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[REDACTED]

2 December 2022

Dear Mrs Whitting

Thank you for forwarding a copy of the Regulation 28 report relating to the death of Harper Denton. My experience giving evidence in relation to this tragic case left a powerful impression and my thoughts remain with Harper's family.

The report raised a specific point for the Home Office to consider:

(3) There is nothing today, such as a form of Offender Register, to protect children from an individual who has already been convicted of a cruelty offence against a child and served their sentence.

We are committed to ensuring that the safeguarding system is as robust as it can be. I would like to set out some of the actions under active consideration by the Home Office in relation to the issues raised.

Offender Management

HM Government is continuing to consider options for better management of domestic abuse offenders. The Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan, published in April, committed to consider the implementation of a domestic abuse 'register' to deal with, and effectively manage, the most harmful perpetrators of such offences and reduce the risk they pose. It is anticipated that there will be overlap between those offenders who commit domestic

violence and those convicted of specific child cruelty offences, and other offences of violence that may be committed against a child.

This sits alongside our ongoing work to improve the management of offenders, including an independent review to evaluate police management of registered sex offenders in the community. The previous Home Secretary appointed former chief constable [REDACTED] to look specifically at how the police use their current capabilities to manage the risk posed by registered sex offenders and whether the regime protecting the public from them could be strengthened further. The review concluded in October 2022, delivering recommendations to HM Government on what needs to be done across the policing and law enforcement landscape to enhance the management of registered sex offenders in the community in England and Wales. It is now for Ministers to decide how the findings of the review will be shared and consider any response to the recommendations; including potential implications for work on the development of offence-based 'registers'.

We are also continuing to support disclosure schemes through the provision of national guidance. The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme and the Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme both provide members of the public with a clear process to seek information from the police on individuals who may pose a risk of harm to children.

The Home Office acknowledges the perception that Violent Offender Orders have been sparingly used by the police, and we will be engaging with policing partners to identify barriers to their use and options to promote awareness of their utility.

Child Protection reforms

You will appreciate that the management of offenders is only one component of the state's responsibility to keep children safe. To be successful, any development of a child cruelty register would need to complement wider reforms to improve collaboration and information sharing across the key agencies that are responsible for safeguarding children.

We know information and data sharing between agencies is a challenge, and across Government we are actively considering how to improve relevant processes for operational partners. The Health and Social Care Act 2022 commits the Government to laying a report before Parliament in Summer 2023 setting out its policy on information sharing by public authorities for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children; including the feasibility of using a consistent child identifier.

In May, we welcomed the publication of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, and the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's national review 'Child Protection in England'; while October saw the final report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in England and Wales. All three of those reviews make recommendations to Government on how to improve multi-agency working to strengthen child protection, and taken together provide us with an opportunity to consider how safeguarding can be improved in the round. The Government will be responding to the recommendations in those reviews in due course, and we will continue to consider the case for a child cruelty register in context of all ongoing policy discussions in this space.

I hope this letter has been helpful in setting out the ways in which these complex policy questions will be kept under constant review.

Yours sincerely,


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