



Ministry
of Justice

Alex Davies-Jones MP
Parliamentary Under-
Secretary of State

Gweinyddiaeth
Cyfiawnder

Andy Slaughter MP, Chair
Justice Select Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

MoJ ref: SUB 127342

16 September 2025

Dear Andy,

INDEPENDENT PUBLIC ADVOCATE AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS

Thank you for your letter of 4 September to the previous Lord Chancellor regarding the Independent Public Advocate (IPA) and the issues raised at your pre-appointment hearing with Cindy Butts. I am responding as the Minister for Victims. I am grateful for the Committee's support for Cindy's appointment as the Standing Advocate and I am confident she will be excellent in this vital role. The appointment was confirmed on 11 September and I look forward to Cindy starting in post on 23 September.

Your letter raised concerns that Ms Butts was not given information on the budget and resourcing that will be available to her in post. It is usual practice, when preparing preferred candidates for scrutiny hearings, to share with them publicly available information. Given the IPA is an entirely new body, there is very limited information in the public domain, which would not be the case for a more established organisation going through the pre-appointment scrutiny process. If a similar situation arises in future, we will ensure this is carefully considered, while remaining guided by the established framework and guidance provided by Cabinet Office.

You raised the subject of the IPA's budget and ensuring whether it would be sufficient. The budget for the IPA for 2025/26 is £552k. The primary objective of the IPA is to support victims of future major incidents, and the budget has been set with this in mind. The annual budget needs to be proportionate to this objective while delivering value for money, particularly if an incident does not occur in the immediate term. In setting the budget for 2025/26, careful consideration has been given to ensuring sufficient resource is available to support the successful launch and swift establishment of this important, independent office.

Your letter also reflected concerns with how long the public appointment process has taken, and you asked what steps the Department is taking to speed up recruitment. In line with other public appointments regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments, the recruitment process for the Standing Advocate was run in accordance with the recruitment principles set out in the Governance Code on Public Appointments. The process can involve consultation with other stakeholders such as senior judiciary, the Commissioner for Public Appointments, the Prime Minister or the King. These steps can take time but ensure that full and careful consideration is given to reaching a decision on the preferred candidate for these important roles.

Public Bodies and their appointees play a vital role in delivering frontline public services and maintaining public trust. The government is committed to ensuring these roles are filled by talented, diverse individuals who bring the expertise and leadership needed to meet today's challenges. Timely and effective appointments are a priority. We have already taken steps to streamline the process to widen the candidate pool and attract the best people. This work will continue, with further reforms to the public appointments process under consideration to ensure appointments are delivered quickly, efficiently, and to the highest standard.

I will respond separately to the further public appointments issues you raised with me at the session on Section 28 on 9 September.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Alex Davies-Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

ALEX DAVIES-JONES MP
Minister for Victims and Violence Against Women and Girls