

Rt Hon Wes Streeting MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department of Health and Social Care
Sent via email

4 March 2026

Dear Mr Streeting,

We are writing to share our concerns as doctors about the Government's plans to introduce a mandatory reporting duty for child sexual abuse, which we have recently shared with the Minister for Safeguarding and subsequently discussed with Home Office officials who suggested we reach out to you about this matter.

We fully recognise and support the government's stated intention behind the duty: to ensure that every disclosure of sexual assault or abuse is treated with the seriousness it warrants, regardless of to whom a child or young person speaks. Protecting children and strengthening safeguarding practice are priorities we unequivocally share. However, we remain unconvinced that the duty as written is an effective way to help survivors of abuse.

As the provisions progress through Parliament as part of the Crime and Policing Bill, we are keen to ensure that the final legislation is workable, evidence-based, and delivers the improved outcomes that children and young people deserve. Clinicians are among those who will be subject to the duty, and we are already hearing concerns from doctors about the practicalities of implementation across different settings.

For example, the mandatory report duty as it is currently written will duplicate duties that are already placed on clinicians. It is likely to complicate and introduce significant inefficiencies into existing health pathways used to report concerns to the police, local authorities and others in the child protection system. Unless properly mitigated against, this will impede the ability of the system to support vulnerable children and young people at any stage from identification of abuse to intervention.

We believe these issues can be addressed through constructive dialogue and careful policy design. To support this, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss the emerging proposals with officials at the Department of Health and Social Care. Our aim is to ensure the duty, which the government intends to bring into force, is implemented in a way that protects children effectively, supports professionals, and maintains the trust that is often crucial for young people to seek help.

We would value a meeting to discuss this further. To arrange a meeting your office can contact public.affairs@rcpch.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Steve Turner PRCPCH
President, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health




Professor Andrew Rowland OBE CF FRCPCH
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Dr Lade Smith CBE
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Dr Alison Wright,
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Dr Victoria Tzortziou Brown,
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Heidi Stewart
CEO, British Pregnancy Advisory Service

Cc

Jess Philips MP, Minister for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls, Home Office
Sharon Hodgson MP, Minister for Public Health and Prevention, DHSC