



**Rt Hon Dawn Primarolo MP**

Minister of State for Children, Young People and Families.

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Councillor Ross Irving  
Leader of the Council  
Stoke-on-Trent City Council  
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21 July 2009

*Dear Councillor Irving,*

I would like to thank your Lead Member for Children's Services, Cllr Ian Mitchell, and Interim Chief Executive, Chris Harman, for meeting with me yesterday (20 July) to discuss the Council's succession plans for the end of the Government's intervention in children's services in Stoke. It was unfortunate that you were not well enough to attend. I hope that you are feeling well again now.

The current contract with Serco for the delivery of the strategic management team in children's services ends on 31 March 2010. As discussed at our meeting with the Council yesterday, I welcome the clear evidence that performance has improved across children's services and am grateful to Ged Rowney, Director of Children's and Young People's Services, and his team for their good work. I am also grateful for the support provided to Serco by the Council to improve services for the children and young people of Stoke.

When I met with the Council, it was made clear to me that the leadership of the Council's preference is to enter into a new contract for the management of children's services with an external supplier, when the current contract expires in March 2010. You also explained an alternative option would be for the Council to directly recruit a new leadership team. You will now be taking your proposals to the Council for debate shortly.

As you will understand, I need to be reassured that the Council has robust, workable succession plans in place, with a clear timetable for securing the new management team in time for a smooth hand-over of responsibility from the current leadership team at the end of March. At our meeting, I was reassured to hear that decisions would be taken by September and I would therefore be grateful if you would write to me at the end of September setting out the decision the Council has taken on how to secure a new senior team and the steps the Council has and will be taking to achieve this in the months leading up to the end of the current contract.



department for  
**children, schools and families**

As a result of the clear improvements evidenced, and subject to robust succession plans being agreed by the Council, I am not minded to issue a further direction. I wish you every success in this next stage of your children's services improvement journey and hope to hear of sustained progress being made in Stoke, in particular through the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).

I am copying this letter to Cllr Ian Mitchell, Lead Member for Children's Services, Chris Harman, Interim Chief Executive, Joan Walley MP, Mr Mark Fisher MP and Mr Robert Ffello MP, and Elaine Simpson at Serco.

*Yours sincerely,  
Dawn Primarolo*

**DAWN PRIMAROLO**