Dear Mr Lewis

Thank you for your email of 17 October to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and ministers about children’s social care. Your email has been forwarded to the Department for Education for a reply.

Councils will receive more than £200 billion for local services, including children’s social care, up to 2019-20. Council spending on children and young people's services increased to over £9 billion in 2015-16. We understand, however, that councils have been making, and continue to make, extremely tough choices around priorities, given growing demand on services.

To help councils meet the challenges, the department has invested £200m since 2014 in the Innovation programme and Partners in Practice programme, to promote innovation and re-design of service delivery to achieve higher quality and better value for money. As part of this, the government has announced £20m to provide additional support to local authorities (LAs) where the risk of service failure is highest. This will allow the government to increase the number of strong LAs within the Partners in Practice programme, to provide intensive peer support, challenge and advice to LAs with the greatest needs and to aid the sector’s ambition to create a system in which all LAs support each other in areas of strength.

The East Midlands is one of the three regions who are currently piloting the Regional Improvement Alliance model, as part of the Innovation programme and Partners in Practice programme investment. These pilots are set to test out a regional model for improvement based on self-assessment and peer review, so councils can learn from one another and the government can broker improvement support to those authorities that need it. As Derbyshire forms part of the East Midlands Alliance, it is strongly recommended that you get in touch with the lead for your alliance, Debbie Barnes (Director of Children’s Services at Lincolnshire) who will be able to provide more detail on the pilot and how you can be involved.

You say in your letter that county councils face particular financial challenges, relative to other local authority types. The government has re-affirmed the commitment to a fair funding review led by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). This aims to address concerns about the fairness of current funding distributions and carry out an evidence-based review of current funding formulae, so they reflect shifting factors, such as changing populations and demographic pressures that impact on LA costs in providing services.

The department will be working alongside DCLG and the sector as part of the review and are jointly funding specific research with DCLG, including data collection into ‘need to spend’ on children’s social care but also wider children’s services, for example home to school transport.

Once again, thank you for writing and I hope this information proves helpful.

Your correspondence has been allocated reference number 2017-0052150. If you need to respond to us, please visit: <https://www.education.gov.uk/contactus> and quote your reference number.

As part of our commitment to improving the service we provide to our customers, we are interested in hearing your views and would welcome your comments via our website at:<http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/YBK1O/>

Yours sincerely

D Birkett

Ministerial and Public Communications Division

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