

## Reading Borough Council – Inspection of child protection

**11 – 20 March 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 Reading Borough Council as **adequate** for how effective child protection services are. All of our grades are explained 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:

Social workers and staff in other agencies whose job it is to keep children and young people safe work hard and are committed to helping children and their families. People act quickly when a child or young person needs to be protected. Everybody works together to share information so that decisions are made properly, including in an emergency, or when children go missing from their home or school.

Most of the time, children and young people who need extra help get good support and advice early on before problems get very big or much more difficult to sort out. People and services that help make sure that parents are involved at an early stage. This means that parents know what to do and feel more confident about looking after their children. Many of parents who spoke to inspectors felt things were getting better.

Children who have child protection plans are visited regularly by their social worker and have time to talk to their social worker on their own. This helps children talk

about anything they are worried about and how they are feeling.

The number of young people committing serious crimes and breaking the law in Reading is falling. There are good specialist services which support young offenders and a wide range of activities in the community which help to stop children and young people getting into trouble in the first place.

The most senior people in the council understand what needs to improve for children and young people in Reading. They agree with what inspectors told them is good and what is not yet good enough. They are already making plans so that changes can happen quickly and make a real difference to 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 staff in other helping agencies need to get better at listening to children and understanding exactly what life is like for them. They need to involve children more in discussions and in decision making about their help and protection plans.

Staff in all agencies need to be clear about when to refer children and young people to child protection services. Some children are referred when they do not need to be, for example by the police in less serious domestic violence cases. This is to stop social care services becoming over-loaded and to make sure that all children get the right kind of help without delay.

Sometimes the different ways that families can be helped and the different services that can help them gets complicated and confusing for children and parents. The council and other helping agencies need to make sure that all children and parents understand the services they are getting and why they are getting them. The council is already working on a plan to make this clearer for everyone.

The plans that social workers make for children who need to be protected are not always clear about exactly what needs to change in children's lives to keep them safe and well. Child protection officers, who are in charge of child protection meetings, need to make sure that all plans are making a difference in improving children's lives in the way that everyone has agreed.

When the council and other agencies plan new services for children and families, they need to think more about all the different groups and communities in Reading so that the right services are developed in the right places. The council also needs to

involve children and young people in developing child protection services.

The full inspection report was published on 23rd April 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/reading>