



# Science and Technology Committee

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From Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP, Chair

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19 December 2017

Dear Susan,

## **Biometrics Strategy and facial recognition**

Thank you for your letter of 30 November.

First, I appreciate the update on the Custody Image Review, but with regard to the continued non-publication of a Biometrics Strategy I remain concerned about how the Review will be implemented as well as uncertainty on the Government's position on other important areas — DNA, fingerprints and so on.

I would be grateful if you could provide the Committee with further information on how the recommendations of the Review are being implemented, and what plans the Government has to embed the results in legislation.

Second, while the Custody Image Review addresses issues around retention, there appear still to be uncertainties about how facial images are captured and used, in part because of the absence of the Strategy. You report that their use is an 'operational matter'. I would be grateful if you could provide details of any guidance or instructions that are given to police forces on this, and what extended remit the Biometrics & Forensics Ethics Group now has in overseeing this matter. Is it not your intention for the Biometrics Strategy to address ethical issues and other important guidance relating to the proper and appropriate use of facial imaging?

Third, on the Biometrics Strategy, I would also be grateful if you would give us full clarity on what areas the Strategy will cover, and the reasons for the continuing delay. What aspects of the proposed strategy has caused particular problems? It would be helpful to know when a draft first reached ministers for consideration. It would be helpful also, not least for the Committee in planning its future scrutiny work, to have a more precise estimate — beyond 'next year' — for when the Strategy will appear.

**Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP**  
Chair