Dear Lord Patel,

Joint-review of the provision of forensic science to the criminal justice system in England and Wales

When I gave evidence to the Lords Science & Technology Committee on 29 January, I said that I hoped to be able to publish the Review and its accompanying implementation plan by the end of March.

Preparations for publication are well under way. The Review is subject to a cross-Departmental write-round procedure, following which we will be able to confirm the precise publication date, which is now likely to be in April. My officials will be in touch as soon as the date is confirmed, and they would be glad to brief you on the review and the next steps when the review is published.

In advance of publication, I am happy to confirm that the draft top-level review recommendations are that government should:

- Ensure police forces and their contracted providers adhere to the quality standards set by the Regulator.
- Ensure funding and commercial models are sustainable and encourage investment.
- Ensure policing and the criminal justice system benefits from advances in science and technology by developing and implementing new forensic techniques more coherently.
- Ensure practitioners and policy makers have stronger evidence and data to support decision making and facilitate more effective working with partners.

The implementation plan will explain what we will do to address each recommendation in detail. However, the Committee may find it reassuring to know that implementation began last summer to address the most urgent issues identified by the review. For example, we helped policing to establish a specialist team to manage national market place risks shortly after the review concluded. The team’s immediate objective was to co-ordinate action to stabilise the forensics market and they are now working with stakeholders to revise procurement policy with the aim of stabilising the market for the long-term.
The review also made clear that there must be scientific and methodological rigor across forensics provision and that there should be a level playing field for all providers of forensic services. I have therefore been clear with police forces that they need to take immediate steps to reach accredited standards set by the forensic science regulator. Police forces are being supported by a specialist team to help them gain accreditation, following investment through the Transforming Forensics Programme. I am pleased that this is starting to deliver positive results.

I look forward to sharing the full implementation plan with you shortly and to reading your Committee’s report.

RT HON NICK HURD MP
Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service