

Anne Fox

Chief Executive Officer, Clinks and Chair, RR3

By Email Only

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31 July 2025

Dear Anne,

SENTENCING REVIEW IMPLEMENTATION

Thank you for your letter of 1st July following the meeting of the RR3, sharing questions from the sector. I am grateful for the productive discussion at the meeting and for the ongoing support and engagement from the members of RR3.

I am pleased to hear about the general positivity regarding the Sentencing Review. The recommendations of the Independent Sentencing Review represent an ambitious package of reforms that aim to place our prison system on a more sustainable footing going forwards. The Government accepted, in principle, nearly all recommendations of the review, except the progression model for extended determinate sentences. These are significant and vital reforms intended to ensure there is always space in prisons for dangerous offenders. We are also going significantly further than recommended by the Review in the final third of the sentence by continuing to supervise the highest risk offenders, and with licence conditions continuing for all offenders as standard.

Thank you for providing the feedback collated by the National Women's Justice Coalition. My officials and I will take this into consideration, as appropriate. Please find below answers to some of the questions raised in your letter. I'm sure you can appreciate that I am not able to provide a detailed response on some of these matters, as the department continues to plan for the implementation of the Sentencing Review recommendations. My officials welcome the opportunity to have ongoing engagement with you and other RR3 organisations through relevant fora, and we will continue to keep you updated as we progress through the policy planning and implementation of the Sentencing Review's recommendations.

Questions from Nicola Drinkwater at the RR3:

The Government recognises the vital support that women's centres provide to vulnerable women in or at risk of contact with the justice system. In 2025/26, the Ministry of Justice is investing £7.2 million in community support, including women's centres, focused on steering women away from the justice system and custody. HMPPS also provides funding for women's Commissioned Rehabilitative Services contracts with women's community sector organisations, including women's centres, delivering specialist support to women on probation. Unfortunately, I am unable to comment on Ministry of Justice funding beyond this period as internal Spending Review allocations are yet to be confirmed. However, we will ensure the Independent Sentencing

Review recommendation and other evidence is taken into account when considering approaches to future funding.

We acknowledge the concerns you have raised about the criminalisation of victims who have experienced domestic abuse and we take this issue very seriously. Ensuring that the justice system recognises and responds appropriately to the complex circumstances faced by victims is of huge importance to this Government. The Law Commission is currently reviewing defences such as self-defence, duress, loss of control, and diminished responsibility as part of its broader review of the law and sentencing in homicide cases. While the focus is on homicide, the review may highlight broader issues that may extend beyond homicide cases, including barriers among domestic abuse victims to accessing defences more generally regardless of which offence they have committed. It is important to allow this independent review to conclude so that any legislative changes are informed by evidence. In the meantime, existing full and partial defences remain available to all defendants, including those who have experienced domestic abuse. Full defences, including self-defence can result in acquittal, while partial defences such as loss of control or diminished responsibility may reduce a charge from murder to manslaughter.

As you are aware, the Lord Chancellor has also commissioned a thorough review of sentencing disparities and its causes. We will be able to provide more information on this in due course.

Building appropriate community support:

We recognise that the Probation Service has been under significant pressure – and that changes to the use of short custodial sentences may lead to more women being managed in the community. We are pleased to have secured a significant increase in funding, around 45% by the final year of the spending review period. This will deliver more tags, more staff and more accommodation. As noted above, although the Ministry of Justice has received its departmental Spending Review settlement, the internal allocation process is still underway at the moment which will confirm budgets for the next financial year. We will publish further details once that consideration has been completed.

The Sentencing Review recommended that the availability of Intensive Supervision Courts should be expanded to address prolific offending. I am pleased to say that we will be launching an EOI process to identify further pilot sites across England and Wales this summer. Whilst the evaluation of the existing pilot sites is ongoing, this approach is backed by strong international evidence. We know that in a number of other countries, arrests are down by a third where problem solving approaches are used. Expanding to new sites will allow us to reach more offenders and give them the support and tools that they need to turn their lives around for good, with a specific focus on stopping the revolving door of prolific offending. We look forward to working with Clinks on the expansion of the pilot, promoting the opportunities that the ISC approach brings to local areas.

Liaison and diversion:

We are undertaking some research with NHS and police personnel about their use of the offence of assaults on emergency workers and the circumstances behind it, taking into account any perceived gendered differences. We are scoping options for additional analysis, which will be subject to funding decisions.

NHSE is responsible for the Liaison and Diversion service and would need to consider the implications of the suggestion that every woman arrested on this charge was seen. The current service specification does mandate a female pathway and female lead in every L&D service.

The non-police prosecutions you enquired about, involving (but not limited to): children not attending school, not having a TV licence and benefit fraud, are the responsibility of other government departments and agencies who would need to consider how women might be able to access diversion services. However, on behalf of the BBC, TV Licensing does refer callers in financial hardship to third parties such as debt charities and support organisations where appropriate.

Racial disproportionality:

As noted above, the Lord Chancellor has commissioned a thorough review of sentencing disparities and its causes. More information will be provided on this in due course.

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG):

The scale of violence against women and girls in our country is intolerable and this Government is treating it as the national emergency that it is. The Government was elected with a landmark mission to halve violence against women and girls (VAWG) in a decade. We will publish our cross-government strategy later this year. Now that the department has its Spending Review settlement, there will be a process within the department to allocate this budget to individual areas. This will require difficult and carefully considered decisions to balance priorities within the department.

Cross-departmental working:

I would like to assure you that my officials are working with other government departments and are engaging through relevant fora to ensure effective implementation of reforms where they engage cross-departmental responsibilities. We have also set up an implementation taskforce with senior operational leads to ensure a whole justice system approach to the operational implementation of the Government's response to the Independent Sentencing Review. Furthermore, I have regular meetings with my counterparts in other government departments to discuss cross-cutting issues, including the Government's response to the Sentencing Review.

Engaging with sentencers:

Officials and Ministers have engaged regularly over the last several months with senior members of the judiciary and judicial office on the Government's response to the Independent Sentencing Review. We are committed to ensuring that these reforms result in changes to sentencing in practice.

Thank you for sharing these questions from the group. My officials will remain in touch as plans for implementing the review recommendations continue to develop, and I welcome RR3's ongoing engagement on these issues.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lord Timpson
Minster for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending