

Permanent Secretary

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Meg Hillier Chair of the Public Accounts Committee House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

\ 8 September 2017

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

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CSC Vision and 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 strategic nurturing home, and overcome challenges to achieve their potential objectives Sub 2016 2019 2020 2021 2022 Programme 2017 2018 Children and Social objectives Where we are programmes **Putting Children First** Work Act 2017 Royal published (July 16) Assent (Apr17) Social Work England Implementation Social Work England operating under Project established (Mar 17) funding agreement rising, arrangements for use of agency workers is ensure that all vulnerable children, no matter where they live, receive upport by 2022. protection for children is unsatisfactory and inconsistent, suggesting Beta roll out (Sep 2019) Consultation on A&A of Assessment and Accreditation Alpha roll out (Mid 2018) PEOPLE: National roll out Social Workers (Dec 16) People A highly Teaching partnerships capable, Teaching partnerships highly skilled Step up cohort 5 Frontline cohort 4 LAs social work confirmed (Feb 17) confirmed (Mar 17) Step-Up, Frontline & ASYE Step-Up, Frontline & ASYE Step-Up, Frontline & ASYE future cohorts workforce Practice Leaders Development programme Practice Leaders Development programme Practice Leaders Development programme protection Supervisors Development programme local failure. Demand for help or protection piecemeal and high caseloads, vacancies vices. (NAO Oct 2016). Chair of Birm trust Sunderland trust Chair of Sandwell trust Improve interventions process and deliver Trusts where LAs fail persistently or systemically appointed (Nov 16) operational (Apr 17) appointed (June 17) Ofsted deliver new inspection PLACES: framework (Jan 18) Place Increasingly LAs at risk of failure are identified early High New Social Care Common New improvement programme for at and action taken to turn them around Inspection Framework (Apr 17) performing risk LAs launches (October 2017) First Regional Adoption Agency services goes live (Apr 17) Roll out Regional Adoption Agencies across country (Dec 2020) everywhere Second round of Innovation Programme announced - April 2016 Third round - Nov 2016 Evaluation reports published - July 2017 - 2020 We will continue to: Publish evidence on what good CSC services look like as a consistent methodology to underpin improvement Continue to implement and develop new services e.g. Adoption Support Fund, Staying Close and Staying Put for care leavers. PRACTICE: Ensure targeted safeguarding support is effective and develop new practice responses to emerging threats e.g. CSE, radicalisation, and work across Govt. on an effective and joined up response to these threats. Improve use of data including on Secure Children's Homes places to reform commissioning A practice National Fostering Stocktake launched (Apr 17 and learning Fostering Stocktake report (Dec 17) Implement recommendations system which Pilot mental health assessments (Apr 18) Practice Evaluate pilots enables, published (Sept 2020) New multi-agency regulations (May 2018) identifies and Launch second child LAs have local arrangements in systemic rathe sharing good preserved to the contract to the contract The Department abuse campaign (Mar 17) place Sept 2019 spreads Announce Staying Staying Close pilots Bids for care leavers Staving Close Keep on Caring published (Jul 16) excellence Close pilots(Jul 17) Completed SIB (Aug 17) evaluated (Dec 20) national roll-out and Build robust evidence base on what works through the Currently Set up Residential Care innovation Innovation Programme and Partners in Practice programme Leadership Board (Nov 17) approved Establish a What Works Government response to Centre (April 2020) Children in Residential Care **TBC** National SCR panel goes live (April 2018) report published (Nov 16)