

DIRECTION UNDER SECTIONS 497(4B) OF THE EDUCATION ACT 1996 TO NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

WHEREAS

1. The Norfolk County Council (“the Council”) is the children’s services authority for its area.
2. The Ofsted reports ‘Inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children’ published on 22 February 2013 and ‘Inspection of looked after children services’ published 16 August 2013 found that the Council’s arrangements for those services were “inadequate”. In addition, an inspection of the local authority arrangements for supporting school improvement dated 24 July 2013 was rated “ineffective”.
3. The Secretary of State for Education is satisfied that the Council is failing to perform to an adequate standard or at all some or all of the functions to which section 497(A) of the Education Act 1996 is applied by section 50 of the Children Act 2004, namely:
 - a. social services functions, as defined in the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970, so far as those functions relate to children;
 - b. the functions conferred on the Council under sections 23C to 24D of the Children Act 1989 (so far as not falling within paragraph (a) above); and
 - c. the functions conferred on the Council under section 10, 12, 12C, 12D and 17A of the Children Act 2004.
4. The Secretary of State considers it expedient in accordance with section 497A(4B) of the Education Act 1996 to direct the Council, as set out below, in order to secure that those functions are performed to an adequate standard.
5. The Department for Education will assess progress by undertaking a performance review at the end of this Direction.

NOW THEREFORE

6. Pursuant to section 497A(4B) of the Education Act 1996, the Secretary of State for Education directs the Council to:
 - i. incorporate improvement activity for Looked After Children services into current improvement work to urgently address key areas of operation in children’s social care;
 - ii. submit the Council’s plans to improve children’s services to the Department of Education for approval within two

calendar months of the issuing of this Direction;

- iii. ensure the submitted improvement plan is accompanied by a preliminary report from the Independent Chairs of the Improvement Board and Norfolk Safeguarding Children Board to the Secretary of State for Education on the progress of all agencies in improving children's services in Norfolk, and quarterly reports thereafter; and
- iv. co-operate with an individual/organisation, to be identified by the Department for Education, who will conduct a review of the Council's approach and improvement plans and consider whether, and if so what, additional support is needed is to drive improvement.

7. This Direction will remain in force for a period of 6 months from the date on which it is made.

Signed by authority of the Secretary of State for Education



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Dated this 18 day of December 2013