



21 JAN 2010

Rt Hon Ed Balls MP
Secretary of State

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Mr David Pearson
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18th

January 2010

Dear

David

Thank you for your letter dated 16 December about Sir Roger Singleton's report on the Vetting and Barring Scheme, "Drawing the Line".

I would like to begin by offering my thanks to you and your colleagues in CCPAS for your continued assistance and commitment to the development of the policy on the Scheme. Your detailed knowledge of the faith sector and your willingness to work closely with officials within the Department has been invaluable and I look forward to this continuing in the future.

Since receiving your letter, I understand that officials have met with your colleagues Simon Bass and Barbara Ball and many of your concerns have been resolved. Although the outcomes from that discussion will be highlighted in the guidance for your sector, for the sake of clarity I will outline the position here.

In your letter you express concern over the recommended changes to the definitions of 'frequent' and 'intensive' as a number of positions for which there was a previously a statutory requirement to register with the Scheme no longer have a duty to do so. While this is true, it is important to note that there remains eligibility for these people to be ISA-registered and in many cases best practice would be for them to join the Scheme.

You give an example of those working in Sunday schools as an example of a role that would now fall outside of the scope of ISA-registration. I would say that this is a good example of where there is no mandatory duty but where



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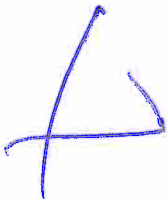
best practice would suggest they should register. Those teaching in Sunday schools are carrying out a specified activity as defined in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act and would be required to register if they did this on either a weekly basis or on four or more occasions in a thirty-day period. In practice, the nature of 'rota' systems is that people often swap their 'shifts' with others on the list, which could result in their inadvertently triggering the requirement to register. To ensure these arrangements remain flexible a sensible approach would be register all those involved the work, whether or not they meet the definitions of frequent or intensive. A similar approach will be used in other sectors such as firms that employ school bus drivers and wish to have a 'pool' of drivers so that sickness or other unforeseeable events can be catered for.

I appreciate that adopting a more discretionary approach to registration is a more subtle message when compared to a statutory duty; and more responsibility is placed on organisations to ensure it is applied in an appropriate manner. However, I am confident, particularly in connection to the faith sector, that this will not create huge difficulties, and that adopting a risk based approach, such as the one advocated in the guidance you produce, will produce a more tailored approach to safeguarding the vulnerable.

With regard to the policy on the use of CRB disclosures, as you may be aware we are committed to reviewing the policy as a consequence of Sir Roger's recommendations. The review is still in its preliminary stages but I will ensure that you are given full opportunity to contribute.

Finally, I am pleased to hear of the positive feedback for the Scheme you have received. We have made every effort to create a proportionate response and it is reassuring to hear that the view across the faith sector tallies with feedback we hear from other areas. In relation to the roadshows you have organised, my officials inform me that they have been a particularly useful means to communicate to the faith sector and we appreciate being invited to participate.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Ed Balls', written over a faint circular stamp.

ED BALLS MP