



Ministry
of Justice

The Right Honourable
Dominic Raab MP
Deputy Prime Minister
Lord Chancellor & Secretary of
State for Justice

Baroness Hamwee

Chair
Lords Justice & Home Affairs Committee
House of Lords
London
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Copied to all members of the Lord Justice and Home Affairs Committee

8th December 2021

Dear Sally,

CONSULTATION TO INFORM DEVELOPMENT OF THE VICTIMS' BILL

I am writing to inform you, in advance, of several measures that I am announcing tomorrow to raise the voice of victims in our criminal justice system. This includes the publication of a consultation on the new Victims' Law, the first national all-crime criminal justice scorecards, Rape Review progress report and announcement of our plan to extend provision of Section 28. An embargoed copy of the consultation document is included with this letter.

Delivering Justice for Victims – Consultation

The Victims' Bill consultation is the first significant step towards delivering this Government's manifesto commitment to introduce a historic 'Victims' Law'. We have a moral duty to protect the victims of crime, to improve the level of service they can expect from the criminal justice system, and to raise the quality of support they receive. It is the right thing to do. But it is also essential at a practical level, in order to ensure that we have the most effective justice system possible.

This Government has already improved the support we provide to victims by strengthening the Victims' Code, investing £300 million this year in victims support services, and improving the trial experience for victims by rolling out pre-recorded cross-examination (known as Section 28) for vulnerable victims.

The Government's plan to deliver a world-class service to victims has five critical elements: amplifying victims' voices in the criminal justice process, increasing transparency of the criminal justice system, strengthening accountability of criminal justice agencies, improving support for victims including through ensuring criminals pay more towards it, and delivering better tools to protect victims and prosecute criminals.

The consultation on a new 'Victims' Law' will focus in particular on:

Better communication with victims: we want to ensure agencies communicate with victims better, including an explicit requirement for a prosecutor in certain types of cases to communicate directly with the victim before the charging decision. We are also consulting on whether there is more we can do to enable victims to engage with the Parole process;

Use of community impact statements: we want to amplify the voice of communities, and intend to put explicit provision for community impact statements in the Victims' Law and Code, mainstreaming their use,

to ensure that the police, CPS and court understand the wider scale and extent to which crime can blight whole neighbourhoods;

Improved accountability: we want to make sure there are clearer lines of accountability when victims do not receive the right level of service from criminal justice agencies, including through more focus on victims by inspectorates nationally and Police and Crime Commissioners locally;

Increased Victim Surcharge: we want to ensure criminals take greater responsibility for the cost of supporting victims to recover from what they have suffered, and we will consult on increasing the victim surcharge so that criminals pay more towards crucial services.

In line with this Government's manifesto commitment, the consultation also seeks views on how we can enshrine the Victims' Code in legislation to send a clear signal about what victims can and should expect from the criminal justice system.

National Criminal Justice Scorecards

I am also pleased that we are publishing the first national all-crime criminal justice scorecards, providing the national picture on performance generally and on adult rape specifically. Localised scorecards, which will give more granular local detail, will be published early next year. The scorecards will enable better understanding of the performance of criminal justice agencies, an area we are looking closely at in the Victims' Bill consultation.

Rape Review Progress Report

Alongside the scorecards, we are also publishing the first Rape Review progress report, setting out the progress we have made against our plan over the last six months since publication, and the key actions we will be delivering over the next six months.

Provision of Section 28

I am also pleased to confirm that we will expand provision of Section 28 pre-recorded cross-examination for sexual and modern slavery victims to all Crown Courts nationwide, so that more victims can benefit from recording their evidence earlier in the process and outside of the courtroom. We will work with the judiciary to roll this out, so that once prosecutors apply for this provision, the judiciary retain oversight and discretion to ensure the interests of justice are properly served.

Thank you to colleagues on all sides of the House for your continued engagement in these crucial issues. I look forward to working with MPs further to continue to deliver this important work to the benefit of all our constituents.

I know you are interested in the development of the Victims' Bill, and I would like to invite you to drop-in sessions, hosted by Minister Pursglove and Minister Atkins, in the New Year to discuss the consultation and upcoming draft bill. My officials will contact you with further details in due course.

Yours sincerely



RT HON DOMINIC RAAB MP