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National Appropriate Adult Network

29 September 2025

Sarah Jones MP
Minister of State for Policing and Crime
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Dear Minister,

Please accept our congratulations on your appointment as Minister of State.

The National Appropriate Adult Network (NAAN) charity leads, supports, and represents over one hundred organisations whose staff and volunteers work daily to safeguard the rights of children and vulnerable adults during police investigations. We have worked in partnership with the Home Office for two decades, and we look forward to continuing that relationship under your leadership.

Earlier this month, I met with your predecessor, Dame Diana Johnson MP, alongside Kate Green (Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester and APCC lead for custody and mental health), to discuss a critical issue affecting operational policing.

The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) requires that police *secure* an appropriate adult (AA) when conducting custody procedures, voluntary interviews, and strip searches on a child or vulnerable adult. To protect independence, PACE requires that AAs are not under contract to, or under the control and direction of, a police force. Consequently, local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure AA *provision* for children (Crime and Disorder Act 1998 s.38). However, there is no parallel statutory duty to provide AAs for vulnerable adults when required by police.

Although established as part of social work, this non-statutory status has seen most local authorities remove their provision or commissioning of AA services for vulnerable adults. In the absence of a national framework for local responsibility, and paralysed without access to AAs, policing has been forced to commit millions of pounds to maintain AA services in the majority of force areas. This unplanned, unsustainable and inequitable approach presents significant risks; not only for adults with mental ill health, autism and learning disabilities, but for policing and criminal justice.

At the conclusion of our meeting, Minister Johnson asked officials to prepare an options paper to support her decision-making. NAAN and the APCC offered to assist with this work. However, we understand that, following the change in ministerial responsibilities, this work has been paused.

the national appropriate adult network • 19 North St • Ashford • Kent • TN24 8LF
tel: 07739 904858 • email: admin @appropriateadult.org.uk • web: www.appropriateadult.org.uk
registered charity: 1104765 • company number: 04680035

We appreciate that this may not yet have come to your attention, and that you are managing a wide range of urgent priorities.

I enclose a short briefing and further information is available on our website, along with statements of support including from the National Police Chiefs' Council. However, officials in the Police Powers Unit are familiar and well-briefed on the issue.

Given the operational impact on policing and broad support for action, we believe it would be helpful for officials to continue developing the options paper, so that you are able to consider practical proposals in due course. We therefore ask that you reaffirm Minister Johson's request.

Should you prefer to meet, or receive further information, before work on the options paper resumes, we would of course welcome the opportunity.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Yours sincerely



Chris Bath | Chief Executive

Email: chrisbath@appropriateadult.org.uk
Phone: 07712 713162