



Home Office

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Mrs Sheila Harmon
[REDACTED]

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4 May 2023

Dear Mrs Harmon,

Thank you for sending the Home Secretary a copy of your letter of 4 March to the Prime Minister concerning false allegations of sexual abuse. Your letter has been passed to the Home Office's Direct Communications Unit for a reply. We are sorry for the delay in responding.

The Government is clear that all sexual offences must be properly and thoroughly investigated by police forces. Sexual exploitation and abuse are despicable crimes and it is important that all victims and survivors feel supported in coming forward to seek justice. It is crucial that police, law enforcement and other frontline services listen to victims and survivors properly and sensitively without fail when they report any form of sexual exploitation and abuse. It is right that the police are victim-focused in responding to reports of sexual offences. However, the subsequent investigation should be conducted with impartiality. False allegations of rape and/or sexual violence can have a serious adverse impact on the person accused. This is why these cases must be examined thoroughly by suitably experienced prosecutors who should strike the right balance between ensuring genuine victims are believed and not criminalised whilst recognising the need to protect the innocent from false allegations.

Evidence does not suggest that false allegations are widespread. On the contrary, it is the under-reporting of crime to the police that is known to be particularly acute for sexual offences. However, wrongly and deliberately accusing someone of a sexual offence is a very serious matter. If there is evidence of this, the accuser could be prosecuted for perverting the course of justice.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Gearing

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