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Lord Bishop of Durham  
House of Lords  
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10<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Dear Bishop Paul,

Firstly, I would like to thank you for your contributions during the debate on the 'Love Matters' report. I also appreciate the input that you will have provided that led to the report being debated.

You drew attention to the report's recommendation that Registrars are "required to signpost couples to marriage/relationship preparation available in their community when the couple give notice of an intention to marry or form a civil partnership". As I noted in the chamber, I count myself as a beneficiary of excellent marriage preparation, and believe it to be a valuable service offered by the Church.

As it stands, there is no current legal requirement for registrars to sign-post couples to any other services, and we have no plans to change this. It is the responsibility of each local authority to determine how to organise and deliver their registrar services to best meet the needs of their local community.

That is why we work closely with local government on the importance of relationships. This is done, for example, through the work of the Reducing Parental Conflict Programme, to ensure local authorities are equipped with the tools they need to aid their communities with relationship support facilities.

I thank you for the point you have made, and it has been fed through to the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, and to my officials who work closely with Local Areas.

I will place a copy of this letter in the House Library.

*With best wishes,  
James*

**VISCOUNT YOUNGER OF LECKIE  
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE**