



Edward Timpson MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families

Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus

Lord Warner
9 Bridle Close
Surbiton Road
Kingston Upon Thames
Surrey
KT1 2JW

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Dear Lord Warner,

I am writing formally to appoint you, through your company Sage Advice Ltd, as a Commissioner in relation to Birmingham City Council, with responsibility for Children's Social Care. The overall purpose of this work is to oversee improvement in the quality of children's social care services in Birmingham, as recommended in Professor Julian Le Grand's Report, published on 27 March. I know you have begun this work already and I am very grateful for your first report. I look forward to discussing it, and the Ofsted report which has now been published following the recent inspection, at our meeting on 10 June.

I am delighted that you have agreed to undertake this work on the priority areas of action which, as you are aware, are:

- to ensure that, by June 2014, Birmingham has a single coherent plan for the improvement of children's services with a particular focus on both the immediate period and the next three years, reporting to me on its adequacy. I have seen a first version of that report and would like to discuss it with you when we meet;
- to explore the problem of unidentified risk identified in the panel's report – with its suggestion that a significant number of children at risk are simply not coming into the system;
- to review Birmingham's senior management capacity and report to me on this; and
- to oversee the production of a budget for children's services in Birmingham that reflects its improvement needs and which aligns with the improvement plan.

The other key area on which I would like your company to focus is overseeing work to identify future strategies for commissioning children's social care services in Birmingham, to report to me and Sir Albert Bore by the end of this year. I would also be grateful for your assessment, by March 2015, of the necessary next steps to continue to secure improvement in Birmingham's services.

These areas will be set out formally in the contractual arrangement we expect to set up with Sage Advice Ltd and which officials will send to you in draft shortly.

As you know, Julian Le Grand's report suggested the engagement of an "expert panel" to support this work. That feels to me an important component of the strategy for ensuring that Birmingham has, at a range of levels, both the challenge and the support to tackle some of the detailed issues which lie behind the significant further work your report identifies and the practice issues picked up with Ofsted. Again, we might discuss how best to utilise the expertise available when we meet.

I know that Birmingham City Council particularly welcomes your appointment to this work and that you have already had fairly extensive discussions with them. After our discussion, the next step will be for the Department to issue Birmingham with a formal Direction, which will require them to cooperate with you in your work and in particular on the priority areas for action. It will be worth us reflecting whether there are particular areas we need to include in that Direction to ensure their full cooperation.

I very much look forward to making progress with you in the coming months as we work together to drive essential improvements for children and young people in Birmingham. I am copying this letter to Michael Gove and to Eric Pickles.

*Your ever,
Edward.*

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