To the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
Minister for Employment Rights and Consumer Protection

Dear Minister Dearden, 27.10.25

Congratulations on your appointment as Minister for Employment Rights and Consumer Protection. We wish you every success in your new position. We are writing to you to further support the call for action on toy safety you received this week from healthcare professionals, patient organisations, and academics.

As Minister responsible for the Office for Product Safety and Standards and the regulation of children's toys, we are writing to ask that you use the powers granted to you in the Product Regulation and Metrology Act to mirror vital improvements to toy safety that were agreed upon in the EU in April 2025 that are due shortly for publication in the Official Journal.

The EU updated the 2009 Toy Safety Directive in response to the latest science on the risks from harmful chemicals to children's health. The new regulation takes crucial steps to protect children from chemicals that interfere with the endocrine and respiratory systems, those which are toxic to specific organs, and group bans on bisphenols and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), also known as 'forever chemicals'. The UK is operating under the now-outdated EU regulations, adopted as the 2011 Toy Safety Regulations.

Currently, children in Northern Ireland will receive better protection from harmful chemicals in toys than the rest of the UK, as the EU update applies under the Windsor Framework. It makes sense to have a consistent toy safety regime across the four nations to uphold the UK internal market, which should meet the highest safety standards. The new EU Toy Safety Regulation also includes measures to improve the safety of toys sold online, a significant issue in the UK. In 2024, the British Toys and Hobby Association found 85% of the toys they bought from online marketplaces were unsafe.

We believe that the public would support matching the new EU toy safety regulation. A survey conducted by IPSOS and commissioned by CHEM Trust found 90% of UK adults aged 16-75 think the UK Government either 'definitely' (58%) or 'probably' (31%) should take action on the use of endocrine-disrupting chemicals in some children's toys. OPSS data also show that concern about product safety is highest for consumers buying toys and other products for children and babies. With the new EU rules affecting approximately 1 in 10 toys, Great Britain risks becoming a dumping ground for toys considered unsafe for children in the EU and Northern Ireland.

We also want to highlight the need for cross-departmental work to achieve the same safety standards in the EU regulation. The previous government chose not to adopt new EU hazard classes for endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs) into its rules for Classification Labelling and Packaging of chemicals (GB CLP). These new classifications are directly linked to the toy safety rules: once a chemical is classified as an EDC, its use in toys is automatically prohibited, without the need for further risk assessment. We believe that the UK could fall behind EU updates to toy safety regulation without aligning GB CLP with EU CLP.

Matching the EU's Toy Safety regulation would be an excellent use of the new powers in the Product Regulation and Metrology Act. Based on the importance of protecting children's health, we urge this to be prioritised for consideration. We believe swift action is very much in line with OPSS's mission of protecting people and places from product-related harm. We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Anna Watson, Director of Policy and Advocacy, CHEM Trust
Suzanne Astic, Policy and Advocacy Advisor, Child Rights International Network (CRIN)
Clara Schlösser, Circular Healthcare policy officer, Health Care Without Harm Europe
Thalie Martini, CEO, Breast Cancer UK
Jacquie Loughrey, Education and Prevention Officer, Hive Cancer Support
Jamie Page, CE, Cancer Prevention and Education Society
Ruth Chambers, Senior Fellow, Green Alliance
Richard Benwell, CEO, Wildlife and Countryside Link
Janet Newsham, Chair of UK Hazards Campaign
Catherine Gunby, Executive Director, Fidra
Ivié Itoje, Green Baby Programme Manager, Women's Environment Network