



Ms Angela Constance MSP

Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

I hope this letter finds you well.

I am writing with concern, following the recent LBC interview with Police Scotland's Chief Constable Jo Farrell, where she advised that too much of the force's time is spent on mental health callouts. She expressed surprise at the impact this is having on the police service, with a mental health call coming in every 3 to 4 minutes.

Following this, Chief Constable Farrell stated that it is not Police Scotland's role to "*step in and provide support to every individual who has vulnerabilities*", and that the police need to reset the parameters of what they will respond to in relation to mental health.

This is a concerning development, particularly within the context of the Metropolitan Police's recent decision to stop attending most emergency mental health incidents.

While we recognise that police forces are not always best suited to providing care for those in mental health crises and are faced a stretched landscape in terms of their own resources, it is not right that people in mental distress across Scotland should be left in limbo between the police and health services.

I understand that the First Minister responded to the Chief Constable's remarks, advising that her concerns are understandable and the Scottish Government want to make sure that those with mental health issues are supported in the most effective way. The Chief Constable rightly advises that Scotland urgently needs local provision where that officers can take people who are in need of mental health support.

There are some great examples of these pathways already in existence, one being the Distress Brief Intervention programme which provides crisis support to those experiencing mental distress, with referrals being made by frontline services, including GPs, A&E, Police Scotland and Scottish Ambulance Service. For your awareness, Change Mental Health is the lead agency for Distress Brief Intervention programme in Highland, Dumfries & Galloway, Argyll & Bute and Western Isles.

I would be grateful if you could clarify what these 'reset parameters' will look like in terms of a police response to a mental health crisis and what action the Scottish Government will take to extend local provision of mental health crisis support, so that no individual experiencing mental distress will be left without support due to these new parameters.





We would also like to ask you to ensure that there is clear dialogue and planning with the third sector in the event of any change to the current parameters, so we can continue to effectively support those in mental health crises.

Recognising the cross-portfolio nature of this work, we have sent a copy of letter over to the Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport.

I look forward to your response.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nick Ward". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nick Ward
CEO, Change Mental Health