

**Lisa Blakemore Brown**

Letter from Jacqui Smith MP, Department of Health, 21 October 2002

For Jacqui Smith, Minister of State



PO1016339

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**21 OCT 2002**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Lisa Blakemore-Brown'.

Thank you for your letter of 21 September regarding the abuse of children and your concerns about Induced or Fabricated Illness.

As you mention in your letter, the Government announced on 12 January 2001 that it was setting up a statutory inquiry, chaired by Lord Laming, into the circumstances leading up to, and surrounding, the death of Victoria Climbié. Lord Laming intends to complete his report later this year. It will be published following its receipt by the Secretaries of State for Health and the Home Department, and will be made widely available. They will respond to the report when they have considered its findings and recommendations.

The Government is anxious not to do anything that would pre-empt, or could be seen to be pre-empting, the outcome of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry. We have therefore refrained from speculating on the likely content of Lord Laming's report. We have always made clear that we will consider the report carefully before responding in due course.

You also raise concerns in your letter about social workers' lack of training in relation to the fabrication or induction of illness. As you know, Government guidance has recently been produced for all professionals and agencies who manage and provide services to children in whom illness is fabricated or induced. The guidance highlights that the responsibility for safeguarding children in whom illness is fabricated or induced is shared between services, professionals and the wider community and that all services must focus on securing the best possible outcomes for such children. I would stress that this guidance takes account of lessons from research and experience, and of developments in policy and practice, and that it has been subject to an extensive consultation exercise.

I hope that this letter helps to reassure you that this Government does take the issues you raise seriously and that work is ongoing to address them. I can assure you that your comments have been noted.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Jacqui Smith'.

JACQUI SMITH MP