

Cumbria County Council – Inspection of child protection

13-22 May 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 Cumbria County 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:

People who work in the council really want to get better at helping families and want to keep children safe. They have made some good changes, including setting up a new joint team of social workers, police officers and health staff to work together when people tell them about children and young people they are worried about. They know what needs to be put right, but they know they still have a lot more to do.

The Director has helped everyone to see how important it is to improve the way the council and others work together to help children and their families. She made sure that things were done quickly when we told her about some children who were not being kept safe.

The council has made sure parents who are having problems or who find it hard to look after their children can get help from children's centres, schools and other organisations. We met some parents who told us that these places had made things

better for them and their children.

Social workers and their managers work very hard to help children and their families and they are getting more training to make sure they do this better in the future. The council understands how important it is to help families and keep children safe and it has been able to recruit more staff for this work.

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

Social workers want to keep all children safe but sometimes they don't realise how difficult things might be for them and they don't notice things that are happening to them, especially when they are not feeling safe. This means that sometimes they don't take action quickly enough when things go wrong in children's lives.

Some children who are unhappy or might not be safe are not being visited often enough by social workers and their views are not always listened to. Sometimes social workers give too much attention to what adults are saying and they do not spend enough time alone with children, getting to know them and listening to any worries they have. When this happens, they might not realise that children and young people are at risk of real harm. The council needs to sort these things out immediately and it needs to keep checking to make sure these problems do not happen again.

Not all children get the right help at the right time. More needs to be done to make sure families can get help quickly when they begin to have problems, so things don't get worse for them and their children. Some families' problems are complicated and they need help from several different people. Workers need to talk to each other more about what is happening and work more closely together as a team so they do a better job in helping these families.

We found some children who were not being properly looked after, even though social workers knew about them, we had to make sure that things were done quickly to make them safe.

Social workers are not always getting the help they need so that they can do a good job to protect children who aren't safe. Many social workers have a large number of families to work with and they sometimes miss things because they are very busy. Their bosses should meet them regularly to help them think about their work and make sure they are doing what is needed to make children safe.

Although social workers' bosses know about these problems, they are not changing

things quickly enough.

The full inspection report was published on **24 June 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/cumbria>