



**Edward Timpson MP**  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families  
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Councillor Tony Johnson  
Leader of the Council  
Herefordshire Council  
Plough Lane Offices  
Plough Lane  
Hereford  
HR4 OLE

*Dear Tony,*

24 March 2015

I am writing to lift the Improvement Notice, which I issued to Herefordshire Council on 14 February 2012.

It is clear from the 2014 Ofsted single inspection framework assessment of children's services provision; the reports submitted to me by Paul Curran; and the review of the Improvement Notice carried out by my officials on 15/16 December, that Herefordshire has made good progress in addressing the issues raised in Ofsted's September 2012 inspection. I want to congratulate you and acknowledge the hard work of staff, leadership, and partner organisations in bringing about this change. I am grateful for the constructive way your officers have engaged with my officials over the period of the Notice.

Thank you for your letter of 10 December 2014. I was reassured to hear that there is political interest and commitment to continue to prioritise children's safeguarding, and of Herefordshire's commitment to protect spending on children's services, alongside supporting Council members to fulfil their corporate parenting role. Your leadership and oversight will be important in ensuring that the Council and the Safeguarding Children Board continue to improve child protection arrangements in Herefordshire.

Whilst it is clear that the service provided to children, young people and their families has improved, Ofsted identified some areas for development and challenges. In particular, embedding and sustaining recent improvements across the service; tackling variability in practice; and enhancing support for looked after children will all require a continued sharp focus. I understand from my officials that these requirements are captured in your improvement plan and that you and children's services leadership and staff are dedicated to achieving 'good' or better for your provision.

You recognise that your workforce position remains fragile and is a major challenge to maintaining improvement. I welcome your continued commitment to invest this area.

I am pleased to hear that Paul Curran will continue to work with Herefordshire over coming months to further support the Council's improvement activity and work closely with Sally Halls, the new LSCB Chair, on transition arrangements.

Given the evidence available to me and the progress you have made I have sufficient confidence to lift the Improvement Notice with immediate effect.

I would encourage you and your officers work with neighbouring authorities – especially those who find themselves facing similar challenges – in order to share the lessons you have learned, and the good practice you have developed on your 'improvement journey'.

I am copying this letter to: Councillor Jeremy Millar, Councillor Jenny Hyde, Jo Davidson, Alistair Neill, Paul Curran and Sally Halls.

*Yours sincerely,*

*Edward*

**Edward Timpson MP**  
**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families**