



**Rt Hon Michael Gove MP**  
Secretary of State

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Peter Davies  
The Mayor  
Doncaster MBC  
Civic Office  
Waterdale  
Doncaster

25 March 2013

Dear Peter,

### **Children's Social Care**

As you are aware, I have been considering how the serious and longstanding failures in Doncaster's children's services can best be addressed. The scale of the problem, confirmed by Ofsted's most recent report, requires significant action. I am now writing to advise you of the measures I am minded to take to ensure the required improvements. I enclose a draft of the Direction which the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and I intend to make shortly. I would be pleased to hear any views from you or others in the Council with a direct interest, by Thursday 04 April.

I have asked Professor Julian Le Grand, Professor of Social Policy at the London School of Economics, supported by Alan Wood Director of Children's Services in Hackney, to review the structure and governance arrangements of Doncaster's children's social care services, with a view to deciding the approach most likely to support improvement over the long term.

In doing so, they will:

- report on progress in improving child protection services, since the Ofsted report of 16 November 2012;
- provide an assessment of the likelihood of the current governance arrangements providing sufficient and sustainable improvement: and
- consider whether those services should instead be delivered by an organisation independent of the council.

In conducting their review, Professor Le Grand and Alan Wood will consult you, Doncaster Councillors, key officers and those with an interest in children's services locally. I will expect Doncaster Council to co-operate fully with them as they conduct

this review, providing officers' time and support where required. Professor Le Grand will report to me by the end of May. I will consider his recommendations, before deciding on further action to secure improvement in Doncaster.

My expectation is that I will then want to appoint a fourth "Commissioner" in Doncaster, to join the team of existing Commissioners led by Rob Sykes, appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. This "Children's Services Commissioner" will have specific responsibility for ensuring the implementation of Professor Le Grand's recommendations. I intend to end immediately, the requirement for the Council to have in place the "Children's Board" required by the existing Direction.

Until any actions can be put in place following Professor Le Grand's review however, I see a need to put in place immediate improvement measures. I therefore also expect the Council to contract immediately with an external delivery partner to provide the capability and capacity to improve the standard of child protection practice. My officials would be very happy to discuss the details of this, and any associated funding arrangements, with your Chief Executive.

The draft Direction also contains the decision made by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, to extend the period in which the existing three Commissioners will operate, until 31 July 2015.

These measures are set out in more detail in the accompanying draft direction which I, along with the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, intend to issue under section 15(5) and (6) of the Local Government Act 1999 and section 497A (4B) of the Education Act 1996.

I am also letting you know that I will, tomorrow, be publishing the Government's response to Lord Carlile's report on the Edlington case. That response will detail the measures we are proposing to put in place in Doncaster as well as responding to the recommendations for central Government. I attach an embargoed copy.

I believe these steps are the ones required to establish the best possible chance of the very significant and sustainable change required in Doncaster. I hope you and colleagues in the Council will give Professor Le Grand and Alan Wood every assistance in taking the work forward.

I am copying this letter to Eric Pickles, to Jo Miller (Chief Executive) and Rob Sykes (Lead Commissioner).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Gove". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michael" written in a larger, more prominent script than the surname "Gove".

MICHAEL GOVE