

Improvement Notice

To: Name SALFORD CITY COUNCIL
Address Civic Centre, Chorley Road, Swinton, Salford

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 2010) which judged the overall effectiveness and capacity for improvement of Salford's safeguarding services to be 'inadequate'.

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

Within **two months of the date of this Notice**, the Council must:

- (i) appoint an independent chair to the Council's existing Improvement Board, to be identified by the Council or the Department for Education, and to be approved by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families;
- (ii) establish peer mentoring for the Children's Services leadership team, formal peer support arrangements throughout Children's Social Care and peer representation on the Improvement Board;
- (iii) ensure that the membership of the Improvement Board includes: the Lead Member for Children's Services; the Deputy Chief Executive; the Director of Children's Services; representation from Health and Police partners; the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board; and other officers as appropriate;
- (iv) ensure that decisions made by the Improvement Board are appropriately held to account and scrutinised by a wider set of Members, to include the Leader of the Council and representatives from the opposition;
- (v) review the Safeguarding Action Plan and the improvement priorities, and ensure that the final version is endorsed by the Improvement Board; and
- (vi) revise the Board's reporting arrangements to ensure that the Council as a whole is informed and therefore able to exercise scrutiny of improvements being overseen by the Improvement Board.

The Council's Improvement Board is expected to meet on a monthly basis, and should include a representative from the Department for Education as an observer.

By the **end of December 2010**, the Council must:

- (i) have appointed a permanent Director of Children's Services and a permanent Assistant Director, Specialist Services; and
- (ii) have in place clear, robust and timely plans – endorsed by the Improvement Board – for the appointment of a full complement of Assistant Directors.

The Council's Safeguarding Action Plan, endorsed by the Improvement Board, must include the following measures, with agreed milestones and deadlines for each. Ministers will review progress against the following after **six months** and after **twelve months**.

The Council must:

Safeguarding Children

- (i) implement effective quality assurance and auditing arrangements including multi agency audits to inform improvements to the overall quality and consistency of casework;
- (ii) ensure that clear practice standards, including the use of thresholds, are properly established and shared with key partners, and disseminated through a comprehensive training programme;
- (iii) while ensuring timeliness remains high, improve the quality and consistency of assessments, recording the views of key agencies to inform effective planning;
- (iv) improve the quality and consistency of Common Assessment Frameworks (CAFs) overall, further embedding their usage across the partnership so that they are effectively used to inform early intervention;
- (v) act on issues raised in the internal safeguarding report and Ofsted's report about the use of the ICS system by staff, the system's functionality and the need for senior leadership oversight to effect the changes required.

Partnership and Governance

- (vi) establish clear and agreed processes with partners in the Children's Trust (taking into account legislative changes to its role) and SSCB to ensure effective leadership and scrutiny is exercised, training takes place to ensure the quality of assessments improves and action is taken to effect changes and drive improvements where necessary;
- (vii) finalise and implement a robust SSCB business plan, ensuring there are clear arrangements for joint-agency auditing of work and performance

management;

Capacity and Capability

- (viii) review social workers' responsibilities and workloads to ensure that responsibilities are clearly and tightly defined and that no staff carry too heavy a workload;
- (ix) ensure that there is adequate management capacity within the service (in particular the Court and Child Protection Teams), reduce the number of social workers that managers are supervising and ensure such supervision is robust and regularly reviewed by senior management;
- (x) develop a comprehensive programme of training, mentoring and continuous professional development for all social care staff in combination with partners so that they have the skills to complete high quality and timely assessments.

Improvement against the above measures will be assessed as follows:

The Improvement Board chair should, two months after the date of this notice and at the start of January 2011, submit progress reports on the Improvement Board and mentoring arrangements, and the recruitment of a children's services leadership team. Should Ministers not be satisfied with the Council's progress at this stage, they may choose to invoke their statutory powers of direction (s497A Education Act 1996).

The chair will also report to the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families on a bi-monthly basis.

On the basis of the Council's own Safeguarding Action Plan and the chair's reports, the Minister will review overall progress against the above targets after **six months** and after **twelve months**.

In addition to attending Improvement Board meetings Departmental officials will hold performance challenge discussions with the children's services leadership team monthly for the first six months of the intervention. These meetings will also be reviewed in the light of the progress made against the targets and measures set out above.

Department for Education officials will, on the basis of progress towards the measures outlined above, advise Ministers on any necessary follow-up action.

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:**