

## West Sussex County Council – Inspection of child protection

**11 – 20 February 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 West Sussex County Council as adequate 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:

Children and young people in West Sussex are better protected from serious harm because the council's child protection services have improved a lot since the last time they were inspected in 2011.

People in the council and in other agencies whose job it is to keep children safe act quickly to make sure that children and young people are not at risk of immediate or serious harm. Everybody works together to share information so that decisions about children are made properly, including in an emergency or when children go missing from home or school.

Social workers and other staff are in the main helping agencies work hard and are committed to helping children, young people and families make life better. Most of the time, children's centres, schools and other agencies work well together to give advice and support to children and parents when their problems first appear. Most of the helping agencies are good at involving parents at an early stage so that they

know what to do and feel more confident in looking after their children.

Children who have child protection plans are visited regularly by their social worker. The visits includes time to meet their social worker on their own which helps some children to talk about their feelings and views and anything they are worried about.

The most senior people in West Sussex County Council and in other agencies have worked well together improve child protection services. But they know that they still need to do some things better and they are working hard to make sure that services keep getting better.

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

When social workers get all the information together for reports and work out what services will help the most, they need to better understand things about children and what life is like for them. This includes taking into account the country and backgrounds children come from and any religion they might follow.

Written plans which describe how children need to be helped or protected are not always clear. This means that children and parents and the different agencies involved do not always understand exactly what needs to happen, why it needs to happen and by when. The records that social workers keep are not always up to date and this makes it harder to tell if services are making the difference to children that everyone has agreed.

The council and other agencies need to get better at listening to children and young people and involving them in discussions and plans for the help they need. When children need support to talk about their experience or to give their opinion, for example in child protection meetings, they should have an independent person who is specially trained to do this.

Children and families sometimes end up with lots of different help and advice from lots of different professionals at different times. This can be confusing. The council and other agencies need to get better at coordinating their services so that children and families get all the early help they need to stop problems getting very serious and much harder to sort out.

The council should regularly ask children, young people and families what they think about the child protection and other services they have received and should use

these ideas to make services better.

The full inspection report was published on 22 March 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/west-sussex>