



Rt Hon Ed Balls MP
Secretary of State

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Lord Laming of Tewin
House of Lords
SW1A OPW

17

November 2008

Dear

Lord Laming

PROGRESS REPORT ON SAFEGUARDING

The Children's Minister and I announced to Parliament on 12th November that we had asked you to prepare an urgent report of progress being made across the country to implement effective arrangements for safeguarding children. Thank you for agreeing to take this important work forward.

The reforms introduced by Government following the Victoria Climbié Inquiry set a very clear direction and have significantly strengthened the framework for safeguarding children. But it is vital we ensure that these reforms are being implemented systematically by all local agencies so that children in every part of the country receive the protection they need. Your work will be crucial in allowing us to assess progress being made, and to identify any barriers to effective, consistent implementation and how these might be overcome.

I would like your report to address three key questions:

1. What good practice has been successfully achieved in safeguarding children since the publication of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry Report? We would like you to set out the key features of this good practice, and whether it is being universally applied across the country, particularly in relation to:
 - the effective implementation of safeguarding systems and procedures;
 - inter-agency working;
 - the development and deployment of professional workforce capacity; and
 - effective systems of public accountability.
2. What are the key barriers, including in the legal process, that may impede efficient and effective work with children and families and that may be



department for
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preventing good safeguarding practice from becoming standard practice everywhere, for example in deciding whether an application should be made to take a child into care? Is the right balance being struck between the correct application of processes and the needs of the child?

3. What specific actions should be taken by Government and national and local agencies to overcome these barriers and accelerate systematic improvements in safeguarding practice across the country?

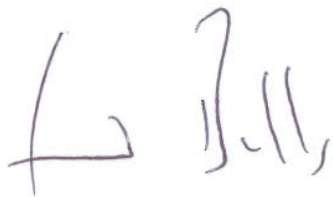
On 22nd October, I announced the terms of reference for the stocktake of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs). One of the key issues being considered by this stocktake is the independence of LSCB chairs and whether the statutory guidance on this in *Working Together to Safeguard Children* needs to be revised. I also announced a study of Serious Case Reviews in order to identify what more can be done to improve the quality, consistency and impact of Serious Case Reviews as part of the overall system for safeguarding children and young people. I would like to bring both these pieces of work within the framework of your report.

It will of course be important that your report is informed by a wide range of views and experience and I know that you will be seeking views from key national and local stakeholders as you consider the issues. I will ensure you have all the professional support, and resource, you need to complete this task.

I look forward to receiving your report, with recommendations for action, early in the new year.

We are laying a copy of this letter in both libraries of the house.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ed Balls'.

ED BALLS MP