



DEBATE PACK

Number CDP-2018-0209, 9 October 2018

Victims Strategy

Commons Chamber, Thursday 11 October 2018

A General Debate on Victims Strategy is scheduled for Thursday 11 October 2018.

There is a cross party consensus that reforms to the justice system are needed to meet victims' needs better than it does currently. In the run up to the 2015 and the 2017 General Elections, various political parties including the Conservatives promised legislation on victims' rights.

Currently victims' rights are set out in the [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime](#). This sets out what victims should expect from various criminal justice agencies.

On 10 September 2018, the Government published its [Victims Strategy](#) which contains proposals to consult on a revised victims code and on the detail of victim-focused legislation and improve support for victims.

Labour [has criticised](#) the length of time it has taken the Government to produce the strategy and questioned where some of the funding will come from.

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Subject specialist: Pat Strickland

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1. Background

Summary

There is a cross party consensus that reforms to the justice system are needed to meet victims' needs better than it does currently. In the run up to the 2015 and the 2017 General Elections, various political parties including the Conservatives promised legislation on victims' rights.

Currently victims' rights are set out in the [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime](#). This sets out what victims should expect from various criminal justice agencies.

Although the Code is a statutory one, provided for in the *Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004*, failure to comply with it does not of itself make a person liable to criminal or civil proceedings. Courts can take such failure into account in other proceedings however. Some argue that the "rights" in the code are not sufficiently enforceable. The Victims Commissioner and Victim Support have pointed to problems with victims being given their rights under the Code.

On 10 September 2018, the Government published its [Victims Strategy](#) which contains proposals to:

- Consult on a revised Victims' Code (in early 2019) and also consult on the detail of victim focused legislation
- Improve support for all victims of crime, whether or not they report that crime
- Improve support after a crime has been reported
- Provide better support victims during the court process
- Make sure victims understand a court's decision.

Labour [has criticised](#) the length of time it has taken the Government to produce the strategy and questioned where some of the funding will come from.

1.1 Introduction

The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime

Currently victims' rights are set out in the [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime](#). This sets out what victims should expect from various criminal justice agencies.

The Code started life in the 1990s as the Victim's Charter, but was made statutory by the Labour Government in 2004. It has since been revised by the Coalition Government, and by the subsequent Conservative Government. This latest revision, which came into force in November 2015, was partly to implement some of the requirements of an EU Directive on victims' rights.

The following extract from the Code summarises the main rights:

Key entitlements under the Code

You are entitled to:

- A written acknowledgement that you have reported a crime, including the basic details of the offence;
 - An enhanced service if you are a victim of serious crime, a persistently targeted victim or a vulnerable or intimidated victim;
 - A needs assessment to help work out what support you need;
 - Information on what to expect from the criminal justice system;
 - Be referred to organisations supporting victims of crime;
 - Be informed about the police investigation, such as if a suspect is arrested and charged and any bail conditions imposed;
 - Make a Victim Personal Statement (VPS) to explain how the crime affected you;
 - Read your VPS aloud or have it read aloud on your behalf, subject to the views of the court, if a defendant is found guilty;
 - Be informed if the suspect is to be prosecuted or not or given an out of court disposal;
 - Seek a review of the police or CPS's decision not to prosecute in accordance with the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) and CPS Victims' Right to Review schemes;
 - Be informed of the time, date and location and outcome of any court hearings;
 - Be informed if you need to give evidence in court, what to expect and discuss what help and support you might need with the Witness Care Unit;
 - Arrange a court familiarisation visit and enter the court through a different entrance from the suspect and sit in a separate waiting area where possible;
 - Meet the CPS advocate and ask him or her questions about the court process where circumstances permit;
 - Be informed of any appeal against the offender's conviction or sentence;
 - To opt into the Victim Contact Scheme (VCS) if the offender is sentenced to 12 months or more for a specified violent or sexual offence;
 - If you opt in to the VCS to:
 - make a VPS for consideration by the Parole Board if the offender is considered for release or transfer and apply to the Parole Board to read it out at the hearing;
 - make representations about the conditions attached to the offender's licence on release and be informed about any licence conditions relating to you;
 - Apply for compensation under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme;
 - Receive information about Restorative Justice and how you can take part;
- Make a complaint if you do not receive the information and services you are entitled to, and to receive a full response from the relevant service provider.

What is the Code's status?

The Code is a statutory one made by Order under section 32 of the *Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004*. Section 34 sets out the effect of non-compliance. It states that:

- If a person fails to perform a duty imposed on him by the code, the failure **does not** of itself make him liable to criminal or civil proceedings
- **But** the code is admissible in evidence in criminal or civil proceedings and a court may take into account a failure to comply with the code in determining a question in the proceedings.

Although the Code is statutory, this doesn't mean that a service provider who fails to comply would be committing a criminal offence because of this.

So if, for example, a person was taking civil action against the police or another service provider on other grounds, the court could take a failure to meet the Code's requirements into account.

1.2 Calls for change

The Victims Commissioner

In December 2012 the Government appointed Baroness Helen Newlove as the new [Victims' Commissioner](#). An important part of her role is advising the Government on views from victims.

Baroness Newlove published the results of a broad investigation, [A review of complaints and resolution for victims of crime](#), in January 2015. It surveyed experiences of 200 victims and found that almost 75 per cent of the victims consulted during the review were unhappy with the response they received and over 50 per cent found the relevant agency's complaints process difficult to use. The report called for better support for victims.

A second review, [The silenced victim: A Review of the Victim Personal Statement](#), was published in November 2015, found inconsistencies in approach, with six out of ten victims not recalling being offered the chance to make a Victim Personal Statement. Baroness Newlove called for "all criminal justice agencies to work together to better support victims and to make sure they are given chance for their voice to be heard."¹

In October 2017, Baroness Newlove called for a "victims law":

The Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales, Baroness Newlove, is calling for a 'Victims' Law' that guarantees victims legal 'rights' within the criminal justice system, stating that there must be a "seismic change" in the culture of the justice system.

In her speech, Lady Newlove will say: "*I am calling for a 'Victim Law' to make the needs and rights of victims central to the delivery of justice.*

"Over recent years, there has been considerable debate about putting victims at the heart of the criminal justice system. So why do victims complain that the justice system leaves them feeling like bystanders?"²

The Victims' Commissioner has called for improved support, better complaints systems and more consistency about offering victims the chance to make personal statements.

¹ Victims' Commissioner [Failure to offer VPS to every victim leaves many without a voice](#), 23 November 2015

² Victims' Commissioner [Victims' Commissioner calls for new Victims' Law](#), 11 October 2017

Victim Support

In April 2015, Victim Support published [Making a Victims Law a Reality: A Manifesto for Victims and Witnesses of Crime](#). This called for a new Victims Law, which would be clearly enforceable:

Victim Support has called for a new Victims Law.

There is a growing consensus across the political spectrum that victims' rights need to be enshrined in law. We welcome this move. But it is vital to ensure that the rights included in a new Victims Law go further than those set out by the current Code of Practice for Victims of Crime, and that the Law is clearly enforceable and rigorously monitored. We look forward to working with anyone who seeks to bring in such a Law.

The manifesto set out eight proposals:

1. A single complaints system for victims of crime
2. A more powerful Victims' Commissioner
3. Better communication with victims about the outcomes of their case
4. Court-compensation to be paid immediately
5. Trained intermediaries to be available for all child witnesses
6. No child to be obliged to enter a court building to give evidence
7. Pre-trial therapy for all victims of sexual crimes
8. A national strategy for victims with mental health issues.

In 2017 Victim Support published a further [report](#) on victims' rights which found that as many as six in ten victims do not receive their rights under the Victims' Code. The report also found that the more rights victims receive, the more satisfied they were with the police.³

1.3 Party manifestos

In the run up to the 2015 General Election, Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat manifestos all promised legislation on victims. The Government's 2015 [Queen's Speech Background Briefing Notes](#) referred to "putting the key entitlements of the Victims Code in primary legislation". The 2017 Conservative Manifesto, [Forward together: Our plan for a stronger Britain and a Prosperous Future](#), also promised to "enshrine victims' entitlements in law" (p44):

We will ensure that victims of crime are supported at every stage of the criminal justice system. We will enshrine victims' entitlements in law, making clear what level of service they should expect from the police, courts and criminal justice system

The 2017 Labour Party manifesto, [For the many not the few: Labour party manifesto 2017](#), also promised legislation:

³ Victim Support, [The experiences, interests and rights of victims of crime in the criminal justice process](#), April 2017

We will ensure appropriate support is provided to victims of crime and introduce legislation for minimum standard entitlements to service from criminal justice agencies (p78)

The Liberal Democrats, [Change Britain's Future: Liberal Democrat Manifesto 2017](#) promised a "Victims' Bill of Rights that will create a single point of contact for victims in the criminal justice system, increase victims' access to information about their cases, and give victims the right to request restorative justice rather than a prison sentence" (p74)

Introduce a Victims' Bill of Rights that will create a single point of contact for victims in the criminal justice system, increase victims' access to information about their cases, and give victims the right to request restorative justice rather than a prison sentence

Plaid Cymru [Action Plan 2017](#), promised "new laws to protect victims of crimes such as rape and domestic abuse so that they can give evidence in court without being intimidated". (p 38).

1.4 The Strategy

The Government published its [Victims Strategy](#) on 10 September 2018. It is divided into:

- Key overarching commitments
- Improving support for all victims whether or not they report the crime
- Improving support after a crime has been reported
- Offering better support during the court process
- Helping victims understand the court's decision, and the implications for them and the offender

[Overarching commitments](#) include:

- Consulting on a revised Victims' Code
- Consulting on a Victims' Law
- Abolishing the "Same Roof" rule which denies Criminal Injuries Compensation to victims injured before 1979 if they lived with their attacker⁴
- Consulting on further changes to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme⁵
- Consulting on the establishment of an Independent Public Advocate (IPA) to help bereaved families following a disaster
- Strengthening the regulatory system for the press to tackle media intrusion

[Measures to improve support whether or not victims report a crime](#) include:

- Increasing availability of services through more joined up and sustainable funding
- Better integration and signposting of support services

⁴ For background see Library Briefing Paper CBP 7498, [Criminal Injuries Compensation for victims of child abuse](#), 28 November 2017

⁵ For further details see MoJ Press Release, [Justice Secretary announces victim compensation scheme review, scraps unfair rule](#), 9 September 2018

- Developing commissioning guidance and improving sharing of best practice

[Proposed improvements to victim support after a crime has been reported](#) include:

- Improved police training and new guidance, and a trial of body worn cameras to take Victim Personal Statements
- Increased numbers of Registered Intermediaries to help vulnerable victims and witnesses give their best evidence at police interview and at court
- Increased opportunities for victims to “engage in alternative solutions to court” such as restorative justice

[Proposals to give better support during the court](#) process include:

- Making the court environment more victim friendly by publishing a court estates design guide
- Modernising and digitising courts
- Improving court communications
- Improving support for victims with specialist needs including rolling out pre-recorded cross-examination for vulnerable witnesses
- Clarifying and reviewing key entitlements under the Victims’ Code

[Improvements to victims’ after court experiences](#) include

- Reviewing and considering extending the Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme, under which victims and others can have sentences reconsidered by the Court of Appeal
- [Review the entire Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme \(CICS\)](#) so it reflects the changing nature of crime – particularly around applications relating to child sexual abuse and terrorism. Consideration will be given to reform of the eligibility criteria, and the government is committed to abolishing the unfair and arbitrary pre-1979 ‘same roof rule.’
- Improve communication and support for victims during the parole process. A commitment to simplify the [Victim Contact Scheme](#) and improve the quality of communication; allow [Victim Personal Statements](#) at parole hearings; and roll out revised training for Victim Liaison Officers.

In an Oral Statement introducing the strategy, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice, Edward Argar, said that the consultation on the revised code will take place in “early 2019” and that the new code will be in place by the end of 2019:

First, we want to strengthen the victims code and make it fit for the future. Our data tells us that fewer than 20% of victims are even aware of the code. Those who are often find it too lengthy and too confusing, with too many agencies involved. We will therefore revise the code, make it more user-friendly and reduce the number of contact points. We will also strengthen entitlements in key areas

such as the victim personal statement and support for victims of mentally disordered offenders. We will test the proposed changes to the code in a public consultation in early 2019, and aim to have a revised code in place by the end of 2019.

We have reaffirmed our manifesto commitment to a victims law. The consultation will consider how best to enshrine victims' entitlements in law and the detail of the necessary legislation, and it will include boosting the powers of the Victims' Commissioner, who already plays a vital role in holding agencies to account. In that context, I pay particular tribute to Baroness Newlove for all her work over the past six years to promote and protect the interests of victims and witnesses.

The statement is reproduced in full in section 3 of this Debate Pack.

For Labour the Shadow Justice Minister, Gloria de Piero criticised the length of time it had taken the Government to produce the strategy:

Any progress to help victims is welcome, but the only thing that will cut the mustard when it comes to strengthening victims' rights is primary legislation and for that we are still waiting. We are still waiting for the delivery of the promise made by the Tories in 2015 that they would enshrine key entitlements for victims and witnesses in primary legislation. They mysteriously stopped making specific references to passing primary legislation just a year later. When Labour repeatedly pressed them on whether they still planned to do so, we received a series of fudges, talking about strategies and non-legislative options.

It has taken three years for the Government to produce the strategy that has finally been unveiled today. Why so many mentions of consultation—"consult" on a revised victims' code, "consult" on a victims' law, and "consult" on the establishment of an independent public advocate? We have consulted all this to death over the past three years, and have heard loud and clear from all quarters that these things are vital and urgently needed. Labour has campaigned on this for years. Have we not had long enough to talk about this? I would like to hear from the Minister just how much longer we will have to wait and why we have to wait.

We welcome the potential for improving court environments with victim-friendly waiting areas and an emphasis on accessibility for the most vulnerable, but with more than 230 court closures since 2010 many vulnerable people cannot get to the court anyway. Victims having to travel for hours on several different buses will hardly have the calmest start to their court visit, even if they have a more suitable waiting area when they do arrive.

There are measures that aim to provide more support for victims of major disasters such as Grenfell; the Minister alluded to that and we know it is currently lacking. Judicial review is a key tool for victims of tragedies to be able to challenge unjust or unlawful decisions by the state or other public bodies. Labour has committed to restoring legal aid for judicial review. Will the Government now do likewise?

The Government say that an independent public advocate would help to guide bereaved families through any investigative process after a disaster

"so their voices can be heard at inquest."

However, that is misleading. Although the title includes the term “advocate”, the official will not represent bereaved families at inquiries or inquests. When will the Minister provide advocates to help victims to navigate a complex and intimidating system and lawyers for bereaved families at inquests? The document released today concedes that there is “some potential for confusion”. That is not good enough for victims who are seeking clarity.

Let us be very clear: from a victim’s point of view, our justice system is not fit for purpose. For too long, victims have felt like an afterthought in the criminal justice process. The Government can produce all the strategy documents in the world but victims need action now.

There is no indication of how the Government intend to fund some of the positive measures in the strategy, measures that Labour has been calling for—raising the amount for survivors and victims of sexual violence and abuse from £31million to £39 million; £8 million for children who witness domestic abuse; and £18.8 million on domestic abuse accommodation services in England. That is all crucial, but will the Minister tell us where the money will come from? Victims may well not have confidence that anything in these measures is being properly funded, given the Tories’ failure to fund the female offenders strategy, which their own advisers say was underfunded by at least £15 million.

Just today, we heard the president of the Police Superintendents’ Association say that policing will be in a “perpetual state of crisis” if the Government do not lay out a long-term vision for the stretched service. The entire justice system is crippled. It is time for the Tories to do as they promised and speed up the urgent work of creating a robust victims’ law. Victims cannot wait for another year.⁶

⁶ Ibid cc479-80

2. News and blogs

Russell Webster

[What's in the new Victims Strategy?](#)

13 September 2018

Victims' Commissioner

[New Victims Strategy pledges to deliver reform of victim rights](#)

11 September 2018

Law Society Gazette

[Government promises 'better support' to victims in court](#)

10 September 2018

Association of Police and Crime Commissioners

[APCC welcomes Victim Strategy and Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme review](#)

10 September 2018

Barnardo's

[Barnardo's responds to Government's Victims Strategy](#)

10 September 2018

Rights Info

[Overhaul in support for crime victims announced by Government](#)

10 September 2018

Ministry of Justice

[Justice Secretary unveils Victims Strategy](#)

10 September 2018

Ministry of Justice

[Justice Secretary announces victim compensation scheme review, scraps unfair rule](#)

9 September 2018

2.1 Press

Independent

[Here is everything that's wrong with the government's new Victims Strategy](#)

10 September 2018

Guardian

[UK disaster victims and bereaved to get extra support](#)

10 September 2018

Independent

[Rules of compensation for victims of crime must be reviewed, orders justice secretary](#)

9 September 2018

Guardian

['Same-roof' bar on compensation to be lifted to help abuse victims](#)

9 September 2018

Independent

[Victims 'increasingly failed by authorities' as confidence in criminal justice system falls, research shows](#)

3 August 2018

BBC News

[Victims of mentally disordered offenders 'ignored'](#)

2 August 2018

Telegraph

[Baroness Newlove: reform 'derisory' victims of crime compensation scheme](#)

19 July 2018

Guardian

[Helen Newlove: 'Victims should never be let down by the justice system'](#)

27 February 2018

3. Parliamentary Business

[Victims Strategy](#)

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Edward Argar):

With permission, Mr Speaker, I should like to make a statement. Today, the Secretary of State for Justice and I are launching the Government's victims strategy, which sets out our vision for victims of crime in England and Wales. That vision is of a justice system that supports even more victims to speak up with the certainty that they will be understood, protected and supported, whether or not they report a crime and regardless of their circumstances or background.

However, no single Department, agency or emergency service alone can provide the services that victims rightly expect to receive, as shown by recent major incidents and tragedies such as the Grenfell Tower fire and terrorist attacks in London and Manchester. To truly deliver on our vision, we must all work together. That is why we have today published, for the first time, a cross-Government victims strategy, further delivering on this Government's commitment to ensure that victims of crime get the support they need.

This strategy is the latest milestone in improving that support for victims and builds on important progress over the past few years under Governments of both parties, such as the establishment of the first code of practice for victims in 2006; the appointment of the first Victims' Commissioner to champion the interests of victims and witnesses in 2010; and the publication of "Getting it right for victims and witnesses" in 2012, which set out the Government's approach to ensuring that victims and witnesses get the support they need.

The victims strategy consolidates and builds on that progress but recognises that more still needs to be done. I thank and pay tribute to all the victims, victims' groups and experts who have willingly shared their experiences and sat on the victims panel, and to my predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Bracknell (Dr Lee), who initiated this work. I also pay tribute to my officials and to my opposite number in the Home Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Louth and Horncastle (Victoria Atkins), for their work on the strategy. To achieve what we wish to, we must work together.

The nature of crime is changing and we must adapt our response to meet that challenge. Although overall crime has fallen, incidents of some of the most serious crimes have risen. Serious violent crime has increased and the reporting of sexual offending has also risen. In the year ending March 2018, there was a 24% increase in reported sexual offences, compared with the previous year.

The message from victims is clear: they want to be treated with dignity, humanity and compassion; they want clear, timely and accurate information about what is happening with their cases from day one; and they want the opportunity and support to make their voices heard as justice is done. To help to achieve that, the strategy sets out a system-wide response to improving the support offered to all victims of crime,

throughout the criminal justice process, and incorporates actions from all criminal justice agencies, including the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and the courts. We must ensure that those who are victims of crime do not become victims of the process.

First, we want to strengthen the victims code and make it fit for the future. Our data tells us that fewer than 20% of victims are even aware of the code. Those who are often find it too lengthy and too confusing, with too many agencies involved. We will therefore revise the code, make it more user-friendly and reduce the number of contact points. We will also strengthen entitlements in key areas such as the victim personal statement and support for victims of mentally disordered offenders. We will test the proposed changes to the code in a public consultation in early 2019, and aim to have a revised code in place by the end of 2019.

We have reaffirmed our manifesto commitment to a victims law. The consultation will consider how best to enshrine victims' entitlements in law and the detail of the necessary legislation, and it will include boosting the powers of the Victims' Commissioner, who already plays a vital role in holding agencies to account. In that context, I pay particular tribute to Baroness Newlove for all her work over the past six years to promote and protect the interests of victims and witnesses.

The criminal injuries compensation scheme must reflect the changing nature of crime. We will therefore review the entire scheme, with a particular focus on how we treat the victims of child sexual abuse and terrorism. That will include examining eligibility criteria and abolishing the arbitrary and unfair "same roof" rule, so that victims can get the compensation that they are rightly due.

From Hillsborough to Grenfell, there have been too many failures properly to support those affected by disasters, so today, in this strategy, we have set out our plans for an independent public advocate, and in tandem we have published a consultation on the detail of that role—supporting bereaved families so that those failures cannot be repeated and so that we can properly support victims from the beginning of a disaster right through to the application of justice and beyond.

Building on the work we commenced earlier this year to improve the parole process, the strategy sets out how we will improve communication and support for victims during what can be for many a difficult time, when memories of crimes committed years ago are relived. We will simplify the victim contact scheme and improve the quality of communication. We will make it easier for victims to make victim personal statements at parole hearings, and we will roll out revised training for victim liaison officers so that they are better equipped and prepared to support victims through parole hearings. That can and should help to ensure that past failings can never be repeated.

The strategy highlights the extra funding that we are providing for victims, including by increasing spending to improve services and pathways for survivors and victims of sexual violence and abuse. That spending includes £8 million on interventions to ensure that support is available to children who witness domestic abuse. Other measures include improved training for

the police, including guidance on supporting victims through the interview process and collecting evidence; the trialling of body-worn cameras for taking victim personal statements, so that victims have a choice in how their story is heard; and expanding support for families bereaved by gang violence. The recent spate of gang-related violence, particularly in London, has shone a spotlight on the devastation that gun and knife crime can cause to families. We will also bring in new funding for advocacy support for those affected by domestic homicide. New guidance on pre-trial therapy to reduce the perception that it will damage the prosecution case will also be brought forward.

In developing the strategy, we have engaged extensively with victims, victims' groups and the Victims' Commissioner. That has ensured that the strategy is informed by those who have had direct experience of being a victim, as well as by those with frontline expertise who have supported them.

This strategy is not a quick fix. It is about building on the work to date so that we can better support victims in the future. It is also about giving them the confidence that, no matter their background, their individual circumstances, or the crime that has been committed against them, the support they need will be there.

This is the first time that we have looked in such detail and in such a joined-up way at how we treat victims in the wake of crime. This strategy is a marker for the way we should see ourselves as a nation—one that offers dignity, empathy and compassion to people when they are at their most vulnerable. It is something on which there is broad consensus across this House. On this agenda, the Opposition have, in my experience, always been constructive and positive in their engagement with the Government and I hope that that constructive approach will continue as we deliver the strategy.

Delivery of the strategy will now commence in earnest, as we continue to progress towards a system that supports even more victims to speak up by giving them the certainty that they will be understood, supported and protected throughout their journey. I commend this statement to the House.

HC Deb 10 September 2018 c477-87

[Victims Strategy](#)

Lords statement on the Government's victims strategy

HL Deb 10 September 2018 c2130-8

3.1 Parliamentary Questions

[Criminal Injuries Compensation](#)

Asked by: Sir Desmond Swayne

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he has plans to remove the same roof rule from the criminal injuries compensations scheme.

Answered by: Edward Argar | Ministry of Justice

We are determined to make sure every victim gets the compensation to which they are entitled.

The Justice Secretary announced, in the cross-government victims strategy published yesterday [on 10 September], a full review of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme to ensure it reflects the changing nature of crime and can better support victims. The review will consider how the Scheme might better serve victims - especially victims of child sexual abuse – and take account of the interim findings and recommendations made by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA.)

We also committed within the victims strategy to remove the pre-1979 'same roof rule'.

13 September 2018 | Written question | 171270

[Topical Questions](#)

Asked by: Dawn Butler

We welcome the fact that upskirting has been made into a specific sexual offence. It cannot be right, therefore, that victims of revenge porn are not afforded the protection of anonymity. The Government's new victim strategy, which was released on Monday, failed to address the lack of protection for victims of image-based sexual abuse. When will the Government close this loophole in law and give all sexual abuse victims the protection that they deserve?

Answered by: Edward Argar | Ministry of Justice

The hon. Lady has raised this matter with me on previous occasions, and I know that she will welcome what is in the victim strategy. She highlights an important issue. As she will be aware, in terms of tackling the publication of upskirting images and voyeurism online and via social media, the Law Commission is looking, as part of the DCMS-commissioned review into online abuse, into the sharing of intimate and sexual images. I believe that that is the right way for us to proceed with looking at the important issue that she rightly highlights.

HC Deb 13 September 2018 c863

[Engagements](#)

Asked by: Nigel Huddleston

We quite rightly spend quite a lot of time in this place talking about crime, criminals and prisons, but perhaps we do not spend enough time talking about the victims of crime. So I warmly welcome the Government's announcement this week of a victims strategy. Can the Prime Minister assure me that this will not be some kind of dry document but a genuine effort to boost support for the victims?

Answered by: The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May)

I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. We know that nothing can take away the trauma and distress of being a victim of crime, but we need to ensure that people get the support they need as they rebuild their lives. This is absolutely vital. It is our duty to keep people safe but it is also our duty to ensure that victims are properly protected and listened to. That is why we are taking steps to enshrine their entitlements in law—to strengthen the victims code. This first ever cross-Government victims strategy will ensure that victims of crime receive the care and support they deserve at every stage of their interaction with the justice system. I commend my right hon. Friend the Justice Secretary, and also the Under-Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Charnwood (Edward Argar), for the work they have put into the victims strategy.

HC Deb 12 September 2018 c746-7

[Slavery: Victims](#)

Asked by: Stephanie Peacock

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his policy is on the eligibility of survivors of modern slavery for publicly-funded education; what discussions he has had with the Home Secretary on the application of the Immigration Rules to institutions which provide education for survivors of modern slavery.

Answered by: Nadhim Zahawi | Department for Education

Under international law, all children have the right to an education. Children and young people who are the survivors of modern slavery will normally be in local authority care while their immigration status is under consideration.

Such ‘looked-after children’ must be given highest priority for admission to English state-funded schools and young people in this situation are eligible for funding for 16-19 education or training in England.

To meet the eligibility requirements for student support for higher education in England, a student should normally be resident in England, have ‘settled’ status or a recognised connection with the UK and have been a resident of the UK and Islands (Channel Islands and the Isle of Man) for the three years prior at the start of the course. Exceptions are made for students who have been granted refugee status following a successful asylum claim, including the proportion of that group who have been confirmed as victims of modern slavery.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State regularly meets Cabinet colleagues to discuss a variety of issues.

11 September 2018 | Written question | 169676

[Domestic Violence](#)

Asked by: Catherine McKinnell

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to ensure special protection measures are implemented for all victims of domestic abuse across all UK jurisdictions.

Answered by: Edward Argar | Ministry of Justice

I am only able to respond in relation to special measures that are available in criminal justice, family and civil proceedings in England and Wales.

In the criminal courts, complainants of offences which involve domestic abuse are eligible for special measures as 'intimidated witnesses' if the quality of their evidence is likely to be diminished by reason of fear or distress as a result of testifying in the proceedings. They may also be eligible as 'vulnerable witnesses' if they are under 18 or the quality of their evidence is likely to be diminished by reason of a mental or physical disability or disorder.

In the civil and family courts, parties can apply to the judge for protective measures such as screens and videolinks and over the last year staff have received training on providing additional measures such as separate entrances, exits and waiting rooms.

We are considering how best to build on the recent improvements we have made in this area and we have recently consulted on creating a legislative assumption that all victims of domestic abuse are eligible for assistance on the grounds of fear and distress in criminal proceedings. We have also sought views on what more the Government can do to support victims and will be publishing a formal response to the Consultation (Transforming the Response to Domestic Abuse) in the autumn 2018.

The government has published its Victims Strategy, which commits to improving the support and protections available to all victims of crime.

10 September 2018 | Written question | 170876

[Offences against Children: Victim Support Schemes](#)

Asked by: Helen Jones

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent discussions he has had with local authorities on the provision of support services for victims of child sexual exploitation.

Answered by: Edward Argar | Ministry of Justice

Government officials meet with representatives of local authorities to ensure that victims of crime receive effective and joined up support. The Ministry of Justice also works closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, which holds the relationship with local authorities.

The Ministry of Justice has responsibility for supporting victims of crime. We want to ensure that all victims of child sexual abuse and exploitation feel they can come forward to report abuse and have access to the support they need. This is why we have allocated around £7.2m in funding to sexual violence support services to provide specialist support for victims of sexual violence, including victims of child sexual abuse and exploitation.

We have also allocated Police and Crime Commissioners around £68m in funding to locally deliver or commission support services for victims of crime. £4.7m of this funding has been allocated specifically for services supporting victims of child sexual abuse. This Government has also awarded grant funding to national organisations providing vital services for victims of child sexual abuse and exploitation, including telephone and online counselling.

Local authorities receive Government funding to deliver local services in their communities, and it is for them to decide how best to direct their funding in line with local priorities.

9 July 2018 | Written question | 160694

[Crime: Victims](#)

Asked by: Virendra Sharma

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what his Department's policy is on police forces reporting the immigration status of victims of crime in relation to non-immigration related offences.

Answered by: Caroline Nokes | Home Office

The police priority is to protect victims and investigate crime and forces are extremely careful about doing anything to deter victims from reporting crime. Victims of crime should be treated as victims first and foremost. Each case is considered very carefully but there will be instances where police need to exchange information with the Home Office.

When individuals are found to have no basis in the UK, Immigration Enforcement's (IE) immediate priority is to ensure that all vulnerable migrants receive the support and assistance they need regardless of their immigration status.

8 June 2018 | Written question | 149649

4. Organisations and further reading

[Rights of victims of crime](#), Commons Library debate pack CDP-2018-0066, 12 March 2018

[A new victims' law in England and Wales?](#), Commons Library briefing paper SN07139, 26 May 2016

Ministry of Justice, [Victim Personal Statement](#), 13 September 2018

Ministry of Justice, [Victims Strategy](#), 10 September 2018

Policy paper

Ministry of Justice, [Criminal injuries compensation: a guide](#), 18 November 2016

Ministry of Justice, [The code of practice for victims of crime and supporting public information materials](#), 18 December 2015

Ministry of Justice, [Government response to the recommendations in Baroness Newlove's report into the Probation Victim Contact Scheme](#), 1 November 2013

- Justice Committee, [Work of the Victims' Commissioner](#), HC 800, 10 November 2016

Justice Committee, [Restorative justice](#), HC 164, 1 September 2016

- [Victims' Commissioner](#)

Victims' Commissioner, [Current review](#) [into criminal injuries compensation]

Victims' Commissioner, [Reviews](#)

Victims' Commissioner, [Entitlements and experiences of victims of mentally disordered offenders](#), June 2018

Victims' Commissioner, [A voice for the voiceless: the Victims' Commissioner's review into the provision of registered intermediaries for children and vulnerable victims and witnesses](#), January 2018

Victims' Commissioner, [Are we getting it right for young victims of crime? A review of children's entitlements in the Victims' Code](#), February 2017

Victims' Commissioner, [A question of quality: a review of restorative justice Part 2 - victims](#), November 2016

Victims' Commissioner, [A question of quality: a review of restorative justice Part 1 – service providers](#), March 2016

- [Victim Support](#)

Victim Support, [Victim Support strategy 2015 to 2020](#)

Victim Support, [Reports and policy statements](#)

Alex Mayes, Ania Moroz and Thea Thorsgaard Frolunde, [Survivor's justice: how victims and survivors of domestic abuse experience the criminal justice system](#), Victim Support, December 2017

Rachel Almeida and Ania Moroz, [Responding to terror attacks: providing support to those affected in England and Wales](#), Victim Support, November 2017

Polly Rossetti, Alex Mayes and Ania Moroz, [Victim of the system: the experiences, interests and rights of victims of crime in the criminal justice process](#), Victim Support, April 2017

Tamar Dinisman and Ania Moroz, [Understanding victims of crime: the impact of the crime and support needs](#), Victim Support, April 2017

Bridget Pettitt and others, [At risk, yet dismissed: the criminal victimisation of people with mental health problems](#), Victim Support and Mind, October 2013

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