

Improvement Notice

To: Name TORBAY COUNCIL (“the Council”)
Address Union House, Union Street, Torquay, Devon TQ1 3YA

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 October 2010) which judged the overall effectiveness and capacity for improvement of Torbay’s safeguarding services to be ‘inadequate’.

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

The Council must take action to:

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

The Council must demonstrate clear evidence of improvement in outcomes, with particular regard to:

- preparing documentation, in partnership with Torbay Local Safeguarding Children Board setting out the thresholds and criteria for access to children’s social care and ensure the thresholds and criteria are understood and applied by all partners and agencies of the Council to ensure consistent and high quality referrals from other agencies;
- ensuring the responsiveness and quality of assessments and child protection investigations are carried out and meet the standards set out in ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010’ such that action is based on a clear, critical, considered and well balanced analysis of identified risks and needs, and ensure that in all cases that referrers are informed of the outcome of all their referrals;
- in partnership with the Torbay Safeguarding Children Board and all partner agencies, establish and maintain a multi-agency quality assurance

framework, making available the findings of case file audits across all agencies;

- within children's social care ensuring that a clear performance management and quality assurance framework is prepared and implemented by staff at all levels, and ensuring that it includes regular auditing arrangements of the quality of case files and that action is taken in response to the audits;
- increasing the percentage of initial assessments for children's social care carried out within 10 working days to:
 - 70% for March 2011 (in-month figure)
 - 80% by October 2011 (cumulative figure for the first half of 2011-2012 reporting year)
- increasing the percentage of core assessments for children's social care carried out within 35 days of their commencement to:
 - 60% for March 2011 (in-month figure)
 - 78% by October 2011 (cumulative figure for the first half of 2011-2012 reporting year)
- ensuring that a framework is put in place which sets out how the Council will effectively support, supervise and appraise those undertaking safeguarding social work and ensure that all management oversight and decision-making, on individual cases are set out in writing on the case files with a view to driving up the quality of social care practice;
- carrying out an assessment of whether the Council has sufficient staff to undertake all work relating to children's social care and ensure that there is sufficient capacity within children's social care, in particular those undertaking front-line social work and those at operational manager levels as soon as practicable after service of this notice;
- carrying out a review of children's social workers' responsibilities and workloads, and ensure that these are clearly and specifically defined, and that all staff have a manageable and equitable range of work consistent with their level of experience and competence;
- taking such steps as necessary to improve the timeliness of initial child protection conferences so that it meets the standards set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010 and ensure the effective involvement of partner agencies; and,
- developing a comprehensive programme of continuous professional development for all social care staff in conjunction with partners with a view to ensuring high quality and timely assessments of need.

There is an expectation that Torbay Council and partners will put in place a robust Improvement Programme to embrace all the issues in the inspection report and those specifically highlighted in this Improvement Notice, which will be regularly and closely monitored by the Safeguarding Improvement Board which will include representation from the Department for Education. This Board should continue to meet on a monthly basis in the first instance.

Improvement against the above measures will be assessed as follows:

A review will be carried out on receipt of performance information relating to March 2011 and a further assessment will be carried out once October 2011 performance data is available.

by:

The Department for Education which will, on the basis of measurable progress towards the targets outlined above, advise Ministers on any necessary follow-up action.

Failure to comply with this Improvement Notice by the assessment date 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:**