

Improvement Notice

To: Name PETERBOROUGH CITY COUNCIL(“the Council”)
Address TOWN HALL, BRIDGE STREET, PETERBOROUGH, PE1 1HL

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

Children’s social care services

on the basis of evidence contained in:

- the report of the inspection of safeguarding children’s services carried out by Ofsted (published September 2011) which judged the overall effectiveness and capacity for improvement of Peterborough’s safeguarding services to be ‘inadequate’; and
- the diagnostic review carried out by Peterborough Council.

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

The Council must take action to:

- (i) put in place arrangements to sustain and build on the improvements secured; and
- (ii) improve the areas of weakness identified in the Ofsted inspection report having regard to the recommendations contained therein.

In respect of (ii) above the Council must demonstrate evidence of improvement in outcomes by:

Social Care Practice

- Improving and sustaining the quality and timeliness of assessments and care plans to comply with ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010’ taking appropriate account of risk and recording the views of key agencies and children themselves where appropriate to inform effective decision-making and planning. This should be measured and evidenced through regular case and supervision auditing.
- Reviewing and revising the Council’s quality assurance framework and ensure it is in place, in line with standards set out in statutory guidance. The framework must include regular auditing arrangements of the quality of case files with independent challenge and scrutiny; the frequency of which should be agreed by the Board. A report of the results must be made available to the Board which demonstrates how the Council has taken action against the recommendations in order to maintain and to continue to improve the quality of social work practice;

- Using the revised quality assurance framework, ensure effective supervision of social work practice is in place with rigorous management oversight and decision making on individual cases, which will identify strengths and areas for development in practice with a view of improving further the quality of social care practice;
- Reviewing and developing a system that sets out thresholds and criteria for access to children’s social care. Ensuring these thresholds and criteria are communicated, understood and applied consistently across all partner agencies;
- Working with partners, develop a preventative and early intervention strategy and as part of this increase the quantity and effectiveness of CAF’s and ensure the Council is monitoring the use and impact of CAF by partner agencies
- Ensuring that an implementation plan is in place for the Council’s new ICS which includes interim arrangements to ensure that the quality of case recording continues to take place prior to implementing the new system. The Council must present regular updates on the development and implementation to the Improvement Board highlighting where issues have occurred what action has been taken to address them.

Capacity and Capability

- Develop an overall workforce strategy, informed by a service need analysis, to ensure a stable workforce which requires fewer agency staff with a view to improving the quality of services within the Council.
- Taking account of the findings of the Inspections and Diagnostic review, the Council must ensure the social care teams have sufficient numbers of staff and staffing numbers and roles are clearly defined with clear lines of accountability;
- Reviewing social workers’ responsibilities and workloads to ensure they are clearly defined and that workloads are manageable; ensuring staff have a manageable range of work and a caseload consistent with their level of experience and competence; and ensure that the Improvement Board receives management information to confirm that this is achieved and sustained;
- Developing and implementing a programme of induction, training and mentoring and continuous professional development for all social care staff and ensuring that staff have access to training and development opportunities that meet their needs and the needs of the service.

Partnership and Governance

- Ensuring the Council sets out clearly its **vision and ambition** for children’s safeguarding services (with a clear set of objectives and timescales) and that this is communicated and implemented with staff and partners such that they have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in delivering this vision, and overall improvement;

- Developing a strong strategy for strengthening the leadership team across the assessment and safeguarding service with clear plans for permanency and effective lines of accountabilities to ensure an effective delivery of children's services;
- Establishing a clear remit for the Improvement Board, Children's Trust and the Local Safeguarding Children Board with clear governance, lines of accountability and specific roles of each body in driving forward improvement;
- Ensure that all elected members of the Council take responsibility and are accountable for improving the quality of the service; ensure there is close oversight and scrutiny in order to be confident that outcomes for children are being delivered.

Support measures

Improvement in these circumstances places additional pressures and higher expectations in terms of the performance of both senior officers and members. Therefore the Council must:

- Work with representatives of the Children's Improvement Board to formalise a package of sector support to address the issues set out in the inspection and diagnostic review. The package of support should include peer mentoring arrangements for the Lead Member for Children's Services to support her in leading the change required and peer challenge and scrutiny at the Improvement Board. A further package of peer support for managers and front line staff may be considered subject to the direction of the Improvement Board;
- Continue to ensure the scrutiny arrangements that are in place, allow elected members and the LSCB to scrutinise and challenge social care practice once the necessary improvements have been made

Taking account of the measures set out in this Improvement Notice

With members of the Improvement Board, the Council must agree a dataset of performance targets with clear and realistic targets and timescales. The Council must report to the Improvement Board on progress against this, and reporting must include analysis of performance trends that are failing to meet the targets and timescales set. The Council should aim for all targets to be met by XXX

We expect the Council to put in place an Improvement Board which shall have an Independent Chair and which we expect will meet once a month and include in its membership key partners and agencies. An official from the Department for Education will attend as an observer.

The Improvement Plan should be developed with partners and agencies to carry out the recommendations identified in the Ofsted inspection report, diagnostic review and those set out in this Improvement Notice. This plan should be approved by the Improvement Board by the end of February 2012.

Improvement against the above measures will be assessed as follows:

The Chair should provide an initial report within six weeks of this Improvement Notice to the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families setting out the challenges and plans the Council has put in place, followed by quarterly progress reports including specific commentary against the targets set out in this notice. Additional external validation of progress, such as a peer review, should be commissioned and carried out before the end of this notice to inform decisions on next steps.

The progress reports from the Chair will inform the formal reviews of progress will take place after six and twelve months with a further review planned within 18 months of issuing the Improvement Notice which will be supported by the external validation of progress. The six month review should be supplemented by a report on progress from the Leader. Such reviews may result in further action being required.

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

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

Signed: **Date:**