



Home Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: [European Arrest Warrant](#), HC 689

Tuesday 14 October 2014

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Written evidence from witness:

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Members present: Keith Vaz (Chair), Ian Austin, Mr James Clappison, Michael Ellis, Paul Flynn, Lorraine Fullbrook, Dr Julian Huppert, Yasmin Qureshi, Mr David Winnick.

Questions 1 – 49

Witness: **Alison Saunders**, Director of Public Prosecutions, Crown Prosecution Service, gave evidence.

Q1 Chair: Director, thank you very much for coming in to see us. I should start with something of an apology because the member of the Committee who was originally very keen to have you here and to discuss the European Arrest Warrant was Mr Reckless, who, as you may know, has stepped down.

Alison Saunders: Yes.

Chair: But we will do the best to fill in for him on this issue in the best way we can.

Alison Saunders: I am sure you will.

Chair: I thought we would just do 15 or so minutes on the European Arrest Warrant and members—including myself—want to raise other issues with you. Let us start first with the European Arrest Warrant. Presumably, you are totally signed up to the changes that the Home Secretary has made—because we have not seen you since she has made them—to the European Arrest Warrant. You feel that that gives adequate protection, as far as the issuing of these warrants is concerned?

Alison Saunders: I do, and they are beginning to show some signs of addressing the concerns that both the Committee and I and my predecessor had about some of the issues around proportionality. You heard very briefly from Mr Bristow before me about the fact that he—

Chair: Sorry, you need to speak up; we seem to have a lot of noise. I am not sure if it is heckling, but there is a lot of noise outside.

Alison Saunders: I will try to speak up. It is a while since I have been in court and I have rather got rusty with my advocacy, so I apologise. As you heard from Mr Bristow, the NCA have already started to apply the proportionality test, which is set out in the amendment. We know that they

have already started to reject some requests for EAWs but, yes, we think that the amendments do help.

Q2 Chair: The most recent example that was in the public domain, and that I know was of concern to Mr Reckless and other members of this Committee, was of course the case of Ashya King; rather extraordinarily, Hampshire police were able to get a European Arrest Warrant issued against the parents of this child. When it got to the CPS on the second occasion, when obviously it was going to go to court, it was then dropped. What happened in that case? You must have studied this by now. We know that you are not the Chief Crown Prosecutor for Hampshire, but you are the DPP, and so eventually it all comes under you.

Alison Saunders: Absolutely.

Q3 Chair: Was it a mistake to hear that in the first place?

Alison Saunders: No, what we did in relation to asking for the EAW in the first place was we applied the threshold test. As you have already heard, we only apply for EAWs when there is going to be a charge and when we have decided that the code test has been satisfied. Very rarely we apply a threshold test, which is where we do not have all the information or all the evidence that we might do to apply a full code test, but where we think that that evidence will be forthcoming. We apply a threshold test where there are concerns, particularly about flight risks, which was an obvious issue in that case.

On the Friday we requested an EAW on the basis of a threshold test. We then reviewed it and asked for further evidence and reviewed it again—as we should do and we do in every case—and decided that the full code test was not satisfied. That is when we made the request for the EAW to be dismissed and contacted Spain to make sure that the parents were released from custody.

Q4 Chair: It must have been a bit of a climb down for the CPS because you had everyone—including the Prime Minister and the Health Secretary—all saying that this was the wrong thing to do, to issue a European Arrest Warrant against parents who were obviously only concerned with looking after their child. Of course, subsequently, the fact that you did not proceed with it makes people believe that this was an error of judgment.

Alison Saunders: I am sure the Committee, as everybody else, would want us to act on the evidence that we had at the time. The evidence that we had at the time was that the parents and the child had disappeared. The hospital did not know where they had gone. There were concerns about their ability to look after the child in some of the technical medical ways that were needed—

Q5 Chair: You are telling this Committee it was because of the medical evidence that you decided to do this?

Alison Saunders: It was because of the evidence that we had before us, which satisfied us at the time that there was a risk; there was enough evidence on the threshold test to make a charge, and therefore—

Q6 Chair: What was the charge?

Alison Saunders: It would have been neglect.

Chair: That is quite a serious charge to put against parents.

Alison Saunders: Absolutely.

Q7 Chair: I think the Chief Constable of Hampshire subsequently wrote around explaining what he did—and we will be writing to him—but the contrast between that and, for example, what happened in the Alice Gross case was quite stark. Here you had someone with a previous conviction for murder and no European Arrest Warrant was issued.

Alison Saunders: No.

Chair: Therefore, those who do not support the warrant—as the Committee does, with some reservations about tests and proportionality as you know—would have been concerned that in the case of child neglect, which was not proved, out goes the European Arrest Warrant; there is international action, Spain and Interpol are informed, and the parents are detained. However, in the case of someone who, obviously, is no longer alive, we discovered nothing was done.

Alison Saunders: They are two very different cases and they do bear some explanation, if the Committee will bear with me.

Chair: Yes, of course.

Alison Saunders: On the King case, we did it on the threshold test. We were asked for advice in relation to charging. It was sufficient to pass a threshold test. When we reviewed that case, as we are obliged to do, we decided on the full code test. It was not made out, therefore we asked for the EAW to be taken back.

On the Alice Gross case, we were not asked for charging advice. We did not have enough for even a threshold test, because we were not asked for that. You cannot ask for an EAW unless you are going to charge and unless there is a prosecution; otherwise we would be doing exactly what the Committee has criticised in previous sessions, which is asking for an EAW that you cannot do, just for an investigation and where you do not have sufficient evidence to say you are going to charge, so they were very different cases.

Q8 Chair: The reason why you did not use it in the Alice Gross case is you could not charge the suspect; the prime suspect was not ready to be charged.

Alison Saunders: We were never asked. We gave some early investigative advice—

Q9 Chair: You were never asked by the police.

Alison Saunders: We were never given a file, or sufficient evidence to look at either a threshold test or a full code test.

Q10 Chair: Are you saying before an EAW is taken out the DPP is asked first?

Alison Saunders: The CPS is asked. I am responsible for the decisions.

Chair: The CPS, yes, of course.

Alison Saunders: But we are asked for a charging decision.

Q11 Chair: You were never asked in the case of Alice Gross?

Alison Saunders: No.

Q12 Chair: Looking at this whole area of convicted individuals who come from European countries, I discovered the existence of various organisations where the convictions became known through the Metropolitan Police. How does the CPS find out if it is about to charge someone? How does it find out whether someone has a conviction from abroad?

Alison Saunders: If it is in Europe, we do that through the European Convention and through ECRIS, so we find out there about the convictions. But the police will tell us, so we may not independently find out if you are going through the police.

Q13 Chair: You would go to them?

Alison Saunders: Yes.

Q14 Chair: Of course, in the Alice Gross case, this gentleman was arrested in 2009. Was there a CPS file on him?

Alison Saunders: That I do not know. I am not aware of any file on him, no.

Q15 Chair: Are you satisfied that the warnings index is fit for purpose with the information it has, or do you think there should be any changes to the way in which we look at EU co-operation, so that, as a prosecutor, you are given as much information as possible?

Alison Saunders: We do get lots of co-operation from Europe. We do find out about previous convictions, and we use those previous convictions in proceedings now. For example, they are particularly helpful when we are looking at bail issues to know if we have convictions, not just in this country but abroad. We do use them if we are referring to bad character in the case of trials, if those convictions are of a similar nature and they are going to satisfy a bad character application.

Chair: Indeed. Colleagues, any questions on the European Arrest Warrant? Dr Huppert?

Q16 Dr Huppert: Yes. As you know we are reaching a deadline of 1 December for the opt-in. If we were to fail to reach agreement within Europe or if Parliament were to vote, in a fit of UKIP frenzy, not to support it, what would be the consequences for our legal system and from your perspective?

Alison Saunders: I sincerely hope that that would not be the case, and that we will have the opt-in agreed by then. If not, in relation to EAWs, we think we would fall back on the European Convention on extradition, which I think is 1957, and that would allow us to go back, but it would need some significant legislative change. For example, countries would have to be part 2 rather than part 1, and we would also have to have some discussions with foreign countries about possibly changing their legislation. We would go back if we could use that for extradition, but we know that it was a much slower process and therefore more costly.

There were some issues around some countries not extraditing their own nationals, which disappeared with the EAW. Also, some offences may be subject to time limits in other countries, which is not the case under the EAW. For example, we know of one recent case where we successfully extradited somebody for non-recent child abuse, but that would have been time-limited, and under the ECE we probably would not have had the extradition.

Q17 Dr Huppert: That is very helpful. You say it would be slower; how much slower are we talking?

Alison Saunders: Going back from previous experience before the EAW, significantly slower. With EAWs, we can get people back to this country in a matter of months. Then it could have been much longer—years, possibly.

Q18 Dr Huppert: You said that there would have to be legislative changes domestically, which we can control to some extent, but also in other countries.

Alison Saunders: Yes. We may have to, in some other countries.

Q19 Dr Huppert: Obviously it is harder to persuade other countries to change their legislation because we have not opted into something. If that had not happened, is there a risk that we just simply would not have any arrangements with some of those countries?

Alison Saunders: We would have to look at what negotiations happen with those countries and exactly who fits in. We would have to look at all the legislative changes that were needed and do some bilateral discussions. I would be optimistic that that would happen.

Q20 Dr Huppert: You talked a lot about us being able to bring people back to face trial. What would happen about people who were here, but who were wanted in other countries? Would we have to keep them here? Would we have no way of sending them back?

Alison Saunders: We think the position would be that any EAW that had already been requested before 1 December—if that is the cut-off, and we do not have the solution of an opt-in—would still be valid, but then we would have to double-check all that and make sure that we were right. We think we are, but we would have to double-check, and then we would have to go back, again, to the ECE after that.

Q21 Dr Huppert: Again, which would be slower, and we would have more of these people in our country.

Alison Saunders: Yes. We know from some of the figures that we have had they were slower; therefore it costs more as well. It is more resources.

Q22 Chair: As you know, we are concerned about the number of warrants that come from countries like Poland and Germany. Have you been able to talk to your fellow prosecutors in the rest of the EU about their trigger-happy approach to the European Arrest Warrant, or is it the fault of the judges in those countries?

Alison Saunders: I have not talked to them directly, but my staff have been in contact with them and have regular ongoing dialogue. We have seen a reduction, for example, in some of the requests coming from Poland. Sometimes that is a result of their system, whereby they have less prosecutorial discretion than we do. For example, my prosecutors will exercise a proportionality test before we look at issuing EAWs, which does not necessarily happen in other jurisdictions.

Q23 Chair: No, it does not apply in Poland, which of course is the biggest user of EAWs.

Can we move on? Colleagues have other questions. I want to ask particularly about the Committee's longstanding interest in Operation Yewtree, as well as Elveden, Pinetree, Golding and Sacha—all these inquiries that the CPS is involved in. The real concern that has been expressed by the public is over the way in which the CPS is using bail and re-bailing people without a charge being put. Of course, the latest person is Paul Gambaccini. Twelve months of trauma; that is how he described being involved with the CPS and the police. Indeed, the former Deputy Speaker of the House, Nigel Evans—a Member of this House—said that it was time the Government ended the unnecessary public persecution of people under Operation Yewtree and offered suspects anonymity until charged. Presumably, you do not support that—or do you? At the moment, we are getting a number of people ringing us and saying that in the case of News International, up to 30 journalists are being bailed and re-bailed without being charged; they have had their careers ruined and cannot work at the organisation because they have been suspended or dismissed. This cannot be right, can it, when people keep being brought back again and again, bailed and re-bailed without being told why?

Alison Saunders: It is very important to make sure that we deal with investigations and prosecutions as quickly as possible. Equally, it is very important that we make sure that we do investigate thoroughly and we do have the full facts and the evidence before us when we are making decisions. If people are not in custody, and if it is not a case where we have to make a threshold test because there is a flight risk, or there is a security risk, in those cases we need to make sure we act as quickly as possible.

Some of those delays will be around the investigation, particularly when you are dealing with non-recent sexual cases. You will not have forensic evidence, which quite often will help us to make quick decisions. You may not have recent witnesses with recent memories that can help. They will quite often be complex and sensitive and lengthy investigations that we need to work with our police colleagues on to make sure that they are as quick as possible.

Q24 Chair: I realise your desire to make sure that every single “t” is crossed and “i” is dotted, considering that—

Alison Saunders: It is not quite as dogmatic as that. It is around making sure that we have sufficient evidence for a realistic prospect of conviction. It is important for both the suspect and the complainant that we do that properly and thoroughly. It is about making sure that we have

the evidence, so that we can make a fully informed decision on whether there is a realistic prospect of conviction. Some of those cases we have charged, some of them we have not. I have looked at the delay in relation to the CPS, which sometimes is only a month. Sometimes we have advised in weeks. Sometimes it has taken longer than I would have liked. The longest one, in Yewtree terms, has been about five months for that decision to take place.

Q25 Chair: But I understand that there are 30 journalists—and we began the inquiries into News International—that have not been charged with any criminal offence but are being bailed and re-bailed. Mr Evans talks about the torture, torment and stress to the families and the individuals. He describes it as “indescribable”. What do we do about this in a criminal justice system that takes so long?

Alison Saunders: It is around making sure that we can work as quickly as possible with police colleagues. For example, going back to some of the non-recent sex cases, I have been working with the police lead, Martin Hewitt, to make sure that we are giving early advice, and that we can very quickly talk to the police about what lines of inquiry should be followed and which lines of inquiry are not going to take us anywhere evidentially—and even possibly, in those cases where we can see very early they are not going to go anywhere, to make sure that we stop those, because I quite appreciate the trauma it can cause to both suspects and complainants when they have to wait for a long time.

Q26 Chair: Indeed, but as far News International is concerned, you would not consider it more appropriate to prosecute the company.

Alison Saunders: We have not considered prosecuting the company as yet. That is not a case that has come forward for advice. I will check and let the Committee know how many outstanding cases for advice in relation to journalists we have. I do not recognise 30, and we have—

Q27 Chair: It would be very helpful if you could do that. We are currently monitoring Weeting, Elveden, Pinetree, Golding, Sacha, Tuleta, Kalmyk, Sabinas, Carrizo, Kerville and Caryatid—quite a lot of inquiries.

Alison Saunders: There are.

Chair: Scotland Yard must be spending its entire time looking at these inquiries. What would be very helpful is in each particular inquiry—you are presumably involved in these, and maybe there are so many you do not have the resources—if you would let us know how many people are on bail. How many people have been—

Alison Saunders: We can let you know how many cases we have that are outstanding for advice, and how long we have had them for.

Chair: That would be extremely helpful.

Q28 Michael Ellis: Director, the police in certain constabularies certainly have been using RIPA powers—the Regulation of Investigative Powers Act 2000, a rather draconian law set up by the previous Labour Government, not designed to be used against journalists—to find out the source of leaks. This is quite apparent. Do you believe that the CPS should be advising police forces that using

RIPA in that way is inappropriate and improper? It is not the right tool. Journalists should not be above the law, of course. Do you not think that there should be the safeguard for journalists that there is at least a judge that has to decide on these matters, not just a police officer of the rank of Superintendent?

Alison Saunders: RIPA sets out a very clear and very thorough framework, quite rightly so, for what are intrusive powers. I think it is very important that we have a free democratic press that can speak openly. In relation to certainly two of the cases I know about—I do not know about any others—this was not in relation to finding out leaks. It was in relation to investigations around criminal offences, and particularly serious criminal offences, that were being alleged and—

Q29 Michael Ellis: I accept that, but do you see that it is reported that Tom Newton Dunn, the political editor of *The Sun*, is somebody who had his phone looked at without his knowledge? Someone like that will have a lot of information on his phone. He may well have the Prime Minister's phone number in his phone. He may even have Mr Vaz's; I do not know. Do you not think it is appropriate that there are extra safeguards, and that a judge decides about these things, so that we do not have inappropriate conduct? The CPS is responsible for advising the police about the law in these areas, is it not?

Alison Saunders: Not always, no. The police do not have to come to us for advice in relation to some of the powers under RIPA, and do not always come to us for advice in relation to some of it. If—

Q30 Michael Ellis: Right, but in principle, do you think a judge should be looking at this?

Alison Saunders: There is a very tough framework there. If it is applied properly then it gives a lot of safeguards. If Parliament thinks that there should be extra safeguards, then that is a matter for Parliament, I think.

Q31 Michael Ellis: Can I ask you about something else? The *Mail on Sunday* reported at the weekend that the RSPCA spent £22.5 million on legal bills over a two-year period, apparently paying excessive legal fees of £1,200 a day in some cases, which is higher than the amount that the CPS pays to state prosecutors in child cruelty cases—as you would recognise—and that was after a six-month report by somebody you will probably know, Stephen Wooler, the former Chief Inspector of the CPS Inspectorate.

Alison Saunders: Yes, I do.

Q32 Michael Ellis: Sir Edward Garnier QC, the former Solicitor General, has said the RSPCA should report to yourself or the police, and the CPS should be the ones prosecuting these sorts of things. Do you think you ought to take over this responsibility? Do you think it is right that there is a separate prosecuting authority in that way? What is your view on that?

Alison Saunders: It is not something under the Prosecution of Offences Act that we are statutorily obliged to do. They are private prosecutions. In the past we have taken over RSPCA prosecutions and terminated them in some cases, so we have the power to do that.

Q33 Michael Ellis: Can you just elaborate on that? You have taken them over with a view to terminating them. In other words, because you do not think they are appropriate prosecutions?

Alison Saunders: It is not just the RSPCA. We have the power in private prosecutions to look at them if they are referred to us, either to take them over to proceed with them—if we feel it would be better for the CPS to—or to take them over and to terminate them. It is a power that we use with quite a lot of care because Parliament has seen fit to make sure that there exists a right to have a private prosecution, so it is not for us to say that there should not be. Equally, we make sure that that responsibility is exercised carefully. If it is a case where we think there really is not the sort of evidence that should go before the court—there is not any prime facie evidence—we would take it over and stop it or, for example, if it is not in the public interest, because private prosecutors do not have to consider the public interest in the same way that we do.

Q34 Michael Ellis: But there are people like me who want to see money spent by the RSPCA on the good work that they do to protect animals, but not so much on lawyers. In principle, do you see a problem there? Do you agree with Sir Edward Garnier, or do you think that the status quo is sound?

Alison Saunders: There is obviously concern. In his report, Mr Wooler has voiced concern. Again, if Parliament sees fit to take those prosecutions and to put them within the CPS, then we will prosecute them to the best of our ability.

Q35 Mr Winnick: Director, you mentioned, in reply to a question about the press, serious criminal offences. If I could put to you the question that I put to Mr Bristow, *The Sun* newspaper said that the phone records of the *Mail on Sunday* and one of its own freelance journalists had been trawled through by another police force investigating a speeding offence that was high profile, to say the least, because of the person concerned. Would you consider that in any way justified?

Alison Saunders: If it was just a speeding offence, probably not, but it was not a speeding offence. It was an offence of perverting the course of justice, which is an extremely serious offence, and an offence for which people went to prison. That is extremely serious.

Q36 Mr Winnick: What you are saying, Director, is that in the circumstances that we know about, it was perfectly right for the police to start trawling through the mobile phones of the journalist concerned.

Alison Saunders: In that particular instance, there were serious allegations of perverting the course of justice. That is an extremely serious offence that quite rightly falls within the Act, and RIPA allows for that communication data to be considered. As I said before, it is really important that we balance the rights of a free press but, equally, make sure that serious criminality is investigated and prosecuted.

Q37 Mr Winnick: If RIPA does allow this, can you understand the concern of many journalists—not just the ones that were subject to this—that their freedom to investigate and report and the rest is being undermined in a way that must cause concern to many, and not only to journalists, by any means?

Alison Saunders: If this was widespread, then they would be right to be concerned. I have no real sense of how widespread it is, other than the two cases that have been referred to.

Q38 Paul Flynn: Just a very brief one: the Committee and many other people have been shocked by the levels of female genital mutilation that go on in this country and to British people abroad. For various reasons, there have been no prosecutions, or very, very few. Do you think there is an obligation now and a duty to ensure that, where appropriate, prosecutions take place as part of a campaign to reduce the level of female genital mutilation?

Alison Saunders: We have done a lot of work in relation to trying to make sure that prosecutors, police officers and, to some extent, communities are aware of the issue around female genital mutilation. We still have very few cases referred to us to consider prosecution, which is disappointing. We continue to work with our police colleagues to try to encourage more cases to come to us for consideration. Our last look at the numbers showed that we were prosecuting one case. We had nine cases in which we advised no further action. We have about four cases that we are still considering, or giving early investigative advice on to the police. It is disappointing that we are not getting more through. Of course the best thing would be to prevent it completely and not to have any cases come to us, but we are still at the stage where I would encourage more reporting of FGM and more investigations and, therefore, more reference to us.

Q39 Paul Flynn: The great majority of prosecutions against those who torment small animals for fun, in breach of the Hunting Act 2004, have come from private prosecutions and very, very few from the police. I suggest to you that the police are neglecting their duty in this area, and there is an obligation to prosecute and to support private prosecution, because they are doing the job that the police are not doing.

Alison Saunders: The right to take a private prosecution is there; it is enshrined in statute. It is a case of where the police direct their resources to.

Q40 Paul Flynn: You would not be influenced by the fact that the people committing these crimes are rather rich people who live in the countryside and are greatly influential, rather than conventional criminals?

Alison Saunders: If cases are referred to us, we would not be influenced by anything like that. We would look at the case in the same way as we do any other case and apply the code for Crown prosecutors, and we would do so independently and objectively.

Q41 Chair: There was a loss of CPS data from computers in Manchester a few weeks ago, and among the information contained in that data was information about vulnerable witnesses. How was it possible to have lost all this data?

Alison Saunders: Let me put that into context. There was no loss of data. There was a company that was dealing with transcriptions of video interviews that involved some witnesses in sensitive cases. The premises where that took place were burgled and three computers were stolen. Those computers have been recovered and they have been examined by the police, who have confirmed that the data has not been compromised or taken off the computers. As far as we can be satisfied, there has been no loss of data. What we have done since then is reviewed the

security in relation to those premises, and we are no longer using that company to transcribe interviews.

Q42 Chair: You are satisfied all has been recovered?

Alison Saunders: Yes, it was only three computers that were stolen. They have been recovered and the police have considered the computers and looked at whether any of the data was compromised or lost, and it has not been.

Q43 Mr Winnick: Two brief questions, Chair. Are you satisfied with the existing legislation on antiterrorism?

Alison Saunders: Yes.

Q44 Mr Winnick: At this stage there are no further measures that you would like to see?

Alison Saunders: No.

Q45 Mr Winnick: That deals with that. As regards the matter of communications and the rest—and bearing in mind the revelations that came from Edward Snowden—are you satisfied with the present position?

Alison Saunders: In what respect, sorry?

Mr Winnick: With regards powers over communications and finding out details and so on.

Alison Saunders: Yes, in the main. Communications data is really important to us. We prosecute a lot of cases using communication data that we receive, be it telephone billing or internet or text messages or e-mails, and that is vitally important for us in very many cases—drug trafficking, homicide cases, murders, all sorts of different cases, yes.

Mr Winnick: Yes, we understand that, but are you satisfied that the powers are adequate at the moment?

Alison Saunders: Yes.

Q46 Chair: It is a year since you became the DPP.

Alison Saunders: Give a week or two.

Chair: It has been a session of anniversaries on 1 November. Do you find that the police are getting too close to the CPS? There is an allegation that the police are not as independent as they should be from the decision-making process on charging, or do you think you have the right approach, as far as that is concerned?

Alison Saunders: No, I had not heard that allegation. We have it about right with the way we deal with the charging. We still have some issues around particular cases, such as rape cases and serious sexual assaults, to make sure that we are giving investigative advice in the appropriate

cases, and we are working with police colleagues on that. In the more serious cases that happens, and it is absolutely right that that happens. You can see the benefit of that with improved prosecution, stronger cases going before the court, and the conviction rate that we have, which is good. I do not see us too close. We are very proud and quite protective of our independence—and quite rightly so—from the police, and we make independent and objective decisions from them.

Q47 Chair: Does that include the case of police corruption? It must be very difficult for you and your organisation to deal with those kinds of cases.

Alison Saunders: No, it is not, because in relation to IPCC cases, we have a separate unit at our headquarters that deals with those, so it is not the local CPS who would be dealing with that force on a day-to-day basis. We are very careful to make sure that that does not happen, because then there would be a perception—I do not think any more than a perception—that the independence may be compromised. We are very keen to make sure that does not happen, so IPCC police corruption cases are dealt with at our headquarters division.

Q48 Chair: In terms of diversity of the CPS, a year on, are you happier about the number of women and ethnic minorities in senior posts? What is your current percentage?

Alison Saunders: I do not have the figures to—

Chair: Obviously you are the first woman DPP, so 100% at your level.

Alison Saunders: The second woman DPP.

Chair: Of course, yes.

Alison Saunders: Yes, I am. I do not have the breakdown here, but we can supply the Committee with that. The only area where we need to do some more work, which we have planned for this year, is around disability and disabled employees and making sure that our percentage there is reflective of society, too.

Q49 Chair: Finally, in terms of the profile of your local Chief Crown Prosecutors, there was a time under your predecessor-but-one when we all got to know who they were, and they wanted people to know who they were. They were not quite District Attorneys, but they became local figures to whom people were able to write. It is still the case, is it, that representations can be made to the CPS about particular cases, and there is no moratorium against Members of Parliament or others writing, if they feel a decision is wrong?

Alison Saunders: No. We receive letters from Members of Parliament frequently. I am encouraging my Chief Crown Prosecutors to meet with their local Members of Parliament if they have not. For example, we have a new Chief Crown Prosecutor in the west midlands; I know she has written to all local her MPs to invite them to meet her. We very much welcome contact with local Members of Parliament.

Chair: That is wonderful. Thank you very much for coming in.