

## Norfolk – Inspection of child protection

**14 – 24 January 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 Norfolk as **inadequate** 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:

When help is provided to children and families early enough, it improves their quality of life. Some parents spoken to by inspectors could identify improvements in their lives and the lives of their children from the help they had been given.

Advice to families when they begin to experience problems is sound. Ways to transfer these cases to social workers when the risk to children increases and then step cases down when risks have lessened are in place.

When people who work with children have concerns about the immediate welfare of a child or young person, they rightly let social workers know. These cases are dealt with efficiently at this stage. Social workers then let these people know about the next steps.

Where children are placed in private foster care, their needs are considered well. Inspectors saw examples of positive relationships between social workers and privately fostered children that supported them well.

Reviews and other meetings about the safety of children who are on child protection

plans are held when they should be.

The right action is taken to protect children who are missing from school and for children who are educated at home.

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

The help that children receive when their families begin to experience problems is too patchy. A common frustration parents had was the lack of recognition of problems by agencies when they first came up, particularly schools. The council needs to sort this out within six months.

Once concerns about children have been identified, too often there are significant delays in them getting the support, help and protection that they need because social workers often have too much to do. The council needs to sort this out within three months.

Assessments by social workers of risks to children are influenced by managers who want them done quickly, but this often means that they don't properly consider their needs. During these assessments children are not always seen and their views and the views of their parents are not always taken into account. Assessments are therefore completed without all of the information needed to plan effective support. The council needs to sort this out immediately.

The needs of families from diverse cultures and backgrounds are not looked at fully when planning support for them. The council needs to sort this out within three months.

Risks to children are not always well recognised then written down properly by social workers' managers and as a result some children do not get the help and protection they need. The council needs to sort this out immediately.

Too often at multi-agency meetings to protect children, the agencies that need to be involved are not all there and information sharing between agencies at these meetings is poor. The plans made by the meetings to protect children are not clear enough to ensure that all of those involved know what they must do to keep children safe, including their parents. The council needs to sort this out immediately.

Children's views are not well considered at meetings to protect them and there is no one to help them if they want support with this. The council needs to sort this out within six months.

Too many cases were seen by inspectors where children in need of social work support did not have a social worker who could help them, or where children had too many changes of social worker and could not get to know them well. The council needs to sort this out within three months.

When the people who run the services to protect children have information on the poor practice and performance of some social work teams, the action they take to sort out problems is not quick or effective enough. As a result too many children remain at risk of serious harm. The council needs to sort this out within three months.

The full inspection report was published on 22 February 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/norfolk>