

Improvement Notice

To: Name Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council (“the Council”)

Address Number One Riverside, Smith Street, Rochdale OL16 9NP

An Improvement Notice (the “first Improvement Notice”) was issued to Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council on 10th April 2013 following the findings of inadequate performance identified in Children’s Social Care contained in the Ofsted inspection of the local arrangements to protect children; and the adoption scorecards published by the Department for Education in May and November 2012.

This further Notice is given to:

- (i) Reflect progress made under the first Improvement Notice;

Refocus the targets set out in the first Improvement Notice to ensure that the Council works on the weaknesses identified in the Council’s self assessment and LGA peer review assessment of The following measures are needed for the Council to comply with this Notice:

The Council must take action to:

- (i) ensure that the actions taken under the first Improvement Notice are embedded and sustained;
- (ii) improve areas of weakness identified in the self-assessment and peer review reports; and
- (iii) put in place arrangements to sustain and build on the improvements secured.

In respect of the above, the Council, working with its partner agencies (“partners”) as identified by the Council, must demonstrate evidence of improvement, and also take the following actions:

1. Leadership and Governance

- 1.1. Ensure that all the corporate functions (including HR, legal, ICT, procurement and performance services) provide support and contribute to the delivery of rapid and sustainable improvement in children’s services.
- 1.2. Consolidate arrangements to ensure that senior managers and elected Members continue to have a clear understanding of the issues affecting the performance and capabilities of frontline social workers.
- 1.3. Implement a new workforce strategy which must include actions to recruit and retain sufficient high quality social workers

2. Quality of Practice

- 2.1. Work with all partners to ensure that the Multi-Agency Screening Service (MASS) team is provided with sufficient resources to make high quality and timely decisions, and that there is an agreement between partners to assure the sustained, long-term future of the team.
- 2.2. Audit the work of the MASS team, to ensure that responses are timely, appropriate and effective. The number and frequency of the audits must be approved by the Improvement Board and the results of the audits presented to the Improvement Board. The improvement Board must agree the actions which must be taken to address shortfalls identified.
- 2.3. Work with partners to improve information sharing between partners to ensure the safeguarding and protection of all children whilst ensuring that all workers remain focussed on the needs of the child at all times.
- 2.4. Ensure that all management oversight is conducted in line with Working Together 2013 and evidence is presented to the board which demonstrates robust oversight of safe practice and decision making. Ensure that the quality assurance framework is embedded with clear standards which are agreed by the board. The results must be reported to the Improvement Board which must agree actions to address any shortfalls in performance.
- 2.5. Provide regular qualitative feedback reports to the Board and Rochdale Safeguarding Children Board to demonstrate progress in improving in the quality and effectiveness of management decision making. The Improvement Board must agree all actions to address any shortfalls in performance.
- 2.6. Continue to embed the improvements made to the IRO service in relation to its quality assurance and challenge role and provide regular reports to the Improvement Board on progress. The Improvement Board must agree all actions to address any shortfalls in performance.

3. Local Safeguarding Children's Board

- 3.1 The LCSB ensures that all agencies can demonstrate evidence of the timely and effective implementation of their respective action plans following the recent Serious Case Reviews. The LCSB must ensure that the key lessons are learned and that the learning is effectively shared within and across organisations.

4. Early Help and Partnership Working

- 4.1. Work collaboratively with partners to improve attendance at all meetings regarding the welfare of children; identify and resolve the blockages to attendance and take steps to ensure that corporate

commitment to partnership working is implemented.

- 4.2. Work collaboratively with partners to develop, deliver and regularly audit early help services, as set out in the first Improvement Notice; and review and adapt practice in the light of lessons learned from audits, serious case reviews, and any other new evidence.

5. Improvement support measures

Taking account of the measures set out in this Improvement Notice the Council is expected to:

- 5.1. Continue to support the Improvement Board and its Independent Chair (“the Chair”). The Board is expected to meet at least every six weeks. If in the future the Board wishes to vary the frequency of meetings this must first be agreed by the Department for Education. An official from the Department for Education will attend Board meetings as a participant observer. The Board should include key partner agencies in its membership. The Council must provide the Chair with administrative support to a level sufficient for the Chair to undertake their role efficiently and for the Board to operate effectively.
- 5.2. Develop and implement an Improvement Plan which will set out the actions required to comply with this Notice. The plan must be approved by the Improvement Board.
- 5.3. With members of the Improvement Board, the Council must agree a dataset of performance indicators with targets and timescales. Targets should be set at appropriate intervals. The Council must report to the Improvement Board on progress against these, and reporting must include analysis of performance trends that are failing to meet the targets and timescales set. The Council should aim for all targets to be met within twelve months of the commencement of this Notice, and have in place plans for continued monitoring of performance against targets to ensure that improvement is sustained and embedded. The performance targets will form part of the discussion at the formal review meetings with the Department for Education.

Improvement against the above measures will be assessed as follows:

- Three months after the commencement of this Notice, and at 3-monthly intervals thereafter until this Notice is lifted, the Chair must provide the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families with a written progress report including specific commentary against the targets set out in this Notice.
- Additional external validation of progress such as a peer review should be completed within twelve months of the commencement of this Notice.

- The progress reports from the Chair will inform reviews of progress which will be conducted by Department for Education officials and take place six months after commencement of this Improvement Notice, or at the specific request of the Department for Education. Such reviews may result in an amendment to this Notice and further action being required.

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

Should the Council be unwilling or unable to comply with this Notice, or the Secretary of State for Education not be satisfied with the Council's progress at any stage, the Secretary of State for Education may choose to use his 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 social care services.

Signed:  Date: 10th April 2014

Signed: [Edward Timpson MP]..... **Date:** ... 10th April 2014

Edward Timpson MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families