



**Edward Timpson MP**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families

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Councillor Sir Merrick Cockell  
Local Government Association Chairman  
Local Government House  
Smith Square  
London  
SW1P 3HZ

27 March 2014

Dear Merrick,

Last November, the Minister for Children and Families, Edward Timpson, asked Professor Julian Le Grand, supported by Alan Wood and Isabelle Trowler, to produce a Report on ways forward for children's social care services in Birmingham. This Report was presented to Ministers in February and is being published today.

As part of his work, I know that Professor Le Grand spoke to Colin Hilton and Councillor David Simmonds, who were both part of the LGA Birmingham Peer Review Team towards the end of last year. I am very grateful for the LGA's assistance with this.

It is clear from Professor Le Grand's Report that whilst discussions in Birmingham pointed to some building blocks which should, in time, lead to improvement, significant concerns remain about the safety of children. It is clear to me that swift action is needed to make the service safe.

Further, Professor Le Grand set out in the Report his view that, in order to ensure that a full range of intervention options are available when local authorities are failing to protect children and young people, there is a need to explore how improvement capacity can be created or promoted in the children's services system. I also accept this view and therefore am clear that as well as the more immediate action, there is a need for some medium-term activity in pursuit of sustainable improvement.

I have therefore accepted the Panel's recommendations for ways forward and have today written to the leader of Birmingham City Council, Councillor Sir Albert Bore, and to Professor Le Grand to make clear the next steps. I attach a copy of both letters, which set this out in detail, but to summarise in broad terms the work in Birmingham and nationally:

- I will be appointing Lord Norman Warner as Commissioner for Children's Social Care in Birmingham and appointing an Expert Panel, independent of the Council, comprising Isabelle Trowler and other Children's Services experts to work with the Council to ensure the service is safe and drive immediate improvements.
- I have decided to commission a piece of work overseen by Professor Le Grand to explore developing capacity for delivering children's services, including outside of local authorities. This will be used not only in future thinking about the commissioning of services in Birmingham but elsewhere. This will report by September 2014. A further report by the end of the year will make recommendations specifically about the best long-term commissioning approach for services in Birmingham. That study will report to me, and to the Council.

I am absolutely committed to getting the very best service for Birmingham's children and would very much value your support as this work progresses. I will ask my officials to ensure that you are kept updated over the coming months.

*Yours ever,  
Edward.*

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