



TOBY PERKINS MP
Member of Parliament for Chesterfield

House of Commons
Westminster
SW1A 0AA



The Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP
Secretary of State for Justice
Ministry of Justice
102 Petty France
Westminster
London
SW1H 9AJ

Our Ref: MK/MACD03001/03140714

02 July 2014

Dear Secretary of State,

Sheffield Probation Service

As you will recall, yesterday in the House I raised the case of my constituent, Gwen MacDonald.

Gwen has 20 years of experience in the Probation Service but was moved to one of the six new companies on the basis of names drawn from a hat.

I was extremely disappointed with your response as you dismissed this story, from an experienced and dedicated public servant, as “absolute nonsense” and ruled out taking any further action.

To refresh your memory I include a copy of our exchange below.



Toby Perkins (Shadow Minister (Business, Innovation and Skills); Chesterfield, Labour)

My constituent Gwen MacDonald has worked for more than 20 years in the probation service in Sheffield. When she asked why she had not been selected to move with the national probation service—she was to move to one of the new companies instead—when someone who had been in the service for only six months had been selected, she was told that it was because the selection was done by drawing names from a hat. Does that not show an utterly shambolic approach to probation? Does it not say everything about this Government’s approach, and what is the [Secretary of State](#) going to do about it?



Chris Grayling (The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice ; Epsom and Ewell, Conservative)

What the hon. Gentleman says is absolute nonsense. Names were not drawn from a hat. There was a carefully constructed process of selection and a proper appeal mechanism for those who were unhappy with where they had been allocated.

I now enclose a copy of an email chain involving Gwen, where she is explicitly told by the local Probation Service’s HR Systems Manager, that names were “drawn out of a hat by a panel of 3”.

Toby Perkins, Labour Member of Parliament for Chesterfield

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This is clear proof that Gwen's claims were not "absolute nonsense" and that the note you passed to me in the Chamber earlier today which stated that "selection was not done by drawing names from a hat" are inaccurate.

I would be grateful if you could confirm that you accept this.

Your note also highlighted how you believed selection was "based on ... the balance of work staff had been doing".

Now you have been presented with clear proof that this is not the case I am sure that you will wish to launch an investigation into how this could have happened as a matter of some priority.

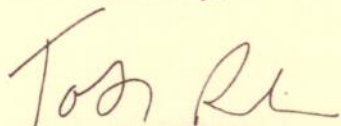
I assume you will also wish to rerun the transfer process so that staff and the public can have faith in the way that it operated.

I also think it would be appropriate for you to apologise to Ms MacDonald for dismissing her concerns so publically.

Thank you very much for your help in this matter, I look forward to hearing from you soon.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Toby Perkins', written in a cursive style.

Toby Perkins MP
Member of Parliament for Chesterfield
Shadow Small Business Minister