

Improvement Notice

To: Plymouth City Council ('the council')
Department for Children's Services
Ballard House
West Hoe Road
Plymouth
PL1 3BJ

This Improvement Notice is issued to Plymouth City Council on 19 May 2023 following the judgement that children's services have areas of priority action, as identified in the Ofsted Focused Visit report published on 30 January 2023.

1. This Notice is given to address all the areas for improvement identified in the report of the focused visit dated 30 January 2023.

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

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

Improvement plan

3. The council's improvement plan will deliver appropriate and sustainable improvement. The plan should cover the areas identified in the Ofsted report of 30 January 2023 as well as recommendations made by the adviser appointed by the Department.
4. 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 ensure it establishes and maintains an improvement board, which the council will be responsible for. The improvement board is to have an independent chair in place who will oversee the implementation of the improvement plan and report to the improvement board on progress against the objectives in the plan, to a timetable agreed with the Department. It 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 services for children in need of help and protection;

- 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

- 5. Officials or advisers from the Department will undertake reviews of progress against the improvement agenda at least every six months or more regularly where appropriate.
- 6. These reviews may cover, but are not exclusive to: culture; performance; leadership, management and governance; workforce and management oversight; early help; and multi-agency arrangements.
- 7. 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.
- 8. 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.
- 9. 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. involvement of safeguarding partners and the Improvement Board;
 - c. staff surveys;
 - d. staff supervision and the quality of feedback.
- 10. Taking account of the measures set out in this improvement notice and the adviser's feedback, the council should aim for actions included in the improvement plan to be delivered by the end of December 2023 (within 12 months of the Ofsted inspection) or sooner, where appropriate.

Improvement against the above measures will be assessed as follows:

- 11. The Department will be represented at the council's monthly Improvement Board.
- 12. 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:

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: 19 May 2023

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'LL', written over a faint, illegible stamp or watermark.

**Lucy Livings
Senior Civil Servant in Department for Education**