

Improvement Notice

To: Name SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL ("the Council")
Address St Martin's Place, 51 Bath Road, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 3UF

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 and looked after children's services carried out by Ofsted and CQC (published June 2011) which judged the overall effectiveness and capacity for improvement of Slough's safeguarding services to be 'inadequate'.

The following measures are needed for you to comply with this Improvement Notice:

The Council must work with their partners (as identified by the Council) to 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 working with their identified partners and with specialists from targeted sector-support, must demonstrate improvement in outcomes by:

Social Care Practice

- Ensuring that performance management systems are reviewed - focusing on management oversight and the role of the Independent Reviewing Officers - and any recommendations made as a result of the review are implemented. The impact of any changes must be monitored to ensure that they have resulted in improvements to the quality of social care practice.
- Ensuring a quality assurance framework is in place, in line with standards set out in statutory guidance, which improves the quality of social work practice and provides evidence of qualitative improvement. This quality assurance framework must include regular auditing

arrangements of the quality of case files. The proportion of cases to be audited and the frequency in which they will be audited should be agreed by the Improvement Board. A report of the results of the auditing process should be made available to the Improvement Board for consideration and the Council must consider any recommendations made by the Improvement Board in order to maintain and to continue to improve the quality of social work practice.

- Ensuring that multi-agency audits are undertaken by the Slough Local Safeguarding Children's Board ("LSCB") and reported to the Improvement Board outlining the key lessons to be learnt and improvements to be made;
- Ensuring that all management oversight and decision-making on individual child protection cases is conducted in line with standards set out by the Council (and agreed with the Improvement Board) and evidence of that management oversight and decision making is set out in detail on each case file. Ensuring evidence - from management information and information arising from case audits - confirms that this has been carried out satisfactorily;
- Ensuring that the procedures of the Independent Reviewing Officers are reviewed and any recommendations made as a result of the review are implemented. The impact of any changes to the procedures of the Independent Reviewing Officers must be monitored to ensure that any drift in care planning and child protection planning is prevented and are based on a detailed and informed assessment which addresses the needs of the child;
- Developing and implementing a risk assessment framework that will inform the development of all child protection and children in need plans to ensure consistent judgements are made about the levels of risk. Ensuring that all relevant staff are applying the risk assessment framework in their practice and that management information and the audit of the case files provide evidence that this is being done and the quality of social work practice is improving;
- Ensuring the quality of core and other assessments are improving so that they meet the standards set out in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010' and include the views of children and young people, their parents/carers and other agencies;
- Ensuring that all child protection plans and children in need plans, include the following, and that improvement in practice is evident through the audit of case files:
 1. Detailed outcomes which enable a clear understanding from parents, carers and agencies of what is expected of them, how they will be used to track progress and the consequences of non-compliance
 2. A risk assessment

3. Contingency planning
4. Analytical recording
5. Regular monitoring and updating
6. And ensure that child protection plans meet the standards set out in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010'.

Capacity and Capability

- Developing and implementing a programme of induction, training, mentoring and continuous professional development for all social care staff and ensuring that all such staff have access to training and development opportunities that meet their needs and the needs of the service. In particular, ensure that this programme includes training for staff and managers on risk analysis;
- Reviewing social workers' responsibilities and workloads by utilising the Health Check developed by the Social Work Task Force to ensure that responsibilities are clearly defined and that workloads are measured and manageable; ensure that the Improvement Board continues to receive management information to confirm the improvements are achieved and sustained.
- Developing an overall workforce strategy - informed by demographic and service needs analysis - based upon an analysis of training needs, and includes clear recruitment and retention strategies. The strategy should be implicitly linked to the improvement plan, and should also be clearly related to service plans and audit outcomes.

Partnership and Governance

- Following the review of the LSCB, ensure that all the recommendations and actions set out in the review have been implemented and supports the improvement programme. Ensuring the LSCB is able to scrutinise, monitor, challenge and provide strategic direction in relation to the quality of services provided by the Council and the outcomes for vulnerable children and meets all statutory requirements as set out in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010';
- Undertaking a review of the effectiveness of partnership working, particularly the LSCB with a view to agreeing with the Council's partner's actions to address any issues concerning partnership working. The implementation of those actions and the impact on improving the working relationship of the Council and their partners will be monitored by the Improvement Board. Working with senior representatives from health, police, schools and voluntary sector to support the LSCB and Children's Partnership Board through providing it with the information it requires to undertake an effective role.
- Establishing procedures that will ensure that each member of the Improvement Board, Children's Partnership Board and the LSCB are

aware of the terms of reference for their respective boards and the overall governance, responsibilities and specific roles and the organisations that they represent, in driving forward improvement.

- Reviewing and revising as necessary the Council's post-inspection action plan and improvement priorities. The key priority is to develop a practice improvement programme that builds on previous work with a clear focus on improving the quality of core child protection work undertaken by the Council's staff. The Improvement Plan needs to identify clear impact measures, quality assurance arrangements, and what success will look like in the short, medium and long term.
- Working with representatives of the Children's Improvement Board to seek to formalise a package of peer mentoring and sector support, to address issues set out in the inspection. The package of support should be agreed by the Improvement Board and reflected within the Improvement Plan.
- Putting in place scrutiny arrangements to enable members of the Council to scrutinise and challenge social care practice once the necessary improvements have been made.

We expect the Council to put in place an Improvement Board which shall have an Independent Chair and which we expect will meet every six weeks and include in its membership key partners and agencies. An official from the Department for Education will attend as an observer. We would expect the Council to provide the Independent Chair ("the Chair") with such support as they need to carry out their role.

The Improvement Plan should be developed with partners and agencies to carry out the recommendations identified in the Ofsted inspection reports and those specifically highlighted in this improvement notice, and should be approved by the Improvement Board at its third meeting. The Board should monitor the programme and make recommendations to the Council.

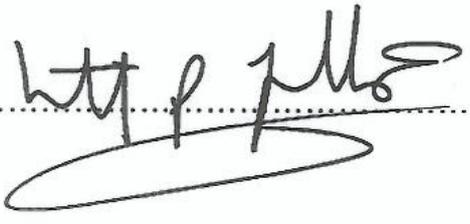
Improvement against the above measures will be assessed as follows:

The Chair should provide an initial report to Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families setting out the challenges and plans the Council has put in place, followed by progress reports every six months 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 which 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. 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: A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'W. P. Jones', written over a horizontal dotted line. Below the signature is a large, horizontal oval scribble.

Date: 27. ix. 11.....