

Suffolk Local authority – Inspection of child protection

3 -12 June 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 Suffolk 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:

Senior leaders and managers who run Suffolk County Council make sure that no child or young person is at risk of harm because of problems in the system. They have a good understanding of all the difficulties children face and have made important decisions to begin transforming Suffolk to make life better for every child and young person. New approaches to helping and protecting children and families were introduced between 2011 and 2012 but in some areas and teams this has been too slow. The bosses are kept up-to-date on the changes and are very keen to make alterations so that things improve quickly.

Children and families who need help can turn to special services in the seven areas in the county. Senior leaders and managers have made sure that different services work together in the local areas to stop difficulties getting worse. The services can call on experts quickly and offer proper help and protection when it is needed.

A wide range of projects are used to provide specialist help and support that meets the needs of individual children and families and different groups of people. These

projects make sure that children and families can get help early to prevent them needing more help from social services.

Children and families told inspectors that the help provided to protect them works well. Inspectors looked at lots of children's case files and saw the different ways children and families are helped. They agreed with parents and children that as a result of the early help and support offered things mostly get better at home, in school and in the community.

The Suffolk Local Safeguarding Children's Board who have the job of making sure all children and young people are safe in Suffolk is doing well. There are some things they need to do more of such as make sure professionals working with children are clear about what they need to do to help make things safer.

The council takes clear actions to make sure that all groups of children and families have equal access to every service provided. It challenges discrimination and tries to encourage understanding amongst different groups of people.

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

Too many social workers have heavy caseloads which they cannot deal with effectively. This needs to be tackled urgently to make sure that staff can always do their best work to help and protect children.

The council needs to take immediate action to ensure that managers in every locality supervise and check on staff regularly so that their work can improve.

The council needs to take immediate action to look carefully at what they do to employ staff and make sure that they hire those who are really good at doing their work, and that those people feel they have a good job and want to stay.

The council needs to make sure that managers carry out regular checks to find out how well decisions and actions to protect children are being completed. The council needs to sort this out within three months.

Plans to help children and young people do not always record their views and wishes. Sometimes, the information that workers collect about children and young people is not detailed enough to help them understand the problems and plan the next steps. The council needs to sort this out within three months.

Within three months, the council needs to make sure that social workers are always easily available and ready to give expert advice and support to professionals working with children and adults in Suffolk.

The council needs to have different but useful ways of recording and collecting the views and complaints of children and young people to find out what they think about the services offered and how they can be better. The council needs to sort these points out within six months.

More could be done to help all staff working with children produce plans that are clear and help people understand what needs to change. This is to make sure that children are well cared for and support is carefully planned to protect them from harm. The council needs to sort this out within six months.

Managers need to think carefully about how to meet the needs of all children, which may be different according where their families are from, or how their families think and behave. Plans they make need to show how they thought of this. The council needs to sort this out within six months.

The council is going to help everyone who leads child protection conferences to improve their skills so they can do an even better job when supervising reports and making sure that they can tell if things are getting better for children on plans more quickly. The council needs to sort this out within six months.

The full inspection report was published on **12 July 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/suffolk>