

16 September 2010

Mr P Lewis  
Director of Children's Services  
London Borough of Haringey  
Civic Centre  
High Road  
Wood Green  
London  
N22 8LE

Dear Mr Lewis

**Annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within the London Borough of Haringey 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 Haringey Council which was conducted on 17 and 18 August 2010. 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 areas of strength and satisfactory practice, with some areas for development.

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

<b>Strengths</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ All contacts are rigorously screened by a multi-disciplinary team. This facilitates the effective prioritisation of contacts within clearly defined service thresholds. Decisions taken at this filtering stage are well evidenced and timely.</li><li>▪ Re-referral rates are comparatively low reflecting the accuracy and quality of</li></ul>



assessments of need and risk analysis.

- Strong community networks are in place and are enabling joint services to respond promptly to the assessed needs of children and the appropriate identification of children who are at risk of harm.
- The common assessment framework is very well integrated into the first response service and is underpinned by an effective panel system to harness relevant community services.
- Performance management arrangements and case auditing systems are firmly in place. Managers obtain weekly performance information on work flow and quality which is used to target social work activity and the use of joint resources.
- Managers at all levels in the organisation have a strong commitment and vision for services based on good quality social work practice. They have a visible presence and have established a culture which sustains good direction and guidance on cases and continuous improvement. Staff morale is good.
- Staffing capacity is closely monitored to respond very effectively to an increasing demand for services, complex cases and day-to-day fluctuations in the level of contacts and referrals.

### **Satisfactory practice**

- Pan-London procedures for safeguarding children are being used consistently throughout the service and are supplemented well by accessible local practice guidance.
- Careful attention is being paid to the individual needs of children and their families and case records demonstrate that services are planned and delivered in response to the diverse needs of local communities.
- Case work is allocated promptly with effective case tracking through the electronic recording system.
- Initial and core assessments are undertaken in a timely and focused manner under clear management direction. They are analytical and have clear and measurable plans. Assessments show that children and their parents are routinely seen during assessments and are appropriately involved in planning.
- Child protection investigations are undertaken promptly and include a core assessment of risk and need.
- Improved management and assessment processes have led to an increase in the rate of children who become the subject of child protection plans which is

now in line with similar authorities.

- Staff supervision is regular and is being well-recorded. Staff state they feel well supported by their managers and have good access to them both in formal supervision and as the need arises.
- Record keeping is largely up-to-date and is of satisfactory quality.
- Out-of-hours and emergency duty arrangements are established and ensure appropriate communication with day services. The increasing demands for services and changes in joint working opportunities are appropriately leading to a review of the way out-of-hours services are organised.
- All staff in the first response service are suitably qualified and most are experienced. New staff, including those recruited from overseas, receive good induction.

#### **Areas for development**

- Transfer of work from the first response service to the safeguarding and care teams is timely but workload pressures within the children in need team periodically affect the ability of the first response service to transfer work.
- Case closure summaries do not consistently demonstrate that agreed plans have been fully implemented.
- Although the presence of a range of multi-agency professionals in the first response service is aiding joint communication the outcome of initial assessments are not consistently being reported back to referrers.

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

Yours sincerely

**Martin Ayres**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

Copy: Mr K Crompton, Chief Executive, London Borough of Haringey  
Mr G Badman, Chair of Haringey Safeguarding Children Board  
Councillor L Reith, Lead Member for Children's Services, London Borough of Haringey  
Andrew Spencer, Department for Education