

News Release

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Bexley shares its path to improvement

Children social care staff from over 30 councils from across the country came to the Civic Offices in Bexleyheath last week (15 August) to take part in a special learning event about Bexley's Children's Services improvement journey.

Director of Children's Services Jacky Tiotto opened the event on Bexley's move from an inadequate Ofsted inspection in 2012 to last year's inspection that judged them "outstanding".

During the day staff from Bexley held workshops and question and answer sessions about the improvement principles that are embedded into their day-to-day work.

Topics included the importance of strong and consistent management, collaboration with colleagues and with partners, honest, open and fair management, caseloads and commitment from social workers and managers.

The teams described how they work to the recognised 'Signs of Safety' practice model to ensure families are supported to find the best solutions for them.

The importance of Councillors support throughout was also highlighted as one of the key ingredients of Bexley's success.

Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Councillor Philip Read attended the event

to give the perspective of a lead Member. He said; “We know there is always room to improve and we won’t always get things right, but it was great to be able to meet colleagues from across the country to share how we do things in Bexley. “

“The world of children’s services is complex. There is no magic answer. Everyday our children’s services teams are dealing with issues affecting the safety of our children and young people. Nothing is more important to us.

The Ofsted Inspection into Children’s Services in Bexley took place in July 2018. The report commented in particular on the ambitious and effective work to protect children and to help families stay together where it is safe to do so. For children and young people who are not able to live within their family networks and who are looked after by the Council, inspectors found that they are supported by social workers who know them well and who are making good plans with their families about their futures.

Plans to further improve the support for young adults leaving the Council’s care were also said to be making a difference, with leaders overseeing credible planning and change. The adoption service was marked out as being exceptional for its unrelenting focus on children’s needs and their support for adopters.

Overall the service in Bexley, was described as being underpinned by many skilled practitioners, who know the families and young people well, and make effective relationships with them which are helping their lives to be better.

The workforce was found to be accomplished, stable, well supported by ambitious leaders and senior managers who have good insight into the effectiveness of the work and who work closely with partners to progress their vision about doing what is ‘right’ for children and their families.

The Council was praised in the report for the investment in children’s services by elected members who are well-informed and who understand and support the established vision.

To find out more about working in Children's Services in Bexley visit
bexleysocialcarecareers.wordpress.com

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Notes to editors

Notes for editors –

Jacky Tiotto will be joining Cafcass as its new Chief Executive in Autumn 2019. As the Chief Executive, Jacky will lead Cafcass' social workers and corporate staff in achieving the best possible outcomes for children, young people and their families who are being represented in the family courts. The strategic leadership role is accountable to the Cafcass Board, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and to Parliament.

Bexley's Acting Director of Children's Services is Stephen Kitchman.