



Juliet Lyon CBE

MoJ ref: 72390

11<sup>th</sup>

September 2019

Dear Juliet,

Thank you for your letter of 16 August to the Prime Minister to which, as the Secretary of State for Justice, I am replying.

Every death in custody is a tragedy, and we must do whatever we can to prevent prisoners taking their own lives. Levels of self-harm in prisons are far too high. As you know, we have a programme of work underway focused on these issues. We have rolled out revised and improved suicide and self-harm prevention training for new and existing staff. Our new early days toolkit is intended to help staff identify those individuals who may need additional support right at the start of their prison journey. Revisions to the ACCT case management approach were recently piloted in ten establishments, improving the focus on individual needs, effective multi-disciplinary working, and encouraging greater family support. I am encouraged by the early findings, but there is still more to do to ensure that individuals at risk of harm are identified and supported appropriately, and we are further developing ACCT ahead of roll-out.

We are also developing new guidance for prison staff on understanding and supporting those who self-harm. We are funding the Samaritans to work with us to develop a set of interventions for prisoners and staff to support them after a suicide in the prison, including additional training for Listeners (peer support workers), written resources, and a dedicated advisor. A new mental health training package has been developed and is being delivered in POELT. Our ACCT training, and other relevant packages, will be updated ahead of the roll-out of the revised ACCT next year.

I very much welcome your interest in the review of sentencing policy which the Prime Minister announced last month. The current system is failing victims and the wider public. Too often, we are told, the time offenders spend in prison does not match the severity of the crime. The review will, therefore, focus on the sentencing for the most serious violent and sexual offenders and the rules governing when and how those offenders are released. We are also, as part of this review, looking at changes to sentencing for the most prolific offenders which could help break the cycle of reoffending.

You make a number of important points in your letter and I am grateful to you for giving your time to be interviewed by my officials as part of the review process. The review is due to report to the Prime Minister

this autumn and, as our plans develop, I would welcome discussions with you on the issues you raise in your letter.

*Yours ever,  
Robert*

**RT HON ROBERT BUCKLAND QC MP**