

Hertfordshire County Council – Inspection of child protection

28 January – 6 February 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 Hertfordshire County 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:

When people are worried or concerned about children and young people, there is a good system in place to help them to find the right support and help. As soon as someone contacts the council about the safety and well-being of a child or young person quick action is taken by social workers and other professionals, including the police, to make sure these concerns are investigated and the right help is offered. People have worked hard to make sure the right services are in place so that children and families can get help when they need it most.

When children and their families need help at an early stage the council and other organisations work well together to support them to make life better. Children's centres, schools and some other services often give good advice and support to parents who are having difficulties in caring for their young children.

Early help and support to children who are 14 years and older is generally good and as a consequence fewer young people are taken in to care later in their teens, fewer young people are committing crimes, fewer children go missing and school attendance has improved.

Social workers, youth workers and other specialist staff who work with children and their families receive training and support regularly in order to do their job well and ensure children are keep safe.

The council works well with lots of different services and makes sure that specialist support is available which, in many instances, prevents problems from getting out of control.

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

The council has done a lot of work to make sure services for keeping children safe improve but in some areas of practice progress has been too slow and this means it cannot always be sure that children who are most at risk of harm are always protected as well as possible.

Important plans that describe how children are protected from harm are not clear enough and do not explain how plans will be checked to make sure the right things are being done and that outcomes for these children are getting better.

Children, young people and their families who have been subject to plans are not always asked about their views or opinions. This means the council has no clear way of knowing how to improve services to make sure their needs are being well met.

Too many requests for help are placed on a waiting list if they are not considered by social workers to be urgent and this means some children and their families are not receiving support quickly enough.

The full inspection report was published on **8 March 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/hertfordshire>