



**Edward Timpson MP**  
Minister of State for Children and Families

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John Osman  
Leader of Somerset County Council  
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17 September 2015

Dear John,

**Secretary of State intervention in Somerset Country Council's children's social care services**

As you know, following Ofsted's judgement that Somerset County Council's children's social care services are inadequate for a second consecutive time, I appointed independent advisers – Dave Hill and his team from Essex County Council - to undertake a review and to report to me on the Council's capability and capacity to secure improvement. I have now received and considered my advisers' report.

I note that leadership needed to drive improvement is now in place and key issues are beginning to be tackled. I am advised that the Council's plan, focusing on nine key priorities, is a good starting point to get the basics right. This is encouraging. It is clear, however, that there is a long way to go before Somerset's children's social care services are adequate. I have therefore decided that Somerset County Council's improvement should be monitored over the period until September 2016 to ensure that the steps the Council are taking to address failure secure the necessary improvement to services – I will be asking my expert advisers to conduct quarterly reviews and report to me on the outcome. These arrangements will be enforced via a statutory direction issued under section s497A(4B) of the Education Act 1996. A draft of the direction will be sent to you for your comments in due course.

I will be looking for clear evidence that the pace of change is maintained, that there is strong leadership and management of the improvement programme and that the corporate support needed to facilitate improvement is provided. I will

expect Somerset County Council to cooperate with my advisers and to take account of the recommendations in their report, alongside those in Ofsted's report of March 2015. If insufficient progress is made, I will reconsider whether Somerset County Council has the capability and capacity to lead its own improvement.

Given that quarterly reviews will be in place, the statutory direction will not require Somerset County Council to also have an Improvement Board. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Jane Haywood for the work she has done as the independent chair of this Board to support Somerset's improvement.

I am copying this letter to Francis Nicholson, Patrick Flaherty, Julian Wooster, Dave Hill and Jane Haywood.

*Yours sincerely,*  
*Edward*

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