

Rt Hon Ed Balls MP
Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families
Department for Children, Schools and Families
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

Dear Secretary of State

I am writing to express my concern about the provision of inappropriate, and therefore unsafe, accommodation for child victims of trafficking in the UK.

Every year many children who have been trafficked into the UK are being placed in accommodation that fails to provide for their needs as child victims who have suffered tremendous physical, sexual and/or psychological abuse. Due to limited specialist care and a lack of training on and awareness of the issue of trafficking on the part of carers and social workers, the experiences and needs of these children are not recognised or dealt with appropriately through the care that they currently receive.

I am aware that the Government's position, as stated by Baroness Morgan, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children, Young People and Families, in a letter to David Howarth MP of 31 October last year, is that 'where a local authority looks after a child, including those that have been trafficked, then they are responsible for identifying a placement that will be appropriate to meeting their needs, including their need to be kept safe from any likely harm'.

I also understand that in 2008 the UK ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. Article 12 of the Convention states that victims of trafficking should 'receive appropriate and secure accommodation' and that 'the special needs of persons in a vulnerable position and the rights of children in terms of accommodation, education and appropriate healthcare should be taken into due account'.

In light of these points, I would like to draw your attention to ECPAT UK's call, as part of its Three Small Steps campaign, for foster care as the most appropriate form of accommodation for child victims of trafficking.

I would therefore like to take this opportunity to urge you to ensure that Local Authority Children's Services:

- are trained to be able to recognise child victims of trafficking, and
- place all such children in foster care up to the age of 18.

I would be grateful if you could confirm how you are ensuring that all child victims of trafficking receive such care.

Foster care can provide accommodation that is safe; it can recognise the differing needs and particular vulnerabilities of these children; and it can provide the specialist support that is necessary for the health and well-being of such children who have experienced trauma and violence.

In addition, Local Authority Children's Services should consider placing child victims of trafficking in safe and secure foster accommodation out of the area where they were exploited to ensure the risk of their being contacted by their traffickers is minimised.

For further information on ECPAT UK's Three Small Steps campaign and other work, please visit www.ecpat.org.uk or contact ECPAT UK on 020 7233 9887.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course on this urgent issue.

Yours sincerely,

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