From Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP, Chair

Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP
Minister of State for Security and
Economic Crime
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

20th June 2019

Dear Ben,

Independent Review of Prevent

I am writing to you about the Government’s announcement that it will carry out an independent review of the Prevent programme. I note that there has been no further information on this since the announcement was made in January.

The Committee welcomes the Government’s plans to review Prevent. We called for it during our scrutiny of the Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Bill and in previous reports on Counter-Extremism and Freedom of Speech in Universities. Independent consideration of the impact of the Prevent programme is essential to address concerns about the effects on the right to freedom of expression, the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and protections against unlawful discrimination.

In order to ensure the review is genuinely independent, we think it is important that the terms of reference for the review are sufficiently broad. This should include an assessment of the human rights impact of the Prevent strategy in all sectors. In particular, the review should include an assessment of the human rights impact on the education sector and how the Prevent duty has worked in tandem with other legal duties on public authorities, such as the duty for universities in England and Wales to secure free speech within the law. It will also be important to assess the identification process for referrals.

Regarding the appointment of the Independent Reviewer, you have said that you will be happy to take suggestions on this from all parts of the House. We think it is important that the independent reviewer is appointed through an appointment process that communities can trust. This would involve a public call for applications as well conforming to normal public appointment processes.
Finally, we also think it is very important for the review to be properly resourced so that the Independent Reviewer can carry out a thorough and detailed review of a policy which has been on a statutory footing since 2015.

We look forward to seeing further details about the review in due course.

Yours sincerely

Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP
Chair of the Joint Committee on Human Rights