

## **Improvement Notice**

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To: Lancashire County Council (“the council”)  
PO Box 78 County Hall  
Fishergate  
Preston  
Lancashire  
PR1 8XJ

**This Improvement Notice is issued to Lancashire County Council on 19 May 2016 following the judgement that children’s services are inadequate, as identified in the Ofsted inspection report published on 27 November 2015.**

1. This Notice is given to address all the areas for improvement identified in the report of the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and the review of the effectiveness of the local safeguarding children board published by Ofsted on 27 November 2015.
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):

### **Improvement board and independent chair**

3. The established improvement board (“the board”) and independent chair (“the chair”) arrangements currently in place will be maintained. The chair will provide quarterly progress reports to the Department.

### **Adviser arrangements**

4. The Secretary of State has chosen to appoint an adviser to provide advice to the Department and/or the council. The council will work with the adviser until some such time that the Secretary of State is satisfied this is no longer required.

### **Improvement plan**

5. The council’s improvement plan will deliver appropriate and sustainable improvement. The plan should cover the areas identified in the Ofsted report of 27 November 2015 as well as the recommendations in the diagnostic report produced by Tony Crane in March 2016, and pay particular attention to:
  - a. The need for robust performance management and audit information, which is used effectively to support scrutiny and challenge and to drive service improvement
  - b. Management oversight, particularly for children in need cases
  - c. Services for care leavers
  - d. Issues which may hinder efficient processes for case management,

including management structure and structure of social work teams.

6. 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 report monthly to the improvement board on progress against the objectives in the plan and 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 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;
  - 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**

7. 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.
8. These reviews may cover, but are not exclusive to: culture; performance; leadership, management, and governance; workforce and management oversight; early help; and the LSCB.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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. staff surveys;
- c. staff supervision and the quality of feedback.

12. Taking account of the measures set out in this improvement notice and the diagnostic report produced by DfE's adviser, the council should aim for actions included in the improvement plan to be delivered by end of May 2017 (within 18 months of the Ofsted inspection) or sooner, where appropriate.

**Improvement against the above measures will be assessed as follows:**

13. The adviser will provide to the Department regular reports of progress or concern against the areas set out in this notice; improvement against the Ofsted requirements; and any other such information relevant to the improvement journey.

**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 as amended) to direct the council to enter into an appropriate arrangement to secure the improvements required in children's services.

Signed: 

Date: 

**Suzanne Lunn**

A senior civil servant in the Department for Education