should be 'stepped up' or 'stepped down'.

19. The individual needs of children, young people and families including their ethnicity, culture and faith are addressed well resulting in effective plans and good levels of engagement. The integrated disabled children's service (IDCS) provides a highly effective response to child protection concerns. Where children are subject to child protection and child in need plans there is good evidence that actions taken result in improved outcomes for the wellbeing of children and young people. Overall, the extent to which children and young people understand the intentions of the help and protection they receive is good. Young people say being able to participate in their strategy meetings is a good experience and helps them understand why adults are concerned about them. Also, they have an active role in planning interventions to support them. Parents report they feel listened to and understand the purpose of the support that they receive. For example, one parent talked about the changes they have made to improve the life chances and secure the safety and wellbeing of their child.
20. The council and its partners demonstrate a very good understanding of potential risk to children and young people of sexual exploitation and have a range of effective targeted services in place. These include group and individual programmes provided by Safe and Sound that evidence positive impact and good outcomes for children and young people. The robust multi-agency children missing protocol is supported by monthly meetings involving a range of agencies including the police to evaluate the data on missing children. Those who regularly go missing are known and are allocated a key worker from MAT who knows the young person well and helps prevent further incidents of going missing. Any child subject to a child protection or child in need plan is seen within 24 hours of their return.
21. Managers have an excellent knowledge of local communities and the needs of children, young people and families. This means that families in need are rapidly identified and as a result the needs of all, including minority ethnic groups, are prioritised. New arrivals to the community are identified through effective neighbourhood networks such as Derby Homes and children's centres. Health visitors pass information to children's centres who respond with a visit from a family visitor. The good relationships established between the family visitors and vulnerable parents encourage them to access services at the children's centre.
22. The early help offer from children's centres is targeted at the most vulnerable families within their areas. Children's centre staff and leaders know their communities well and participation and take up data shows that centres are well used by families who have historically been difficult to engage. For example, the Traveller project where staff positively engage with the Traveller community, running groups and one to one sessions for young children. Because these activities take place where Travellers live, it avoids suspicion and barriers to delivering effective early

help to these families. Evidence demonstrates that children are now attending nurseries and those families are engaging as a result of this work. All those seen during the inspection were overwhelmingly positive about the impact of the children's centre courses in helping them to be a better parent. For example, the Freedom Programme helps mothers to reflect on the impact domestic violence has on their children and themselves. Managers routinely collect feedback for their service users but as yet the data had not been fully analysed to inform future service development.

23. The council has responded effectively to the historically low number of common assessments (CAF) completed by partners. Recently appointed CAF advisers offer good support and this has resulted in a steady increase in numbers of CAFs undertaken and also in CAFs being initiated by parents. Schools acknowledge that CAFs are time consuming and sometimes complex, particularly where there are a number of children in a family requiring an assessment. However, good support from CAF advisers has led to schools becoming more confident and adept at using this type of assessment. In some cases a pre-CAF approach is used to clarify issues and to ensure the most appropriate services to secure good outcomes are involved in the team around the family. CAFs are subject to regular and effective review. Where agencies are unsure whether the CAF is providing the best level of support, cases are referred to the weekly VCM for possible 'stepping up'. Evidence demonstrates effectiveness of team around the family processes in reduced rates of families requiring higher level intervention. CAFs are of variable quality with all at least adequate and some good. CAF advisers routinely audit CAFs to support improvements in quality standards and identify areas for further training.
24. A robust system is in place to ensure information about vulnerable children is passed on to their next school. A team around the school approach is used effectively in primary and secondary schools enabling them to work with appropriate professionals such as youth workers, education welfare officers and child practitioners. This is helping to improve attendance through alternative provision including group and individualised programmes that target young people at risk of offending or involvement in gang related activities.
25. The small number of children subject to Private Fostering Arrangements (PFA) in Derby are all appropriately monitored. The council has taken action to improve notification of PFA through training and awareness raising provided to partner agencies. This has resulted in an increase in the numbers of notifications, although numbers remain small.

The quality of practice

26. The quality of practice is adequate. Professionals within universal services make appropriate referrals to children's social care and agencies have a

good understanding of thresholds which are applied consistently. Good, accessible advice is provided by suitably qualified and experienced social work staff. Where there are specific concerns about CSE both the specialist child protection manager and Safe and Sound, a commissioned service, are available to discuss risk and thresholds. In addition, 30 CSE champions situated in a range of agencies which include schools are available for consultation. Workers in multi-agency teams (MAT) have access to a qualified manager to discuss escalating concerns and consider the appropriateness of referrals to children's social care. Out of hours services are effective and undertake strategy discussions and section 47 investigations. The multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) provides robust, effective information sharing and action planning to respond to high risk domestic violence incidents. The conference is well attended by partner agencies including both statutory and voluntary sector workers and a cross section of adult and children's professionals. Action planning is strongly focused on the outcomes for children (where appropriate), and is clearly recorded with timescales and expectations for action from partners.

27. The First Contact team triage process for dealing with notifications of domestic abuse assessed as medium or low risk by the police has not been sufficiently timely as it was only held weekly. Consequently, delays in children's social care making decisions and taking any required action may have resulted in some children potentially being at risk. Managers have taken immediate, effective action and all notifications where risk to children is identified are now assessed by either the senior practitioner or the Team Manager of the First Contact team on the day that they are received.
28. In the vast majority of cases referrals receive a timely and effective response. Clear evidence of appropriate management decision making is demonstrated including where the thresholds for intervention through social work are not met. Where necessary families and carers are given information and advice and appropriately referred to other agencies. Where immediate child protection concerns are identified timely and effective Section 47 enquiries demonstrate a well-coordinated multi-agency response and good information sharing.
29. Overall the quality of assessments is good, clearly identifying risk and protective factors and in most cases providing clear, informed analysis that takes account of family history. All assessments are undertaken in a timely manner and provide evidence of children being seen and consideration of their views. However in a very few cases analysis is weak and in the majority of cases seen there is no reference to research to inform action planning. Assessments under the common assessment framework (CAF) are undertaken by a range of professionals and are at least adequate in quality. CAF advisors support and deliver training to a wide range of agencies and lead professionals. Advisors are closely linked

to MAT and regular vulnerable children's meetings ensure effective multi-agency working with children, young people and their families.

30. A key strength of the council is the IDCS offering well-coordinated early intervention through individualised packages of support from a highly effective and responsive multi-disciplinary service providing access to information and resources, assessment, short break and nursery provision. The social work team in IDCS undertake prompt, effective assessments and section 47 enquiries of good quality.
31. The council and its partners have taken a highly proactive and robust response to CSE and have developed a CSE risk assessment toolkit which is an excellent guide and support for practitioners in all services. It ensures a consistent high quality response for young people at risk. An exemplar of a good quality action plan is included and strategies for intervention and disruption of risky activities are set out clearly. Multi-agency strategy meetings chaired by the specialist CSE Child Protection Manager demonstrate very good practice and the full engagement of young people and their families. Resulting action plans are of very good quality and include practical actions to address all areas of risk and support for the whole family. Actions are allocated to individuals, have detailed timescales and reviewing arrangements. In other cases strategy discussions and meetings are timely, include partners as required and clearly determine actions to be taken to promptly assess risk. However, recording of strategy discussions is not well supported by the electronic case file system and details can be difficult to find. Children and young people are well supported in child protection processes through a commissioned advocacy service which very powerfully represents their views and feelings.
32. The quality of child protection and child in need plans is variable but at least adequate. Significant improvement has been achieved in focusing on outcomes within plans. This was identified as an area of concern in the 2011 safeguarding and looked after children inspection. However, while the majority of plans are clear in detailing actions families need to take and how they will be supported, most plans do not include timescales for actions to be completed. This results in managers not being able to accurately measure progress or be sufficiently clear as to the expectations of families. All plans are reviewed regularly and there is a dedicated Independent Reviewing Officer for children in need which is good practice.
33. The quality of case recording is good overall and in the majority of cases recording is timely and up to date reflecting the work undertaken. However, the present electronic case file system is poor and does not support social work practice sufficiently well. The system's weaknesses lead to delays in accessing and inputting essential information resulting in it being very difficult to easily gain a clear picture of a child's journey. The use of chronologies is variable with some chronologies of a good standard.

However, others seen by inspectors consisted of lists of events, were not succinct and did not focus on the key life events for children and young people. The overall quality of reports for legal proceedings is good with a clear focus on the immediate and long term risks for children and young people.

34. Managers provide effective and routine oversight of cases ensuring focus on children's needs, risks and outcomes is maintained. Where concerns escalate and risks increase, an effective two tier structure of management scrutiny firstly reviews cases at locality meetings then secondly a case review panel makes decisions in relation to legal interventions. Effective Vulnerable Children's Meetings (VCM) chaired by senior managers promote a consistent approach across localities with a focus on how cases should progress and what resources are required to best support children and young people to improve outcomes.
35. Staff receive regular supervision of good quality. However, a recent audit by senior managers identified a need to focus more specifically on reflective practice within the First Contact team and work has already commenced in order to address this. Casework supervision is routinely recorded and used to inform practice.

Leadership and governance

36. Leadership and governance are good. The council and its partners effectively prioritise early help and child protection services. Appropriate priorities for action are shared by key strategic leaders and are clearly defined within the multi-agency Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). Clear links can be seen from the high level Derby plan down through the CYPP and on to individual service business plans. A good range of services are commissioned from independent and voluntary providers such as the family group conferencing service. Ambitious leadership is demonstrated by Keeping Families Together, a strategic plan clearly and precisely linked to the needs of the most vulnerable in the area. Sharply focused objectives for early help are set out so that a family's needs can be rapidly identified and met through multi-agency working.
37. The council and its partners have a good understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and ensure statutory requirements are met. The implementation, in conjunction with Derbyshire County Council, of a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) is expected to provide an improved and immediate multi-agency response to domestic abuse referrals from January 2013. Recommendations from previous inspections have been considered regularly at the Children and Young People's Improvement Board. The vast majority of recommendations have been satisfactorily addressed and used to improve practice. However, the electronic case file system has not been changed or much improved and it remains poor, hindering rather than supporting social work practice and failing to provide

an effective account of a child's journey. The council learns well from complaints and evidence of subsequent improvements such as training to reinforce the importance of accuracy of record keeping and decision making can be seen in practice.

38. The exceptionally strong, focused leadership of Derby Safeguarding Children Board (DSCB) has driven an impressive programme of policy and practice improvement by taking an uncompromising approach to protecting children at risk of sexual exploitation. Clear evidence of its effectiveness and its learning from recent serious case reviews has underpinned all service developments and is demonstrated both at strategic and operational levels. The CSE strategy is robust, of very good quality and has a proven impact on reducing risk and protecting vulnerable young people. Extensive, good quality training of the workforce by both in house and commissioned services has raised the profile of child sexual exploitation in the city. Partner agencies are fully engaged as evidenced by the successful appointing of 30 CSE champions in a wide range of agencies who offer consultation and advice to professionals. Two further learning reviews have been independently commissioned to ensure that actions taken have had the optimum impact for young people at risk from, or involved in, the prosecution of CSE perpetrators. Multi-agency case auditing is effective, routinely undertaken and appropriately focused on child protection. The DSCB annual report and business plan fully reflect the Board's priorities in relation to the quality of multi-agency practice and sets out in clear detail their achievements and priorities.
39. Governance arrangements between the Derby Partnership Board and DSCB are good, formally detailed and understood by all partners. This accountability arrangement results in the widest possible strategic engagement for the DSCB as the partnership includes representatives from industry and the local press as well as chief executives of key partner agencies. The children and young people's scrutiny board demonstrates a good focus on child protection and regularly holds officers to account at performance surgeries.
40. The Director of Children's Service (DCS) has succeeded in providing stable and confident leadership with a very visible, accessible style. For example, he audits case files, visits front line teams and has accompanied social workers visiting families. The Children and Young People's Improvement Board, led by the DCS, maintains a robust focus on improvement leading to the effective delivery of integrated preventative and statutory children's social care services. Managers at all levels reflect this culture and directly challenge the robustness of assessment outcomes and effectiveness of particular interventions on a routine basis. A review of their work demonstrates that consistency of decision making is improving. Social work teams are aspirational and keen to demonstrate their good performance.

41. Performance management has a high profile, is well established and is evident in all levels of planning. Good quality and accessible management information is key to the effective use of approaches such as 'turning the curve' which has delivered desired improvements. This approach has led to a broad range of colleagues, such as legal officers, being engaged in all aspects of performance management. Reporting arrangements are robust and performance surgeries overseen by the children and young people's scrutiny board enhance the good arrangements for performance reviews held by the improvement board. Individual staff members have regularly monitored and reviewed performance plans directly related to business plan priorities. Standards of quality assurance are improving and regular thematic case file audits are routinely undertaken. Evidence of this is seen in improvements to the quality of child protection plans in relation to their focus on outcomes for children. In early help services evaluation and regular case reviews are in place but are yet to be fully utilised to gain maximum effect for further service development.
42. The council has an appropriate two year financial plan and children's services managers have planned their service delivery accordingly. Imaginative, effective leadership and management has resulted in all children's centres remaining open but with services and staffing being organised flexibly to maximise effectiveness of reduced resources. Elected members and senior officers are committed to the protection of front line, statutory child protection services.
43. The workforce within children's services in Derby reflects the community it serves and staff retention is strong. The workforce strategy is successful in delivering a culture of learning based upon mandatory training to adequately equip staff to undertake their duties. A good example is that of children's centre staff who regularly update their knowledge and expertise in subjects such as domestic violence, paediatric first aid, and the emotional health of children and their families. As a result, they are well placed to provide support to the most vulnerable groups in the community.
44. Children and their families are effectively consulted in the early stages of service design. A good example is the commissioning of Children and Young People's Network to inform the design and specification of new, very early parenting support services. Parents and carers are routinely asked to provide feedback on their experiences of intervention work which is good practice and examples seen demonstrate positive experiences of staff and services.

Record of main findings

Local authority arrangements for the protection of children	
Overall effectiveness	Good
The effectiveness of the help and protection provided to children, young people, families and carers	Good
The quality of practice	Adequate
Leadership and governance	Good