

Improvement Notice

To: NAME London Borough of Wandsworth Council
ADDRESS Town Hall, Wandsworth High Street, London, SW18 2PU

This Improvement Notice is issued to the London Borough of Wandsworth Council (“the council”) on 11 August 2016 following the judgement that the council’s children’s services are inadequate, as identified in the Ofsted inspection report published on 16 February 2016.

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 review of the effectiveness of the local safeguarding children board published by Ofsted on 16 February 2016 (“the Ofsted report”).
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 13):

Improvement board and independent chair:

3. The council will establish an improvement board (“the board”). The role of independent chair of the board (“the chair”) will be undertaken by a person appointed by the Department for Education (“the Department”), who will report on progress to the Department.
 - a. The board must meet at least every 4 weeks. If in the future the board wishes to vary the frequency of meetings, this must first be agreed by the Department.
 - b. An official or an adviser from the Department may attend any board meeting as a ‘participant observer’.
 - c. The board must include such partners in its membership as the chair considers appropriate.
 - d. The council must provide the chair with administrative support to a level sufficient for the chair to undertake the role efficiently and for the board to operate effectively.

Adviser arrangements:

4. A person or body appointed by the Secretary of State will provide advice to the Department and the council (“the adviser”). The council must work with the adviser until such time that the Secretary of State is satisfied this is no longer required.

Improvement plan:

5. The council must prepare an improvement plan. The improvement plan should address areas of weakness identified in the Ofsted report and by the advisor, with the aim of ensuring that all services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers meet children's needs.
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 to each improvement board meeting and, when requested, to the adviser and Department, on progress against the objectives in the plan, commissioning updates from partners where appropriate;
 - c. reports to the board, adviser and Department must 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 must highlight those objectives against which progress is slow and where an increased focus is needed;
 - e. the views of frontline staff, and of children and young people, must be taken into consideration in the development of practice and standards.

Department for Education reviews and assessments:

7. Department officials, and/or the adviser, will undertake reviews of progress against the improvement plan at least every six months and more regularly where appropriate. These reviews may cover, but are not exclusive to: culture; performance; leadership, management, and governance; workforce and management oversight; early help; and the Local Safeguarding Children Board.
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, as 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 and/or any other relevant information.
10. Prior to any reviews, the council must provide its own assessment of improvement. This may include, but is not limited to:

- a. progress against the improvement plan objectives;
- b. staff surveys;
- c. staff supervision and the quality of feedback.

11. The Department may publish reports of any review or assessment.

Improvement against the above measures will be assessed as follows:

12. The adviser will provide to the Department regular reports of progress or concern against the outputs defined by the improvement plan and any other such information relevant to the improvement journey.

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

13. 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: 11/8/16

Suzanne Lunn
A senior civil servant in the Department for Education