

Improvement Notice

To: Name LONDON BOROUGH OF SUTTON (“the Council”)
Address London Borough of Sutton, Civic Offices, St. Nicholas Way,
Sutton, SM1 1EA

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

Children’s 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 dated 29th May 2012 (“the inspection report”) which judged the overall effectiveness of the Council’s safeguarding services to be ‘inadequate’.

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

The Council must take action to:

- (i) improve areas of weakness identified in the Ofsted inspection report and ensure safeguarding and looked after children’s services meet all legislative requirements.
- (ii) put in place arrangements to sustain and build on the improvement secured.

In respect of the above the Council, working with its partner agencies, as identified by the Council, (“the Council’s partners”) must demonstrate evidence of improvement in outcomes by the following:

Quality and effectiveness of safeguarding practice

- Improve the quality and consistency of assessments, by carrying out an assessment of risk in a timely manner and in line with the time frame set out in statutory guidance. Such assessments must detail the level of risk to the child or young person and the analysis of any such risk by the Council’s partners. Such assessments must also record the views of the child or young person where possible.
- Improve the quality, delivery and management of child protection plans by ensuring that all child protection plans comply with *Working Together to Safeguard Children* and *The Framework for Assessment of Children in Need and their Families* including ensuring that the plans set out the actions that must be taken and by whom and the outcomes to be achieved with timescales. Ensure that evidence of management oversight of case work and decision making is set out in detail on each case file and information arising from case

audits confirms that this has been carried out satisfactorily.

- Ensure that in all cases, the views of children and young people, their experiences and needs are recorded on their case files and used to inform their individual care plans and the work of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (“the Children Board”). To support this work regard must be had to the Children’s Safeguarding Performance Information Framework (published 12 June 2012). The Council’s Quality Assurance Framework must include a requirement that the Council set up systems to ensure that this information is recorded and a report of children and young people’s views, experiences and needs are reported to the Board.
- Provide revised guidance to all child protection conference Chairs and arrange training to those identified by the Council as requiring it to ensure Chairs are aware when the Council has not had regard to statutory guidance, has not assessed or assessed inadequately risk, where there has been drift in carrying out the child or young person’s care plan or where there has been a lack of adequate contingency planning. The improvement in capability of child protection conference chairs will be monitored by monthly performance reports to the Improvement Board.
- Ensure the Council’s Quality Assurance Framework (“the Framework”) is prepared with regard to the Children’s Safeguarding Performance Information Framework and quality assurance processes referred to in Working Together. Ensure that the Framework is implemented by all those in the Council’s Children’s Service. The Framework must include regular auditing arrangements of case files, with independent oversight and challenge to ensure the quality and timeliness of recording and compliance with recording in individual case records (as set out in Working Together) and the analysis of risk. The frequency of the oversight and challenge must be agreed by the Board. Regular reporting of the audits must be made available to the Safeguarding Improvement Board (“the Improvement Board”) demonstrating how the Council have addressed any findings of the audits in order to improve the quality of social work practice.

Improving the effectiveness of partnership and governance

- Ensure that the Council and the Council’s partners on the Improvement Board agree objectives, actions, performance indicators and milestones for all staff of the Council and the Council’s partners who have been identified by the Council as requiring this information so that they understand their roles and responsibilities in delivering these objectives and improvements. Ensure the Council’s partners ensure their staff understand their roles and responsibilities in delivering and sustaining these improvements. Report to the Improvement Board on compliance with these objectives, actions, performance indicators and milestones and any consequent improvement in the delivery of children’s safeguarding services.
- Ensure elected members understand and deliver their corporate parent role and are trained and supported to undertake a leadership, scrutiny and

challenge role of safeguarding services. Ensure these arrangements are sustained after improvements have been made.

- Establish a remit for the Improvement Board, the Children's Trust, and the Children Board with responsibility for tasks set out, lines of accountability and specific roles of each body in ensuring improvement in Safeguarding Services are made and sustained.

Capacity and Capability

- Implement a programme of induction, training, mentoring and continuous professional development for all children and families staff including managers to improve the quality of front line social work. Attention must be paid to the eight standards for employers of social workers¹. The Council must also work with the Council's partners to ensure that shared learning opportunities are utilised. The Council should report the impact the training has on improving outcomes for children to the Improvement Board.
- Ensure that the views of staff are considered in relation to their work and workplace using feedback mechanisms such as staff surveys the result of which should be reported to the Improvement Board. To support this, consideration should be given to the Children's Safeguarding Performance Information Framework (published 12 June 2012).²

Improvement support measures

The Council must put in place an Improvement Board with an independent Chair. The Improvement Board should meet once every 4 weeks initially, and include in its membership the Council's partners. If the Improvement Board wishes to meet at 6 weekly intervals this must be agreed with the Department for Education. An official from the Department for Education will attend as a participant observer. The Council must provide the independent Chair with such support as they need to carry out their role and the Council must consider if further support and challenge might be provided. This package of support may include peer mentoring and support for the Lead Member for Children's Services and senior managers in Children's services to support them in leading the required change.

An improvement plan should be developed with the Council's partners to address the recommendations identified in the Inspection Report and those specifically highlighted in this Improvement Notice. The plan should be agreed with all the Council's partners and the Improvement Board within one month of receipt by the Council of this Improvement Notice.

Taking account of the measures set out in this Notice:

¹http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/workforce/-/journal_content/56/10171/3511605/ARTICLE-TEMPLATE

²<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/safeguardingchildren/protection/b00209694/perf-info>

The Council must report to the Improvement Board against the objectives, actions, timescales and impact indicators agreed by the Improvement Board. The Council should ensure this also includes appropriate reporting from Partners on the Improvement Board. Reporting should include analysis of any objectives and actions which are not being achieved as planned, actions to address these, and revised timescales for improvement which should be agreed by the Improvement Board. The Council must meet all performance indicators and milestones by January 2014.

Improvement against the above measures will be assessed as follows:

Ministers must receive information on progress from the Chair of the Improvement Board in respect of the performance indicators and milestones set out in this Improvement Notice in October 2012, April 2013 and October 2013. An initial review of progress against the Improvement Notice will be held with the Department for Education in April 2013, further reviews will be held in October 2013 with a final review in February 2014.

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

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:

Date: