

Improvement Notice

To: Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council ('the Council')

Municipal Buildings

Huyton

L36 9UX

This Improvement Notice is issued to Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council on 20 January 2025, following significant concerns highlighted by the publication of Ofsted's inspection report of the Council's Children's Social Care Services, published 20 January 2025.

1. This Notice is given to address all the areas for improvement identified in the report of the inspection of children's social care services dated 20 January 2025.
2. To comply with this Notice, the following actions are required of the Council, working with its partner agencies ("partners") as identified by the Children Act 2004 (Section 11).

Adviser arrangements

3. The Secretary of State has chosen to appoint the support of an Improvement Adviser in Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council, to provide advice to the Department for Education ("the Department") and the Council. The Council will work with the Adviser until some such time that the Secretary of State is satisfied that this is no longer required.

Improvement plan

4. The Council's improvement plan will deliver appropriate and sustainable improvement. The plan should cover the areas identified in the Ofsted report published 20 January 2025, as well as recommendations made by the Improvement Adviser appointed by the Department. The plan should be submitted to the Department by a date determined by the Improvement Adviser.
5. To ensure there is clear evidence of progression:
 - a. the content of the improvement plan and a record of progress against it must be kept up to date;

- b. the Council must ensure it establishes and maintains an improvement board, which the Council will be responsible for. The improvement board is to have an independent chair in place who will oversee the implementation of the improvement plan and report to the improvement board on progress against the objectives in the plan, to a timetable agreed with the Department. It can commission updates from partners in order to do this;
- c. reports to the improvement board should include data, analysis and recommendations supported by evidence of the impact of improvements on the quality of practice and experience of children and families;
- d. the Council should highlight those objectives which are slow to progress and highlight where contributions need to be strengthened; and
- e. the views of frontline staff, children and young people will be taken into consideration in the development of practice and standards.

Department for Education reviews

- 6. Officials or advisers from the Department will undertake reviews of progress against the improvement plan at least every six months and more regularly where appropriate.
- 7. These reviews may cover but are not exclusive to: culture; performance; leadership, management and governance; workforce and management oversight; arrangements at the front door/ Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH); early help; and multi-agency arrangements.
- 8. From time to time, the Improvement Adviser may require that a diagnostic review or assessment of performance in a specific service area is undertaken by a local authority or other party agreed with the Department.
- 9. For any review or assessment, the Council must provide the persons conducting it with:
 - a. access to, and time with, staff and leadership.
 - b. accurate and up to date data on performance and quality.
 - c. facilities to carry out the reviews.
 - d. access to case files, minutes of meetings, supervision records or any other relevant information.
- 10. Prior to any reviews, the Council should provide its own assessment of improvement. This may reflect, but is not limited to:

- a. progress against the improvement plan objectives
- b. involvement of safeguarding partners and the Improvement Board
- c. staff surveys
- d. staff supervision and the quality of feedback

11. Taking account of the measures set out in this Improvement Notice and the Improvement Adviser's feedback, the Council should aim for actions included in the improvement plan to be delivered by the end of July 2026 or sooner, where appropriate.

Improvement against the above measures will be assessed as follows:

12. The Improvement Adviser will provide to the Department quarterly reports of progress or concern against the areas set out in this Notice; progress against the Improvement plan; and any other such information relevant to the improvement journey.

13. The Department will be represented at the Council's Improvement Board.

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

14. 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 (under 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:

Mark Taylor

A senior civil servant in the Department for Education