



Rt Hon Dawn Primarolo MP

Minister of State for Children, Young People and Families.

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Councillor Roger Stone
Leader of the Council
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
The Town Hall
Moorgate Street
Rotherham
S60 2TH

16 December 2009

Dear Roger,

Subsequent to our meeting on 26 November, I advised you in my letter of 2 December that I was minded to issue Rotherham with an Improvement Notice.

A draft was subsequently shared with your officers and I am grateful for the co-operation afforded to my officials to agree the content. I now enclose the final signed Improvement Notice. As is standard practice, this will be published on the Department for Communities and Local Government's website.

My officials at the DCSF and Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber will closely monitor progress against actions contained in the Improvement Notice and report directly to me at set intervals. They will write to the Council shortly on this matter. I will consider whether any further intervention action is required at those points. As you know the use of statutory powers of direction remain an option but I know that you and your officers are concentrating your efforts on making necessary improvements and I look forward to hearing of your progress.

I have also considered and agreed to your request for extra support to secure rapid improvements and have asked my officials to work with you on ensuring this support is put in place.

I am copying this letter to those who attended the meeting – Councillor Shaun Wright (Lead Member for Children's Services), Martin Kimber (Chief Executive), Matt Gladstone (Assistant Chief Executive) and Joyce Thacker (Director of Children's Services). I am also copying to the Members of Parliament for the area.

*Yours ever,
Dawn*

DAWN PRIMAROLO



department for
children, schools and families

Improvement Notice

To:

Name ROTHERHAM METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Address The Town Hall, The Crofts, Moorgate Street, Rotherham, South Yorkshire
S60 2TH

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

Children's services

on the basis of evidence provided by/contained in:

Ofsted's annual assessment 2009, which judged Rotherham's children's services to be "performing poorly".

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

The Council must:

- By March 2010, demonstrate that the necessary structures, processes and corporate support are in place to deliver on the requirements outlined below

Demonstrate clear evidence of improvement in outcomes, evidenced by:

- improvements in the following performance indicators:
 - NI 68 – increase the percentage of referrals to children's social care that go on to initial assessment to 65% by end of March 2010, to 68% by end of October 2010 and to 70% by end of March 2011
 - NI 59 - increase the percentage of initial assessments for children's social care carried out within 7 working days of referral to 80% by end of March 2010, to 85% by end of October 2010 and to 87% by end of March 2011.
 - NI 60 - increase the percentage of core assessments for children's social care carried out within 35 working days of their commencement to 80% by end of March 2010, to 84% by end of October 2010 and to 87% by end of March 2011
- Reduce social worker vacancies from 37.2% (as at 3.12.09) to 20% by October 2010, 10% by March 2011.

- Reduce social work team leader vacancies from 33% (as at 3.12.09) to 16% by October 2010, 8% by March 2011.
- The council is expected to demonstrate overall improvements in LAA indicators relating to children's services and statutory attainment targets through the period of this Improvement Notice
- By the end of January 2010 the council should submit a plan to the DCSF which addresses performance across primary schools with a particular focus on addressing the performance of schools below the floor. The council is expected to implement this plan, as agreed with DCSF and National Strategies, to bring about demonstrable and sustained improvement in primary school standards throughout the term of the Improvement Notice.
- We expect the council to provide independent evidence at the review stages in March 2010 and March 2011 and on an ongoing basis to GOYH that in meeting the timescales for initial and core assessments, the quality of assessments is being monitored closely and is improving consistently. This will include quality assuring the recording of the work to ensure that assessments are of a consistently high standard.
- Robust evidence of both quantitative outcomes and qualitative processes should be provided to GOYH on a monthly basis to report on progress. In addition the council should engage in monthly performance review meetings with DCSF and GOYH

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 in relation to safeguarding:

- Appoint the Director of Children and Learners at GOYH as a member of the Improvement Panel and ensure that the Panel, chaired by the Chief Executive, provides effective challenge, and drives swift and sustainable progress through overseeing a robust action plan
- Rigorously monitor a robust action plan for delivering improvements across children and young people's services, looking in particular at areas of weaknesses highlighted in Ofsted inspections, the Children First review and the 2009 Comprehensive Area Assessment.
- Monitor improvement in children's social care, by establishing a rigorous performance management system which delivers regular monitoring, scrutiny and quality assurance of social care performance
- Increase capacity at all levels within children's social care, in particular by ensuring that there is an effective Senior Management Team responsible for social care and by reducing social worker vacancy rates at all levels.

- Review social workers' responsibilities to ensure that responsibilities are clearly and tightly defined so that no staff carry too wide a range of work. This will need to involve consideration of whether a restructure of children's social care services is necessary
- Develop a comprehensive programme of training, mentoring and continuous professional development for all social care staff so that they have the skills to complete high quality and timely assessments

Developing services and front-line practice:

- Establish and implement an effective policy on the auditing of assessment and referrals so as to ensure managerial involvement in quality assurance.
- Ensure information systems are up to date and accurate and that staff have the capacity and administrative support necessary to input data in a timely fashion
- Implement the council's supervision policy so that all social workers receive supervision in line with the council's policy.
- Embed use of the CAF in practice across children's services so that it is effectively used to inform early intervention.
- Demonstrate improvements in staff satisfaction and in the satisfaction of children and families with the services they receive through the term of the Improvement Notice.

Working with others:

- Establish clear and agreed processes with partners in the Children's Trust and LSCB for contact and referral so that contacts and referrals go to the appropriate team and are dealt with quickly
- Continue to work with National Strategies and National Challenge to improve attainment in all schools and across all Key Stages

Improvement against the above measures will be assessed as follows:

An interim review in March 2010, further review in October 2010, final review March 2011.

by:

The Department for Children, Schools, and Families, who 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 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 services.

Signed: *Dawn Primard* Date: 16/12/09