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Dear Home Secretary

Government Office North East

At the meeting of the Safer Stockton Partnership held on 17 August 2010 one of the matters under discussion was the Government's decision to abolish Government Offices for the Regions.

The view of the Partnership was that we have enjoyed a lot of support from the Community Safety Team at GONE over the years, although the relationship has been a challenging one, rather than a comfortable one, and we were concerned about how our contact with the Home Office would work in future. In particular, concerns were expressed that longer communication lines and trying to cope with a national span would lead to less effective links, failure to update contact lists in a timely manner, and lack of appreciation of the realities on the ground. For example, in our dealings with Whitehall level civil servants we have often found that they proceed on the basis of national received wisdom about the problems of guns, knives and gangs in urban areas, and the over-representation of people from BME communities in the criminal justice system, none of which are applicable in our Borough, nor in most of the North East region.

We would be grateful to receive an indication of what system is intended to replace our Government Office contacts from the anticipated changeover date of March 2011. For example, will we have a designated contact person in the Home Office for our Borough, the Tees Valley sub-region or the North East as a whole? Or will there be an attempt to establish and maintain direct communication with the whole range of specialist units in London with whom we may need to deal? Any information which can be offered on this would be helpful in our planning, especially as we frame our response to the Comprehensive Spending Review.

Yours sincerely

Mike Batty
Secretary, on behalf of Safer Stockton Partnership

Rt Hon Theresa May MP
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