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Robert Goodwill MP

Minister of State for Children and Families

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Cllr Nicholas Bennett JP
18 Upper Park Road
Bromley
BR1 3HT

21 August 2017

Dear Cllr Nicholas Bennett,

Thank you for your letter of 26 July about the local authority protocol for notifying receiving authorities of families with care concerns. Thank you also for congratulating me on my appointment.

I am grateful to you for raising these important issues and appreciate the experience you bring to these matters. As you are well aware, when a family with children subject to a child protection plan moves from one local authority area (the originating authority) to another local authority area (the receiving authority), then the responsibility for the monitoring, supervision and updating of that plan must transfer from the originating authority to the receiving authority. In order that the vulnerability of such children is not compromised, such case transfers should take place in a timely manner. During the period prior to the formal transfer of case responsibility, the originating authority should continue to monitor the protection plan.

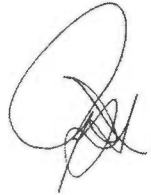
These procedures relate to duties arising from the Children Act 1989 and related legislation, regulation and guidance to provide services for children at risk of significant harm and subject to a child protection plan. We know, however, that there have been challenges in many local areas to consistently comply with these statutory obligations. The failure to do so is unacceptable, which is why we are continuing the urgent work of overhauling how the police, social services, health services, and other agencies work together to protect all vulnerable children. The department is committed to doing all that we can to protect children from abuse and neglect; this includes examining all options for how we can further improve our child protection system.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 includes provisions to strengthen and simplify the existing statutory framework around multi-agency working. The requirement for local areas to have Local Safeguarding Children Boards will be removed, and replaced with a requirement for three key partners – the police, local government and health services – to work together to agree the necessary strategic decisions to underpin effective practice. The Act received Royal Assent in April 2017, but has not yet been commenced.

We will be introducing a stronger but more flexible statutory framework that will support local partners to work together more effectively to protect and safeguard children and young people, embedding improved multi-agency behaviours and practices.

Nothing is more important than keeping children safe. We want a robust local accountability system, one that adds real value, is better at identifying delivery problems early and putting them right, and which is more effective in safeguarding children.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. Goodwill', written in a cursive style.

Robert Goodwill MP
Minister of State for Children and Families
