

International Development Committee

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

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From Stephen Twigg MP, Chair

Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP
Secretary of State
Department for International Development

5 December 2018

The Government's Response to the International Development Committee's Report on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in the Aid Sector

Dear Penny,

Thank you for providing the Government's reply to the IDC's report on sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector. We are publishing it as our 10th Special Report. As is clear from our report, the Committee is intent on following progress in this area to prevent the past pattern of reforms that seemed to run out of steam once the immediate scandal had abated.

The Committee therefore wishes to consider the Department's responses carefully. To facilitate this, we are seeking further written evidence on the basis of the questions set out below. These arise from the reply and particularly relate to DFID's ongoing leadership in this area.

You write that DFID has agreed to co-chair a working group in the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on the topic of sexual exploitation and abuse.

1. What are the objectives of the DAC working group, how often will it meet, and what specific changes will it seek to bring about?

2. What level of transparency will there be around this group's work and its progress against objectives?

You write that DFID country offices have been engaging with partners locally and the Safeguarding Unit will increase its engagement with offices to support that work.

3. What will this increased engagement with DFID country offices involve in practice? What are the aims and expected outcomes of this engagement and how will progress be measured?

In response to our recommendation that DFID's Safeguarding Unit should play a pivotal role in ensuring coherence and coordination on safeguarding across all ODA-spending departments, you replied that whilst DFID can promote this, it cannot ensure that it happens given that each department is accountable for its own ODA spend. We are pleased to hear that the Safeguarding Unit has provided all ODA-spending departments with

detailed guidance on safeguarding, and that these departments endorsed the donor set of commitments presented at the summit. However:

4. We would like to know whether your Department will be taking steps to assess whether, and in what way, the endorsements received from other departments are being translated into action?

5. Where does responsibility sit for reporting that safeguarding standards and commitments are met across government?

6. If responsibility sits within DFID, what changes have these departments made to safeguarding procedure since the new guidance was issued?

If this is not the case, the Committee shall be writing to each department seeking this information.

We were concerned to hear that, within DFID, safeguarding investigations are still being conducted by the Internal Audit Department's Counter Fraud Section. Whilst it is encouraging to hear that the team has received specialist training from CHS Alliance in investigating allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, and that they are in the process of recruiting two additional specialist safeguarding investigators, we are disappointed that such specialism is not already embedded.

7. When will the specialist safeguarding investigators be employed?

8. Will the name of the Counter Fraud Section be changed to reflect its dual purpose and responsibility also for safeguarding?

We were also surprised to learn that safeguarding investigations which have been conducted by DFID's partners are quality assured by the Counter Fraud Section, considering the current lack of expertise on safeguarding investigations within this team.

9. Will the new specialist safeguarding investigators are in post, will they have responsibility for assuring the quality of safeguarding investigations carried out by delivery partners?

As highlighted in the Government's reply, DFID announced at the Safeguarding Summit that it would support the establishment of a Resource and Support Hub to provide guidance drawing on the latest research alongside support and training to NGOs and others, and that this will include access to specialist investigators.

10. When will the Resource and Support Hub be fully operational?

- How much will it cost and how many staff will it have and at what grade?*
- To whom will the head of the Hub report?*
- How will support and resources be accessed from the Hub and who will be eligible for such assistance?*

Overall, we are concerned that there does not appear to be a mechanism in place for holding all those who made pledges at the Safeguarding Conference in October accountable

to their commitments. For example, we were pleased to hear from DFID last month that following the Global Disability Summit, DFID is working with the summit co-hosts to develop an accountability mechanism to support and monitor progress made against new commitments made.

11. *Will an accountability mechanism – similar to that envisaged for commitments on disability – be developed to track progress against the commitments made at the Safeguarding Summit across the various elements of the aid sector represented?*

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Stephen Twigg". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephen Twigg MP
Chair of the Committee