

Improvement Notice

To: Name NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
Address County Hall, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 7QP

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

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

The Council must take action to:

- (i) improve the areas of weakness identified in the Ofsted inspection report and have regard to the recommendations contained therein;
- (ii) improve performance against key indicators in the areas concerned; and
- (iii) put in place robust arrangements to sustain and build on the improvements secured.

The Council must demonstrate clear evidence of improvement in outcomes, evidenced by improvements in the following:

- whilst ensuring assessments are of a high quality, increase the percentage of initial assessments for children's social care carried out within timescale from the provisional 2009-10 baseline of 54% to:
 - 60% for September 2010 (in-month figure)
 - 70% for March 2011 (in-month figure)
 - 75% by 30 June 2011 (cumulative figure for first quarter of 2011-12 year)
- whilst ensuring assessments are of a high quality, increase the percentage of core assessments for children's social care carried out within timescale from the provisional 2009-10 baseline of 46% to:

- 55% for September 2010 (in-month figure)
- 70% for March 2011 (in-month figure)
- 75% by 30 June 2011 (cumulative figure for first quarter of 2011-12 year)
- Reduce the percentage of re-referrals to children's social care to:
 - 30% by 31 September 2010
 - 26% by 31 March 2011
 - And sustain at 2008-09 levels by 30 June 2011
- Ensure that statutory timescales are met for the review of child protection cases.
- In relation to the following key workforce indicators, by 30 June 2011:
 - reduce the vacancy rate for social workers to 7%
 - reduce the turnover rate for social workers to 10%
 - reduce the absence rate for social workers to 10 days per FTE

In respect of achieving the above, the Council should:

- improve the response to child protection referrals, having regard to statutory guidance, and ensure discussions with the police and other agencies take place in a timely manner in all relevant circumstances, as set out in *Working Together to Safeguard Children*;
- have clear multi-agency thresholds in place, shared with and understood by all partners, in order for children and young people to access appropriate services and to ensure consistent and high quality referrals from other agencies;
- ensure that a clear performance management framework is in place, which includes effective quality assurance and auditing arrangements;
- increase capacity within children's social care, in particular at front-line social worker and operational manager levels, and ensure that there is an effective senior management team responsible for social care;
- review social workers' responsibilities and workloads, and ensure that these are clearly and tightly defined, and that all staff have a manageable and equitable range of work consistent with their level of experience and competence;

- 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;
- demonstrate evidence of the implementation of recommendations from serious case reviews (SCRs) and the subsequent impact; and
- work with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Children's Trust to strengthen their role and leadership in areas of support, challenge and scrutiny of safeguarding activity in Nottinghamshire and ensure that all LSCB member agencies receive appropriate training in this area.

There is an expectation that Nottinghamshire will put in place a robust Improvement Programme to embrace all the issues highlighted in this Improvement Notice, which will be regularly and closely monitored by a Board of key partners, to include representation from the Department for Education.

Improvement against the above measures will be assessed as follows:


A review will be carried out on receipt of performance data relating to September 2010 and a final assessment will be carried out once June 2011 performance data is available.

by:

The Department for Education which will, on the basis of measurable progress towards the targets outlined above, advise Ministers on any necessary follow-up action.

Failure to comply with this Improvement Notice by the assessment date 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: 29. vi. 10

