



**REBECCA PAUL MP**  
**Member of Parliament for Reigate**

Shabana Mahmood  
Secretary of State for Justice  
Ministry of Justice  
102 Petty France  
London  
SW1H 9AJ

1 September 2025

Dear Secretary of State,

**Re: Placement of Biological Males in the Female Prison Estate (HMP Downview)**

I am writing to formally raise my concerns regarding the holding and placing of biological male prisoners in HMP Downview, a women's prison, despite the recent – and unambiguous - Supreme Court ruling on the definition of sex under the Equality Act 2010. In light of my growing concern for the safety and wellbeing of female prisoners, I have tabled a series of parliamentary questions on this issue, and I'm disappointed to say that the answers I have received have not been clear.

Throughout May, June, and July 2025, Ministers confirmed that seven biological males were housed in HMP Downview, all located on E Wing, a segregated unit described as a "transgender only facility". However, responses regarding the official status of E Wing have been vague. While it has been repeatedly stated, notably on 10 June and 2 July, that E Wing is "*not part of the general women's estate*" the unit remains physically located within HMP Downview - a women's prison. I have seen this with my own eyes when visiting recently. Furthermore, E Wing prisoners are granted supervised access to work, education and faith services in the wider facility with the female prisoners, subject to local risk assessments.

Given the location of the wing and access to the main regime, this is a clear breach of the single sex provisions under the Equality Act 2010. The presence of males within this women's prison compromises the rights of female inmates to privacy, dignity, and safety. I would also like to remind you that these women are some of the most vulnerable in society – often having suffered domestic abuse, sexual abuse and coercion by male partners or family members prior to incarceration.

In light of the above, I would be grateful if you could provide answers to the following questions:

- When will the biologically male prisoners currently housed in E Wing at HMP Downview be transferred out of the female estate, in line with the recent Supreme Court judgement?
- How many biologically male prisoners have been placed into E Wing since the General Election held on 4 July 2024?
- Can you confirm whether you, or any other Minister at the Ministry of Justice, personally signed off on those placements?

This is a matter of significant public interest, and I therefore hope that I will receive a clear and full response as soon as possible.

**Rebecca Paul MP**  
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Yours, sincerely,

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