



Member of Parliament for Fareham and Waterlooville
HOUSE OF COMMONS

The Rt Hon Ellie Reeves KC MP
Attorney General
SENT VIA EMAIL

31st July 2026

Re: The killing of Aria Thorpe, a request for a reference to the Court of Appeal under section 36 of the Criminal Justice Act 1972

I am writing to you in my capacity as Member of Parliament for the family of Aria Thorpe, and as a former Attorney General, asking you to exercise your power under section 36 of the Criminal Justice Act 1972 to refer a point of law arising from Aria's case to the Court of Appeal for its opinion.

9 year old Aria Thorpe was killed by the defendant (who cannot be named for legal reasons) who admitted stabbing her and causing her death, and who accepted he was, in his own words, "100% to blame" for her death at trial. Yet, following a two-week trial, the defendant was acquitted of both murder and manslaughter. Aria's family have raised with me their concern that the trial judge declined to include recklessness as a basis on which the jury could convict for manslaughter. As a result the jury were directed that they could only convict for manslaughter if they were sure the defendant *intended* to kill or cause really serious harm, which in substance is the same mental element required for murder.

Aria's family, and I wish to see the Court of Appeal asked to clarify whether the judge was right to direct the jury as she did: specifically, whether recklessness as to death or really serious harm was properly excluded from the jury's consideration, and whether the directions given adequately reflected the established bases of manslaughter, including gross negligence manslaughter and unlawful act manslaughter, as well as any residual role for recklessness in homicide directions. We are concerned that, if the direction given in this case was wrong in law, juries in future cases may be denied a route to a manslaughter conviction that Parliament and the common law intend them to have, with serious implications for victims' families and for public confidence in the justice system.

I recognise that a reference under section 36 cannot disturb the acquittal in this case, and I am not asking that it should. What I am asking for is that the law be clarified so that the correctness of the direction given can be authoritatively determined by the Court of Appeal, for the benefit of future trials. Given the significance of the point, the boundary between murder, manslaughter, and cases where a defendant may otherwise escape any conviction for a killing they admit causing, I believe this meets the threshold of general public importance that section 36 exists to address.

I would be grateful if you would:

1. Review the transcript of the judge's directions to the jury in this case;
2. Consider whether the point identified above is suitable for a reference under section 36 of the Criminal Justice Act 1972; and
3. Meet with Aria's family and me to discuss the case and our concerns in person.

Aria's family have begun a campaign, "Justice for Aria Thorpe", to press for this point to be clarified so that other families do not face the same outcome. I would be grateful for an early response, and for the opportunity to discuss this matter at your convenience. Please don't let others share the pain of Aria's family.

Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon Suella Braverman KC MP
Member of Parliament for Fareham & Waterlooville