

Email Reply: contact@blacklivesmatter.uk

Child Q - Department for Education response

Department for Education Correspondence Reference 2022-0012692
CRM:0461797

11/04/2022

Dear Correspondent

Thank you for your recent correspondence following the publication of the local child safeguarding practice review on 14 March 2022, and the concerns you have raised on behalf of Child Q.

I hope you will appreciate that, whilst many people have contacted the department to find reason and justice on Child Q's behalf, it is of paramount importance that the anonymity of Child Q and her family, and that of the school, are preserved. The department is in touch with the local authority, and they are supporting Child Q. I am sure you will also appreciate that the ongoing Independent Office for Police Conduct investigation means it would be inappropriate for us to comment further on the actions taken by the police.

Nothing is more important than a child's welfare and everyone who comes into contact with children has a role to play in ensuring that their welfare considerations remain paramount. There is a shared responsibility between organisations and agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area at all times. Further, it is the duty of the statutory safeguarding partners, police, local authority and health to join up the activities and policies of all multi-agency partners to ensure children are safe.

We want to be clear that this was an unacceptable incident which should not have happened. Strip searching is one of the most intrusive powers available to the police. As such it should be used in a lawful manner and, in almost all circumstances, in the presence of an appropriate adult. The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 Code C sets out the circumstances under which strip searches can be used and the requirements for attendance by appropriate adults, should this type of search be necessary.

The publication of the local child safeguarding practice review brings into sharp focus the complexity and challenges of all local and national child safeguarding systems. It also underlines the fundamental importance of, and necessity for, strong relationships between all those with a vested interest in child protection.

Understanding whether there are systemic issues, and whether and how policy and practice need to change, is critical to the system being dynamic and self-improving and should seek to prevent or reduce the risk of recurrence of similar events. A local child safeguarding practice review identifies improvements to be made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in a local area. Whilst that learning is relevant locally, it also has a wider importance for all practitioners working with children and families as well as for government and policy makers.

On receipt of the two learning recommendations for the department, following the child safeguarding practice review, the Secretary of State initiated an immediate review of the Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance for schools. We will look at any necessary changes alongside and in addition to the Behaviour in Schools guidance and the Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance, both of which have been out for public consultation, so that all schools are clear on their duties relating to safeguarding and protecting the welfare of all pupils. The department is listening and assessing what needs to change and is working closely with cross-government colleagues. This coordinated approach will enable us to take a holistic view of what improvements can be made across our school safeguarding advice and guidance.

The Secretary of State has also instructed Baroness Barran, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the School System, and Will Quince, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families, to convene a roundtable with children's social care departments, statutory safeguarding partners and colleagues across government. The aim of this collective approach is to bring leaders, practitioners and decision makers together to ensure Child Q's experience cannot be repeated.

I trust this information will be of use to you and thank you once again for raising these very important issues.

Yours sincerely

Department for Education

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