

# Improvement Notice

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To: Name GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL (the 'Council')  
Address Shire Hall, Westgate Street, Gloucester, GL1 2TG

**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 January 2011) which judged the overall effectiveness of Gloucestershire'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) put in place robust 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.

The Council must demonstrate clear evidence of improvement in outcomes, by:

Social Care Practice

- Reviewing the Council's policies and guidance on access to children's social care including establishing clear definitions of 'contact' and 'referral' to ensure that those thresholds are understood and implemented consistently by all partners and agencies of the council, measured by the proportion of referrals to children's social care which result in an initial assessment and the proportion of these that are closed without further action reduces from a baseline of 66% (Sep 2010) to 30% by September 2012;
- Ensuring that all assessments contain a level of detailed analysis including historical information and risk assessments as required in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010' and include the views of children and young people, their parents/carers and other agencies and all cases referrers are informed of the outcome of all their referrals

- Reviewing current child protection plans, in accordance with Working Together to Safeguard Children to ensure that they continue to be required. The implementation of any actions arising from these reviews will be reported to the Improvement Board as part of the audit framework.
- Ensuring that all child protection plans include detailed reasons why a child protection plan has been put in place and that child protection plans meet the standards set out in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010';
- Increasing the number of children and young people who attend their child protection conference, and ensuring that children and young people subject to a child protection plan are seen in accordance with the frequency specified in the plan;
- Ensuring that the number of children and young people subject to child protection plans for 2 years or more reduces whilst taking action to reduce the percentage of children and young people who become subject of a child protection plan who do so for a second or subsequent time reduces to 13% ;
- Reporting progress to the improvement board on the implementation of the new ICS system and the extent to which it supports social workers demonstrating that action has been taken to address any issue raised;
- Reviewing performance management systems to ensure that data is recorded accurately to inform ongoing actions to improve the quality of frontline practice as measured through a programme of audit and review;
- Ensuring there is a supervision policy in place which establishes the regularity and purpose of supervision as set out by the Social Work Reform Board and monitor that it is being implemented consistently;
- Ensuring that all management oversight and decision-making on individual cases is set out clearly on the case file, with a view to driving up the quality of social care practice;
- Ensuring that children in need receive a timely service, minimising risk, by:
  - improving the percentage of initial assessments carried out within the timescales set out in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010' from the 2009-10 baseline of 50.4% (in 10 days) to 75%
  - improving the percentage of core assessments carried out within the timescales set out in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010' from the 2009-10 baseline of 69.45% to 78%

while at the same time ensuring that quality of assessments meets the standards set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children as measured through a programme of audit and review.

- Improving the quality of initial and subsequent health assessments of looked after children, ensuring that assessments are complete and include all supporting information;
- Improving the provision of health promotion advice to looked after children for both those placed within and outside Gloucestershire; and demonstrate the impact of the advice by gathering the views and experience of looked after children;
- Improving the quality of care leaver Pathway Plans by ensuring specific actions and timescales are recorded and that the care leavers needs are appropriately identified and action is taken on the basis of the plans; and
- Using the Health Check developed by the Social Work Task Force ensure that caseloads and workloads are manageable and demonstrate to the improvement board that caseloads and workloads are manageable.

#### Partnership and Governance

- Ensuring that Gloucestershire's Local Safeguarding Children Board is meeting its statutory obligations and that performance management and quality assurance arrangements are developed such that the board provides scrutiny, monitoring, challenge and strategic direction in relation to services and outcomes for vulnerable children; and
- Ensuring that under the new organisational structure that will be in place from April 2011, all managers and staff have clear objectives and that there are clear lines of accountability for social work performance.

We expect the Council to put in place an improvement programme to carry out the recommendations identified in the Ofsted inspection report and those specifically highlighted in this Improvement Notice. We expect that the Council will produce an Improvement Plan with key partners and which must be published by 6 May 2011. The plan should be reviewed and monitored by an Improvement Board, which we expect will meet once a month and include in its membership key partners and agencies. The Improvement Board should include within its membership, independent peer support from another local authority to provide an independent perspective. An official from the Department for Education will attend as an observer.

#### **Improvement against the above measures will be assessed as follows:**

A review of progress will take place after six months and a further review at the end of April 2012 which should be informed by a self assessment of progress against this Improvement Notice. Additional external validation of

progress, such as a peer review, should be commissioned and carried out before the April 2012 review to inform decisions on next steps. 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:** ..... **Date:** .....