



Frances Crook OBE  
Chief Executive Officer  
Howard League for Penal Reform  
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17 November 2020

Dear Frances,

### **CHARITABLE STATUS OF SECURE SCHOOLS**

Thank you for your letter to the Lord Chancellor of 9 November, expressing the Howard League's views on the government's proposal to clarify in legislation that operating a secure school can be a charitable activity. As the Minister of State for Prisons and Probation, I am responding on the Lord Chancellor's behalf.

I have noted your concerns regarding our plans. As you know, the original recommendation to set up secure schools was made by Charlie Taylor, the then chair of the Youth Justice Board. In his review of the youth justice system, Taylor recommended that we "reconceive youth prisons as schools" by setting up secure schools. The government accepted that recommendation and in doing so wants to engage visionary, not-for-profit, child-focused providers to create a therapeutic environment in a secure setting. Many of the child-focused organisations with the experience and mindset necessary to fulfil this vision are charities, such as those running successful academies.

Our intention is to clarify the law to guarantee providers the freedom and autonomy required to meet their statutory duty to reduce reoffending and improve outcomes for this vulnerable cohort. We intend for the proposed amendment to apply to the operation of a secure school only and to be tightly drafted so that it does not extend charitable status to the providers of other education or justice institutions. I can assure you our sole objective is to improve children's life chances. In the long term, we hope to move toward a youth estate of smaller, more local provision, comprising secure children's homes, secure schools and similar smaller units.

For the reasons set out in this letter, the government remains committed to the proposed legislative change, which will ensure a firm footing for secure schools.

Yours sincerely,

**LUCY FRAZER QC MP**