



November 2021

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about the police and the Sarah Everard case. My thoughts continue to be with Sarah's family and loved ones at this truly devastating time.

Like many, I continue to be deeply shocked and saddened by this case. I have found the details of the case as the trial concluded deeply harrowing. I welcome the sentencing of Wayne Couzens. The sentence means he can expect to die in prison and never be released. I believe this reflects the exceptionally high seriousness of the case and that a whole-life order is the correct punishment for such grotesque crimes.

Police officers across the country recognise the consequences this devastating case has had on public trust in the police. The Policing Minister has acknowledged that there is now a job to be done to rebuild trust by the police and I support this assessment without reservation. The Home Secretary has said that while the vast majority of police officers serve with the highest integrity, we cannot ignore the disturbing abuse of power and trust we have seen in this case.

The Home Secretary has also been clear that the Met Police has serious questions to answer. As a result, she has launched an inquiry to investigate the issues raised by the conviction of Wayne Couzens. The inquiry will be made up of two parts, with the first examining Wayne Couzens' behaviour and establishing a definitive account of his conduct leading up to his conviction, as well as opportunities missed. This part of the inquiry will draw on the Independent Office for Police Conduct's investigations, once concluded.

The second part of the inquiry will look at any specific issues raised by the first part of the inquiry, which could include wider issues across policing. I understand this includes vetting practices, professional standards and discipline and workforce behaviour.

The Government's priority is to provide assurance as swiftly as possible which is why the inquiry has been established as a non-statutory inquiry. As you will be aware, a statutory inquiry is a very long-winded process to set up, and a non-statutory inquiry can be much quicker. However, I can assure you that if the chair of the inquiry feels that he or she is not getting the co-operation or the information they need, Ministers have reserved the right to convert the inquiry into a statutory one.

I am aware of the calls for the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Dame Cressida Dick to resign. I believe it is absolutely vital that the correct lessons are learnt. I am confident that Dame Cressida is committed to whatever changes are required in order to build back public confidence in the police and keep women safe on our streets.



Chris Heaton-Harris

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The Government is also funding a new National Policing Lead for Violence Against Women and Girls – Maggie Blyth. The HMICFRS inspection into the police response to VAWG crimes has shown that radical reform is needed. An immediate focus of the role will include working with police forces nationally and the Government to make sure action is taken in response to the inspectorate's findings and their recommendations considered and implemented as appropriate.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY