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24 May 2018

Martin Samuels  
Council House  
Priory Road  
Dudley  
DY1 1HF

Dear Martin Samuels

### **Final report: LA Monitoring visit of Dudley**

Thank you for the cooperation of your department during the recent LA Monitoring visit of your children's social care services. The inspection team have considered your comments on the draft report and amended the report where appropriate. I attach the final report. A response to your factual accuracy comments on the draft report is appended to this letter.

We will share this pre-publication version of the report with:

- the DfE
- the Care Quality Commission
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services.
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons
- Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Services Inspectorate

If you wish, you may share this report with others under embargo until 29 May 2018 at which time it can be publicly accessed on the Ofsted website.

If you have any queries please contact [ProtectionOfChildren@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:ProtectionOfChildren@ofsted.gov.uk)

Yours sincerely

Jenny Newton  
**Inspection Support Administrator**

**Response to your factual accuracy comment on the draft report**

**Dudley Monitoring Visit - Ofsted's response to your factual accuracy comments**

Paragraph / section in the report	LA comments	Ofsted action
<p>The local authority is aware that multi-agency referrals (MARFs) are not recorded on the children's social care recording system but only on the early help system.</p>	<p>Only MARF's that do not reach threshold are recorded on the Early Help System. Where MARFS do reach a threshold they are recorded on the Children's Case Management System. It is important for this distinction to be made as it reads as through all MARFS are recorded on the Early Help System.</p> <p>Suggest rewording paragraph to</p> <p><i>The local authority is aware that multi agency referrals (MARFS) that do not meet threshold for statutory intervention are only recorded on the early help system and not on the children's social care recording system.</i></p>	<p>Comments are accepted, and the suggested changes will be made to the letter.</p>
<p>The assessment is not formally initiated until the case is allocated to a lead professional,</p>	<p>There are very few occasions where a case does not receive an intervention before 2 weeks and the data provided demonstrated this. It is important to note that <b>all</b> cases are monitored during this time by a</p>	<p>The letter now references that cases are monitored by a qualified social worker prior to allocation to a</p>

<p>which can be up to two weeks later.</p>	<p>qualified social worker and action is taken where appropriate.</p> <p>Suggest rewording paragraph to</p> <p><i>The assessment is started but not formally allocated to a lead professional which may be up to two weeks later.</i></p>	<p>lead professional, this provides further clarity of management oversight.</p>
<p>Many early help assessments do not sufficiently reflect the positive multi-agency engagement that takes place. Historical factors and patterns are not considered sufficiently and chronologies are not used effectively. In a very small number of cases seen, this means that the focus is on presenting needs without considering previous information and support.</p>	<p>The adjectives in this paragraph could be seen as contradictory e.g. '<b>Many</b> Early Help Assessments...' then ' In a <b>very small</b> number of cases .....</p> <p>From the verbal feedback it was stated that there were <b>some</b> examples - this is not as many as the paragraph initially suggests.</p> <p>Suggest rewording paragraph to</p> <p><i>Some Early Help Assessments do not sufficiently reflect..</i></p>	<p>Comments are accepted. Ofsted does not use the term 'some' as this is nonspecific and does not provide the reader with a perspective of scope.</p> <p>The letter now states:</p> <p>'Early help assessments do not routinely reflect the positive...'</p>
<p>Early help staff benefit from a range of accessible training which is having a</p>	<p>It would be extremely helpful to have the team that provides this training specifically mentioned as this</p>	<p>The name of team is now included in the letter.</p>

<p>positive impact on their development and improving practice such as completing assessments, working with families and undertaking parenting programmes.</p>	<p>may support our marketing and recruitment activities.</p> <p>Suggest rewording to -</p> <p><i>Early Help staff benefit from a range of accessible training, provided by the highly valued Centre for Professional Practice, which is having a positive impact .....</i></p>	
<p>The local authority recognise that a small minority of staff are not yet engaging with families at the required standard.</p>	<p>It is unclear what the “engaging with families at the required standard” refers to. This may lead to questions from the workforce so it would be helpful for the issue to more clearly specified. For example, is this about recording or is it about the manner with which families undertake direct work?</p> <p>Suggest rewording the paragraph offering additional clarity</p>	<p>The statement has been removed as it references the same comment below, so is not required.</p> <p>‘However, this practice is not consistent, and some children’s voices are absent, or communicated via an adult perspective or lack sufficient purpose in assessments and plans.’</p>
<p>This means that some caseloads, particularly those with larger sibling groups are not manageable and do not enable the worker to sufficiently focus on</p>	<p>We have not received any complaints or been made aware of any situation where a case load has been said to be unmanageable. This wording suggests a more challenging situation than is actually the case.</p>	<p>This is accepted. The letter has been amended to reflect your suggested statement.</p>

<p>each child's individual needs.</p>	<p>Suggest rewording the paragraph as follows -</p> <p><i>This means that some caseloads, particularly those with larger sibling groups, do not enable the worker to focus sufficiently on each child's individual needs.</i></p>	
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