

From the Office of David Nicholson CBE  
Chief Executive of the NHS in England



To: All Chairs at NHS Trusts in England  
All Chairs at Primary Care Trusts in England  
All Chief Executives at NHS Trusts in England  
All Chief Executives at Primary Care Trusts in England

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cc: All Chairs at Strategic Health Authorities in England  
All Chief Executives at Strategic Health Authorities in England  
All Chairs at NHS Foundation Trusts in England  
All Chief Executives at NHS Foundation Trusts in England  
Monitor - Independent Regulator of NHS Foundation Trusts

16 July 2009

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Dear Colleagues,

### **Safeguarding children and the Care Quality Commission Review**

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) published a report today with the findings of their review of arrangements in the NHS for safeguarding children. As the CQC's report makes clear, most trusts have the right people and systems in place for safeguarding children. However, the report also identifies areas where further improvement is required. I am writing to you to set out expectations as to the actions required. Monitor has written separately to NHS foundation trusts setting out similar requirements.

The report reflects good progress on a number of fronts, demonstrating the important work done by professionals leading work on safeguarding and on the front line, but it also makes clear that there is more to be done. The report gives a snapshot of the situation across the NHS at the start of this year. I am aware that, following Lord Laming's report on child protection, action continues to be taken at a local level to strengthen arrangements for safeguarding.

Clearly, organisations will want to review services to ensure all necessary improvements to safeguarding arrangements are being made and that they are thoroughly prepared for registration with CQC in April 2010. CQC will be making data available from their review to Trusts in early autumn and Trusts

should use this information to assess and address all areas where they need to improve.

However, the report identifies some areas that need urgent attention. As part of organisations' preparation for registration, all Chief Executives and their boards should assess their own position against the findings of the report. Boards should assure themselves that best practice and statutory requirements are followed and immediate action is taken where necessary.

As a minimum, Boards should assure themselves that:

- their organisation meets statutory requirements in relation to Criminal Records Bureau checks;
- child protection policies and systems are up to date and robust, including a process for following up children who miss outpatient appointments and a system for flagging children for whom there are safeguarding concerns;
- all eligible staff have undertaken and are up to date with safeguarding training at level 1. The new e-learning package on the e Learning for Healthcare system and the National Learning Management (ESR) system offers an additional resource to support this. In addition, a review of other training arrangements should be completed within 6 months, taking account of emerging messages from the national review of safeguarding training;
- designated and / or named professionals are clear about their role and have sufficient time and support to undertake it; and
- there is a Board level Executive Director lead for safeguarding, the Board reviews safeguarding across the organisation at least once a year and has robust audit programmes to assure it that safeguarding systems and processes are working.

In addition, PCTs should ensure that they have robust and appropriate performance monitoring systems in place with all providers, including the independent sector, in relation to safeguarding. PCTs should scrutinise the declarations of all providers from whom they commission services. PCTs should also ensure GP practices and staff have robust systems and practices in place to ensure they can fulfil their role in safeguarding children.

Boards of all Trusts (including NHS Trusts, PCTs and NHS foundation trusts) are required to publish a declaration locally on their websites (and also in other medium as they decide) as soon as possible when they are satisfied these arrangements are in place. NHS Trusts and PCTs are required to share their declarations with SHAs and the Department. These should later help to support (Standards for Better Health) Core Standard declarations which CQC will be rerunning for trusts at the end of November 2009 or at the start of December 2009. This is as part of the build up to Registration in April 2010.

The Department will hold meetings to discuss safeguarding with each SHA over the coming months and will consider safeguarding issues as part of the

SHA assurance process.

Progress has been made on safeguarding in many organisations. However, many of the issues raised in CQC's report are not new and we are yet to see the sustained improvement necessary for good practice in safeguarding children in every organisation.

We need to see urgent action on this. Above all, this is an issue of leadership. I urge Chief Executives and leaders across their organisations to take this issue seriously and to model the behaviours necessary to drive consistent and positive improvement to services and safeguarding for children across England, both now and in the future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Nicholson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**David Nicholson CBE**  
**NHS Chief Executive**