



**Michelle Donelan MP**

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families

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Councillor Julian Bell  
Labour Group Members Room  
Town Hall  
New Broadway  
W5 2BY

19<sup>th</sup> December 2019

Dear Julian

**London Borough of Ealing: INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY  
CHILDREN'S SERVICES (PUBLISHED DATE 19 December 2019)**

I am writing following Ofsted's publication of its report on London Borough of Ealing's services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. Ofsted has judged services overall to be 'Requires improvement to be good'.

It is disappointing to see that the quality of services for children is no longer judged as 'Good' and that services have declined since the 2016 inspection. I recognise that local authorities face significant challenges in delivering effective children's social care services, but the fact that they are so important to the most vulnerable children locally means that it is essential that they be delivered to a high standard.

Ofsted has described service delivery in Ealing as variable but have identified some areas of good practice such as the quality of social work once referrals are accepted and the level of support children in care and care leavers receive for their education. Children in care have their health needs met well and most live in secure and stable homes. Care leavers receive a high level of support with their training and employment. I expect Ealing will continue to maintain and develop these good areas of practice.

However, the report also highlights how high caseloads, issues with the front door and weakened management oversight are impacting on the local authority's ability to provide consistently good services to children, young people and their families. There was evidence of delays in assessing children's needs and some children waiting too long to come into care. The quality of accommodation for care leavers is also inconsistent, and some care leavers do not feel safe where they live, which is unacceptable.

In order to drive and sustain improvement, the leadership must be onboard. I am therefore glad to hear that leaders have responded well to the issues raised during the inspection period, and in some cases have taken immediate action. I now expect

the Council to work swiftly to take the necessary steps to address all of the areas for improvement identified by Ofsted, including the allocation and timeliness of responses to referrals, the quality and consistency of management oversight, the sufficiency of accommodation, the quality and accuracy of performance reporting and the quality of responses to children and young people who are at risk of being homeless and children on the edge of care.

My understanding is that Ealing has now withdrawn from the Partners in Practice Programme. I am very grateful for your work on this programme to date but agree that it is now sensible to take a step back to focus on your own improvement journey. My officials have spoken to Judith Finlay and have scheduled a meeting in the new year to explore what additional support could be helpful. I encourage you to keep working with our Regional Improvement and Support Lead for London, Hester Carro ([hester.carro@education.gov.uk](mailto:hester.carro@education.gov.uk)) who is your main departmental contact for children's social care going forward.

I am copying this letter to: Cllr Yvonne Johnson, Paul Najsarek, Judith Finlay, Virendra Sharma MP, James Murray MP, Rupa Huq MP.



Yours sincerely,

**Michelle Donelan MP**  
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