

# Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM

City Hall  
The Queen's Walk  
London SE1 2AA  
Tel: 020 7983 4362

Dame Cressida Dick QPM DBE  
Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service  
[By Email]

7<sup>th</sup> April 2020

Dear Cressida,

## **Re: Custody Suites and Bail during COVID-19**

I am writing to ask about practices for custody suites and those in custody, as well as gaining further information on any changes the Met is considering to how bail is used during the COVID-19 crisis.

There will be many across London who have concerns over the custody environment and the safety of officers, staff and detainees when it comes to the possible transmission of COVID-19 in these environments. As such, I would be grateful if you could provide answers to the following questions:

- Have the Met included health screening questions concerning COVID 19 as part of their risk assessment processes for detainees?
- What consideration has been given by the Met to minimising human traffic in the custody environment in order to reduce, as far as possible, the risk of COVID 19 transmission in police stations and custody suites?
- What consideration regarding out-of-custody options, such as voluntary attendance, are being considered by the Met during this time of crisis?
- Are you confident that there are sufficient hygiene facilities not just for staff and officers through Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), but also detainees in custody cells to prevent against COVID-19 as far as possible?
- How are you ensuring those taken in to custody have access to advice and support from a solicitor, and that those under-18 or vulnerable have access to an appropriate adult or guardian?

I also wanted to raise some questions and concerns I had around the issue of bail during the COVID-19 crisis. Some have suggested that wider consideration should be given to the use of bail during the crisis, as it is expected to last for several months at the very least.

I have a couple of important questions on this matter, which are:

- Can you confirm whether you support the possibility of the Met using bail more widely at this time of crisis?
- Although extending the use of bail in the current circumstances can be seen as a largely sensible move, because of the 28-day pre-charge bail limit, would this not also be likely to also lead to an increase in the use of Released Under Investigation (RUI), for which no restrictions are placed on suspects, unlike with bail?

- If there is an increase in the use of RUIs, how will the Met still be ensuring that the work they are currently undertaking to ensure RUIs are not used for potentially dangerous suspects continues and is not compromised?

I am asking the above questions in the interest of protecting police officers, staff, suspects and those who have potentially been victims of crime. I appreciate that the COVID-19 crisis has raised complex challenges for all services, including the Met, and I have nothing but respect and admiration for the dedication and bravery of Met officers and staff at this challenging time.

Thank you for taking the time to look into these matters and I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caroline Pidgeon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Caroline Pidgeon AM  
Liberal Democrat Assembly Member

CC: Sophie Linden, Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime [By Email]