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**Claire Coutinho MP**

Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing

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Rt Hon Jesse Norman MP

By email: [jesse.norman.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:jesse.norman.mp@parliament.uk)

Your ref: JN29361

13 March 2023

Dear Jesse,

Thank you for your email of 22 February, enclosing correspondence from Professor Luke Clements of the University of Leeds, about the Working Together to Safeguard Children (Working Together) statutory guidance.

I am grateful to Professor Clements for sharing his concerns and was interested to see his Unit's research on Parent Care Blame. I note the concern that when parents of disabled children approach their local Children's Services department seeking support, they can be treated in the same way as parents suspected of neglecting or abusing their children. Professor Clements indicates that this issue is an unintended consequence of the Working Together guidance on inter-agency working and seeks a small change to that guidance.

I would like to assure Professor Clements that the government is doing all it can improve support for disabled children and their families. On 2 February, we published 'Children's social care: Stable Homes, Built on Love', an implementation strategy and consultation, setting out our plans to transform children's social care. As part of these reforms, there is a formal public consultation on Working Together planned for Spring 2023, and details on how to respond will be available at the time of the launch. We plan to publish the revised statutory guidance by the end of 2023. Further information on Stable Homes, Built on Love is available at: [tinyurl.com/56CK6TS7](https://tinyurl.com/56CK6TS7).

We will use the Working Together consultation in spring 2023 to consider how we can include a stronger focus on support for disabled children. We will also look again at assessment processes and the way information is shared across children's social care, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) systems, and schools. We will work to ensure multi-agency panels, multi-agency safeguarding partners including the new NHS Integrated Care Boards, connect up in a sensible way.

In the meantime, if Professor Clements wishes to respond to the implementation strategy and consultation and share any views on improving the support children's social care provides for disabled children and young people, he can do so at: [tinyurl.com/3HKAWKFA](https://www.gov.uk/consult/3HKAWKFA). The consultation closes on 11 May.

On 2 March, we published the SEND and alternative provision (AP) improvement plan in response to the SEND and AP green paper published in March 2022 and this is available at: [tinyurl.com/572HBY8P](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/572HBY8P). Our SEND and AP improvement plan outlines our mission for the SEND and AP system to fulfil children's potential, build parent's trust and provide financial sustainability. Further information on the SEND and AP improvement plan is available on GOV.UK at: [tinyurl.com/BDCV6K74](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/BDCV6K74).

Thank you for writing on this important matter. I hope Professor Clements will find this reply useful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Claire Coutinho', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Claire Coutinho MP**  
**Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing**