

Improvement Notice

To: NAME London Borough of Lambeth (“the Council”)
ADDRESS Brixton Town Hall, Brixton Hill, London. SW2 1RW

This Improvement Notice is issued to the London Borough of Lambeth Council on 16 December 2015 following the judgement that children’s services are inadequate, as identified in the Ofsted inspection report published 12 May 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 review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board published by Ofsted on 12 May 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):

Adviser arrangements

3. The Secretary of State has chosen to appoint Morning Lane Associates (“the 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

4. The Council will submit an improvement plan to the adviser by 16 December 2015. The adviser will review the plan against the areas listed in a. – g. below and make recommendations to the Department for Education as to whether the plan is fit for purpose to drive continuous and sustainable improvement in the areas of weakness identified in the 2015 Ofsted report and in advice provided by the adviser. The plan should be grounded in an understanding of the needs of children, young people and families. The council’s Improvement Board (‘the Board’) is accountable for delivering the improvement plan. The plan should include actions to improve:
 - a. leadership, management, governance and partnerships;
 - b. timeliness and quality of social work assessments and reports and delivery of practice;
 - c. strength, stability and quality of the social work workforce;
 - d. services to children in need of help and protection;
 - e. services to children looked after and care leavers;

- f. services to children requiring adoption; and
 - g. Lambeth local safeguarding children board.
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;
 - b. the Council must report to the adviser on progress against the objectives in the plan at least at monthly intervals and sooner if requested by the adviser;
 - c. a comprehensive and accurate data set that is regularly communicated and understood by all levels of the Council must be in place to ensure that data better informs practice and provision in children's services;
 - d. reports to the adviser should include analysis and recommendations for action supported by performance trends against key data sets including the quality of service and outcomes for children and young people;
 - e. the Council should highlight those objectives which are slow to progress and highlight where contributions need to be strengthened;
 - f. the views of frontline staff, and children and young people will be taken into consideration in the development of practice and standards.

Improvement board

- 6. The Board, chaired by the council's Chief Executive, is to meet every calendar month. If in the future the Board wishes to vary the frequency of meetings this must first be agreed by the Department for Education. The Board should include the adviser and key partner agencies in its membership.
- 7. The Board Chair will provide to the Secretary of State for Children and Families a written progress report against the areas set out in 4 above in January 2016 and at intervals to be agreed thereafter. The Council will give the Board Chair all reasonable assistance to enable progress reports to be provided to the Secretary of State.

Progress reviews, diagnostic reviews and assessments

- 8. Reviews of progress against the improvement plan will be conducted at least every six months and more regularly where appropriate. Reviews may be:
 - a. conducted by the adviser and officials from the Department for

Education;

- b. commissioned from a local authority or other party agreed between the adviser and the Council.
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 between the adviser and the Council.
10. For any review or assessment, the Council should 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 progress review conducted by the adviser, the Council should 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.
12. Taking account of the measures set out in this improvement notice the Council is required to deliver the actions included in the improvement plan within 12 months of the publication of this notice and to take such further action after this date as is required of them.

Improvement against the above measures will be assessed as follows:

13. The adviser will provide to the Department for Education regular reports of progress or concern against the outputs defined by the improvement plan.

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 under s497A of the Education Act 1996 to direct the Council to enter into an appropriate arrangement to secure the improvements required in children's services.

Signed: Edward Timpson..... **Date:** 16.12.2015.....

Edward Timpson MP
Minister of State for Children and Families