



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Department of
**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**
www.dhsspsni.gov.uk



**To: Chief Executives
GB Local Authorities**

cc: Mr Martin Donnelly
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& Skills
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Mr Michael Porter
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Dear Chief Executive

3 December 2015

HOME INJURY PREVENTION FOR CHILDREN - BLIND CORD/CHAIN SAFETY AND COMPLIANCE WITH NEW EUROPEAN STANDARDS FOR INTERNAL WINDOW BLINDS

The purpose of this letter is to draw attention to the dangers of blind cords/chains and to ask for your assistance in highlighting this issue.

In September 2013 we (the UK Chief Medical Officers) established a working group comprised of our respective public health agencies, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) and the British Blind and Shutter Association (BBSA) to look at ways in which to reduce blind cord/chain injuries and deaths.

Children under 5, particularly those aged 16-36 months are at most risk from blind cord/chain strangulation, although this can affect older vulnerable children as well.

In the UK, since 1999, we are aware of a total of 30 deaths from blind cord strangulation, with 17 of these since 2010.

New European standards were introduced in February 2014 aimed at improving blind cord/chain safety making it a requirement that new blinds must be "safe by design" or be supplied with appropriate child safety devices installed, however there are still 100-200 million blinds across the UK that do not comply with the new European standards. Regrettably, the potential for more deaths and injuries remains a real possibility.

In August this year the CMO working group published a report containing seven recommendations aimed at reducing blind cord accidents and deaths:

<http://www.rospa.com/rospaweb/docs/advice-services/home-safety/uk-blind-cord-safety-discussion-paper.pdf>

Two of the seven recommendations were the responsibility of the Department for Business & Skills (BIS) to take forward. These were as follows:-

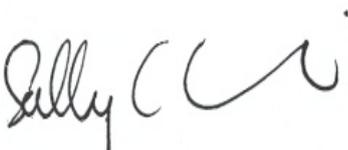
Recommendation 4 states: *“The UK CMOs should write jointly to the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills asking what monitoring arrangements are in place to ensure compliance with the new standards and to establish whether the new safety systems are working as the standards intended.”*

Recommendation 7 states *“Organisations that provide free cleats should be encouraged to advise parents who do not find plastic cleats aesthetically acceptable that alternative designs are available and are encouraged to purchase these for themselves”.*

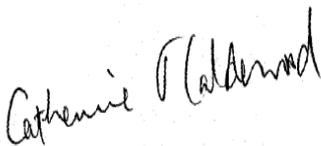
BIS has responded positively to both recommendations. With regards Recommendation 4, officials from the Single Market Product Safety Team have agreed to approach Trading Standards to ask them to conduct a market surveillance project to gather evidence of regulatory compliance within the UK industry. In response to Recommendation 7, BIS will engage with Trading Standards via their National Product Safety Focus Group asking them to promote the message with retailers and manufacturers.

We, the UK Chief Medical Officers, would very much welcome your support in raising awareness of the dangers posed by blind cord/chains in whatever capacity you see appropriate to reduce these preventable deaths.

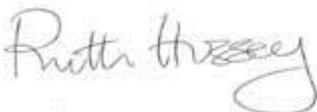
Yours sincerely



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