Dear Robert Neill MP

Chairman, Justice Select Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

October 2017

LORD FARMER REVIEW – IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS

I wanted to write to you to outline the Government’s approach towards the implementation of the recommendations arising from Lord Farmer’s report into family engagement.

There is a consensus that improving the quality of an individual prisoner’s engagement with their family or significant other can have a beneficial impact upon their overall well-being as well as contributing to reducing their likelihood of re-offending. I truly believe that our work in this area can make a significant difference to the well-being and rehabilitation of our prisoners.

Lord Farmer was asked by the former Secretary of State, Liz Truss, to undertake a review focusing on the importance of family engagement and how it might be used to reduce reoffending and to prevent intergenerational crime for male offenders. His report, ‘The Importance of Strengthening Prisoners’ Family Ties to Prevent Reoffending and Reduce Intergenerational Crime’ was published on 10 August; the report can be accessed from the following web link. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/importance-of-strengthening-prisoners-family-ties-to-prevent-reoffending-and-reduce-intergenerational-crime

The Government welcomes Lord Farmer’s recommendations, which rightly recognise the importance of strengthening family ties to help offenders turn their lives around and protect public safety. Conscious that the issue of family engagement is a matter that Parliamentary colleagues raised during the passage of the Prison and Courts Bill, during the last Parliament, I wanted to share with you and your committee the Government’s plans to progressing the recommendations.

The report made 19 recommendations, which are being taken forward and will be implemented over the coming months. These include embedding family work within the prison system where governors are expected to develop local family strategies; ensuring that information about prisoner’s family members or significant others is recorded as soon as possible on reception to the prison; and making mutually beneficial links with local businesses, schools and the other bodies in the wider community. Fulfilling the requirements of these recommendations are possible through partnership arrangements with new third sector family services providers working with prison governors, their senior managers and family strategy leads.

There are however a handful of recommendations, which will take longer to deliver, including those where infrastructure investment is required across the prison estate. We will ensure that these requirements are factored into the existing reforms and delivered incrementally over the life of the reform programme. A
new Family and Significant Others Policy Framework will include guidance to drive and support this important area of reform.

To further progress the implementation of recommendations and to standardise good practice across the prison estate, several policy frameworks that will drive changes will be developed.

Meetings between Lord Farmer, Government officials and third sector representatives have been planned and preliminary meetings agreeing the implementation plan have already taken place. A Family Strategy Board will manage and update the implementation plan and Lord Farmer will be kept abreast of any changes either where progress has exceeded our expectations or if issues occur. Discussions will take place to consider alternative ways forward.

Yours ever

[Signature]

SAM GYIMAH MP