

South Tyneside - Inspection of child protection

13 May – 22 May 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 South Tyneside 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:

Inspectors looked at a great deal of information and talked to many people who work for the council as well as families who are being helped. We found that when children need immediate help to make them safe the council quickly takes the right actions and the risks that children face are reduced. People who work with children in schools and health services understand when they have to let the council know they are worried about a child or young person and they regularly do this.

The people who work in children's centres and support services work well with families and find out quickly what families are worried about and the things in their life they need help with. They also talk to children and find out what they think and then make plans to help which work well. Families told inspectors the help they receive makes family life better for everyone.

The people who work for the council and run services for children are working hard to improve the quality of services for children and families. They want the best for children in South Tyneside and they want children and young people to be safe and

well. Inspectors found that their plans to improve the quality of how social workers assess what help and protection children may need are satisfactory and as a result children will get a better quality of service.

We spoke to parents who have been attending courses to help them improve the way they look after their children and we asked them what they thought about the help they have received. All of them understood why they needed help and said that social workers, family support workers and people running the courses took time to talk to them and listened to what they said and showed them respect. Parents told us that the courses are good and that they have now changed the way they look after their children to make them feel safer and more secure.

We saw some good work by social workers and teachers to ensure children who have child protection plans can let people making decisions about them know how they feel. Some children have been helped to draw pictures showing how they feel while others have written it down on forms specially designed for them. This helps social workers to take the right actions to help keep children safe.

The social workers and other people who work with disabled children work well as a team and make good plans that ensure children can access a wide range of services to support them. This includes specially designed activities, help at school and short breaks.

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

We have asked the people who run children's services to immediately improve the way they investigate situations where children are at high risk of being harmed. They need to ensure that everyone who knows about a child is involved and that they keep accurate records of what they do. Also, they need to carry out their investigation quickly and ensure that all social workers and managers do it in the same way.

When children need a special plan to protect them the people making the plan need to ensure that they are clear about when things have to happen. Also, they need to get better at updating the plan as a child's family situation changes. We have asked the council to do this very quickly.

We think that more children and young people should be supported to attend meetings about them, especially when big decisions about their lives are being made. People known as advocates are specially trained to help children say what they think or they can attend and speak up for children. We have asked the bosses

of children's services to make sure children can have an advocate and to ensure that children know about them.

We found that when children come from different cultures or have very particular family circumstances or needs social workers are not very good at considering what difference or effect that may have. We have asked the managers of children's services to ensure that social workers do this in every case and record in children's case files clearly how they have done it. Also, we have asked them to provide training for social workers so they know exactly what is needed to ensure all of every child's needs are taken into account.

The full inspection report was published on 24 June 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/south-tyneside>