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Dear Secretary of State and Lord Chancellor,

Cleveland Divert and the role of Adult Deferred Prosecution

Last week I was delighted when Cleveland Divert received national recognition when the scheme won the Adults and Policing category at this year's Howard League Community Awards.

Divert is an adult deferred prosecution programme that I fund to give Cleveland's first-time and low-level offenders a second chance to turn away from crime by directing them towards support to address the underlying problems driving their offending behaviour. I passionately believe that when we present people with an opportunity to leave their mistakes in the past, that most will grasp it – and make positive choices in their future.

The victim is at the front and centre of the process and the programme is delivered in partnership between my office, Cleveland Police and Probation Service – North East who work closely with Restorative Cleveland, a programme that I commission to deliver restorative justice interventions, and other local support services.

As part of Divert offenders will receive support to address areas of need, such as substance and alcohol misuse, relationships and thinking, behaviour and attitudes, and may be asked to do something to re-pay the community. This may include voluntary or restorative work. If offenders do not complete the programme, they risk being charged and taken to court for the original offence.

Divert accepted its first participant in December 2018 and has accepted over 700 referrals to date. I am phenomenally proud of what the team has achieved so far, and the data makes it very clear that this approach works. The re-offending rate for the programme is just 5.8% – significantly lower than Cleveland's total re-offending rate of 36.7% and the national figure of 28%. Just as crucially, we have been able to proactively prevent more people from becoming victims of crime at a time when demands on our services are at an all-time high.

I know that we both share commitment to deliver a more effective criminal justice system and better outcomes for victims. I would like to invite you to visit Cleveland to meet with myself and the Divert team, along with people that have previously engaged with the

service, so we can share our learning and good practice. I have exciting plans for Divert moving forward that I want to share with you – including how we are proposing to utilise the scheme’s proven success to play a part in reducing the high rates of serious violence in the area.

I welcome any opportunities to discuss this with you further.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Turner', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Steve Turner,
Cleveland Police and Crime Commissioner