



Ministry
of Justice

Alex Davies-Jones MP
Parliamentary Under-
Secretary of State

Gweinyddiaeth
Cyfiawnder

Andy Slaughter MP
Chair, Justice Select Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

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5 February 2026

Dear Andy,

CONSULTATION ON THE NEW VICTIMS' CODE

This Government has been clear about its commitment to ensure that victims have the information and support they need to engage with the criminal justice system and to cope and recover from the impact of crime.

Through the Sentencing Act 2026, we will implement a new, comprehensive release framework which will provide transparency across sentencing decisions and bring much greater clarity for victims. Through the Victims and Courts Bill, we are strengthening the powers of the Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales so that systemic problems can be tackled head-on, giving victims clearer routes to request information about their offender's release, and better protecting victims through automatically restricting parental responsibility for offenders sentenced for a serious sexual abuse offence against their own child.

When victims have confidence to engage in the criminal justice process, we bring more criminals to justice and make this country's streets safer for everyone. That is why today we have published a consultation on a draft new version of the Victims' Code.

The Victims' Code

The Victims' Code of Practice for England and Wales sets out minimum standards for what victims can expect from the criminal justice system and was last updated in 2021. Last year we commenced section 5 of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 (the 2024 Act) which requires those who provide Victims' Code services to comply with the Victims' Code unless there is a good reason not to.

Alongside this, in January 2025, we launched the Understand your Rights communications campaign, in co-ordination with criminal justice agencies, to raise awareness of the Victims' Code amongst victims of crime and the general public. I'm pleased to confirm that this campaign will continue in 2026, with a focus on university students.

This underlines our commitment to ensuring victims receive the service that they deserve under the Victims' Code, and that agencies are held to account for delivering this.

The 2024 Act also requires a new Victims' Code to be issued, reflecting specified statutory principles in the 2024 Act, following consultation. We heard through passage of the 2024 Act and ongoing engagement with the sector that the foundations of the Victims' Code are broadly right but that there are areas that can and should be strengthened. The key proposed changes to the Victims' Code that we are consulting on are set out below. We will test the operability, affordability and effectiveness of these through the consultation which will allow us to refine the Victims' Code ahead of bringing it into force:

1. **Principles and training on how and when victim needs assessments should be conducted (Chapter 1)**, so that agencies properly assess and deliver what victims (particularly the most vulnerable) need to support them through the criminal justice process.
2. **A framework for how and when agencies should directly engage with child victims (Chapter 2)** which we have developed with the Children's Commissioner's Office, the NSPCC, and child psychologists, so that children can be empowered to participate appropriately in the criminal justice process (depending on their age and competency) and therefore stay engaged with their cases.
3. **Specified points or methods to communicate with victims (Chapters 3 and 4)** on routine updates, offers of support services, or opportunities to participate during the criminal justice process so that these communications can be done in a considered way and at the right time for victims, or be delivered digitally where appropriate.
4. **How to improve awareness and understanding of the Code (Chapter 5)**, including the formats and types of material children are most likely to engage with, and where information can be made available to increase engagement. As well as how we can standardise how all victims are told about their rights under the Victims' Code.

The draft Victims' Code and consultation document also reflect clarifications and updates from operational or legislative changes that my officials have been working closely on with colleagues in other departments, namely the Home Office, and criminal justice agencies such as the Crown Prosecution Service and the National Police Chiefs' Council.

The changes to the draft Victims' Code will apply to England and Wales only, as the Code sets out the services that should be provided to victims by organisations in England and Wales. We have worked with the Welsh Government to ensure any areas that have an impact on devolved bodies, such as the ability to make Victim Impact Statements to the Mental Health Tribunal, have been considered jointly.

I look forward to working closely with you as we consult on and develop the new Victims' Code.

Yours sincerely,



ALEX DAVIES-JONES MP
Minister for Victims and Violence Against Women and Girls