



# AFT

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The Rt Hon Ed Balls MP  
Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families  
Sanctuary Buildings  
Great Smith Street  
Westminster  
London  
SW1P 3BT

Dear Secretary of State

We applaud your decision to take immediate action to implement the recommendations contained in Lord Laming's report, *The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report*.

As you told the House of Commons, its recommendations, including Lord Laming's call for an immediate overhaul of the current 'inadequate' training of frontline social workers, 'add up to a step change in frontline child protection'.

As the leading organization for professionals working with families in the UK, may we stress the importance of high-quality systemic family work training for social workers and their managers, to enable and equip them to better assess risk within the children's relational context. Such training is key if staff are to more effectively interview, assess and work with parents, the wider family and others surrounding the child, some of whom may be attempting to hide abuse and block access and support.

Dr Arnon Bentovim, one of our members, has been involved in developing very effective systemic assessment formats. We also strongly advocate the need for specific further trainings for all social workers in interviewing and engaging parents, families and carers. This would assist not only in assessments and the gaining of important information but also in working towards change.

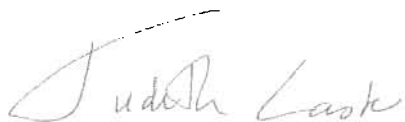
Fully qualified Family and Systemic Psychotherapists already have key posts in effective multi disciplinary teams based in social services, CAMHS and adult mental health services in some areas of the country, bringing their high quality trainings and experience to frontline consultations and assessments, supporting other professionals through supervision and consultation, and increasing awareness of previously 'invisible' children who may be vulnerable to or at current risk of harm. Such designated posts must now be developed and expanded across the UK if the safety of our children is not to remain a postcode lottery.

AFT has been developing training standards and accrediting training in the field for over 30 years. We are fully committed to the improvement of services across the age range and particularly services for children. We would like to offer our experience and expertise in this area to your current trainings review.

Yours respectfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "D.T. Ramsay".

**Dorothy Ramsay**  
Chair – AFT  
The Association for Family Therapy & Systemic Practice

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Judith Lask".

**Judith Lask**  
Project Lead, Training Standards and Workforce Development