



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

## SOCIAL CARE & HEALTH COMMISSION 24 JANUARY 2004

Report of the Director of Social Services

### Inspection of Children's Services

#### RECOMMENDATION

1. To note the findings of the inspection carried out by the Commission for Social Care Inspection in October 2004.

#### SUPPORTING INFORMATION

##### 2.1 Background

The Commission for Social Care Inspection was established in April 2004 as the new independent inspectorate for social care. This new organisation brings together the functions of inspection, regulation and review, of all social care services. The Commission is undertaking a national programme of local authority children's services and Derby was selected for inspection.

The objectives of the inspection are to contribute to the Commissions overall evaluation of the extent to which the Social Services department's policy, strategy, management and practice, address the national objectives for Social Services, the National Priorities Guidance and the Performance Assessment Framework.

- 2.2 The inspection evaluated the collaborative, commissioning and service delivery arrangements between Social Services, other council departments and other agencies. The Commission focused on questions of cost and efficiency, evaluated Best Value Reviews and considered against this background the way in which services are currently being developed and delivered.

The inspection examined the referral, assessment, planning and delivery of services for children in need, children in need of protection and children looked after. There was a particular emphasis of the safeguarding agenda in relation to service provision in general, and in relation to staff and children's placements in particular. The inspection also focused on services for disabled children and also followed up the self audit undertaken by the Council following the Report of the Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié (January 2003).

- 2.4 Prior to arriving in Derby to complete the fieldwork element of the inspection, the views of service users, staff and a range of partner agencies were sought through a postal questionnaire. The Commission identified a case sample of 100 families who receive services, from which to gain the users view of the service they have received. Questionnaires were sent to children and parents or carers.

- 2.5 The inspection team was made up of two inspectors and a lay assessor. The fieldwork element of the inspection took place over two weeks and involved an intensive programme of activity for the inspectors. The team followed up the case sampling with a detailed study of 10 family cases. This involved reading the case file and meeting the families and key workers.

During the two weeks of field work, the inspection also involved meetings with elected members, the chief executive, officers from a range of departments and partner agencies, the senior management team of children's services and social care staff. The inspectors also reviewed an extensive library of key strategy, policy and guidance documents that related to the delivery of children's services in Derby.

## 2.6 Findings

The inspection found that Derby City Children's Services benefit from effective leadership and effective management at all tiers. The department was seen to have made progress in implementing national and local priorities to improve the outcomes for children and families. The inspection judged that most children and families in Derby were well served and that the Council's capacity for continued improvement is promising.

- 2.7 The inspectors singled out a number of services for particular praise. These were the child sexual abuse service, services for children with disabilities and leaving care services. In addition our protocol for children with complex needs and code of practice on school admissions for children looked after were identified as good practice.
- 2.8 The inspection found that the Council and its senior managers have an effective managerial grip on children's services and its strengths and areas for development. The inspectors agreed with the Council's self evaluation and found an on-going process of effective change management designed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of services for the benefit of children and families and carers in Derby.
- 2.9 The inspectors saw that the Council is implementing national and local priorities for children's services whilst managing day-to-day operational pressures. As the Council is aware, the most significant of these is the recruitment and retention of childcare social workers. The inspection found that managers have put in place the measures that are needed to ensure that staff were supported in their work generally and in assessing risks to children and young people.
- 2.10 The inspectors found that children, families, parents and carers generally value services delivered through Derby City Council. They also found that services have been and continue to be re-designed to provide a range of support to help children remain in the care of their families. The department was seen to have an effective family support strategy.
- 2.11 The inspectors concluded that fieldwork services do effectively promote children's welfare and aim to ensure that children and young people are effectively safeguarded from abuse and neglect. Referral and initial response services were found to be safe and effective. Assessments and care plans were regarded as comprehensive, child centred and generally of a high standard. Case records were found to be of a consistently high standard.

- 2.12 The Department was seen to have systematic and comprehensive processes for checking the consistency and quality of assessments and responses to meet individual need. The Department was found to be aware of the impact of staff working at full stretch and the need to minimize the numbers of changes of workers for a child and family. The impact of workload pressures in the quality and consistency of work in some areas was understood by the Council and appropriate action taken.
- 2.13 Evidence was found in the inspection that children's services is working proactively to prevent exclusion from services and issues of ethnicity, religion or culture. The department has clear eligibility criteria that were seen to be consistently applied. Services to children with disabilities were found to meet a range of needs and to be highly valued. Systems were in place to provide unaccompanied asylum seeking children with appropriate services.
- 2.14 Derby was found to have effectively de-commissioned and re-commissioned services to improve cost and efficiency in line with key targets. Best Value Reviews had been used to good effect and effective arrangements between Social Services, Health and Education exist and are being further developed. Appropriate steps were seen to be taken to implement the Children Act 2004.
- 2.15 The inspection concluded that Councillors are clear about their accountability and responsibility for delivering good quality social care to children and families. Our managerial accountability was evident from the Chief Executive, the Director of Social Services through to the children's services management team. Senior managers were seen to be visible and change was regarded as well managed.
- 2.16 The inspection identified a number of areas for continued development. These include the consideration of further improvements to the participation of parents and carers in service planning, a more strategic approach to procurement, improvements in the time taken to complete assessments and the participation of looked after children in their reviews, improved access to records, the development of a cohesive commissioning strategy and a multi-agency workforce strategy.

Of the areas identified for development, the most significant in achieving excellence are the drawing up of a cohesive commissioning strategy and a multi-agency workforce strategy.

The inspectors recommended that more elected members be trained and engaged in visiting children's homes and that Regulation 33 visits to children's homes are undertaken.

- 2.17 The department will now draw up an action plan to ensure that work is undertaken to develop in these areas. This will be reviewed and integrated into the business planning process.

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<b>Background papers:</b>	None
<b>List of appendices:</b>	Appendix 1 : Implications

<b>IMPLICATIONS</b>
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**Financial**

1. None.

**Legal**

2. None.

**Personnel**

3. Preparing for and supporting the inspection process, demanded a significant amount of staff time. This has been drawn from the existing personnel resources and impacts upon the time available to meet the requirements of the department's business plan.

**Equalities impact**

4. Children's services are provided to the most vulnerable children in Derby. The department will be keen to capitalise on the inspection experience in order to continually improve services to children in need in Derby.

**Corporate objectives and priorities for change**

5. This report comes under the Council's objectives of protecting and supporting people.