



# HOUSE OF LORDS

## PUBLIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

House of Lords  
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Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP  
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office  
Cabinet Office  
1 Horse Guards Road London SW1A 2AS

27 September 2021

Dear Mr Barclay,

### **Vulnerable children**

Congratulations on your appointment as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office.

Your predecessor, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, had agreed to give evidence to the Public Services Committee inquiry into '[The role of public services in addressing child vulnerability](#)' on 15 September. However he pulled out a few days before, citing "diary pressures".

We were very disappointed by Mr Gove's decision. This is an important inquiry, which has already attracted many concerning submissions about how child vulnerability has increased markedly in recent years and has been exacerbated by the pandemic.

We would hope that the Government would treat such an inquiry with the seriousness that it requires. Despite repeated requests, since the Committee was established 18 months ago, we have been unable to secure a meeting in private or public with Mr Gove. We are concerned that the Government is avoiding parliamentary scrutiny on its support for vulnerable children and other pressing questions – such as public services' response to COVID-19.

Given the Cabinet Office's role in coordinating the delivery of public services we had hoped to establish a constructive working relationship with your department. We wanted to hear more about how the Cabinet Office planned to coordinate joined-up cross-Government activity as the country emerges from the pandemic, including, in particular, to hear more about the Cabinet Committee, chaired by your predecessor, on the post-COVID recovery of public services. Ours is a committee with a cross-departmental focus that has been tasked with investigating how the Government deals with the most difficult and wide-ranging issues and to make

recommendations that you may find useful. Engagement with the Cabinet Office is therefore important to us, and it is frustrating that we have had little such engagement thus far.

We have invited you to give evidence to our inquiry on 13 October. You have been very responsive to our requests in the past, and provided a useful contribution to our earlier inquiry into 'levelling up'. I hope you will agree to meet the Committee again. It is imperative that the Government's position on vulnerable children is reflected in our final report, which we hope to publish very soon.

We look forward to receiving your response as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Hilary Armstrong". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'H' and a long, horizontal tail on the 'g'.

Rt Hon Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top  
Chair, House of Lords Public Services Committee