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Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
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Children and Families

OPEN LETTER TO THE CHILD PROTECTION AND FAMILY JUSTICE SYSTEM

We are writing to express our wholehearted and sincere gratitude for the extraordinary efforts you have made to sustaining the child protection and family justice system throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Your commitment has ensured that throughout a time of national emergency, critical services have continued to safeguard the welfare of society's most vulnerable children and adults.

The virus has had a grave and profound impact on life in the United Kingdom. The social restrictions and public health controls so essential to addressing the spread of the virus have placed an enormous strain on every one of us. The normal operation of child protection services and the family courts has been hugely disrupted. Despite these challenges, organisations and individuals have responded with agility, energy and dedication to keep the family justice system open to those who have needed it most.

To the social workers, local authority staff and Cafcass officers who have maintained essential support and safeguards for extremely vulnerable children at heightened risk given current circumstances; to the multi-agency staff including police officers, teachers, and NHS workers who play a crucial role in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action; to the court staff, legal professionals, magistrates and judges who have reacted so skillfully to innovate and keep the courts available to those with the most urgent need – thank you.

We know that there are immediate challenges within the system now and the road to full recovery is likely to be a lengthy one. As co-chairs of the Family Justice Board, we have been working with national system leaders to identify the priority challenges to address, and agree a targeted plan to respond to them further. Whilst the imperative for this work has been to agree what must be done now to sustain and stabilise our essential services, we have remained focused on the opportunities for medium-term reform to improve the system further and address pre-existing difficulties. We will be working through the Family Justice Board to implement these priorities immediately.

Yours faithfully,



ALEX CHALK MP



VICKY FORD MP