



Home Office

Laura Farris MP  
Minister for Victims and  
Safeguarding

2 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DF  
[www.gov.uk/home-office](http://www.gov.uk/home-office)

Alex Norris MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

5 March 2024

Dear Alex,

**Criminal Justice Bill: requirement for specialist rape and serious sexual offence teams (new clause 39)**

I am writing to follow up the debate at Committee stage of the Criminal Justice Bill on new clause 39 which sought to place a duty on chief officers of police to introduce specialist rape and sexual offence units in each force (Official report, 30 January, columns 531-532).

The Government remains committed to ensuring police improve their response to crimes which disproportionately impact women, such as rape and sexual offences. This is why we have added violence against women and girls to the revised Strategic Policing Requirement meaning it is now set out as a national threat for forces to respond to alongside other threats such as terrorism, serious and organised crime and child sexual abuse.

As we discussed, specialism is crucial for the effective policing of rape and sexual offences. We acknowledged this in the End-to-End Rape Review, and it has been reinforced through Operation Soteria. We are supporting policing to enhance the learning and development offer for officers at all ranks to ensure there are opportunities to develop specialist skills and knowledge on sexual offending. This includes supporting the College of Policing and Soteria academics to develop the Rape and Serious Sexual Offences Investigative Skills Development Programme (RISDP) which provides new and experienced investigators with a refreshed learning offer based on the latest, academic informed evidence on sexual offending.

In July, the College of Policing and National Police Chiefs' Council committed to ensuring 2,000 officers completed this course by April 2024. The College subsequently wrote to all police forces in England and Wales highlighting the importance of each force supporting this commitment, and providing a suggestion as to how many officers would need to complete RISDP based on the force's police officer headcount compared to the total police officer headcount in England and Wales.

The College of Policing are confident that this commitment will be met. We are working closely with them and the National Police Chiefs' Council to regularly monitor progress will provide a further update in the Spring.

Complementary to this, the College of Policing have launched a new training course for those who provide an initial response to victims of rape and sexual offences. This will help ensure these officers understand the psychology of sex offenders and how to best support victims. This is currently being rolled out to all existing first responders and will be compulsory for all new recruits from April.

I hope this provides assurance that we continue to support policing to embed specialist capability and capacity in respect of sexual offending, and ensure more officers are building stronger cases and placing victims at the heart of their response.

I am placing a copy of this letter in the library of the House.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Laura Farris', written in a cursive style.

**Laura Farris MP**