

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Statutory Direction

STATUTORY DIRECTION TO BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE IN RELATION TO CHILDREN'S SERVICES UNDER SECTION 497A(4B) OF THE EDUCATION ACT 1996

WHEREAS:

1. The Secretary of State for Education ("the Secretary of State") has carefully considered Ofsted's report of 11 February 2022, in respect of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council ("the Council"), of its inspection carried out between 6-17 December 2021. The inspection report found that children's services are 'inadequate' overall. The sub-judgement for the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers was rated as 'requires improvement to be good'. The sub-judgements for the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families and the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection were both rated 'inadequate'.
2. The Secretary of State is therefore satisfied that the Council is failing to perform to an adequate standard, some or all of the functions to which section 497A of the Education Act 1996 ("the 1996 Act") is applied by section 50 of the Children Act 2004 ("children's social care functions"), namely;
 - a. social services functions, as defined in the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970, so far as those functions relate to children;
 - b. the functions conferred on the Council under sections 23C to 24D of the Children Act 1989 (so far as not falling within paragraph (a) above); and
 - c. the functions conferred on the Council under sections 10, 12, 12C, 12D and 17A of the Children Act 2004.
3. The Secretary of State has appointed John Coughlan as the Improvement Adviser for Children's Services in the Council ("the Improvement Adviser") in accordance with, and for the purposes of, the terms of reference ("the Terms of Reference") set out in the Annex to this direction.
4. The Secretary of State, having considered representations made by the Council, considers it expedient, in accordance with his powers under section 497A(4B) of the Education Act 1996, to direct the Council as set out below in order to ensure that all of the Council's children's social care functions are performed to an adequate standard.

NOW THEREFORE

5. Pursuant to his powers under section 497A(4B) of the Education Act 1996 Act, the Secretary of State directs the Council as follows:
 - a. To comply with any instructions of the Secretary of State and/or the Improvement Adviser in relation to the improvement of the Council's exercise of its children's social care functions and provide such assistance as the Secretary of State or the Improvement Adviser may require;

- b. To co-operate with the Improvement Adviser and any Sector Led Improvement Partner (“SLIP”), including on request allowing the Improvement Adviser and SLIP at all reasonable times access:
 - i. any premises of the Council;
 - ii. any document of, or relating to, the Council; and
 - iii. any employee or member of the Council,
 - iv. which appear to them to be necessary for achieving the purposes of, and carrying out the responsibilities set out in the Terms of Reference;

- c. To provide the Improvement Adviser and any SLIP with such amenities, services and administrative support as they may reasonably require from time to time for the carrying out of their responsibilities in accordance with the Terms of Reference, including:
 - i. providing officers’ time or support; and
 - ii. providing office space, meeting rooms or computer facilities.

6. This direction will remain in force until it is revoked by the Secretary of State.

Signed on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized initial 'H' followed by a long, wavy line that tapers to the right.

Helen Brayley-Morris

A Senior Civil Servant in the Department for Education

Dated this day of 08 April 2022

ANNEX

Children's Services Improvement Adviser

Terms of Reference – April 2022

The Improvement Adviser will support the Council in continuing to develop and implement robust, realistic and achievable plans to improve its children's social care functions, in particular those areas which have been judged by Ofsted to be inadequate or where other serious concerns have been identified. In particular they will:

- Provide effective oversight to ensure the pace of improvement is appropriate and that improvements to children's social care are sustainable;
- Provide support and advice as necessary when assessing and driving progress, taking account of the weaknesses identified by Ofsted and of other diagnostic work;
- Apply their expertise and experience to support and challenge the Council's Director of Children's Services, Chief Executive, Members, and wider corporate leadership team in addressing areas of weakness and system/ strategic blockages to improvement; this may also include working with practitioners of different levels to:
 - develop competence and improve performance; and
 - help foster a culture of reflection, challenge and support;
- Make use of wider contacts to support and advise the Council on potential solutions to issues and signpost examples of good practice where possible;
- To Chair the Council's Children's Services Improvement Board;
- Work closely with any other local authority improvement partners to maximise impact of work and avoid unnecessary duplication;
- Engage with the wider partnership;
- Identify key deliverables and produce a plan detailing the outputs and KPIs which the Improvement Adviser will meet over the duration of their appointment, and agree this with the Department for Education ("DfE") within 6 weeks of appointment;
- Participate in any DfE-led review of the Council's progress; and
- To deliver quarterly written updates on the Council's progress to the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families, which is to include a six-month review on whether the pace of progress of improvement is sufficient.