

7. During my oral evidence I noted that our Chief Social Worker for Children and Families, Isabelle Trowler, has also been clear about scoring. In Ms Trowler's letter *Tackling child sexual exploitation - review of assessment and decision making tools* (dated 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2014) [SL02/01] , she noted that decision making tools can be helpful but they should only ever be used to *assist* in decision-making and operational implementation of assessment tools should only ever proceed once their validity has been seriously explored.
8. In reference to social workers, the letter also noted that even the most able social workers, with the help of the best evidence based tools, will still depend upon frequent and high quality dialogue with expert practice supervisors to help develop and test hypotheses about what is happening within families, construct meaningful and effective interventions and make decisions about the safety of children and it is this approach that we should be fostering.
9. I was asked to reflect on a judgment from the family courts (S 2020, EWHC 1012) where the judge who determined the issues in that case highlighted a concern about the lack of secure placements nationally and directed that his judgment be sent to the Secretary of State for Education. I confirmed that the Department for Education has considered this letter and Minister Ford has responded to the judgment, I have provided a copy of this correspondence for the Inquiry [SL02/02].
10. Regarding the London CSE Operating Protocol in relation to safeguarding; the London CSE protocol produced in 2017 is a police-led, multi-agency document that complements but does not replace the London Child Protection Procedures and other statutory guidance.
11. The protocol is non-statutory and DfE was not involved in the development of this protocol or the mnemonic. Given this is a protocol to assist professionals in direct practice developed by front-line agencies, DfE is not in a position to give a view on the efficacy of the SAFEGUARD mnemonic. CSE is a complex area of practice. Any protocol developed for professionals should help them to identify and address this form of abuse and use their professional curiosity, judgement, knowledge, and skills to identify where an individual is at risk and respond effectively. It is for strategic leaders in local areas to make sure that any protocols being used are fit for the unique circumstances presented in their area and that social workers are trained and supported to use advice and guidance to inform rather than determine professional decision-making.