

LONDON ASSEMBLY

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Unmesh Desai AM **Chair of the Police and Crime Committee**

Rt Hon. Robert Buckland QC MP

Secretary of State

Ministry of Justice

102 Petty France

London

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(Sent by email)

26 October 2020

Rape and sexual assault

Thank you for your response to my letter, sent on behalf of the London Assembly Police and Crime Committee, regarding the growing backlog of criminal cases waiting to be dealt with in the Crown Court.

While it is encouraging to hear that cases have kept flowing through the courts during COVID-19, and that greater capacity for the justice system through additional courts and tribunals will enable more hearings and swifter delivery of justice, we remain extremely concerned about the capacity of the courts and the number of cases dropping out of the system.

In September, the Police and Crime Committee met with the Metropolitan Police, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime and Victims Commissioner for London to explore rape and sexual offences in the capital. The Committee heard how there has been an increase in the time taken for cases to be charged by the police and CPS, and that rape prosecutions have fallen to their lowest level since records began, despite rising reports of rape. While fewer rape cases are being passed from police to prosecutors, the fall in the number of rape cases prosecuted by

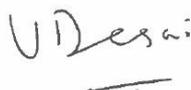
the CPS is even more marked. In addition, the average time for a report of rape to be charged is the longest of any crime type.

At the meeting, we also heard how a lack of perspex screens in courts is causing further delays to rape trials. This is of great concern; the Victims Commissioner for London told us that one rape survivor, who had waited over two years to get to court, is now faced with further delay as the courts have not been set up with perspex screens. This is unacceptable and likely to have a damaging effect on victims' confidence and willingness to stay in the system. I urge you to take swift action, and let us know what steps you are taking, to ensure that this issue is dealt with promptly to avoid a further build up of cases and issues of capacity in the system.

In addition, it has recently been reported that evidence lost by the police is increasing the likelihood of collapsed trials, including rape cases. The Committee would welcome further information on how you are working with partners in the criminal justice system to mitigate the impact of lost evidence and working together to prevent the potential for trials to collapse.

We would be grateful to receive a response to the issues raised in this letter by 20 November 2020.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Unmesh Desai". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a short horizontal line.

Unmesh Desai AM
Chair of the Police and Crime Committee

Cc: Kit Malthouse MP, Minister for Crime and Policing