



Edward Timpson MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families

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Councillor Sir Albert Bore
Leader, Birmingham City Council
Council House
Victoria Square
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23 May 2014

Dear Albert,

I write following Ofsted's publication this morning of the report of their inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, looked after children and care leavers in Birmingham.

Ofsted's findings are not unexpected. Julian Le Grand and his team's report published on 27 March showed a similar picture of poor performance. That makes the findings no less concerning, however. The Council is inadequate across all four principal areas inspected and persists in failing to protect the most vulnerable children in Birmingham. That is and continues to be unacceptable, the more so given the length of time that services have been found wanting and the opportunities not taken to put them right.

That is, of course, why I have asked Lord Warner to direct your improvement work as Commissioner for Birmingham Children's Social Care. I know that work has begun well and I have seen Lord Warner's letter to the Secretary of State which reports some early progress. I will be meeting him early next month to discuss his views after working with you for two months and his view of the Ofsted report and what is needed in response to it.

Birmingham has many committed social workers, seeking to do their best for the city's children. I value their contribution highly, as I know you do. They are, of course, central to the improvement which is needed in Birmingham and deserve clear leadership and a strong plan to achieve the change which is needed.

You have, I know, been working on an Improvement Plan and have sent a draft to my officials. Today's Ofsted report outlines ten areas for immediate action and six for further improvement. To my mind, they throw into sharp relief the scale of the improvement required and the need for your plan to be action oriented, rigorous and to signal a relentless drive for improvement over several years. I now expect you to review your improvement plan in light of Ofsted's findings and I will be looking for it to set out the specific steps which will deliver all the necessary improvements.

By 22 July I wish to see a clear explanation of the issues underlying each of the Ofsted recommendations and how you intend to address them – with the same sharpness and rigour as for the plan more generally.

I am copying this letter to the following key people in Birmingham, Councillor Brigid Jones - Lead Member, Mark Rogers – Chief Executive, Peter Hay – Director for People, Lord Warner – Commissioner for Children's Social Care, and Jane Held – Birmingham Children Safeguarding Board Chair.

Your ever,
Edward.

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