

London Borough of Bromley

PART 1 - PUBLIC

**Briefing for Care Services
Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee
4TH September 2012**

**OUTCOMES FROM OFSTED THEMATIC INSPECTION OF
SAFEGUARDING DISABLED CHILDREN (MARCH 2012)**

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1. Summary

- 1.1 On 24 January 2012 the Director of Bromley Children and Young People Services was informed by Ofsted of their intention to undertake an inspection of Bromley's arrangements for 'Protecting Disabled Children' on 6 and 7 March 2012.
- 1.2 This briefing report provides an outline of the inspection methodology and process and the feedback provided by the Ofsted inspectors.

2. THE BRIEFING

- 2.1 On 24 January 2012 the Director of Bromley Children and Young People Service was informed by Ofsted of their intention to undertake an inspection of Bromley's arrangements for 'Protecting Disabled Children' on 6 and 7 March 2012.
- 2.2 This inspection was to form part of a programme of inspections across the country and constituted a new form of thematic inspection, the focus of which was an in-depth study of 12 local authorities, to assess how effectively disabled children are protected. Ofsted outlined that the inspection outcomes would not take the form of an individual report or grading for each Local Authority; instead, the findings would be published in a document in summer 2012, which would draw together emerging key themes and issues as well as highlighting good practice identified across the local authorities involved without individual authorities being named. (To date this has not been published.)
- 2.3 The inspection was undertaken by 2 inspectors and consisted of a combination of case tracking, focus groups and individual interviews with key personnel.
- 2.4 Two weeks prior to the inspection the local authority was required to submit detailed lists of children's social care cases in the following categories:

- All contacts and referrals to children's social care relating to disabled children over the past 12 months.
 - All disabled children subject to a strategy discussion or child protection investigation over the past 12 months.
 - All initial assessments relating to disabled children undertaken over the last 12 months.
 - All disabled children currently subject to child in need plans.
 - All disabled children currently subject to child protection plans.
 - A list of disabled children receiving multi-agency help or support through the common assessment framework via a team around the child.
- 2.5 Prior to arriving on site the inspectors selected 5 cases for examination: 3 cases of early help, 1 child in need and 1 child protection case.
- 2.6 In addition on the first day of the inspection, from the case lists provided, a further 8 cases were identified for inspection. They were:
- two contacts that did not proceed to referrals;
 - two referrals which did not lead to any further action;
 - two initial assessments which either led to no further action or led to action other than a core assessment, i.e. actions or services by agencies other than children's social care services for disabled children;
 - two strategy meetings/ child protection investigations chosen at random from work undertaken in the last 12 months.
- 2.7 The cases were examined and tracked alongside either the social worker or manager for the case. As in all Ofsted inspections the inspectors were clear that should they identify a child at immediate risk, that had not been identified by the local authority, this would be brought to the attention of senior managers for priority action. No such priority cases were identified. In addition no issues of concern were identified through the case tracking, other than one minor issue of case recording.
- 2.8 The focus groups consisted of a group of strategic multi-agency leads for disabled children and a group of multi-agency front line practitioners. In addition, meetings took place with the Local Authority Designated Officer (the officer responsible for the management of allegations against professionals); and representatives of the Bromley Safeguarding Children Board as well as meetings with some of the parents whose cases were examined.
- 2.9 The focus group of senior managers were asked about the profile of disabled children in the Authority and how this had informed the development and delivery of services to ensure disabled children were safeguarded. The group were able to demonstrate that Bromley has a Joint Strategic Plan for disabled children based on robust needs analysis.
- 2.10 In addition, the Authority was able to demonstrate that the Integrated Disability Service has clear mechanisms in place to respond to safeguarding concerns. These include the fortnightly high risk cases meeting where potential safeguarding concerns are identified and appropriate referral pathways followed. In addition, the method of identification/assessment and service

delivery through a multi-agency team approach was referenced as was the links between that team and the Referral and Assessment Team within Children's Social Care to ensure effective and timely safeguarding for disabled children.

- 2.11 The focus group also outlined how measures are in place to ensure that preventative services are not missing child protection concerns by focusing too much on family support and taking an overly optimistic view of family where there are underlying child protection concerns. This includes ensuring there is good multi agency working and regular supervision with appropriate challenge. Health representatives were also able to demonstrate the increased use of the common assessment framework when additional needs were identified in children.
- 2.12 The meeting with representatives from the Bromley Safeguarding Children Board was able to outline the strategic role the BSCB had taken in promoting the safeguarding of disabled children. This included an annual conference in October 2010 which focused on the issue of disabled children in response to Government guidance in this area. In addition the BSCB had been instrumental in bringing together a multi-agency group to put together a multi-agency strategy for safeguarding disabled children.
- 2.13 Given the nature of the inspection, there was no formal feedback. However, there was a brief meeting with key managers to feedback key findings which was very positive. Inspectors reported that disabled children are being protected in Bromley, that wider safeguarding issues are understood, and there is good early intervention and multi-disciplinary working. A number of strengths and good practice were identified at the verbal feedback meeting with particular recognition given to the quality of the framework of integrated support services – combining education, social care and health to meet the needs of disabled children and their families.
- 2.14 This positive inspection outcome reflects the major changes made as a Council over a number of years to the way services are provided to support children with severe and complex SEN and Disabilities, 0-5, through the Phoenix Centre and Early Years' Support Programme, which was developed further in 2010 when an extension of this policy to meet the needs of children up to the age of 19 was approved by Members.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Providing services for disabled children is a statutory responsibility under the 1989 Children Act. Section 17 is the requirement to provide support services for disabled children and Section 47 is the requirement to ensure all children, include disabled children, are protected from significant harm.
- 3.2 Section 135 Education and Inspections Act 2006 empowers Ofsted to conduct inspections of Local Authority children functions.