

**To: Directors of Children's Services
LSCB Chairs**

**Cc: Lead Members
Chief Executives
Government Office Directors for Children and Learners**

28 September 2010

Dear Colleague,

**CHILD PROTECTION INFORMATION GATHERING AND
CORRESPONDENCE HANDLING ARRANGEMENTS**

Further to the letter of 22 September from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Tim Loughton MP, I am writing to confirm arrangements for the gathering of information on serious child care incidents and Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) and for handling correspondence on child protection.

To support Ministers' accountability for the child protection system as a whole, Departmental officials have notified them routinely of significant developments in relation to serious child care incidents, so that they can form a view as to how well child protection arrangements are working across the country.

You and your colleagues have very helpfully been providing this information to the Government Office Children and Learners Teams who, in turn, have liaised with Departmental officials here. However, as you know, the Secretary of State for Education has decided to end virtually all DfE functions currently delivered by the GO Children and Learners teams.

This letter accordingly sets out revised arrangements for the gathering of information on serious child care incidents and SCRs, as well as a small consequential change in child protection correspondence handling procedures which have previously involved GOs.

Child Protection Information Gathering

As Tim Loughton said in his letter of 22 September, the gathering of information on serious child care incidents and SCRs will in future be carried out by a team within the Department. This will begin from 1 October 2010 in relation to London and from a later date, still to be agreed, for the other regions.

The information we will need from you is the same as you have previously provided to the GOs. Safeguarding Group would, therefore, like to be kept informed of the following:

- new child care incidents notified to Ofsted as being serious enough potentially to lead to SCRs and other cases which are receiving significant media attention;
- decisions to initiate SCRs; dates of SCR completion and submission to Ofsted for evaluation; plans for publication of SCR executive summaries and (where appropriate) overview reports; and actual publication dates;
- where known, expected dates of court proceedings related to child protection incidents and the outcome of related court cases including verdicts and sentencing.

Safeguarding Group may also seek information from local authorities and LSCBs on an ad hoc basis in connection with media coverage of child protection incidents and specific queries from Ministers, just as the GOs have done up until now.

We are still in the process of finalising the membership of the small team which will bring together this information to brief Ministers and anticipate that it will include some of the people who previously undertook this work in the GOs. We will provide you with full details of contact names, telephone numbers and email addresses as soon as we can but in the meantime it would be helpful if, from 1 October, **London** authorities and LSCBs could provide relevant information to Anne Gair, Ashni Jugurnauth, or Michael Mensah here at Mailbox.CPOD@education.gsi.gov.uk. Authorities and LSCBs **outside London** should continue to provide information to their existing contacts in the GOs until further notice.

Ministers of course take very seriously the commitment to reduce bureaucratic burdens on local authorities. While we are therefore committed to ensuring they have the information they need to fulfil their national role in relation to protecting children, we will keep the new arrangements under review and would be pleased to receive feedback as the new system beds in.

Child Protection Correspondence Handling

As you know, the Department's Public Communications Unit (PCU) currently forwards to DCSs correspondence received by the Department which alleges that a child is suffering harm or is likely to do so. We ask DCSs to satisfy themselves that all appropriate action has been taken to ensure the child's safety, and to confirm to the GO that that is the case. The GO, in turn, reports back to PCU that the DCS's confirmation has been received.

From 1 October 2010, these letters will continue to be forwarded to DCSs for appropriate action, given that statutory responsibility for dealing with such issues rests with local services. There is, however, one change to the procedure: PCU will now ask the DCS to acknowledge receipt but, as a contribution to reducing burdens on local authorities, we will no longer be asking him or her to provide confirmation that action has been taken.

If you have any queries concerning the contents of this note, please contact Colin Curtis in our Child Safeguarding Division (colin.curtis@education.gsi.gov.uk) in the first instance.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeanette Pugh". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a long, thin horizontal line that extends across the width of the signature.

JEANETTE PUGH
DIRECTOR, SAFEGUARDING GROUP