



2020-00VFPO

Vicky Ford MP

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families

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Robert Halfon MP
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Dear Robert

It was a pleasure to appear before your committee last week to discuss the Government's response to the Covid-19 crisis. I particularly welcomed the focus on vulnerable children. As I noted in the hearing, they have been identified by the Cabinet Office as one of the Government's top 15 priorities during this crisis.

As I explained in response to your final question, a number of different committees and Ministerial groups are looking at the issue of vulnerable children. The Secretary of State and I have each led detailed discussions on this subject at the General Public Sector Ministerial Implementation Group (GPSMIG), which is one of the four new cabinet committees which were set up to manage this crisis (along with ones on healthcare, the economy, and international issues). I also regularly attend the healthcare group to discuss the issues and their relevance to vulnerable children.

In addition to this, vulnerable children have been discussed at the inter-ministerial group on the supply of food which I have attended. I have also held weekly meetings with my counterpart at the Home Office to discuss safeguarding issues; and engaged with DCMS on charitable support and with MoJ on unlocking the family courts. This is in addition to the huge amount of work the DfE has been doing with HMT, which helped facilitate £3.2bn of additional support being made available for local authorities to cover the additional pressures they are under at this time, including in Children's Social Care and to meet the needs of those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). We are also of course engaging with local authorities directly, as well as with teachers, social workers, charities, and a range of other key groups.

As I said last week, the amount of cross-government work that has been happening at this time is completely unprecedented, and therefore I wanted to clarify that the vulnerable children focus is embedded at the heart of the cross-government discussion rather than a standalone group as I think this may have been misconstrued in the discussion last week. As you can tell, this should not detract from the fact that the work being done in this space is a key priority.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before your committee. I look

forward to working with you further, both during this difficult time and beyond it.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vicky Ford". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a small dash at the end.

Vicky Ford MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families