



Edward Timpson MP

Minister of State for Children and Families

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Councillor Stewart Young
Leader, Cumbria County Council

[By email]

11 April 2016

Dear Stewart,

DfE INTERVENTION IN CUMBRIA COUNTY COUNCIL

I am writing further to the review which officials conducted on 14 March. I am aware that Cumbria has been subject to a considerable amount of scrutiny recently and recognise that this has been challenging, particularly against the backdrop of flooding which affected the county earlier this year. It is to the council's credit that senior leaders and staff at all levels have maintained a focus on improvement throughout this time.

When we met in October, I made clear my expectation of clear progress by this point and I have now had opportunity to review a range of performance evidence. This has included: the outcome of the DfE review; input from DfE's adviser and from the chair of the LSCB; and reports from Ofsted. I have also seen the outcome of the recent LGA care practice diagnostic.

Having considered all the available evidence, I am satisfied that the council is taking reasonable steps to address remaining weaknesses. I welcome the commitment of elected members and the senior leadership team and their engagement with external support. I am reassured that the council is giving due attention to performance across the range of services, rather than focusing only on those areas which were judged by Ofsted to be inadequate. I also welcome the steps which the council has taken to strengthen governance and accountability, including through the recent restructure and improvements to performance scrutiny arrangements. It is critical that this information is used to target attention where it is needed in order to drive sustainable improvement.

On this basis, I intend to maintain the current level of intervention in Cumbria with a further progress review in six months. I am aware that a number of serious case reviews are due to report within that time and I will of course need to consider whether these impact in any way on the nature of the intervention.

I will be looking for reassurance in the next progress review of the steps being taken to ensure that practice is consistent across the county, so that children and families in all parts of Cumbria are able to access high quality services. I would also encourage the council to continue to strengthen its partnerships with external partners and sources of support, to assist ongoing improvement. Should progress on improvement not continue at pace then I will need to consider whether service control can continue to remain with the council.

I am copying this letter to: Councillor Anne Burns; Diane Wood; John Macilwraith; and Gill Rigg.

Yours Sincerely,
Edward

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