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Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP

House of Commons  
London  
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Thank you for your email of 5 June to the Home Secretary on behalf of a number of your constituents about policing and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities. I am replying as the Minister of State for Crime and Policing.

Like many people across the world, I have been sickened at George Floyd’s tragic death. I appreciate your concerns about disparities within police treatment and representation within the police workforce.

Every death in police custody is a tragedy. Following the death of Mr Sheku Bayou in police custody in Scotland, Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf announced an independent public inquiry to investigate this incident. Responsibility for the Scottish criminal justice system is devolved to the Scottish Parliament, including its policing function. It would therefore be a matter for the Scottish Government and Police Scotland to consider the findings of the inquiry into Mr Bayou’s death.

We ask the police to put themselves in harm’s way to defend us and the necessary and proportionate use of force is a vital part of their powers.  But when officers take the difficult decision to deploy force it is important that there can be scrutiny by the people they serve.  The Home Office publishes data on use of force in England and Wales to ensure transparency and respond to public concerns about police use of force. As policing decisions are devolved, it is the responsibility of the Scottish Police Authority to ensure Police Scotland are acting in a way that is fair and transparent and subject to the proper scrutiny.

The police have our full support in the fair and targeted use of stop and search to crack down on criminality. I know from my conversations with them that stop and search is a vital tool that helps tackle violence and safeguard the communities most impacted by crime. Last year, stop and search resulted in 9,400 weapons being taken off our streets and over 58,000 arrests. But no one should be stopped or searched because of their race or ethnicity. The Government has implemented safeguards, including statutory codes of practice, use of body worn video and publishing extensive data, to monitor disproportionalities and ensure that stop and search is used fairly and within the law. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services also inspects force level disparities and use of stop and search as part of their regular inspections programme.

We know that it is crucial police forces reflect the communities they serve to maintain public trust and confidence. Alongside our policing partners, we are putting diversity, equality and inclusion at the heart of policing. Current figures of 6.9% of officers from BAME backgrounds are the highest proportion since records began, which is a promising step towards a more diverse workforce, but we know there is still more to do. Our innovative Police Now scheme is introducing new perspectives into policing and our drive to recruit 20,000 officers is giving us a significant opportunity to attract a wide range of people into the police and support forces to become more representative of the communities they serve by ensuring officers recruited as part of the uplift are as diverse as possible.

I trust this clarifies the Government’s position.



**Kit Malthouse MP**