

14 October 2008

Rt Hon David Hanson MP  
Minister of State  
Ministry of Justice  
Selborne House  
54 Victoria Street  
London SW1E 6QW

I was disappointed that you were unable to meet with me earlier this year, following my request for a meeting (my letter of 10<sup>th</sup> January) to discuss the ongoing reform of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) and specifically the most recent NOMS consultation: 'Believing We Can. Promoting the contribution faith-based organisations can make to reducing adult and youth re-offending'.

However, in light of yesterday's publications from your Department, including the response to the above-mentioned consultation, I am writing again to request a meeting. We are very concerned about the ongoing strategy to increase the number, type and influence of religious organisations and religious practice in the management of offenders, both in prison and in the community, for a number of reasons which have not been addressed in the responses to consultations, nor in your new third sector plan for 2008-2011.

We are especially concerned that there has been no acknowledgment or discussion of the exemptions from equality legislation that allow religious organisations to discriminate on grounds of religion or belief and on sexual orientation in employment, and to discriminate on grounds of religion or belief in the provision of goods, facilities and services. Such organisations are also not bound by the Human Rights Act 1998 even when delivering public services. We consider there to be a real risk that they will breach the human rights of offenders and their families in the provision of services, such as the right to freedom of belief.

I would greatly appreciate a meeting to discuss the potential problems with the strategy and find ways to work together for our shared aims of fairness, equality and human rights.

Hanne Stinson  
Chief Executive