

Dr Kieran Mullan MP  
Shadow Minister (Justice)  
House of Commons  
(via email)

14 February 2024

Dear Dr Mullan,

Thank you for your letter regarding statements by Lord Timpson OBE, Minister of State for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending, on the proportion of the population with a criminal record.

The first statement was made by Lord Timpson in the House of Lords on 24 July 2024 and stated that:

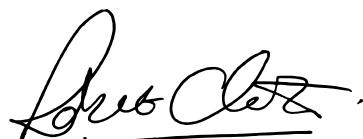
“The criminal justice system exists to keep the public safe, but it should not hold back the one in four working-age people in the UK with a criminal record from getting jobs.”<sup>1</sup>

This claim is based on information provided in an ad-hoc release by the Ministry of Justice in October estimating the number of individuals with a nominal record on the Police National Computer<sup>2</sup>. As summarised within the release, there are a number of limitations for these data and the figure of ‘one in four’ should only be used as a high-level estimate.

Your additional concerns related to claims made in an article published by The Times on 9 January 2025<sup>3</sup>. Within the article, the terms ‘criminal record’ and ‘criminal conviction’ are used seemingly interchangeably, which is imprecise – a criminal record is not the same as a criminal conviction – and the claims referring to criminal convictions are therefore not supported by the Ministry of Justice release. Furthermore, the article is also not always clear that the proportion of individuals with a criminal record relates specifically to the working age population (those aged 16-64) and not the whole population.

It is important that when using figures publicly, they are quoted accurately to best support public understanding on these issues. We have raised this matter with Lord Timpson’s office.

Yours sincerely,



**Sir Robert Chote**  
Chair

<sup>1</sup> [King's Speech Lords debate, 24 July 2024 - Hansard](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Estimate of the number of individuals of working age \(16-64\) and 16+\) with a nominal record on the Police National Computer - Ministry of Justice, 28 October 2024](#)

<sup>3</sup> ['Ex-convicts 'just as reliable' as other staff, says prisons minister' - The Times, 9 January 2025](#)