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Vicky Ford MP  
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families  
House of Commons  
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Dear Minister

### **Winter Planning: Therapy Support for Children and Families**

With winter planning now taking place, we want to draw your attention to the need for children's therapy services to be protected.

The impact of COVID-19 on children and young people, especially those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) has been significant, involving much hardship. Access to therapies in England which is vital in supporting children's physical health, mental health and development was severely limited during the 'first wave' of the pandemic.

For example, a recent survey by the Disabled Children's Partnership showed that over 50% of families with disabled children that were receiving therapy support saw it stopped altogether during the lockdown.

Cancelled therapy has led to lost opportunities for learning and reduced quality of life for the most vulnerable in our society. This is likely to have long term consequences for children's health, well-being and life opportunities.

As the winter pressures begin and we enter the next phase of the pandemic, we need to protect families, children and young people who rely on therapy support to engage in learning and be able to function at their best.

**We therefore ask that children's therapists are protected from redeployment, to ensure that families with children – particularly disabled children – and young people have access to the support they sorely need.**

The most vulnerable young people in our society have already had to deal with reduced access to health professionals throughout this crisis. They cannot afford to lose access to vital therapy services for a further six months, when their access to education and their personal well-being is already extremely delicate.



We recognise the need for flexibility in areas where acute pressures are high, where individual discussions may be appropriate regarding a hybrid approach to regular workloads, but this should be only for the shortest time needed. Children's therapy services should not be left without the staff to deliver essential therapy services as occurred earlier in 2020.

Yours sincerely,



*Chief Executive, Royal College of Occupational Therapists*



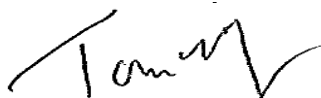
*Kamini Gadhok MBE, Chief Executive, Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists*



*Karen Middleton CBE, Chief Executive, Chartered Society of Physiotherapists*



*Amanda Batten  
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*Dr Toni Wolff  
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