

**DRAFT LETTER FOR SIGNATURE BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE**

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BELFAST

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Thank you for your letter of 23 December. I know my officials have since been in touch with Chief Superintendent Gerry Sillery.

I wanted to write to say that I appreciate and understand your concerns in my writing to Diane Hamill, but I think it is important that I should do so. This is a very unusual case and I think it is important to be as open as possible; to seek to explain, and thereby defend, the system; and also to confront the family on a couple of issues.

I appreciate that the response will be unlikely to be as fulsome as the Hamill family will want. For this reason, and no doubt others, it may well lead to public criticism from them and perhaps others. I think this is a calculated risk.

I have, therefore, written to Diane Hamill in terms of the draft which your staff saw and commented on. A copy is attached.

**MARJORIE MOWLAM**