

Annex A

**From Cllr David Simmonds, Chairman of the
LGA Children and Young People Board**

Rt Hon David Laws MP
Minister of State for Schools
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

28 January 2014

Dear David

Regional Commissioners

The LGA's Children and Young People Board discussed the introduction of Regional Commissioners at their meeting on 9 January 2014 and considered the paper that you kindly sent following the December meeting of the Local Authority Reference Group.

Board members asked for further details about how, in practice, the Commissioners and their offices would relate to the councils in their regions. They asked how the Commissioners could be held to account by councils in relation to their wider school improvement and place-planning duties. They also asked how much the DfE estimated this new regional layer of bureaucracy would cost.

Members expressed concerns about the 'regions' the commissioners will cover, which do not follow the standard planning regions or Ofsted's regional structure. It is of particular concern that London has been split into three. This will make it difficult for parents to know who to contact if they have concerns about an academy's performance.

Given the size and geographical diversity of the proposed regions, the Board did not believe that commissioners could possibly have the detailed local knowledge and understanding they would need to effectively monitor the performance of the academies they would be responsible for; or choose suitable sponsors for new academies. They asked for a rationale for the configuration of the proposed regions.

A major issue for members was the lack of consultation with councils about this new role, given the statutory duty on councils to promote high educational

standards and the expectation from Ofsted that they should take an interest in the educational standards in all schools in their areas, including academies.

They were very concerned that there was no formal announcement or consultation on this proposal and the first councils knew about the plans was when the posts were advertised in December.

I look forward to discussing the issue further when we meet on 5 February, but I you will find it helpful to consider the Board's views in advance.

I am copying this letter to Mark Rogers from SOLACE and Andrew Webb from ADCS.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'D. Jones', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.