



Edward Timpson MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families

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14th January 2014

Dear Colleague

In March 2012 our *Action Plan for Adoption* made clear our determination to tackle damaging delay in the system, and in May and November the first and subsequent adoption scorecards showed clearly the variation in timeliness across the country.

Today we are publishing updated adoption scorecards covering the three year period to March 2013. I have previously announced that thresholds would become more challenging in order to bring performance closer to the expectation for 2013-16 as outlined in the *Action Plan for Adoption*. The third set of scorecards shifts the three year average forward from 2009-12 to 2010-13 and the thresholds have been slightly updated to 20 months (A1) and 6 months (A2). I am also publishing the thresholds for 2011-14 and 2012-15, which should help local authorities in further planning the actions they need to take to meet the 2013-16 thresholds.

Recently, Ofsted published data which showed a 34% rise in the number of approved adopters between 2012 and 2013. This is hugely encouraging, but with 6,000 children for whom the courts have agreed to make a placement order still waiting to be placed, we need to go further and we need to go faster. That is why we're maintaining such a strong focus on reforming the adoption system.

You will see that the thresholds are increasingly challenging to meet the targets for 2016. We are not yet, however, seeing the positive rise in the number of adopters reflected in improved performance against the timeliness targets. It is concerning, for example, that this time only 36 local authorities have been successful in meeting both thresholds compared to 71 in 2012. It is clear that, for a large number of authorities, more needs to be done to ensure timely placements for children.


Against that backdrop, however, I'd like to congratulate you on your success not only in meeting the 2013 targets, but also in already meeting

the 2016 targets. This is a significant achievement. It will of course need a continued sharp focus to continue to meet or exceed the 2013-16 thresholds. In the meantime, I'd like us to think about how we can share the lessons from your success more widely and my officials will be in touch to set up a conversation about how best to do that.

The performance reflected in the adoption scorecards overall is not consistent with what we think is needed to deliver the 2013-16 expectations as set out in the *Action Plan for Adoption*. In the current financial year the Government has invested £150m through the Adoption Reform Grant to help authorities deliver the sustainable change required as well as introducing the new Two-Stage Approval process, and First4Adoption. The Government has also invested in the voluntary adoption sector to help grow the supply of adopter numbers. We expect these changes to help local authorities who have not made the same progress as yourselves deliver the improvements required.

I look forward to seeing councils rise to the challenge of improving adoption processes and eradicating delays; we must continue to do all we can to reform services so that children in need of adoption are found a permanent and loving home as quickly as possible.

Building on your success and significant achievements this year I would like to encourage you to maintain this progress and share learning with other authorities wherever possible.

Yours sincerely,


Edward Timpson MP
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