

To: Local Authority Chief Executives  
Local Authority Council Leaders  
Lead Members for Children's Services  
Local Authority Directors of Children's Services

cc: Government Office Children and Learners Teams

17 March 2010

Dear colleagues

***The Government's Response to Lord Laming: One Year On  
and  
Building a Safe and Confident Future: Implementing the  
recommendations of the Social Work Task Force***

In March 2009, Lord Laming published *The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report*. The Government accepted all of Lord Laming's 58 recommendations and published an action plan in May 2009, setting out our shared commitment to drive up the quality of safeguarding practice across the country.

The Government recognises the critical lead role of local authorities in co-ordinating children's services so that children and young people are safe from harm and well protected. We want to pay tribute to the many thousands of social workers, teachers, police officers, doctors, nurses, health visitors and many others who support and protect children and young people. We recognise too that many professionals and practitioners are working in challenging local contexts.

One year on from Lord Laming's report we are today publishing a set of documents which are designed to offer further support and clearer guidance to everyone involved in safeguarding children and young people. They take account of the revised Children's Trust guidance also being published in March and reaffirm the shared responsibility for safeguarding and child protection. The documents comprise:

- *The Government's Response to Lord Laming: One Year On;*
- Revised statutory guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children;*
- The Government's response to the *Working Together to Safeguard Children* consultation;
- *Local Safeguarding Children Boards – Practice Guidance for Consultation* and a DCSF research brief entitled *The Evaluation of the Arrangements for Effective Operation of the New Local Safeguarding Children Boards in England.*

All the documents are available at [www.dcsf.gov.uk/nsdu](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/nsdu). One particular element to draw to your attention is the revised safeguarding role for the Government Office Children and Learner Teams - a summary of the changes is included at the end of this letter. A new cadre of safeguarding advisers has been recruited with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April. Working as part of the National Safeguarding Delivery Unit in the regions and supporting local areas they will have a critical role in providing expert advice, support and challenge.

This will complement the wider strategic role of the new Children and Learners Strategic Advisers (CLSAs), who also have a specific safeguarding focus in following up resulting action from Serious Case Reviews and recommendations arising from the inspection of children's safeguarding services. We are working hard to ensure that we have the right people in the right roles from April and as smooth a transition as possible to the new arrangements. We welcome your help and continued close engagement with your regional colleagues.

We would also like to draw your attention to the revised version of *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, which comes into force with immediate effect. Hard copies of this will be sent out to local authorities and can also be downloaded at [www.dcsf.gov.uk/nsdu](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/nsdu). In the short term, we will be working with stakeholders to produce a navigable web-based version of the document, with hyperlinks to relevant supporting guidance, as well as a short practitioner guide.

Today the Government has also published *Building a Safe and Confident Future: Implementing the recommendations of the Social Work Task Force*, which sets out a long term programme of reform for social work (available at [www.dcsf.gov.uk/swrb](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/swrb)).

In order to make the improvements recommended by the Task Force, all parties must play an active role. The reform programme will require sustained commitment from all over a number of years. To establish the firmest possible foundation for this, *Building a Safe and Confident Future* is accompanied by a commitment to government investment of more than £200m in 2010-11. This investment is additional to core funding for social work in higher education, local government and the NHS. It will be used to support recruitment, student bursaries and practice placements, workforce development and improvement of IT in children's services as well as to pilot new career grades and support employers to remodel services.

In recognition of particular pressures on local authority children's services, this funding includes £15m for further improvement to IT in children's social care and a £23m Local Social Work Improvement Fund. Local authorities will be able to use this to put in place local solutions that help to reduce pressure on front line children and families' social workers with the intention of building capacity for reform and improvement. We expect local authorities to consult with social workers, using the 'health check' developed by the Social Work Task Force, and local safeguarding partners in deciding how to use it. Further information on this funding and how it can be accessed will be circulated by DCSF shortly.

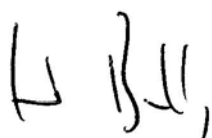
The Government will also invest an additional £10m to enable Cafcass to tackle backlogs through more efficient working practices and to enable the service to meet the needs of children in care proceedings, ensuring that their best interests remain at the heart of court proceedings.

The Chief Adviser on the Safety of Children, Sir Roger Singleton, has today published his first independent report to Parliament on progress on safeguarding (available at [www.dcsf.gov.uk/singleton](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/singleton)). Sir Roger took up this three-year position, which is independent of Government, in April last year and we are grateful for his commitment to work with us to drive through improvement in safeguarding and to challenge us to go further where we can. We welcome his report and look forward to working with him to address the issues he has identified.

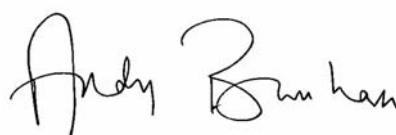
Many thanks again for your continued co-operation. We look forward to working with you to improve safeguarding services in your area and to improve the lives of children and young people.

We would be grateful if this letter could be made available to the Leader of the Council, your Lead Member for children's services and the Chair of your Children's Trust Board. We are writing separately to Local Safeguarding Children Board chairs, PCTs, NHS Trusts, the court service, Head teachers, Chairs of Governors and Chief Constables.

Yours sincerely,



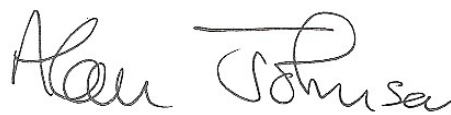
Ed Balls MP



Andy Burnham MP



Jack Straw MP



Alan Johnson MP

cc Chairs of Children's Services Scrutiny and Overview

## **Government Office (Go) Children and Learner Team Safeguarding Role - Summary Version**

GO Children & Learner Teams work closely with SHAs and GO colleagues from other Departments to cover the full breadth of the ECM agenda. On safeguarding this includes:

1. Working with all Children's Trusts Board and Local Safeguarding Children Boards to drive improvements in safeguarding
  - using analysis and understanding of the relevant safeguarding data to challenge performance, support improvement activity and monitor progress
  - providing advice, support and challenge to individual Local Safeguarding Children Boards across the full range of their responsibilities
  - discussing inspection recommendations with the Local Authority, advising on and supporting improvement and seeking assurance that plans are in place and action taken
  - understanding any specific identified challenges for each local area which require targeted additional support
2. Supporting and challenging Local Safeguarding Children Boards/Children's Trusts in relation to Serious Case Reviews and Child Death Overview Panels
  - monitoring the pattern of serious incident notifications and challenging as necessary
  - advising local authorities and LSCBs on the application of the criteria for holding a SCR and, when requested, advising LSCBs on SCR terms of reference
  - assisting individual LSCBs to source suitably trained SCR chairs and authors
  - seeking assurance that plans are in place and action is being taken to address recommendations from SCRs and Ofsted evaluations and helping to embed and share the learning
  - challenging and supporting the development of CDOPs, including in the use of data
  - drawing out and disseminating regional learning from Serious Case and Child Death Overview Panels and sharing this learning with the National Safeguarding Delivery Unit
3. Using local knowledge to alert Government and influence national policy
  - providing regional input and feedback to policy and programme development
  - identifying early warning signs and concerns about the strength of safeguarding arrangements in particular areas which require escalation to Government and supporting Government intervention where that is necessary
  - alerting and briefing Ministers on serious child care incidents, responses from DCSs to child protection correspondence sent to DCSF and issues raised with Ofsted.