

Decision Maker: **Children and Young People Portfolio Holder**

Date: **For Pre-Decision Scrutiny by the Children and Young People PDS Committee on 14 July 2011**

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Executive Non-Key

TITLE: BRIEFING AND ACTION PLAN FOLLOWING THE OFSTED UNANNOUNCED INSPECTION OF REFERRAL & ASSESSMENT SERVICES IN BROMLEY - APRIL 2011

Contact Officer: Kay Weiss, Assistant Director (Safeguarding and Social Care)
Tel: 020 8313 4062 E-mail: kay.weiss@bromley.gov.uk

Mark Thorn, Head of Children's Social Care – Referral and Assessment
Tel: 020 8461 7578 E-mail: mark.thorn@bromley.gov.uk

Chief Officer: Gillian Pearson, Director of Children and Young People Services

Ward: Boroughwide

1. Reason for report

1.1 Bromley's Children and Young People, Referral and Assessment Services were the subject of a two-day unannounced inspection by Ofsted on 5 and 6 April 2011. The report conveys the formal outcomes, judgement and recommendations from that inspection together with the proposed action plan to address the areas identified for development.

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2.1 **The Children and Young People Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider and comment on the report and accompanying Action Plan.**

2.2 **The Children and Young People Portfolio Holder is asked to consider and approve the Action Plan in response to the recommendations made by Ofsted during the April 2011 unannounced inspection.**

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: N/A
 2. BBB Priority: Children and Young People
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: N/A
 2. Ongoing costs: N/A
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Children's Social Care – Referral & Assessment
 4. Total current budget for this head: £2,267,090
 5. Source of funding: Base Budget
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Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional) – 49 staff throughout teams within the Referral and Assessment Service. This includes managers, social workers, support and administrative staff.
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours -
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory requirement: Section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
 2. Call in: Call-in is applicable
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected) - 9,053 customer contacts to the Referral and Assessment Service in 2010-11
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? No
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: Not Applicable

3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 An Ofsted unannounced inspection of Bromley CYP Department's Referral and Assessment Services took place on 5 and 6 April 2011. This represents an annual inspection requirement. A previous unannounced inspection of Referral and Assessment Services took place in 2009, with a full inspection of Bromley's Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services undertaken by Ofsted in March/April 2010.
- 3.2 The aim of the unannounced inspection is to assess the quality and effectiveness of contact, referral and assessment services for children's social care. It is undertaken over a 2 day period by an inspection team consisting of two HM Inspectors who review a range of evidence including data, systems and children's files, together with a schedule of interviews. In addition, observations are made of social workers, managers and other staff undertaking referral and assessment duties as well as discussions with partner agencies.
- 3.3 The Inspection outcomes were very positive and confirmed a number of strengths. Bromley has been judged as meeting the statutory requirements for the safeguarding and protection of children. No areas were identified for priority action.
- 3.4 Bromley's recruitment and retention strategy, which was approved by Bromley Council's Executive in February 2010, underpinned by additional funding, was judged as having a profound effect on the service leading to a strengthening and stability within the Referral and Assessment Service. The inspection report also recognised the progress achieved with the implementation of the Social Care and Safeguarding Improvement Plan 2010, as a strength.

“Strong and highly effective leadership from senior managers and elected members has led to a number of well-targeted initiatives which have made substantial improvements to the referral and assessment service. In spite of budgetary pressures within the council, a significant increase in financial resources has been agreed which have been effectively used to address longstanding problems with the recruitment and retention of staff. The commissioning of effective management training has resulted in strong management oversight and effective decision-making processes.”

OFSTED (2011)

- 3.5 The inspectors confirmed that the service is meeting its statutory requirements according to statutory guidance and the legal duties of the Council. The role of the Referral and Assessment Service is prescribed in law as:

It is the statutory duty of every Local Authority to:

- a) safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are 'in need' as defined by the law;
- b) as far as is consistent with that duty, promote the upbringing of such by their families.

Children Act 1989

- 3.6 Recent management action taken by senior officers to realign the East and West referral teams into one centrally-based boroughwide team was highlighted as a positive factor, ensuring consistent management oversight, supervision and operational systems. Inspectors found that referrals are dealt with in a timely manner and the completion of assessments and management oversight was in place. Staff are appropriately supported and supervised. The inspectors also found evidence of good partnership working with midwifery staff around vulnerable unborn babies and with the children with disabilities service.

3.7 There were a number of areas identified for development:

- The use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) as a referral form is not effective as it failed to provide succinct enough information to assist the referral.
- The Emergency Duty Team (EDT) is not sufficiently robust and was an area of development highlighted at the previous inspection.
- Whilst social workers are offered a range of training to develop their skills, specialist training for experienced social workers is highlighted as limited.
- There is a lack of clear pathways to early intervention services within the council, resulting in many children being inappropriately referred to the referral and assessment team. The inspectors however commented on the plans aimed to address this.
- Whilst recognising that strategy discussions appropriately take place with the police, it is judged more of these discussions could be held in the form of meetings to involve a wider range of partners.
- Some long standing operational issues between the police and the referral and assessment team were not effectively escalated to senior managers and the local safeguarding children board to improve joint working arrangements.
- Feedback from service users should be more routinely collated to assess the impact of the work of the team and to inform further developments.

The Assistant Director, Children’s Social Care and Safeguarding, has prepared a draft post-inspection action plan to address the areas identified for improvement; the draft plan is attached as **Appendix 2**.

3.8 Overall this is a very positive report that not only acknowledges the direction, strategy and action taken since 2009/10 to date, but also builds on the plans put in place following previous inspections and demonstrates sustained improvement and increasing stability within the service.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Ofsted inspection was conducted under Section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

4.2 It reviews the performance of services provided by the local authority according to Section 17 The Children Act 1989 that places a duty upon the local authority to assess the needs of children whose health and development may be impaired without the provision of services. Section 47 of the Act places a further duty to investigate where a child may be at risk of significant harm.

Non-Applicable Sections:	Policy Implications Financial Implications Personnel Implications
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Annual Unannounced Inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment arrangements within the London Borough of Bromley Council Children’s services. Action Plan following the OFSTED Unannounced Inspection of Referral and assessment Services 2011.

Freshford House
Redcliffe Way
Bristol BS1 6NL

T 0300 1231231
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 03000 130570

Safeguarding.lookedafterchildren@ofsted.gov.uk



10 May 2011

Ms Gillian Pearson
Director of Children and Young People's Services
London Borough of Bromley Council
Civic Centre
Stockwell Close
Bromley
BR1 3UH

Dear Ms Pearson

Annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within the London Borough of Bromley Council children's services

This letter summarises the findings of the recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within local authority children's services in the London Borough of Bromley Council which was conducted on 5 and 6 April 2011. The inspection was carried out under section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. It will contribute to the annual review of the performance of the authority's children's services, for which Ofsted will award a rating later in the year. I would like to thank all of the staff we met for their assistance in undertaking this inspection.

The inspection sampled the quality and effectiveness of contact, referral and assessment arrangements and their impact on minimising any child abuse and neglect. Inspectors considered a range of evidence, including: electronic case records; supervision files and notes; observation of social workers and senior practitioners undertaking referral and assessment duties; and other information provided by staff and managers. Inspectors also spoke to a range of staff including managers, social workers, other practitioners and administrative staff.

The inspection identified an area of strength and areas of practice that met requirements, with some areas for development.

The relevant areas of development identified at the previous inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children's Services in April 2010 have been addressed with the exception of the quality of service provided by the out-of-hours service, which remains an area for development.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

From the evidence gathered, the following features of the service were identified:

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong and highly effective leadership from senior managers and elected members has led to a number of well-targeted initiatives which have made substantial improvements to the referral and assessment service. In spite of budgetary pressures within the council, a significant increase in financial resources has been agreed which have been effectively used to address longstanding problems with the recruitment and retention of staff. The commissioning of effective management training has resulted in strong management oversight and effective decision-making processes.
<p>The service meets the requirements of statutory guidance in the following areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The consolidation of two locality-based referral and assessment teams into one borough-wide service has improved the consistency in the application of thresholds for services. ▪ Contacts and referrals are dealt with in a timely manner with one point of referral to a designated duty team. Management decision-making about the progress of referrals is clear and prompt. Good systems are in place to inform agencies about the outcomes of their referrals. ▪ All cases are allocated to suitably qualified social workers. Appropriate arrangements are in place with the children with disabilities team to jointly manage cases where there are safeguarding concerns. The transfer of cases to long term teams is managed effectively. ▪ Newly qualified social workers are well supported to take up their role and develop appropriate skills through an established development programme. Enhanced levels of supervision and joint-working opportunities with more experienced colleagues are also readily available. ▪ The quality of core and initial assessments is adequate. Information is appropriately gathered from other professionals. Although in many cases the overall analysis of the case is limited, the major risks and protective factors are effectively outlined and plans made to address these. All assessments are appropriately countersigned by managers with clear directions about the progress of the case. ▪ Children are routinely seen, their views recorded and taken into account as part of the assessment process. ▪ After a long period of temporary management at both strategic and operational levels, an effective permanent management group is now in place. These managers are well respected by staff and provide regular and focused

supervision which has resulted in improved practice.

- Case recording is clear and the majority of records are up-to-date. Contacts with other agencies and families are appropriately recorded.
- A system of case file audits is undertaken at all levels of the service. Effective systems are in place to report the findings of the audits to senior managers and to disseminate the learning from these audits.
- Performance management systems are improving and managers undertake monitoring on a weekly basis. As a result, the importance of the timeliness of assessments is well understood by social workers. Performance in the completion of initial and core assessments has improved considerably from a low base, although they remain below statistical neighbours.
- Ethnicity and cultural needs of the children and young people are recorded well and used to inform assessments. Translation and interpretation services are easily accessible to staff when needed. The workforce reflects the community that it serves.
- Regular meetings with local maternity units and midwives ensure that information is shared appropriately and pre-birth assessments are undertaken in a timely manner.

Areas for development

- The use of the common assessment framework (CAF) as a referral form to the referral and assessment services is not effective. It fails to provide sufficient succinct information about the reason for the referral and the outcome anticipated.
- The service provided by the out-of-hours service is not sufficiently robust. Limited time is made available for formal handovers to daytime staff. Recording systems used by the service do not clearly reflect any assessment of risk to children and young people nor always outline any outstanding issues that need to be addressed. This was an area for development at the previous inspection.
- Social workers are offered a range of training to develop their social work skills. However, specialist training for experienced workers is limited, including a lack of training to undertake appropriate age assessments and in interviewing child witnesses and victims.
- Lack of clear pathways to the early intervention services within the council, including CAF, results in many children and young people being inappropriately referred to the referral and assessment team. The council is aware of this deficit and plans are in place to address this by the realignment of some services.

- Although child protection strategy discussions take place by telephone between the police and the referral and assessment team, strategy meetings are not routinely convened. This prevents a wider range of partners engaging and contributing to the process. However, these discussions are effectively recorded and decision-making is clear.
- Some long-standing operational difficulties between the referral and assessment team and the police are not effectively escalated to senior managers or through the Local Safeguarding Children Board to improve safeguarding practice and joint-working arrangements.
- Feedback from service users is not routinely collated to help to assess the impact of the work of the team or inform further developments.

Any areas for development identified above will be specifically considered in any future inspection of services to safeguard children within your area.

Yours sincerely

Karen McKeown
Her Majesty's Inspector

Copy: Doug Patterson, Chief Executive, London Borough of Bromley Council
Andrew Spencer, Department for Education

Children and Young People Services

Action Plan following the Ofsted Unannounced Inspection of Referral & Assessment Services on 5 and 6 April 2011

The plan aims to address issues raised as areas for development in the Ofsted two-day unannounced inspection held on 5 and 6 April 2011. The Referral and Assessment Service aims to build on the strengths identified and to continually improve those areas where we are meeting our statutory duties. This will require the service to continue to recruit permanent staff to establishment, maintain staff retention, ensure management oversight and monitor performance.

Key Issues Identified	Key Outcomes	Action to Deliver	Lead Officer	Target Date for Delivery
The use of the common assessment framework (CAF) as a referral form to the referral and assessment services is not effective. It fails to provide sufficient succinct information about the reason for the referral and the outcome anticipated.	Ensure the referral form to the referral and assessment service is effective to provide succinct and clear information about the reason for the referral and the anticipated outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified as an issue prior to the inspection. Multi agency group set up to review the current referral form to Children's Social Care. Proposed new referral form currently being drafted. Will be circulated for consultation and agreement via the Bromley Safeguarding Children Board. 	Head of Service	April 2011
			Head of Service	September 2011
The service provided by the out-of-hours service is not sufficiently robust. Limited time is made available for formal handovers to daytime staff. Recording systems used by the service do not clearly reflect any assessment of risk to children and young people nor always outline any outstanding issues that need to be addressed. This was an area for development at the previous inspection.	To ensure Emergency Duty Team and it's operational functioning are sufficiently robust and effective in the delivery of out of hours services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To undertake a review of the Emergency Duty Team in line with established models of good practice. To monitor the handover of cases to ensure day teams have been sufficiently briefed. Updated child protection training for EDT practitioners to be commissioned. 	Head of Service	October 2011
			Group Manager	Ongoing
			Head of Service	July 2011

Key Issues Identified	Key Outcomes	Action to Deliver	Lead Officer	Target Date for Delivery
<p>Social workers are offered a range of training to develop their social work skills. However, specialist training for experienced workers is limited, including a lack of training to undertake appropriate age assessments and in interviewing child witnesses and victims.</p>	<p>To ensure all staff receive appropriate training in line with their PADS and identify / commission specialist training for senior and experienced staff.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All newly qualified social workers to be enrolled onto the NQSW programme. • The R & A service will identify suitable candidates for specialist post-qualifying courses and specialist training courses such as the Achieving Best Evidence and Age Assessment training. • The Service encourages staff mentoring and shadowing opportunities for experienced staff and will be considered as part of their PADS. • All managers and supervisors have been enrolled onto the Reflective Supervision training. 	<p>Group Manager</p> <p>Group Manager/ Deputy Managers</p> <p>Group Manager</p> <p>Group Manager</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Lack of clear pathways to the early intervention services within the council, including CAF, results in many children and young people being inappropriately referred to the referral and assessment team.</p>	<p>To establish clear care pathways for multi agency support to children and families at the appropriate level of need.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing Partnerships Group set up to further develop multi agency services and pathways. • Re-alignment of Referral and Assessment Team to establish a multi agency triage service to screen all police child in need referrals. • Threshold criteria to incorporate CAF / Safeguarding procedures and process to establish clear care pathways has been reviewed and agreed by the Bromley Safeguarding Children board. • Multi agency triage to become operational. 	<p>Head of Service</p> <p>Head of Service</p> <p>Head of Service</p> <p>Group Manager</p>	<p>Dec 2010 (Ongoing)</p> <p>April 2011</p> <p>May 2011</p> <p>June 2011</p>

Key Issues Identified	Key Outcomes	Action to Deliver	Lead Officer	Target Date for Delivery
Although child protection strategy discussions take place by telephone between the police and the referral and assessment team, strategy meetings are not routinely convened.	To increase the number of appropriate strategy meetings held to ensure multi agency representation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly meetings are in place between Children’s Social Care, the police Child Abuse Investigation Team and borough police to discuss and make plans around local issues • Monitor for a 3 month period the number of strategy meetings and discussions held and professional representation 	Head of Service Head of Service / Group Manager	Ongoing September 2011
Some long-standing operational difficulties between the referral and assessment team and the police are not effectively escalated to senior managers or through the Local Safeguarding Children Board to improve safeguarding practice and joint-working arrangements.	Explore the issues highlighted by OFSTED and ensure there is a clear process in place to escalate issues about joint working arrangements with the police and partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues to be raised at the Bromley Safeguarding Children Board • Quarterly meetings are in place between Children’s Social Care, the police Child Abuse Investigation Team and borough police to discuss and make plans around local issues • Establish data set around police actions to be monitored by BSCB 	Assistant Director Head of Service BSCB Business Manager	June 2011 Ongoing August 2011
Feedback from service users is not routinely collated to help to assess the impact of the work of the team or inform further developments.	To ensure feedback from service users is embedded within the service to inform practice, impact and development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure actions from service complaints are embedded within the service • Monitor over a 3 month period through case audit service user feedback to social work assessments • Feedback from Quality Assurance on consultations from service users removed from child protection plans. 	Group Manager	Ongoing October 2011 Ongoing