

Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Home Secretary
2 Marsham Street
Westminster
London
SW1P 4DF

Monday 29 June 2020

Dear Home Secretary,

I am writing to you to express my concerns about Osime Brown, an autistic young man who is facing deportation to Jamaica. We have been alerted to his case by a number of campaigners who are worried that he has not had the support he needs as an autistic person. We don't know Osime, but we know that his family and friends are desperately worried for his health and wellbeing if he is deported.

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability which affects how people communicate and interact with the world. There are approximately 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK.¹ The vast majority of autistic people are law abiding citizens. In spite of this. Some autistic people may into contact with the justice system for a number of reasons, as a victim, a witness or defendant.

In 2019, our charity undertook a piece of research into the state of autism services and support in England, a decade on from the Autism Act 2009. We published the findings from this report in our 'The Autism Act, Ten Years On' report, and one of the areas we found significant concerns in is the criminal justice system. The research uncovered that without the right support or understanding, autistic people can end up falling into the criminal justice system. It is vital that an autistic person, just like any other person, has a right to a fair hearing and that their needs are supported in order to make sure this happens.

We are concerned about the distress Osime's deportation could cause to his own wellbeing, particularly as it appears that he has significant support needs. Unexpected changes or differences in routine can make autistic people incredibly anxious. From the media reports, it appears that his prospective deportation is already affecting Osime's mental wellbeing. We are concerned that the right support to keep Osime safe won't be available if he is deported. It would be unconscionable to put Osime in a situation that may risk his health or life. The consequences of this could be tragic and we know that Osime's mother fears the worst.

¹ The NHS Information Centre, Community and Mental Health Team, Brugha, T. et al. (2012) *Estimating the prevalence of autism spectrum conditions in adults: extending the 2007 Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey*. Leeds: NHS Information Centre.

Given these extenuating circumstances, we ask that you review Osime Brown's case and ensure that he has the support he requires in HMP Stocken, where he currently lives. It is incredibly important that autistic people like Osime are not discriminated against, and that he is not left in a situation that would leave his life at risk.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this, and our wider concerns about understanding in the police and criminal justice system, with you. Please contact David Mackenzie, our Senior Public Affairs Officer, at David.mackenzie@nas.org.uk if you would like to arrange a meeting over the coming weeks.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Stevens
Chief Executive
National Autistic Society