

Improvement Notice

To: Name SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

Address Councillor Nick Skellett, Leader of the Council, Surrey County Council, County Hall, Penrhyn Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey, KT1 2DJ

This Improvement Notice is being issued due to poor performance/decline in:

Children's Services

on the basis of evidence provided by/contained in:

Joint Area Review (July 2008) and DCSF-commissioned Diagnostic Report (August 2008).

The 2008 JAR judged safeguarding, children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, teenage pregnancy and capacity to improve to be inadequate, and a subsequent Diagnostic Report gave further detail on the areas of underperformance.

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

The Council must:

Demonstrate clear evidence of improvement in outcomes, evidenced by:

- clear progress in meeting Local Area Agreement (LAA) designated annual targets and supporting and local targets plus the DCSF statutory targets
- improvements in the following additional performance indicators:
 - NI 51 - assessment of the effectiveness of CAMHS provision (target to be set once definition confirmed);
 - NI 54 – improve the experience of services for families with disabled children by implementing the Aiming High for Disabled Children core offer;
 - NI 59 - increase the percentage of initial assessments for children's social care carried out within 7 working days of referral to 65% in the quarter to 31 March 2009 and to 77% by 31 March 2010;
 - NI 60- increase the percentage of core assessments for children's social care carried out within 35 working days of their commencement to 65% in the quarter to 31 March 2009 and to 90% by 31 March 2010;

- NI 66 – increase the percentage of looked after children cases reviewed within required timescales to 95% by 31 March 2009 and to maintain that level by 31 March 2010;
 - NI 101 – to improve the percentage of looked after children achieving 5 A*-C GCSEs (or equivalent) at Key Stage 4 (including English and Maths);
 - reduce the social work vacancy rate to 14% by 31 March 2009 and 11% by 31 March 2010;
 - reduce the percentage of unallocated cases open to duty to 0% by 31 March 2009 and to maintain that level by 31 March 2010;
 - ensuring all looked after children have an allocated social worker by 31 March 2009;
 - PAF C24 - reduce the absence rate of looked after children to 7% during academic year 2008-09 and to 5% during academic year 2009-10;
 - completion of all statutory statements of special educational need (excluding exceptions) within the statutory timescale by 31 March 2009;
 - reduce permanent exclusions for pupils with a statement of special educational needs to 23 per 1000 pupils during academic year 2008-09 and 16 per 1000 pupils during academic year 2009-10;
- and that where appropriate performance is at least maintained at these performance levels for the remainder of the period covered by this Improvement Notice.

Build capacity and capability to deliver and sustain improvements by:

Ensuring robust leadership and implementation of an effective change programme covering all staff and elected members with a clear focus on improving outcomes for children particularly for the most disadvantaged:

- Reviewing the structure and functioning of Children's Services, in light of the Diagnostic Report's findings, and in particular ensuring that there is an effective permanent Senior Management Team in place by 1 March 2009.
- Embedding effective performance management across children's services, responding to concerns in the Diagnostic Report, including a detailed audit programme agreed by the Improvement Board with the aim of improving the quality of practice through increased rigour of management and quality of supervision at all levels within the council.
- Ensuring all managers and staff within children's services are subject to an assessment of competence by 31 March 2009 with action taken as a result of

that assessment to ensure that appropriately skilled and experienced staff are in post by 1 May 2009.

- Implementing the council's statutory JAR action plan.

Developing services and front-line practice:

- Building appropriate capacity for early intervention for children with additional needs with clear plans to develop the range of preventative and universal services, including through schools and children's centres consistently across the county.
- Reviewing the process for referrals to children's social care so that all partner agencies, including schools, are clear when they need to refer and the process for doing so while ensuring that targets for initial and core assessments are met.
- Reviewing placements of looked after children, including those in residential accommodation, to ensure that they are the most appropriate for each child including with respect to educational attainment, that each has an allocated social worker and developing and implementing a strategy to reduce the percentage placed more than 20 miles from home or out of area with clear targets by 31 March 2009 and that this be approved, and implementation monitored, by the Improvement Board
- Ensuring that a fully compliant ICS Phase 1B system is in use by all practitioners by 31 March 2009.
- Ensuring there is a strategy in place to reduce fixed term exclusions for pupils with a statement of special educational need and to agree appropriate targets by September 2009 and that these be approved, and implementation monitored, by the Improvement Board.
- Having a clear focus on improving services for disabled children including engaging with Together for Disabled Children in preparing for transforming short break services for families of disabled children by meeting the readiness criteria by 31/3/09 and full service offer by 31/3/10 as set out in the Short Breaks Implementation Guidance (www.everychildatters.gov.uk/ahdc).
- Ensuring appropriate action has been taken as a result of the Council's audit of children in need and reporting to the Improvement Board.

Working with others:

- Building secure partnership working with the Surrey Primary Care Trust and other partners through agreeing by April 2009 a strategy to put in place new Children's Trust arrangements to include, as a minimum with the Surrey Primary Care Trust, the joint commissioning of integrated, community based services particularly for those who are vulnerable. These arrangements should be informed by any new statutory guidance when published.
- Working with Surrey Primary Care Trust to ensure that a joint commissioning strategy informed through the Joint Needs Assessment is in place for April 2009

and for its staged implementation from April 2009 beginning with services to children and young people with complex needs.

- Ensuring that an effective LSCB is in place with an independent chair appointed by January 2009, having an action plan in place to deliver identified improvements in safeguarding arrangements and to address improvements required in serious case reviews as identified by Ofsted.
- Working with schools to ensure that they are active participants in the provision of services and the development of improved outcomes for all children, including the most disadvantaged.
- Co-operating with an enhanced monitoring regime including through an independently chaired Improvement Board and enhanced monitoring, scrutiny and quality assurance of performance arrangements by GOSE and the SHA including a quarterly themed audit programme.

Improvement against the above measures will be assessed on:

A quarterly basis for a period of 2 years with the first assessment occurring in January 2009 and the final assessment in September 2010

by:

The Department for Children, Schools, and Families, who will, taking account of advice of the Improvement Board chair and 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 Children, Schools and Families using statutory powers of intervention (s497A Education Act 1996) to direct the Council to enter into an appropriate arrangement to secure the necessary and rapid improvements required in children's social care provision.

Signed:



Date:

