



Edward Timpson MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families

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Councillor Mike Bird
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Den Mike,

30 October 2013

Thank you for your letter of 30 September, summarising the further progress you believe you have made in safeguarding children and young people in Walsall. This follows the July 2013 Ofsted inspection which rated Walsall as adequate in making effective arrangements to protect children and the six month review carried out by my officials. I am pleased to note that your Strategic Improvement Plan pays attention to the new single Ofsted framework; also that improving the quality and reliability of performance data now enables you to focus on key areas of performance at individual, team and service levels.

Diary pressures make it difficult to arrange a visit to Walsall before Christmas to see for myself the improvements you have made. However, I have asked my officials to arrange a twelve-month review and to provide me with a report on Walsall's readiness to exit intervention. I have also asked the Improvement Board Chair, Chris Spencer, to send me another report in November. Among other things, this should cover how fully the revised Strategic Improvement Plan has been implemented; the impact it is having on service delivery; the sustainability of your improvement measures overall; and the capability of the Safeguarding Board to take over from the Improvement Board once the Notice is lifted.

In their twelve-month review, my officials will report in particular on:

- The impact of the strategy to reduce and remove the backlog of referrals, including the appropriate use of thresholds
- Improvements to the quality and timeliness of initial assessments and the impact of improvements to "step up/step down" processes
- The outcomes of your review of staffing and workforce issues, in particular your recruitment and retention strategy, the use of agency staff and the impact of measures to reduce absence

I know you are planning some deep dives to assess performance in particular areas. My officials will be happy to reflect with you on the lessons learned from such exercises.

I look forward to receiving these reports in order to assess Walsall's readiness to exit intervention.

Yours sincerely,

Edward

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