



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Our Ref: DM/AR

Carolyn Wilkins, Chief Executive  
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18/09/2019

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter regarding the Oldham Council motion on Closing the Loophole.

As you are aware, the Sexual Offences Act 2003 sets out certain positions of trust, which provide protection for 16- and 17-year-olds who are considered to be particularly vulnerable to exploitation by those in such positions. The legislation prohibits people in positions of trust, such as teachers at the 16- or 17-year-old's school, from engaging in sexual activity with the 16- or 17-year-old. At present the positions of trust set out do not cover sports coaches, driving instructors, faith leaders and a number of other roles.

In November 2017, the Government announced that the law on positions of trust would be changed to include sports coaches. Proposals were originally expected in early 2018 but, disappointingly, there has been a lack of progress on this matter so far.

I supported calls to include sports coaches in the legislation on positions of trust. Sport has the power to impact positively on our lives and we must ensure it is a safe space for all our children, free from predators and those who wish to cause harm.

The Government outlined in 2018 that it had no plans at that time to extend the position of trust definitions to include youth workers or ministers of religion. However, it was recently confirmed in June 2019 that an internal Government review of existing law will take place, to check that current legislation is working effectively and protecting young people. I will follow any developments in relation to this closely.

More widely, I believe that teaching age-appropriate Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) in schools is essential for children to learn about mutual respect and the importance of healthy relationships. I am therefore pleased that in March 2019, the House of Commons voted in favour of compulsory Relationships Education for primary pupils and compulsory RSE for secondary pupils from September 2020.

Inadequate RSE leaves pupils vulnerable to abuse or exploitation, without an understanding of where to go for help. It is vital that statutory RSE is a part of the overall teacher training programme, with appropriate resources for those who teach it.

Yours sincerely,

Angela Rayner MP