Dear Harriet,

**SUMMARY REPORT OF REVIEW OF OPERATIONAL POLICY ON MOTHER AND BABY UNITS AND PREGNANCY AND MOTHERS IN PRISON**

In July last year my officials initiated a review of the policy for prison staff managing and caring for all women experiencing pregnancy, Mother and Baby Units (MBUs), and maternal separation in prison.

I am pleased to provide you with an embargoed copy of a report which will be published tomorrow. This is an outline report which summarises both our work on the review and the key reforms we are proposing that will improve the support such women receive in prison. You will see that we plan to respond to the concerns raised by the JCHR on the collection of data relating to this cohort. For the first time, we plan to extend published national data to include a quarterly snapshot of the pregnant population and the annual number of births taking place during women’s sentences. Whilst establishments have held data on pregnancy for some time, collection of this is variable, and this new approach will provide centralised data. We also plan to extend data we already publish on MBU residents to include reasons for refusal of admission and the outcome of appeals against decisions on admission; child resettlements; and upper-age limit extension cases. Whilst the centralised collection of data on the dependants of primary carers was outside the scope of this review, we will be looking into how we might improve this as part of our wider commitment to improving family ties for mothers in custody.

The review has benefitted from a wide ranging multi-disciplinary stakeholder consultation, including input from frontline staff and across the statutory and voluntary sectors, as well as a thorough literature consultation. This has offered an opportunity for staff, criminal justice and third sector partners and stakeholders to reflect on practice, respond to changing dynamics in the landscape, and update the evidence base for this important area of work. The stakeholder consultation process gave individuals with lived experience a central voice in this review process, through focus groups with current and former prisoners.

We are grateful to all those who shared their time and experiences with us. Their input will enable us to make fundamental improvements to our care and management of these women. To continue this dialogue, we plan to introduce a new, biannual Stakeholder Forum on Pregnancy, Mother and Baby Units and Mothers in Prison. This will inform future policy and operational development in this area and ensure that we uphold our accountability.
The new Policy Framework will also reflect the widened scope of the review to include all those recently separated from children under two, pregnant women and those on MBUs.

We also intend to make improvements to MBU applications and appeals processes to ensure they are accessible and trauma informed for the individuals involved. We want to set out a template for each woman to have a tailored care plan, as well as provide clear and detailed guidance for staff on how to offer the best possible support for all perinatal women in prison. The Implementation Strategy for the new package will include extended training to reflect the expanded remit of the new policy.

Following publication of the new Policy Framework and guidance, we will provide an update on the implementation of the changes outlined in this report.

I will place a copy of this letter in the Libraries of both Houses.

Yours sincerely

LUCY FRAZER QC MP