



Will Quince MP

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families

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Dear Directors of Children's Services, Lead Members, Cafcass leaders, Assistant Directors, Heads of Service and Service Managers,

I wanted to write and thank you for all you do to protect vulnerable children who are in need of your support. As children's social care leaders, you have worked through the most challenging circumstances since the beginning of the Covid pandemic to try to keep our most vulnerable children safe. This has required you to carefully balance the protection of children with the well-being and safety of your staff who are so important in making life-changing decisions for families. I am continuously grateful for the work that you do every day in this regard.

Following a number of recent high-profile cases, including the tragic deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson, I recognise that this is an uncertain and worrying time for you and the teams in your local areas who work every day to support families and carers whilst making complex decisions about the best interests of children in respect of their needs, safety and welfare. Any death of a child is a tragedy, and while we recognise that even with the hard work and join-up between all your services, it is impossible to prevent all harm. Despite this very challenging context, I am writing to you to ask you to continue with your leadership and commitment and to support your staff to redouble efforts to protect those vulnerable children who need us most.

I recognise the understandable changes in practice that can quickly occur following a high profile death or injury to a child as the child protection system tries to reassure itself and the public that everything is being done that can be done to keep children safe. Sometimes changes made in such circumstances create additional pressures and challenges which whilst well-intended, do not help. I wanted, therefore, to set out the action government is taking in response to the deaths of Arthur and Star, and to promote the Public Law Working Group's Training and Implementation sub-group's Top 10 Tips, which I hope you and your teams will find helpful when considering the commencement of public law proceedings.

Following the death of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes, the Secretary of State for Education asked the national Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel to undertake a single, national, independent review of Arthur's death. On behalf of the Government, he has also commissioned a Joint Targeted Area Inspection to

examine how all the relevant local agencies are working together to protect and safeguard children in the Solihull area. Together, the National Review and the Joint Targeted Area Inspection will help to identify learning, and changes that need to be made to strengthen work to safeguard children both in Solihull and across the country.

To further support your children's services teams, the enclosed Top 10 Tips, developed by the Public Law Working Group, include useful guidelines on effective use of the Public Law Outline (PLO) and what should be considered before taking a case to court. I strongly encourage you and your teams to consider these guidelines to continue to support the system and to take a case to court only when it is necessary to protect the child. I would also like to highlight and encourage you to access the [ADCS Family Justice Resource Hub](#), which provides a series of practical resources for anyone working in the family justice system.

I am grateful to you all for your continued efforts to keep the system operating in such challenging circumstances.

I am copying this letter to the President of the Family Division, Sir Andrew McFarlane, Mr Justice Keehan, His Honour Judge Moradifar, the Chief Social Worker for Children and Families, Isabelle Trowler and CEO of Cafcass, Jacky Tiotto.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Will Quince', written in a cursive style.

Will Quince MP
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