

## **Improvement Notice**

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To: Reading Borough Council (“the Council”)  
Civic Offices  
Bridge Street  
Reading  
RG1 2LU

**This Improvement Notice is issued to Reading Borough Council (the Council) on 31 July 2025 following the publication of Ofsted’s Joint Targeted Area Inspection report on 06 May 2025, which identified significant weaknesses relating to the multi-agency response to children who are victims of domestic abuse in Reading.**

1. This Notice requires the Council to take steps at pace to address the one area for priority action and all the areas of improvement that were identified in the Joint Targeted Area Inspection report dated 06 May 2025<sup>1</sup>. There is an expectation that all relevant multi-agency partners engage in this process and work in collaboration with the Council as it undertakes the required activity.
2. To comply with this Notice, the following specific 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 an Improvement Adviser to provide advice to the Department and the Council. The Council will work with an Improvement Adviser for a period of 12 months or until such time that the Secretary of State is satisfied this is no longer required. The Department may extend the Improvement Notice if necessary.

### **Improvement plan**

4. The partnership, led by the Council, is responsible for developing and delivering a robust and sustainable improvement plan. The plan should address the Area for Priority Action, the areas for improvement identified in the Ofsted report dated 06 May 2025, and the recommendations from the Improvement Adviser appointed by the Department. It is expected that all agencies addressed in the inspection report will actively contribute to and support the delivery of this plan. The plan should align with the written statement of action Ofsted have requested and be submitted to the Department by the deadline set 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;

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<sup>1</sup> [Joint Targeted Area Inspection report dated 06 May 2025](#)

- b. the Council must ensure it establishes and maintains appropriate governance arrangements (i.e. improvement board oversight with independent chairing), developed in conjunction with the Adviser. These arrangements must facilitate to the Department's and Adviser's satisfaction sufficient oversight and input to deliver the goals of the Improvement Notice and align with existing local governance where appropriate. The governance arrangements will oversee the implementation of the improvement plan and report progress against the objectives in the plan, to a timetable agreed with the Department. The governance arrangements may commission updates from partners in order to do this;
- c. reports into the agreed governance structure should include data, analysis and recommendations supported by evidence of impact of improvements on the quality of services for addressing shortfalls in the multi-agency strategic safeguarding partnership;
- d. the Council should highlight those objectives which are slow to progress and highlight where contributions need to be strengthened;
- e. the views of frontline staff and of 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 agenda 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 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 person(s) 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 suitability and effectiveness of governance arrangements;
- 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, and notwithstanding the potential duration of intervention set out earlier in this Improvement Notice, the Council should aim for actions included in the improvement plan to be delivered by the end of June 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 relevant governance arrangements developed by the Council in conjunction with the Adviser.

**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 (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: 31 July 2025**

**Paul Scholfield**

**A senior civil servant in the Department for Education**