



The Rt Hon David Lammy MP
Lord Chancellor, Secretary of State for Justice and Deputy Prime Minister
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
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BY EMAIL ONLY

9th July 2026

Dear David,

RE: Shabir Ahmed probation and wider sentencing reforms

Probation and offender management

We are writing following reports of the Parole Board Decision Summary relating to convicted child rapist Shabir Ahmed, published on 3 July by The Telegraph in Charles Hymas' article, "Rochdale rapist freed despite warnings."

We have now seen the Parole Board Decision Summary, and its contents raise serious questions.

Ahmed was denied early release on three separate occasions due to the risk he poses. He remains a dangerous and unrepentant risk to society.

The Parole Board Decision Summary dated 28 October 2024 states:

"The panel examined the release plan provided by Mr Ahmed's probation officer and weighed its proposals against assessed risks. The plan included a requirement to reside in designated accommodation, as well as strict limitations on Mr Ahmed's contacts, movements and activities. Noting the lack of work to address his offending behaviour, the panel concluded this plan was not robust enough to manage Mr Ahmed in the community at this stage.

"After considering the circumstances of his offending, the progress made while in custody and the evidence presented in the dossier, the panel was not satisfied that release at this point would be safe for the protection of the public."

We met with Probation Service officials this week, where we outlined our serious concerns about both the robustness of the release plan and the communication surrounding the pending release once it became public.

At the meeting, we raised concerns about the limited geographical restrictions being proposed, given the network of associates that Shabir Ahmed could potentially draw upon. We requested that these restrictions be reviewed and sought confirmation that Oldham would be included within the exclusion zone. We further requested that the exclusion zone be extended to cover the North West and Yorkshire or, at the very least, the whole of Greater Manchester.

We also raised concerns about the lack of any meaningful reform in Ahmed's attitudes or character, particularly in relation to his offending and his attitude towards victims, and women and girls in general, which we believe continues to pose a real and ongoing risk to the public. In response, officials explained the "typical" measures used to monitor compliance and identify any escalation in risk or further offending.

We also expressed serious concern that local MPs were not informed of the release. Likewise, some victims and survivors were not notified, and local charities supporting victims and survivors received no official notification, instead relying on media reports. This must change in future, even if doing so requires legislative change.

The Parole Board Decision Summary reinforces our concern that Shabir Ahmed could not be safely managed in the community, unless something has materially changed since October 2024.

The October 2024 plan already included designated accommodation together with strict restrictions on Mr Ahmed's contacts, movements and activities. Nevertheless, the Parole Board concluded that those measures were "not robust enough to manage Mr Ahmed in the community". We are seeking a detailed explanation of the substantive differences between the two plans, rather than general assurances or statements of confidence.

We therefore ask: what material differences exist between the offender management plan considered by the Parole Board in October 2024 and the plan now relied upon by the Ministry of Justice and the Probation Service to conclude that Mr Ahmed can be safely managed in the community?

Sentencing and early release of offenders

This case also raises a wider policy question. The Parole Board concluded in October 2024 that Mr Ahmed could not safely be released into the community. Nevertheless, it was explained to us that the statutory release provisions applicable to his sentence meant that, once he had served his statutory custodial sentence, there was no lawful basis to continue his detention.

Many members of the public will find it difficult to understand how an offender assessed as posing an ongoing and serious risk to the public can nonetheless be released automatically without completing the full custodial term of their sentence. If this is the effect of the current statutory framework, Parliament should consider whether that framework remains appropriate for offenders who continue to present a serious risk to the public.

This is particularly urgent given the reforms due to take effect later this year under the Sentencing Act 2026. As matters stand, offenders serving standard determinate sentences for serious sexual and violent offences will become eligible for automatic release at or after the halfway point, rather than at two-thirds. The distinction is drawn by reference to the type of sentence imposed rather than the seriousness of the offending itself.

Consequently, offenders convicted of some of the most serious sexual offences who receive standard determinate sentences will benefit from earlier release, whereas offenders serving extended determinate, life or terrorism sentences will not.

If an offender convicted of similarly grave child sexual offences were instead given a standard determinate sentence today, the effect of these reforms would be that an offender whom the Parole Board had repeatedly concluded could not safely be released into the community would nonetheless become eligible for release even earlier than under the current framework.

This is difficult to reconcile with the assurance given by Ministers during the passage of the Sentencing Bill that "those who commit the gravest crimes will continue to face the toughest sentences." The Government's own factsheet further states; "We will retain a higher release point for those serving SDSs for serious violent and sexual crimes and we have rejected the Independent Sentencing Review's recommendation for a progression model for Extended Determinate Sentences."

We would therefore be grateful if you could explain how these assurances are consistent with offenders convicted of some of the most serious sexual offences, serving standard determinate sentences, becoming eligible for release after serving one-half rather than two-thirds of their custodial term.

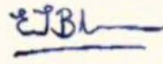
We would welcome a response on whether the Government intends to revisit the operation of the progression reforms for offenders convicted of serious sexual offences (particularly against children) who remain subject to standard determinate sentences.

Given the exceptional public interest in this case, we would be grateful for an urgent response addressing each of the points raised above.

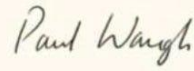
Yours sincerely,



Jim McMahon OBE MP
Member of Parliament for
Oldham West Chadderton &
Royton



Elsie Blundell MP
Member of Parliament for
Heywood & Middleton
North



Paul Waugh MP
Member of Parliament for
Rochdale