



Edward Timpson MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families

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National SCR Panel
By email

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Dear Panel Members,

I am writing firstly to thank you for your work as the national panel of independent experts on serious case reviews over the past fifteen months. As I said in my recent speech to the annual conference of the Association of Independent LSCB Chairs, I have very much valued your advice over this period, and I look forward to both hearing about and seeing the impact of your continuing work over the coming months.

I am also very grateful to you for producing the panel's first annual report. It stands as a testament to the excellent work you have done in rigorously scrutinising the decisions made by individual LSCBs regarding the initiation and publication of SCRs. It provides some strong insights, based on your experience, into areas where improvements are required.

I want to see a system where SCRs are initiated appropriately to investigate cases of children dying or being seriously harmed as a result of abuse or neglect, and where there are lessons to be learned about how agencies can work together to reduce the risk of future harm to children. Instead, your report highlights that, in some instances, there is a deep reluctance to conduct SCRs, and considerable intellectual effort is expended on finding reasons why an SCR is not required.

Where SCRs are initiated, I want the investigative process which follows to result in high-quality reports which are crystal clear about what happened in a case and why, and what action is required to ensure that lessons are learned. Your report shows that, in contrast, the current system produces SCRs which are disturbingly variable in quality, repeatedly list what happened without stopping to ask why, and contain recommendations which are not clear or focussed.

I have discussed the nine very helpful recommendations contained in your report with officials. Whilst we are in a position to accept and take immediate

action on a number of your recommendations, there are others which we will need to consider further and discuss with partners in the context of wider policy work we are proposing to take forward in relation to serious case reviews and local safeguarding children boards. Our responses to your recommendations are attached.

The panel's work is valuable, and the policy imperatives which underpin its role remain critical. I am grateful for your continued commitment to this work.

Yours sincerely,

Edward.

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