

# LIBERTY



## Howard League for Penal Reform

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30 September 2020

Lucy Frazer QC MP  
Minister for Justice  
Ministry of Justice  
Queen Anne's Gate  
London SW1H 9AJ

Dear Lucy Frazer

### **Changes to custody time limits in the crown court**

Thank you for your letter of 25 September 2020.

We are pleased that you have prepared an equalities statement taking into account the concerns we have raised. Given the serious nature of those concerns, please can you provide us with a copy of that statement.

Our letter also raised particular concerns about the situation for children. While your response does not specifically address the position of children, since we wrote to you, the White Paper, *Smarter Sentencing* has been published. The paper reinforces your department's desire "to avoid the unnecessary use of custodial remand for children". We fear this policy will have the opposite effect by routinely extending its use for children. You will of course be aware that the Children's Commissioner this week has published a report in which she raises a number of concerns about the impact of Covid-19 on children in prison including particular concern about extended periods on remand:

"Covid-19 has also exacerbated existing issues around long delays for criminal trials to be heard, increasing the risk of remanded children being stuck in prison without a sentence, and the risk that children who turn 18 while awaiting trial will be tried as adults instead of as children."

Please can you confirm whether or not a Child Rights Impact Assessment has been completed and if one has been prepared, provide us with a copy.

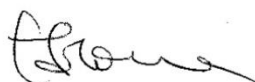
We renew our request for extension to the custody time limits to be withdrawn and, if you are not minded to do this, at the very least to exclude children from the extension.

We would be grateful for a response within seven days. Given the importance of the issues raised in this letter, we will publish this letter on our websites.

Yours sincerely



Frances Crook  
**Howard League for Penal Reform**



Enver Solomon  
**Just for Kids Law**



Martha Spurrier  
**Liberty**