

Medway Council – Inspection of child protection

7-16 January 2013

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 Medway Council 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:

The new senior managers who run Medway children's services are very clear about the changes they need to make so that life is better for children and families in the area. The new senior managers know that the pace of improvement from different services has been too slow. They want to make changes rapidly and have made an early start. Some important changes include explaining their plan to workers to make sure they understand the new ways of working to help and protect children.

People and different services who work with children and families in Medway are passionate about their job. Any children who are at immediate risk of harm are protected by their social worker and other services.

Children and families who find life difficult and ask for help are put in touch with services that make real differences to their lives. Children's centres and family support workers play a very important role in helping to identify children and families who need help and provide support quickly and early to stop the problems getting worse.

Most parents who met inspectors are highly appreciative of the support, help and guidance they receive from family social workers, children's centres and other services.

Meetings to discuss how best to protect children at risk of harm are well led. Parents are given the opportunity to take part and give their views when decisions are made about protecting their children.

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

Social workers and managers do not always follow the right procedures. Some children are not protected as well as they should be or quickly enough. Senior managers need to improve this immediately.

Attention needs to be given to improving decision making by managers so that the right type of help and protection is offered to children and families at the right time. Some cases are being closed too early without the right support being provided which results in some children and families having to be referred again. This needs to be reviewed immediately to reduce the amount of re-referrals.

Managers need to make sure that children are seen quickly when they may be at risk. Social workers need to make sure that children's views are well recorded and are taken into account in decisions that are made.

More should be done to make sure that decisions that affect children's lives are always sound and based on accurate assessment and clear plans. Managers need to make sure that social worker's assessments clearly identify the risks to children and include all the necessary information. Social workers need to make sure that plans are clear and understood by parents and young people.

Some children and their families experience too many changes in their social workers. Senior managers need to do more to reduce the number of changes of social workers that children and families experience by ensuring that there are more permanent social workers. Senior managers need to do more to monitor children and families experience of the help and protection given to ensure that it is good enough and take appropriate action where improvements are needed.

The full inspection report was published on 15 February 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/medway>