Dear Meg,

Thirty-first PAC report of Session 2016-17 – Child protection

My letter of 31 March set out a further response to the Committee’s thirty-first report of Session 2016-17 – Child protection. It supplemented the formal Treasury Minute response to the Committee’s report published on 9 March. Following that letter, four of the Committee’s recommendations remained to be resolved. This letter sets out progress against those responses:

- On recommendation 3 (The Department should work with Ofsted and set out for the Committee by March 2017 what steps it will take to get more timely assurance on the quality of children’s services), with the Department’s support, Ofsted are working on a new framework for the inspection of children’s social care services. The new framework will improve the timeliness of assurance around the quality of children’s social care significantly. They will begin to inspect against that framework in January.

- On Recommendation 4 (The Department should speed up its use of leading indicators to intervene in local authorities before they fail), since the PAC’s report the Department has undertaken work to develop indicators which will help identify those LAs at risk of failure. We are looking to embed those indicators in a broader improvement programme we are developing with sector partners and which we hope to pilot from October.

- On Recommendation 5 (The Department should set out for the Committee its plans for evaluation, dissemination and embedding good practice), by the end of the year the Department intends to have in place an initial model for a “What Works Centre” for child protection. The Centre will form the centrepiece of a national learning infrastructure, which
will draw on a revised serious case review system, the Department’s Innovation Programme and the work of our "Partners in Practice", amongst other sources of evidence.

- We consider recommendation 7c (The Department should clarify what it will do to set clear guidelines for officials about conflicts of interest), to be implemented. The Department has written to senior staff in the Department and to its Arm’s Length Bodies reminding them of their responsibility to disclose potential conflicts of interest. We will of course, continue to work to improve the reporting system for our senior staff.

In addition, we promised to let the Committee have a copy of the Department’s “roadmap” for the delivery of its children’s social care reform programme. I am pleased to attach a headline roadmap, which sets out the timing of the key elements of the programme and its key milestones.

We will provide an update on outstanding recommendations in spring next year.

JONATHAN SLATER
PERMANENT SECRETARY
All vulnerable children, no matter where they live, have access to the support they need to keep them safe, provide them with a stable and nurturing home, and overcome challenges to achieve their potential.

**CSC Vision and strategic objectives**

**Where we are**

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**2017**

- Children and Social Work Act 2017 Royal Assent (April 17)
- Assessment and Accreditation
- Frontline cohort 4 LAs confirmed (Mar 17)
- Step-Up, Frontline & ASYE
- Practice Leaders Development programme
- Chair of Sandwell trust appointed (June 17)
- Sunderland trust operational (Apr 17)
- Common Inspection Framework (Apr 17)
- First Regional Adoption Agency goes live (Apr 17)
- Second round of Innovation Programme announced - April 2016 Third round - Nov 2016

**Practice**

- National Fostering Stocktake launched (Apr 17)
- Pilot mental health assessments (Apr 18)
- Bids for care leavers Sub (Aug 17)
- Announce Staying Close pilots (Jul 17)
- Setup Residential Care Leadership Board (Nov 17)
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- Building evidence base on what works through the Programme and Partners in Practice programme
- Establish a What Works Centre (April 2020)

**Programme objectives**

- Social Work England operating under funding agreement
- National roll out
- Step-Up, Frontline & ASYE future cohorts
- Practice Leaders Development programme
- Supervisors Development programme
- Improve interventions process and deliver Trusts where LAs fail persistently or systemically
- Roll out Regional Adoption Agencies across country (Dec 2020)

**Timeline**

- June 16
- July 16
- March 17
- Feb 17
- Dec 16
- Nov 16
- Aug 17
- Apr 17
- Apr 18
- June 17
- July 17
- Nov 17
- Sep 2018
- Dec 2018
- July 2019
- July 2020
- April 2021
- April 2022

**People**

- High performing services everywhere

**Practice**

- A practice and learning system which enables, identifies and spreads excellence and innovation

**Where we are**

- National SCR panel goes live (April 2018)
- Implement recommendations
- Evaluate pilots published (Sept 2020)
- Staying Close pilots evaluated (Dec 20)
- National SCR panel goes live (April 2018)
- Social Work England operating under funding agreement
- National roll out
- Step-Up, Frontline & ASYE future cohorts
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**Vision and systemic rather than just local failure.**

**Demand for help or protection is rising,**

**arrangements for sharing good practice are piecemeal and high caseloads, vacancies and use of agency workers is related to the quality of services (NAO Oct 2016).**

The Department’s ambition is to ensure that all vulnerable children, no matter where they live, have access to the same high quality care and support by 2022.

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