



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

11th August 2023

Dear Constance,

RE: VICTIMS & PRISONERS BILL

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of the introduction of the *Victims & Prisoners Bill*. I have read your comments with interest.

The introduction of the Bill, which I worked on when I was the Victims' Minister at the Ministry of Justice, delivers on three key manifesto commitments; to pass and implement a 'Victims Law', to reform the parole system; and to establish an Independent Public Advocate to support victims of a major incident. Additionally, the Government will be introducing changes to strengthen the operation of the Parole Board, to ensure greater public confidence in the system. The legislation will also prohibit prisoners who are serving a whole life order from entering into a marriage or civil partnership.

To complement the victim-related measures in the Bill, the Government has committed to bring forward a refreshed 'Victims' Code'. Modifications include upping the Victim Surcharge by 20 percent, so that offenders pay more towards vital victim support services, generating additional income of up to £20 million per year by 2024-25. Further, to ensure victims are better informed and hear throughout the criminal justice process, the 'Victims' Code' will provide for the Crown Prosecution Service to meet victims, in certain cases, before a hearing takes place. The Government is also working with the judiciary to introduce a code of entitlement for victims of the most serious crimes to submit a victim personal statement to the Mental Health Tribunal, where the release of the offender is being considered.

Taken together, I am assured that this is a powerful package of measures to support victims, enhance their rights, improve confidence in the system, and it reflects the Government's clear commitment to victims.

The Government has also said that it accepts that robust data collection on the scale and nature of child sexual abuse is critical to underpinning and driving a more effective response to child sexual abuse. The Government has made a number of improvements on data collection, and has said it will make further improvements to performance data.

I understand that the Department for Education is driving forward an agenda to improve the use of data in safeguarding and children's social care and will deliver a report to Parliament in the summer. It will set out ways to improve information sharing between safeguarding partners - as required by the *Health & Care Act 2022*. Further, the Home Office funds the independent Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse. The centre produces a report on the scale and nature of child sexual abuse and trends in official data. The Home Office is also working with the Office for National Statistics to improve data collection and granularity on child sexual abuse.



I can assure you that the Government is determined to provide proper support to all victims and survivors and to deliver real and enduring change. That is why the Government is working to strengthen the collection of data and how it is used, the consistency in that respect, and the ability to pool or share data to increase awareness of child sexual abuse.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Tom Pursglove'.

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**