

Improvement Notice

To: Name BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL
Address Council House, Victoria Square, Birmingham, B1 1BB

An Improvement Notice (“the first Improvement Notice”) was given to Birmingham City Council (“the Council”) on 30th September 2010 following the findings of poor performance in safeguarding children and young people contained in a report of the inspection of safeguarding and looked after children’s services (“the Report”) carried out by Ofsted and CQC (published July 2010). The inspection judged the overall effectiveness and capacity for improvement of the Council’s safeguarding services to be ‘inadequate’.

This further Improvement Notice is being given:

- (i) to revise the targets contained within the first Improvement Notice;
- (ii) to clarify the focus of the targets set out in the first Improvement notice going into the second year of improvement; and
- (iii) to reflect progress made under the first Improvement Notice.

The following measures are required for the Council to comply with this further Improvement Notice:

The Council must take action to have robust arrangements in place to deliver improvement, to sustain momentum and to build on improvement that has been secured since the first Improvement Notice was given.

The Council must ensure the safeguarding service meets all legislative and statutory guidance requirements and continue to improve the areas of weakness identified in the Report.

The Council must take the following action:

The quality and effectiveness of safeguarding practice

- 1) Ensure timeliness and quality of Children in Need and Child Protection reviews and improve timeliness in respect of assessments and case conferences to meet the time scales set out in legislation and statutory guidance.
- 2) Improve the quality and consistency of assessments, taking appropriate account of risk and recording the views of key agencies and professionals (as identified by the Council) and children and young

people where appropriate to inform decision-making and planning.

- 3) Ensure that clear practice standards on the use of thresholds for access to children's social care are understood, used and shared with key partners and disseminated through training programmes; Standards should be used to ensure consistency in referrals and reductions in referrals;
- 4) Ensure that performance information and evidence from quality assurance audits are analysed, reported to the Improvement Board and LSCB and used to inform action taken by the Council to drive improvements in safeguarding; The Council should also report on the impact of such action to the aforementioned boards;

Workforce – capacity and capability

- 5) Review social worker workloads (including caseloads) to ensure that responsibilities for tasks are clearly defined, there is adequate reflective supervision and support, and that no practitioner carries a workload which is excessive and prevents effective social work practice;
- 6) Support the development of the new leadership team in children's services which will focus in particular on ensuring a consistency in performance management and quality assurance;
- 7) Develop a comprehensive programme of training, mentoring and continuous professional development which builds in challenge from the public sector to ensure all social care staff have the skills to carry out their role and develop their careers;
- 8) Meet agreed workforce targets relating to social worker vacancy, turnover and absence rates and ensure the Council has sufficient, trained staff.

Leading the system – partner agencies, the Council and the LSCB

- 9) Ensure that the contributions of key partner agencies to the agreed improvement plan, LSCB business plan, priorities of Birmingham's Children's Trust are secured within existing and new commissioning plans and that leadership and accountability for the work of safeguarding children is clearly identified within existing and new organisational structures;
- 10) The Council Leader, Lead Member, Executive Member for Children's Social Care, Chair of Vulnerable Children's Scrutiny Committee and Chief Executive must continue to improve corporate leadership of services for children to ensure that the Council sustains close oversight of the experience of children using services, the needs of staff delivering services and the performance, quality and resourcing issues that affect outcomes for children. Members should continue to access the support and advice of the Peer Member on the Improvement Board;

- 11) Ensure the Chair of LSCB reviews, amends if appropriate and delivers a robust business plan that addresses the multi agency response to the safeguarding practice issues set out in this notice in paragraphs 1 to 4; and
- 12) Ensure the improvement board is informed about senior staff appointments and that such appointments are timely and that there is a continuity of leadership.

Taking account of the measures set out in this Notice.

The Council must continue to report against its own “safeguarding dashboard” using the key measures of assurance. Reporting should include greater analysis of performance trends that are not on target and the Council should aim for all targets **to be met by September 2012.**

Improvement against the above measures will be assessed as follows:

Ministers should continue to receive information on progress from both the Council and the Chair of the Improvement Board in respect of the targets set out in this further Improvement Notice at **quarterly** intervals. A formal review of progress so far will be held with the Minister early in **the New Year** and a further review will be held with the Council in **September 2012.**

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

Should the Council be unwilling or unable to comply with this further Improvement Notice, or should ministers not be satisfied with the Council’s progress at any stage, ministers may choose to invoke their statutory powers of intervention (s497A Education Act 1996) to direct the Council to enter into an appropriate arrangement to secure the improvements required in children’s services.

Signed:

Date: