



Permanent Secretary

Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
tel: 0207 340 7414 permanent.secretary@education.gov.uk

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

18 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

CSC Vision and strategic objectives **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**

