



David Bell

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Michael Gove MP
Shadow Secretary of State for Children,
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House of Commons
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24 October 2008

Dear Michael

CONTACTPOINT

Your colleague, Tim Loughton MP, has put a Parliamentary Question for written reply on Monday about correspondence from officials here in DCSF and ContactPoint Implementation Coordinators. I am writing to you, with a copy to Tim Loughton, to apologise for what has happened and to assure you that I have immediately put in hand measures to ensure that this does not happen again.

Ministers neither commissioned the note nor approved its release to Implementation Coordinators. It was an ill-judged attempt by officials here to help those in the field make the case for ContactPoint at a critical point in the project's development. It is unacceptable that the note did so by criticising what officials took to be Opposition policy.

It is legitimate for departmental officials to analyse a wide range of policy positions, including those of the Opposition, and to brief Ministers accordingly. However, any conclusions from that analysis should certainly **not** be communicated by officials outside the Department. The note in question clearly oversteps that line. For the avoidance of doubt, the individuals concerned have crossed the boundary of what would be expected of them under the Civil Service Code. For that, as the Permanent Secretary of this Department, I apologise.



department for
children, schools and families

As well as following this particular incident up with the individuals concerned, I will be drawing this matter to the attention of senior officials across the Department and will put in place further measures to ensure that there is no repetition.

I am copying this letter to Tim Loughton MP who will, of course, receive an answer to this Parliamentary Question in the normal way.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kaggle". The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

pp **DAVID BELL**

Personally dictated by Mr Bell and signed in his absence.