



Home Office

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MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION
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The Lord Avebury
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

27 APR 2012

Dear Eric,

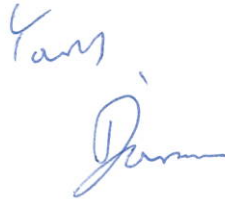
Thank you for your letter of 29 March about the trial of dental x-rays which was announced by the UK Border Agency on 28 March.

I believe that we should strive to improve the age assessment process – principally because of the potential child safeguarding benefits that it will bring, in terms of ensuring that both children and adults are diverted to age-appropriate services, and because of the potential benefits in terms of improving immigration control. You will be aware that the trial is aimed at individuals who have already been assessed as adults by Croydon Council using a Merton-compliant age assessment. Participation in the trial would be entirely voluntary and no adverse inference would be drawn if an individual decided not to participate.

UKBA officials have discussed the proposed trial with the National Research Ethics Service (NRES) as the Chief Medical Officer suggested. As you may be aware, the NRES has concluded that the proposed trial constitutes 'research' and that, as such, it requires the approval of a research ethics committee before it can proceed.

This conclusion was contrary to UKBA expectations – the Agency's view was that the trial did not constitute 'research' and that ethical approval was not therefore necessary. However, the Agency respects the view of the NRES and, in light of this now intends to work further with partners in the proposed trial (Croydon Council and Professor Graham Roberts), and with the NRES to seek formal ethical approval.

In the interim, the trial has been paused. Croydon Council has confirmed that no letters of invitation have been sent to potential participants. No x-rays will take place until such time as ethical approval has been received. The NRES has confirmed that it is satisfied that there has been no activity connected to the trial that would have required ethics approval. On that basis, it is satisfied that the UKBA has not breached the Research Governance Framework.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Damian', written in a cursive style.

Damian Green