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Kit Malthouse MP
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Ms Juliet Lyon CBE
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16 September 2020

Thank you for your letter of 24 August about the way in which effective work between police, courts and health services can significantly reduce the risk of deaths in prison custody.

I share your concerns at the demands placed on police in responding to those in mental health crisis. People in mental health crisis need the right support from the right agency and ensuring that there are appropriate health and social services available to those in crisis is therefore a priority for this Government.

The Government has been consistently clear that the police cannot be expected to act in the stead of professional health services, although we recognise that there will always be a need for a collaborative approach at local and national level in responding to these significant issues.

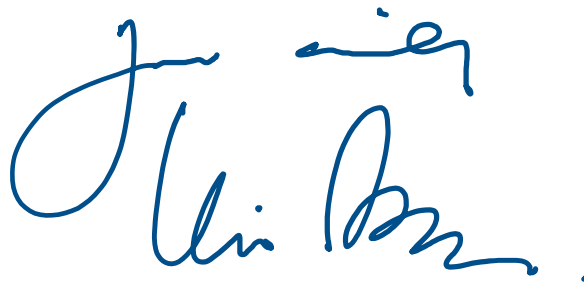
Home Office and Department for Health and Social Care Ministers continue to work closely with police and health partners to identify and address the scale and type of mental health issues they are dealing with. The 2018 Budget set out how the Government will invest an additional £2 billion in mental health services by 2023/24, including mental health liaison in A&E departments, and community crisis services. NHS England set out its proposals to improve all mental health services in their long term plan, which was published last year.

It is important that police officers have the training and skills to be able to identify when a person is vulnerable and intervene appropriately and this is integrated throughout the initial police learning programme which all new recruits must complete. This does not mean that the police should be able to diagnose specific illnesses or disabilities, but they need to know when intervention from partner agencies – such as health professionals – may be necessary, so we seek to equip them to make rational decisions in a wide range of circumstances and to treat people fairly and with humanity at all times.

I am pleased to note that you intend to engage with Police and Crime Commissioners and Police Chiefs to continue to promote good practice in both Liaison and Diversion (which is still on target to reach 100% coverage of England by 2021), as well as Street Triage, both schemes which have helped to divert those with health conditions into more appropriate settings and helped them get the help they need. You may also wish to know that currently Nottingham University has been working with the College of Policing to create a way of evaluating Street Triage and have developed a framework which they are looking to launch shortly to enable forces and key strategic partners to self-evaluate their local issues in order to assess the appropriateness of street triage response.

I am encouraged to hear that you met with officials to discuss progress against the recommendations from the Angiolini Review and future priorities for the Ministerial Board for Deaths in Custody. I will be meeting officials over the next few weeks on this issue.

My office will be in contact about a meeting before the next Ministerial Board for Deaths in Custody, scheduled for November, to discuss these matters.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kit Malthouse', with a period at the end.

Kit Malthouse MP