

Justice Committee

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Rt hon. Robert Buckland QC MP
Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice

By email:

21 April 2021

Dear Robert

It has been drawn to the Committee's attention that Helga Swidenbank, the Executive Director of the Youth Custody Service, who gave evidence with you to the Committee on 9 March this year in regard to the Urgent Notification Procedure recently raised over Rainsbrook STC had previously worked for Rainsbrook's operator, MTC, as director of the London CRC it ran and, briefly, as effective interim managing director before David Hood filled that role in 2017.

While we appreciate that these facts are publicly available and that no rule was broken, we feel that it would have been appropriate, given the subject matter under discussion, for Ms Swidenbank to have declared her obvious interest in MTC during the session, particularly given how clear it must have been that MTC's performance at Rainsbrook had been severely criticized and was likely to attract comment from the Committee.

We would ask that, as a matter of good practice, any civil servant appearing before the Committee in future be encouraged to make any such interest clear and transparent during the evidence session, and we would appreciate a commitment from you to that effect as soon as is possible.

I am copying this letter to Helga Swidenbank.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sir Robert Neill', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sir Robert Neill MP
Chair
Justice Committee