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Dear Susan,

PRISON: EARLY RELEASE, ECL

During the debate in the House of Lords on Monday 22 February titled "Prison: early release, ECL" I said that I would write to you regarding offences committed against disabled people in the community because of their disabilities. I can assure you that the Government abhors all forms of hate crime, including disability hate crime. Hate crime threatens peoples' right to feel safe in their community and live their lives free from fear. No-one should have to suffer abuse and violence and the Government is determined to tackle all instances of hate crime.

In September last year, the cross-Governmental Hate Crime Action Plan was published. It commits the Government to 70 actions to improve our response to hate crime. The Office for Disability Issues was closely involved in the development of this Action Plan and provided valuable understanding of the needs of disabled hate crime victims and what steps need to be taken to inspire their confidence. There are a number of actions within the plan to improve the response to victims of disability hate crime and work is continuing on their implementation.

You also asked how prisoners were released in error. We take this issue very seriously, however the number of releases in error remains very small as a percentage of total discharges. In 2007 less than 0.05% out of a total of 77,000 prisoners released were releases in error.

Nonetheless we have taken action to tighten processes and focus managers' attention in this area. All incidents must be reported immediately and formal investigations are required in every case. Most prisoners released in error are returned to custody quickly and will normally continue to serve their sentence.

I would also like to take this opportunity to correct two issues that were raised. During the debate I stated that the proposed new young offender institution at Glen Parva in Leicestershire will have a capacity of 3,600; it will in fact only have a capacity of 360 places. I also referred to the government's target to "reduce the number of women prisoners by 10 per cent by 2012 following the Corston review". In fact the Government's target is to reduce operational capacity in the female estate by 400 places by 2012.

I am copying this letter to all those that spoke in the debate and to the Library.

Your av.
Willy Bach

WILLY BACH