



Ministry of
JUSTICE

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Julie Wright
Deputy Chief Executive
UNLOCK

[by email: Julie.wright@unlock.org.uk]

14 July 2009

Dear Ms. Wright,

Re: 2nd Stage consultation on prisoners' voting rights

Thank you for your letter of 1 June 2009 to Jack Straw about the 2nd Stage consultation on prisoners' voting rights in which you ask how the Ministry of Justice is consulting directly with serving prisoners in accordance with the Government's Code of Practice on public consultation.

We appreciate that this consultation should be accessible to, and clearly targeted at, those people the exercise is intended to reach. The second consultation was opened on 8 April 2009 and we have already received some responses from prisoners. The consultation document is available online and in hard copy from the Ministry of Justice, and was widely trailed in the press.

We have sought to engage directly with a broad range of groups and organisations that support or campaign on behalf of prisoners, and sent copies of the consultation to organisations such as UNLOCK, the Prison Reform Trust, the Howard League for Penal Reform, and the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders. We have also consulted organisations such as Victim Support and the Association of Electoral Administrators as they also represent the views and experiences of those who may be affected by the proposals.

Notwithstanding the coverage the consultation has already received and the breadth of organisations contacted, it is imperative that the paper reaches those it will be directly affecting - prisoners. We have reviewed the list of those consulted in the light of the limitations prisoners may face accessing the consultation and we have now also sent a communication to Prison Governors requiring them to take steps to ensure prisoners are aware of the consultation - if they have not already done so. This communication will also explain how they should make copies of the paper available as necessary.

We recognise that representative organisations such as UNLOCK have an important role to play in this consultation process and we welcome hearing your views in due course.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Wills". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

MICHAEL WILLS MP