



**Will Quince MP**

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families

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Alison Mutch OBE  
Coroner's Court  
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25 February 2022

Dear Ms Mutch,

Thank you for your letter of 31 December 2021 to the Secretary of State for Education enclosing your Regulation 28 report into the death of Yousef Ghaleb Makki. I am replying as the Minister for Children and Families.

First, I would like to offer Yousef's family my heartfelt condolences. I can only imagine how the circumstances of his death will add to their grief.

Your report raises some important issues which I recognise. Tackling serious youth violence is a top priority for government. We do not want more young lives senselessly lost. Our approach involves a whole system strategy, working across government and with partners from across different sectors coming together to deliver a multi-agency response. The cross-Government [Beating Crime plan](#), published in July 2021, includes measures such as the new serious violence duty for public agencies to work together and reduce serious violence.

Within this strategy, education plays a vital role as a key protective factor for young people. For example, it can enable preventative work, such as helping young people to navigate the circumstances in which they might seek to obtain a weapon, as well as to understand the risks involved. This will be the focus of my response, addressing the following 'Matters of Concern' outlined in your report. These are:

- There was a culture amongst some young people that knives were seen as impressive, and that they did not understand the risks involved in carrying them. The knife that was used to stab Yousef had been purchased online with ease during a school break time.

- That education plays a vital role in addressing these attitudes and action should be taken by the Department for Education.

The circumstances which lead a young person to carry a weapon can be complex and can include factors influenced by their environment and peer relationships which may mean that carrying a knife is associated with a sense of safety or status. Young people may also be affected by criminal exploitation through involvement in gangs and county lines drugs operations, and in particular the grooming relationships that often accompany this.

Within schools, the relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) curriculum covers topics such as these which help to address some of the underlying causes and risks of carrying or using a weapon. Furthermore, pupils should be taught how to build positive and respectful relationships and appropriate ways of resolving conflict. We allow schools the discretion to tailor the content of the curriculum so that they can adapt this to the threats that face their pupils specifically. Issues around knife crime can also be taught as part of a school's wider curriculum. For example, schools can choose to include lessons on weapons awareness and gangs as part of their Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) or Citizenship curriculum, with high quality materials available to schools to support teaching in these areas.

The RSHE curriculum became statutory in September 2020. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, schools had flexibility to prioritise their RSHE teaching in the 2020/21 academic year to meet the immediate needs of pupils. However, we have been clear that schools must deliver a full RSHE curriculum this current academic year (i.e. academic year 2021/22). The Department for Education has plans in place to monitor the implementation of the RSHE curriculum over time. This includes measuring teacher confidence in teaching the statutory requirements, the quality of the curriculum delivery, and how the curriculum is improving children and young people's outcomes. In addition, Ofsted's school inspection handbook sets out that inspectors will consider the provision for relationships education, relationships and sex education and health education as part of a wider judgment of pupils' personal development.

More widely, the Government has been pursuing an ambitious programme of work on school behaviour across the school system and are now [consulting](#) on the revised Behaviour in Schools guidance and revised Suspension and Permanent Exclusion guidance. This consultation is open until 31 March. We have included in both guidance documents that, where appropriate, staff should take account of any contributing factors that are identified after an incident of misbehaviour from a pupil has occurred, including if a pupil has

been subject to criminal exploitation, or is experiencing significant challenges at home.

We recognise that for those young people who are the most at risk of involvement in serious youth violence, more intensive support is needed within and around their schools. That is why we are also investing £45 million in two new programmes.

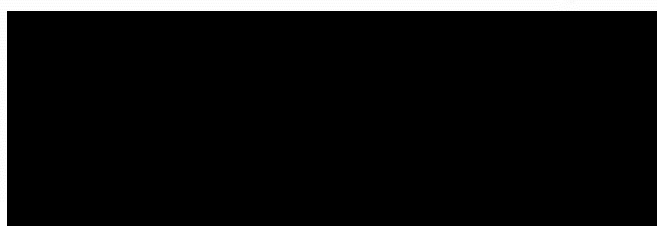
The first of these is the Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforces, launched in November 2021, which involves specialists being drawn from across health, education, social care, youth services and youth justice to work directly with young people in Alternative Provision settings in 22 local areas suffering the worst serious violence, including Manchester, in order to offer them intensive support. We are closely evaluating this programme with the Youth Endowment Fund, the “what works centre” for serious youth violence.

The second programme is the SAFE (‘Support, Attend, Fulfil, Exceed’) Taskforces programme, launched early this year. SAFE Taskforces will be led by partnerships of local secondary schools in 10 areas of the country where serious violence is most problematic (again, including Manchester). Their aim is to re-engage young people in their education and offer intensive early intervention and preventative support, which is informed by the research on what works to tackle serious violence. As school-led Taskforces, schools will be able to shape the support they commission and deliver to meet the needs of their pupils, within their local area.

I appreciate that these programmes were not in place at the time Yousef was in school. However, I hope you will see that this government is committed to preventing serious youth violence and is taking concerted action in this regard by the Department for Education.

On behalf of the Department for Education, I am grateful to you and Yousef’s family for sharing the circumstances of his death, and in doing so, adding to our knowledge about and commitment to preventing serious youth violence.

Yours sincerely,



**Will Quince MP**  
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