

# MAYOR OF LONDON

## **The Prime Minister**

10 Downing Street  
London SW1A 2AA

**Date:** 7 March 2019

Dear Prime Minister,

You are well aware of the surge in violent crime across the country since 2014. Getting to grips with this rise is a top priority for us as Mayors and Police and Crime Commissioners. But there are limits to what we can do, as the factors that are causing the rise are extremely complex and involve the deep-seated problems of poverty, inequality, social alienation, cuts to police, local authority and school funding, and a lack of opportunities for young people. It is the actions of central Government which influence many of these economic and societal factors.

It is crucial that solutions are rooted in robust evidence and where this exists everyone, including the Government, has a duty to act swiftly. That is why we are adopting a public health approach, based on evidence of what has worked in Glasgow to reduce levels of serious violence.

There is growing evidence to show that our most vulnerable children are more likely to be excluded or off-rolled from school and additionally that excluded children are at much greater risk of becoming either perpetrators or victims of serious youth violence. Indeed, your Government's own Serious Violence Strategy from 2018 identifies truancy and school exclusion as risk factors in serious violence. It also refers to evidence which shows that children excluded from school are overrepresented in Young Offender Institutions and more likely to be victims of serious violence. Research by HM Inspectorate of Prisons shows that nine out of ten children in custody had been excluded from school.

Since 2013/2014, the number of young people permanently excluded across England has risen by 56 per cent. For example, over the same period in the West Midlands the number of permanent exclusions has increased by 62% and in London the number has increased by 40%.

Clearly, the way the education system deals with excluded young people is broken. It cannot be right that so many of those who have committed offences have been excluded from school or were outside of mainstream education.

That is why the time has come to act urgently. In the first instance, local authorities need powers and responsibilities over all school exclusions. Time and again we are hearing how the fragmentation of the education system, and the breaking of the link between schools and local authorities, has led to a lack of accountability, coordination and action. There is significant

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variation by school as to what will result in exclusion, with many excluded pupils moving between local authority areas and also out of their cities. This means that responsibility for pupils and arrangements for communicating between statutory organisations is not always clear and there is insufficient sharing of information about special educational needs, mental health needs, looked after children, and safeguarding issues – all of which must be understood in-the-round as part of any exclusion decision making process, along with a clear action plan for future education.

In addition, the practice of off-rolling, whereby pupils are removed from the school roll without a formal exclusion, or when a parent is encouraged to remove their child in the interests of the school rather than those of the pupil, must be outlawed. We firmly believe it is unacceptable that young people can be ejected from the formal education process in this way when we know how vulnerable they become to being sucked into criminality as a result.

Our schools are facing significant funding pressures and many interventions for our most vulnerable children are being cut. This cannot be right, and schools must have the necessary resources to deliver good interventions and support to those at risk of exclusion.

We are investing in our policing as much as the Government will allow us to do, plus further investing in early intervention projects across our regions. Yet so many of the causes of violent crime are out of our control, but in the hands of the Government. That is why it is high time the Government matched our ambitions and showed clear leadership on this issue. We urge you to act swiftly on this matter and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

**Sadiq Khan**, Mayor of London

**Lord Willy Bach**, Police and Crime Commissioner for Leicestershire

**Dame Vera Baird QC**, Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria

**Dr Alan Billings**, Police and Crime Commissioner, for South Yorkshire

**Mark Burns-Williamson OBE**, Police and Crime Commissioner for West Yorkshire

**Hardyal Dhindsa**, Police and Crime Commissioner for Derbyshire

**Keith Hunter**, Police and Crime Commissioner, for Humberside

**David Jamieson**, Police and Crime Commissioner, for West Midlands

**Alun Michael**, Police and Crime Commissioner, for South Wales

Cc: Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP, Secretary of State for Education  
Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP, Home Secretary