



Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP
Secretary of State

Sanctuary Buildings Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
[REDACTED]

Mr Zak Golombeck, HM Area Coroner for Manchester City Area
HM Coroners Service
Manchester City Area
The Exchange Floor
The Royal Exchange Building
Cross Street
Manchester
M2 7EF

20 June 2022

Dear Mr Golombeck,

I am writing in response to your Regulation 28 report concerning the death of Adrian Vincent Balog. This is a tragic case. I am grateful for the expertise and rigor you brought to the inquest and I wish to express my sincere condolences to Adrian's family and friends. I also want to apologise for the delay in replying to your original correspondence.

I have noted the matters of concern you have listed for the Department for Education in relation to the Working Together to Safeguard Children statutory guidance (2018) and to the Keeping Children Safe in Education statutory guidance for schools and colleges (2021), specifically your request to include 'obesity' as an indicator of abuse and neglect in both sets of guidance.

Working Together to Safeguard Children Statutory Guidance

We are clear that everyone looking after or working with a child has a role to play in safeguarding and promoting their welfare, including their physical health. *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2018) is statutory guidance which safeguarding partners (the local authority, the police and clinical commissioning groups/integrated care boards from 1 July 2022) and other agencies involved in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children must have regard to.

Raising concerns about a child's weight is a sensitive subject. However, where there are concerns that the child's weight indicate that the child may be at risk of significant harm including through neglect, the matter should be addressed to prevent any further escalation of risk. Concerns of this type should be raised with the local authority's children's social care service. Local authorities and their partners, including health and education, have a range of mechanisms, including outside of the safeguarding system through which they might provide help to a family including through universal, early help and targeted services.

Keeping Children Safe in Education Statutory Guidance

Keeping Children Safe in Education Statutory Guidance (KCSIE) is clear that causing physical harm to a child and the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical needs are indicators of neglect and abuse. The guidance sets out how schools should protect children from harm and what to do if they have concerns about a child. KCSIE is clear that governing bodies and proprietors must ensure that policies, procedures and training in their schools are effective and comply with the law at all times and that all staff should receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training which is regularly updated.

In addition, to support staff KCSIE is clear that all schools should have a designated safeguarding lead (DSL). Amongst other things the DSL should always be available to support staff and discuss any safeguarding concerns.

Government's Childhood Obesity strategy

The Government has a national ambition to halve childhood obesity and significantly reduce the gap in obesity between children from the most and least deprived areas by 2030. We want to achieve this by ensuring that we are supporting parents, schools and local authorities, particularly in the most deprived areas. The Government's Childhood Obesity: A Plan for Action (launched in 2016) included the introduction of the Soft Drinks Industry Levy which came into effect in 2018 and the sugar reduction programme challenged all sectors of the food industry to reduce by 20% by 2020 the level of sugar in the categories that contribute most to the intakes of children up to 18 years.

As part of the healthy weight investment in 2021/22, 11 Local Authorities were awarded funding to test the expansion of tier 2 behavioural weight management services for children and families and pilot interventions to improve access to local services for children identified as living with overweight or obesity through the National Child Measurement Programme. Although Manchester was not one of the funded 11 Local Authorities, they currently offer multi-component tier 2 weight management services for children and families. Manchester Children's Hospital is one of the areas developing what a holistic offer for children and young people living with complications from excess weight ([link](#)) looks like.

The healthy weight investment in 2021/22 also included a series of research around early years obesity and a package of proposals to establish the evidence base and the framework to support interventions in the early years to prevent obesity, support healthy growth and improve wider health and development outcomes. The findings of these reports will be published in due course.

Independent Review of Children's Social Care

I would also like to bring to your attention the Independent Review of Children's Social Care which published its final report on 23 May 2022. The review makes a number of recommendations to strengthen early help provision for vulnerable families, as well as improving the child protection system for the most vulnerable children in society, including through more effective and joined up working between partners such health, the police and education.

We will need to consider the detail of the recommendations and we will work with experts in the sector to develop our response to the report with a view to publish a detailed and ambitious implementation strategy later this year. I will ensure that the matters you have raised in your report are considered in the context of the recommendations made in the Review and I hope that my response provides the reassurance you need that this matter will be looked at soon.

Yours sincerely,



Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP
Secretary of State for Education