

Rt Hon Kit Malthouse MP
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

By email

Dear Secretary of State,

2 October 2022

Education Committee's oral evidence session on the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson

I am writing to you about the letter of 26 September from the Chairman of the Education Select Committee.

The Association of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers is a registered trade union representing only the most senior staff in local government. Information about trade union membership is sensitive personal data and therefore I am not able to confirm or deny whether the individuals mentioned in that letter are members of ALACE.

It is always devastating when children come to harm. It is right that where tragedies occur, the council(s) concerned and other agencies involved carefully consider what went wrong and how they can improve to keep children as safe as is possible – and that learning should be shared more widely. It is almost invariably parents or carers who cause harm or death to children.

ALACE was very disappointed that this letter focused on individuals rather than the complex system in which child protection takes place, including the role of partners. There seems to be no recognition of the damage that is caused to morale and recruitment and retention in the social care workforce and more widely in local government when individuals are blamed where tragedies occur. The Government and Parliament need to support social workers and other local government staff to carry out their extremely difficult roles safely and without fear of retribution.

As a trade union, we also have to point out that neither MPs nor the Department are the employers of local government staff. Senior staff of councils deserve to be fairly treated in employment matters as do other staff. A fundamental element is that it is the employer's role to deal with any concerns about performance or capability of staff. In respect of the most senior staff there are also specific statutory requirements that must be followed and are reflected in the chief executives' handbook.

While we recognise that the Department and Ofsted have powers of intervention, inspection etc., ALACE stands ready to support and defend any of its members who is subject to inappropriate action by Government that seeks to interfere with the proper role of employers – and, as we always do, we will support any member who is experiencing difficulties with his or her employer.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "I Miller". The letters are cursive and slightly slanted to the right.

Ian Miller
Honorary Secretary, ALACE
Officers' Secretary, JNC for Chief Executives of Local Authorities

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