

Improvement Notice

To: Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council (“the council”)
Civic Centre III
Market Street
Huddersfield
HD1 2EY

This Improvement Notice is issued to Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council on 13 January 2020 following the judgement that children’s services are now “requires improvement to be good”, as identified in the Ofsted inspection report published on 5 August 2019 (‘the Ofsted Report’).

1. This Notice acknowledges the significant progress that has already been made to improve children’s social care services in Kirklees. The Department is satisfied that the council no longer needs to be subject to a formal Direction under section 497A of the Education Act 1996 to manage the intervention. As a result the Direction issued on 25 January 2018 is revoked.
2. This Notice is given to address the areas for improvement identified in the Ofsted report and to seek assurance that improvements demonstrated to date can be sustained.
3. To comply with this Notice, the following actions are required of the council, working with its partner agencies (“partners”) as identified by the Children Act 2004 (Section 11):

Strategic partnership arrangement

4. The Secretary of State is satisfied the existing partnership arrangement with Leeds City Council continues to deliver benefits and requests that it continues under a revised partnership agreement. The council will continue work with Leeds City Council until the end of the initial term (1st July 2020) or , if sooner, until such time that the Secretary of State is satisfied improvements are fully embedded and can be sustained in the long term.
5. A revised partnership agreement must be agreed between the two councils. The agreement must outline how the partnership will operate in the time remaining until the end of the initial term and identify success measures to demonstrate the areas for improvement identified in the Ofsted report are being addressed and progress is sustainable.

Improvement plan

6. The council will update its improvement plan to reflect the findings in the Ofsted report. The revised improvement plan will seek to deliver additional service improvements to those already made. The plan should cover the areas identified in the Ofsted report of as well as any recommendations made by the strategic partner or previously identified by the council.

7. To ensure there is clear evidence of progression:
 - a. the content of the improvement plan and a record of progress against it must be kept up to date;
 - b. the council must ensure there continues to be an improvement board to oversee implementation of the revised improvement plan and report to the improvement board on progress against the objectives in the plan. The board should be chaired by Leeds as strategic partner.
 - c. reports to the improvement board should include data, analysis and recommendations supported by evidence of impact of improvements on the quality of practice and experience of children and families. The council can commission updates from partners in order to do this;
 - d. the council should highlight those objectives which are slow to progress and highlight where contributions need to be strengthened;
 - e. the views of frontline staff and of children and young people will continue to be taken into consideration in the development of practice and standards.

Department for Education review

8. Officials from the Department will undertake a review of progress against the improvement plan and revised partnership agreement in May 2020. This will consider the evidence provided by the peer review undertaken by Leeds and will include a stocktake meeting with Kirklees council.
9. From time to time, the department may request an informal update on progress against the council's success measures. This may reflect, but is not limited to:
 - a. progress against the improvement plan objectives;
 - b. staff surveys;
 - c. staff supervision and the quality of feedback.
10. Taking account of the measures set out in this improvement notice and the revised strategic partnership agreement, the council should aim for actions included in the improvement plan to be delivered by the end of June 2020 (within 12 months of the Ofsted inspection) or sooner, where appropriate.

Failure to comply with this Improvement Notice:

11. Should the council be unwilling or unable to comply with this 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 on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'ME', is positioned below the text 'Signed on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education'.

Matthew Edwards

A senior civil servant in the Department for Education

Dated: 13 January 2020