



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

Professor Julian Le Grand
Department of Social Policy
Old Building
London School of Economics and Political Science
Houghton Street
London WC2A 2AE

27 March 2014

Dear Julian,

I am writing today to thank you and your panel, Alan Wood and Isabelle Trowler, for your Report on ways forward for children's social care services in Birmingham, which I commissioned last November and you presented to Ministers in February. I am also very grateful to those experts and leaders in their field who provided you with additional support: Andrew Christie, Clare Chamberlain, John Coughlan and Steve Crocker. I am copying this letter to those who supported you.

It is clear from your Report that whilst your discussions in Birmingham pointed to some building blocks which should lead to improvement, significant concerns remain. I accept the recommendations in your Report and will now seek to put them into effect.

There is clearly a good deal of very focused work that needs to start in Birmingham straight away, to implement your recommendations and to ensure that the service is safe and children are protected. I have today written to the leader of Birmingham City Council, Councillor Sir Albert Bore, to make clear that I will be directing the Council to take various actions going forward in pursuit of sustainable improvement. I attach a copy of that letter, which sets this out in detail, but in summary, the next key actions I plan to take are:

- to appoint a Commissioner for Children's Social Care in Birmingham – Lord

Norman Warner; and

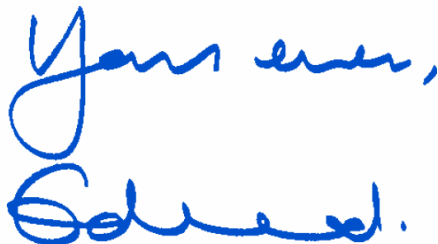
- to appoint an expert panel comprising Isabelle Trowler and other experts and leaders in their field.

This team will bring a greater quantity and quality of external challenge and support than has been seen in Birmingham before. I will be expecting them to work closely with the Council to ensure that there is a clear and effective plan for improvement in place, to undertake a proper analysis of the unidentified risk issue which you highlighted as a particular concern in the Report, to identify ways to strengthen senior management capacity and to focus hard on practice improvement.

You set out in the Report your view that there is a need to explore how improvement capacity can be created or promoted in the children's services system. That is, to ensure that a range of intervention options are available when local authorities are failing to protect children and young people. I accept this view. It is vital that we are able to act swiftly – as you say, in particular for those authorities where the scale and persistent nature of the problem indicates the need for a radical, long-term solution.

That is why I would like to invite you and your other Panel members, Alan Wood and Isabelle Trowler, to form a team to oversee the commissioning of an external study in this area. I am clear that the experience and expertise of your Panel will be essential in drawing up the specification for this work. I would like this to get underway now and to report in September. I will want this to be followed by a second piece of work, reporting in December, which will look at the future commissioning of services in Birmingham in particular. This second piece of work will draw on the study that I am asking you to commission and I will be making plans for the commissioning of the second study in due course.

Thank you again for your Report and for giving so much time and energy to the efforts to drive improvements to services for children and young people. I look forward to continue working with you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Yours ever, Edward'.

Edward Timpson MP
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