Ministry of Justice

Sir Nic Dakin MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary
of State for Justice

Keith Fraser
Chair, Youth Justice Board

21 May 2024

Dear colleague,

PRIORITISING 'VIOLENCE-FIXATED' CHILDREN

As Youth Justice Minister and Chair of the Youth Justice Board, we know the excellent work you deliver day in, day out to prevent offending and re-offending by children. We want to reiterate our sincere thanks to each of you – across England and Wales, those that provide youth justice services play a vital role in supporting some of the most vulnerable children in our society.

We recognise the care and skill you show in assessing and managing children with the most complex needs. You work in a trauma-informed way to build trust, identify risks, and coordinate effective, multi-agency support. In doing so you help prevent further harm being caused to children or harm that they may cause to others – this is a key strength of our youth justice system.

On very rare occasions, children can cause great harm to others. While events like the Southport attack remain extremely rare, the UK Government wants to learn from this and prevent further similar instances taking place. The deeply troubling attack last July reminded us all how vital it is that every agency working with children remains vigilant and committed to prioritising addressing complex needs. We all have a responsibility for protecting individual children and in safeguarding our communities. 'Violence-fixated' individuals, including children – those who demonstrate a fascination with extreme violence without an apparent ideological motivation (as distinct from Terrorism Act offending) – often need support to meet wider complex needs, such as neurodivergence, disengagement from education and vulnerability to exploitation. To avoid them being drawn into harmful behaviour, our ask is that you keep prioritising identifying and addressing the complex needs of these children, and ensure that your referral pathways and partner relationships allow you to do so.

The Prime Minister has asked the Ministry of Justice to consider how Youth Offending Teams/Youth Justice Services work to identify and address the needs of these children. The Ministry and Youth Justice Board will work together to answer this question, including wider Youth Justice Partnerships. This is in recognition that the behaviour of some children escalates at speed without prior engagement with Youth Offending Teams/Youth Justice Services. We invite those with particular expertise or interest in supporting these children to please email: correspondence-YJPU@justice.gov.uk.

Your work matters immensely, and we are grateful for everything you continue to do to keep children and communities safe.

With thanks and appreciation,

Signature

SIR NIC DAKIN MP
Minister for Youth Justice

Signature

KEITH FRASER
Chair, Youth Justice Board