

Improvement Notice

To: Name LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

Address Civic Hall, Calverley Street, Leeds LS1 1UR

This Improvement Notice is being issued due to poor performance in:

Children's services

on the basis of evidence contained in:

Ofsted's August 2009 unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements.

Ofsted's annual assessment 2009, which judged Leeds' children's services to be "performing poorly".

Ofsted's January 2010 inspection of safeguarding and looked after children's services which judged Leeds' overall effectiveness of safeguarding services to be "inadequate".

The duration of the Improvement Notice will be:

From date of issue until the final review of progress relating to October 2011 is delivered. The Secretary of State may, at his discretion, choose to lift the Improvement Notice at an earlier date if he is satisfied that the necessary improvements have been made and are sustainable.

The following measure(s) are needed for you to comply with this Improvement Notice:

The Council must take action to:

- a. improve areas of weakness identified in the reports from the above inspections and assessments,
- b. improve performance against key indicators in the areas concerned; and
- c. put in place robust and sustainable arrangements to sustain and build on the improvements secured. In particular:

Safeguarding children

Developing services and front-line practice:

- The Council is expected to improve the response to child protection referrals to meet statutory guidelines, and ensure discussions with the police and other agencies take place in a timely manner in all relevant circumstances, as set out in '*Working Together to Safeguard Children*'

- The Council must have clear multi-agency thresholds in place, shared with and understood by partners, in order for children and young people to access appropriate services and to ensure consistent and high quality referrals from other agencies.
- The Council needs to ensure that it has effective information management arrangements in place, ensuring that records for all children and young people are up-to-date and that assessment reports are routinely shared with parents as appropriate.
- The Council needs to ensure that it has effective quality assurance arrangements in place to monitor the quality of contact, referral and assessment services and ensure that assessments are of a consistently high standard.
- The Council must further embed the use of the CAF in practice across children's services so that it is effectively used to inform early intervention.
- The Council must demonstrate improvements in staff satisfaction (measured through the Council's corporate staff survey and the local social worker survey) and in the satisfaction of children and families (measured through various service specific surveys) throughout the term of the Improvement Notice.
- The Council must establish clear and agreed processes with partners in the Children's Trust and LSCB to ensure effective scrutiny and training takes place so that the quality of contacts, referrals and assessments improve.

Demonstrate clear evidence of improvement in outcomes, evidenced by improvements in the following performance indicators:

- NI 59 - whilst maintaining high quality, increase the percentage of initial assessments for children's social care carried out within timescale to 72% for the month of June 2010, to 80% for the month of October 2010 and to 80% for the cumulative period October 2010 to March 2011
- NI 60 - whilst maintaining high quality, increase the percentage of core assessments for children's social care that were carried out within 35 working days of their commencement to 80% for the month of June 2010, to 84% for the month of October 2010 and to 85% for the cumulative period October 2010 to March 2011

Other areas of concern

The Council must:

- Working with the National Challenge Board and any other government agencies as appropriate, effectively deliver the National Challenge

Programme, implement the Council's agreed plan for Schools Vulnerable to the National Challenge and ensure agreed targets are met.

- Deliver improvements in the following outcomes:
 - NI 78 - reduction in number of schools where fewer than 30% of pupils achieve 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE and equivalent including GCSEs in English and Maths to no schools in the 2011 examinations, with plans in place and demonstrable progress towards that goal by September 2010
 - NI 79 – increase achievement of Level 2 qualifications by the age of 19 to 75.2% in the 2009/10 academic year.
 - NI 102 - narrow the achievement gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers achieving a 5 ppts reduction at Key Stage 4 in the 2010 examinations
 - NI 108 - achieve a sustained upward trend in the achievement of black and mixed heritage pupils by the end of the academic year 2010/11
 - NI 117 – reduce the number of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) to 6.8% in 2010/11
- Working with DCSF, GOYH, National Strategies and other government agencies as appropriate, the Council is expected to demonstrate overall improvements in LAA indicators relating to children's services and statutory attainment targets through the period of this Improvement Notice.

Building capacity and capability to deliver and sustain improvements

The Council, working with its partners must ensure robust leadership and implementation of an effective improvement programme covering all staff and elected members and engaging partners, with a clear focus on improving outcomes for children and young people, particularly in relation to safeguarding. It must:

- Cooperate with the independent chair to establish an Improvement Board and support the Board in providing effective challenge across the partnership to drive swift and sustainable progress through a robust improvement plan. The Council must provide the Improvement Board with robust evidence of both quantitative outcomes and qualitative processes as required. The Council must take full account of the advice and recommendations of the Improvement Board to deliver improvements in its children's services, and to continue to improve partnership arrangements.
- Prepare a robust Improvement Plan to be agreed with the Improvement Board for delivering improvements across children and young people's services, addressing all areas of weaknesses highlighted in Ofsted inspections, the 2009 Comprehensive Area Assessment and other areas of concern as appropriate.

- Monitor improvement in children's social care, by establishing rigorous performance management and quality assurance systems which deliver regular monitoring, scrutiny and quality assurance of social care performance.
- Increase capacity within children's social care, in particular at team manager and social worker levels, by ensuring that there is an effective senior management team responsible for social care.
- Review social workers' responsibilities and workloads to ensure that responsibilities are clearly and tightly defined, and that no staff carry too wide a range of work. This will need to involve consideration of whether a restructure of children's social care services is necessary to deliver high quality services.
- Develop a comprehensive programme of training, mentoring and continuous professional development for all social care staff so that they have the skills to complete high quality and timely assessments

Improvement against the above measures will be assessed as follows:

The Improvement Board will receive regular updates on performance against the above measures. The Chair of the Improvement Board will report to the Department for Children, Schools and Families and Leeds City Council on a bi-monthly basis.

This will be supplemented by interim reviews in regard to performance at:

- The end of March 2010 (reported in May 2010)
- The end of September 2010 (reported in November 2010)
- The end of March 2011 (reported in May 2011)

as well as a final review at the end of October 2011. The Secretary of State may exceptionally require additional reports in light of these scheduled reviews.

by:

The Department for Children, Schools, and Families, who will, on the basis of measurable progress towards the targets outlined above, advise Ministers on any necessary follow-up action, taking account of reports from the Improvement Board and Leeds City Council.

Failure to comply with this Improvement Notice by the assessment dates may lead to:

The Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families using statutory powers of intervention (s497A Education Act 1996) to direct the Council to enter into an appropriate arrangement to secure the necessary and rapid improvements required in children's services.

Signed: *Jaan Prasad* Date: 2 March 2010.....