



Ministry  
of Justice

**Alex Chalk MP**  
Parliamentary Under-Secretary  
of State for Justice

Criminal Justice Alliance  
Vox Studios, V308  
Durham Street  
London

**MoJ ref:** ADR 87639

11 May 2021

Dear All,

**POLICE, CRIME, SENTENCING AND COURTS BILL COULD DEEPEN RACIAL INEQUALITY  
IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM**

Thank you for your letter to the Prime Minister regarding the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Bill, which has been passed to me for to respond as Minister responsible for Race in the Criminal Justice System.

To begin, I would like to underline that, like you, I want people to have confidence in a justice system that is fair, open and accessible to all; one where no individual or group faces discrimination of any sort. Addressing race disparities is extremely important to the Ministry of Justice and we continue to prioritise this work, examining and acting on the issues highlighted in several reviews, recent independent inspections, and collecting and interrogating data in the spirit of the principle of “explain or change”. Progress has been made on a number of fronts, but I do not want to minimise the task we face, and I am determined that our efforts should be embedded and continuous.

As you point out, we are assisted in policy making by the Public Sector Equality Duty and our responsibility to consider the impacts of proposals in relation to equality as they develop. We welcome the scrutiny our equality statements have received from the Criminal Justice Alliance (CJA) and other sources as part of this process.

We recognise the importance of our continued engagement with the CJA and other third sector organisations during the passage of the Bill, so there will be opportunities for you to raise these and other issues at roundtable events that will be hosted as the legislation progresses.

While a number of the measures in the Bill have been the subject of consultation, including the serious violence duty, reforms to pre-charge bail and the measures to tackle unauthorised encampments, or they cover policy areas which are generally well-understood and supported, such as problem-solving courts and out of court disposals, we are happy to continue the discussion and take you through our thinking. Aside from the Bill, I want to stress that we are doing more than ever before to identify disparity in the current practice and to put in place safeguards to prevent new policies from having unintended consequences that may have a cumulative impact on disparities; particularly in areas such as remand, sentencing and youth justice.

Since the Lammy Review in 2017, good progress has been made towards completing the actions committed in relation to each recommendation. We went further by adding further actions that were not explicitly contained in the report. Though most of the actions we committed to take are now completed,

we want to use the Lammy Review, and work by the Race Disparity Unit, as a springboard from which a wider programme of measures can be launched.

We continue to prioritise the understanding and tackling of disproportionality within the youth justice system with a focus on preventative measures such as early interventions and diversions, as well as procedural focuses in respect to remand and sentencing. The Independent Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities has now reported and we will be looking closely at those recommendations specific to criminal justice, especially those that focus on stemming the entry of young minority ethnic people into the justice system. As a member of the Inter-Ministerial Group on behalf of the Ministry of Justice I am committed to deliver here.

I am grateful for your letter and the work of the Alliance and its members. I sincerely hope to continue this important dialogue, during the Bill and thereafter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Chalk'.

**ALEX CHALK MP**