

Victims and Courts Bill

RUNNING LIST OF ALL AMENDMENTS IN GRAND COMMITTEE

*Tabled up to and including
26 January 2026*

The amendments are listed in accordance with the following Instruction –

Clauses 1 to 3	Schedule 2
Schedule 1	Clauses 8 to 18
Clauses 4 to 7	Title

[Amendments marked ★ are new or have been altered]

Clause 3

LORD MESTON

- ★ Clause 3, page 5, line 41, leave out “4 years or more” and insert “more than six months”

Member's explanatory statement

This amendment seeks to increase the number of people to whom Clause 3 applies.

LORD MURRAY OF BLIDWORTH

Clause 3, page 6, line 20, after “justice” insert “or that it would not be in the child’s best interests”

Member's explanatory statement

This amendment would enable the Crown Court to take into account the best interests of the relevant child as well as the interests of justice when deciding whether to make an order.

LORD MESTON

- ★ Clause 3, page 6, line 20, at end insert –
- “(4A) The Crown Court must notify the relevant local authority that the order has been made and provide a copy of the order.

- (4B) Notification under subsection (4A) must be given before the end of the period of seven days beginning with the day after the day on which the prohibited steps order was made.
- (4C) The local authority must notify all persons who hold parental responsibility for the child or children named in the prohibited steps order as soon as is reasonably practicable but in any event within 14 days beginning with the day after the day on which the Crown Court notifies the local authority under subsection (4A)."

Member's explanatory statement

This amendment seeks to ensure that the other parent and any other holder of parental responsibility is promptly and properly informed that the order has been made.

LORD MESTON

- ★ Clause 3, page 6, line 25, leave out "4 years or more" and insert "more than six months"

LORD MESTON

- ★ Clause 3, page 6, line 42, at end insert –
 - ““relevant local authority” means –
 - (a) where the child with respect to whom the order was made is ordinarily resident within the area of a local authority in England or Wales, that local authority;
 - (b) where the child with respect to whom the order was made does not fall within paragraph (a) but is present within the area of a local authority in England or Wales, that local authority.”

LORD MESTON

- ★ Clause 3, page 7, line 2, at end insert –
 - “10CA Evidence of parental responsibility**
 - (1) Evidence of any parental responsibility held by the offender for each child must be provided in the pre-sentence report.
 - (2) The probation service must liaise with the local authority in the area where the child is living to ascertain whether the offender holds parental responsibility for any child and if so, to obtain evidence of that parental responsibility.
 - (3) The evidence will comprise of the documents listed in subsections (4) to (11).
 - (4) Where the offender is the father and has parental responsibility under section 2(1) by being married to or in a civil partnership with the mother –
 - (a) a copy of the marriage certificate or civil partnership certificate, and

- (b) a copy of the birth certificate for each relevant child.
- (5) Where the offender is a female parent and has parental responsibility under section 2(1A) by being married to or in a civil partnership with the birth mother –
 - (a) a copy of the marriage certificate or civil partnership certificate, and
 - (b) a copy of the birth certificate for each relevant child.
- (6) Where the offender is an unmarried father who has acquired parental responsibility under section 4, a copy of –
 - (a) the birth certificate showing the offender as the registered father for each child,
 - (b) the Parental Responsibility Agreement in the prescribed form which has been registered with the Central Family Court for each child, or
 - (c) the Parental Responsibility Order for each child,and a copy of the birth certificate for each relevant child.
- (7) Where the offender is a second female parent who has acquired parental responsibility under section 4ZA, a copy of –
 - (a) the birth certificate showing the offender as a registered parent for each child,
 - (b) the Parental Responsibility Agreement in the prescribed form which has been registered with the Central Family Court for each child, or
 - (c) the Parental Responsibility Order for each child,and a copy of the birth certificate for each relevant child.
- (8) Where the offender is a step-parent who has acquired parental responsibility under section 4A, a copy of –
 - (a) the Parental Responsibility Agreement in the prescribed form and registered with the Central Family Court, or
 - (b) the Parental Responsibility Order,and a copy of the birth certificate for each child.
- (9) Where the offender acquired parental responsibility by appointment as a guardian for the child or children, where appointed by –
 - (a) the court under section 5(1), a copy of the court order, or
 - (b) a parent, under section 5(3) or a guardian or special guardian under section 5(4) to take effect on their death, a copy of the appointment and death certificate of the appointor,and a copy of the birth certificate for each child.
- (10) Where the offender acquired parental responsibility by appointment as a Special Guardian under section 14A –
 - (a) a copy of the Special Guardianship Order, and
 - (b) a copy of the birth certificate for each child.
- (11) Where the offender acquired parental responsibility under section 12(2) or section 12(2A) –

- (a) a copy of the Child Arrangements Order granting the parental responsibility, and
- (b) a copy of the birth certificate for each child.”

Member's explanatory statement

As the prohibited steps order is to be made by the criminal court at the point of sentencing, the evidence of any parental responsibility held by the offender will have to be ascertained and included in the pre-sentence report.

LORD MURRAY OF BLIDWORTH

Clause 3, page 7, line 11, at end insert –

- “(1A) If the condition in subsection (1)(a) is met, and the effect of the prohibited steps order is that no one who has parental responsibility for the child is able to take steps to meet that responsibility, the local authority that is the relevant local authority at the time the order is made must make an application to the court (as defined in section 92(7)) to review the order.”

Member's explanatory statement

This amendment would require that if the effect of a prohibited steps order was that no one was able to exercise parental responsibility for a child without the consent of a court, the relevant local authority would be obliged to apply to the court to review the order.

LORD MESTON

- ★ Clause 3, page 7, line 23, leave out from “authority” to end of line 30 and insert “has the meaning given in section 10C(10).”

Schedule 1

LORD MESTON

- ★ Schedule 1, page 21, line 2, at end insert –

“(oa) section 15A (sexual communication with a child);”

Member's explanatory statement

This amendment would include in the Schedule the offence referred to if the threshold under Clause 3 is lowered.

Clause 4

LORD MURRAY OF BLIDWORTH

Clause 4, page 8, line 19, after “justice” insert “or that it would not be in the child’s best interests”

Member's explanatory statement

This amendment would enable the Crown Court to take into account the best interests of the relevant child as well as the interests of justice when deciding whether to make an order.

LORD MESTON

★ Clause 4, page 8, line 19, at end insert –

- “(4A) The Crown Court must notify the relevant local authority that the order has been made and provide a copy of the order.
- (4B) Notification under subsection (4A) must be given before the end of the period of 7 days beginning with the day after the day on which the prohibited steps order was made.
- (4C) The local authority must notify the victim of the rape of the prohibited steps order as soon as is reasonably practicable but in any event within 14 days beginning with the day after the day on which Crown Court notifies the local authority under subsection (4A).”

Member's explanatory statement

This amendment ensures that the victim of the rape is promptly and properly informed that the order has been made. The local authority is best placed to give such information and to explain the effect of the order to the victim.

LORD MURRAY OF BLIDWORTH

Clause 4, page 9, line 40, at end insert –

- “(1A) If the condition in subsection (1)(a) is met, and the effect of the prohibited steps order is that no one who has parental responsibility for the child is able to take steps to meet that responsibility, the local authority that is the relevant local authority at the time the order is made must make an application to the court (as defined in section 92(7)) to review the order.”

Member's explanatory statement

This amendment would require that if the effect of a prohibited steps order was that no one was able to exercise parental responsibility for a child without the consent of a court, the relevant local authority would be obliged to apply to the court to review the order.

After Clause 7

LORD KEEN OF ELIE
LORD SANDHURST

After Clause 7, insert the following new Clause –

“Extension of Victim Contact Scheme

- (1) The Secretary of State must ensure that the Victim Contact Scheme is made available to –
 - (a) victims of offenders sentenced to less than 12 months for violent and sexual offences,
 - (b) victims in cases involving coercive or controlling behaviour, stalking, or harassment, and
 - (c) bereaved families in manslaughter or death by dangerous driving cases.
- (2) The Secretary of State must ensure that information under the Victim Contact Scheme is communicated in a timely and trauma-informed manner.
- (3) The Secretary of State must publish data each year on uptake and accessibility of the Victim Contact Scheme.”

Member's explanatory statement

This new clause would require the Secretary of State to extend the Victim Contact Scheme to certain categories of victim. It would also ensure information is provided in a timely, trauma-informed way and require annual reporting on the Scheme's uptake and accessibility.

BARONESS BRINTON

After Clause 7, insert the following new Clause –

“Duty to commission support services for caregivers of victims of abuse and exploitation

- (1) This section applies in respect of victims of offences relating to –
 - (a) domestic abuse,
 - (b) sexual violence, or
 - (c) child criminal exploitation, where the victim –
 - (i) at the time of the offence, was under the age of 18, or
 - (ii) is an adult at risk of harm.
- (2) It is the duty of relevant authorities to commission sufficient and specific services for the parent, guardian or person who has responsibility for the victim under subsection (1) for the purpose of securing the rights of the victim under the Victims Code of Practice for England and Wales.
- (3) Victim is defined as outlined in Section 1 of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024.
- (4) The services commissioned and provided under subsection (2) must be –
 - (a) appropriate to the needs of the caregiver in supporting the victim,

- (b) trauma-informed and culturally competent, and
 - (c) accessible without unreasonable delay or procedural burden.
- (5) In exercising their duty under this section, relevant authorities must have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- (6) The Secretary of State must publish such guidance within six months of the passing of this Act, following consultation with relevant stakeholders including—
 - (a) victim support organisations,
 - (b) organisations representing children and vulnerable adults, and
 - (c) persons with the lived-experience of the effects of sexual or violent offences.
- (7) In this section—
 - “child criminal exploitation” has the meaning given in the Crime and Policing Act 2026;
 - “adult at risk of harm” means a person aged 18 or over who—
 - (a) has needs for care and support,
 - (b) is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, and
 - (c) as a result of those needs is unable to protect themselves against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it;
 - “relevant authorities” has the meaning given in section 13 of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024.”

Member's explanatory statement

This amendment places a duty on relevant authorities to provide specific services to the parent, guardian or person who has responsibility for a victim of domestic abuse, sexual violence or child criminal exploitation for the purposes of securing the rights of the victim under the Victims Code.

LORD KEEN OF ELIE
LORD SANDHURST

After Clause 7, insert the following new Clause—

“Victim personal statements

- (1) The Secretary of State must, within six months of the passing of this Act, issue revised guidance on the content of victim personal statements.
- (2) The revised guidance issued under subsection (1) must stipulate that when making a victim personal statement, a victim must be able to say anything they wish about the defendant, provided it is not contrary to any statutory limitations on free speech, makes allegations of untried criminal conduct or is disorderly language.
- (3) The court must disregard any prejudicial comments made during a victim personal statement.”

Member's explanatory statement

This new clause would require the Secretary of State to review how to make victim personal statements less restrictive and clarify what can be included.

LORD GARNIER

After Clause 7, insert the following new Clause –

“Compensation for victims of fraud and other economic crimes

- (1) The Secretary of State must, within one year of the passing of this Act, lay before Parliament a review of victims of fraud, bribery and money laundering offences.
- (2) The purpose of the review under subsection (1) is to identify how victims of such economic crimes could be better compensated without such victims needing to pursue civil action.
- (3) The Secretary of State must provide for a public consultation on the review.
- (4) In this section “victims of economic crime” includes United Kingdom and overseas victims of complex corruption cases where the harm caused by the offending is not easily quantifiable.”

Member’s explanatory statement

This new clause requires a review to explore how domestic and overseas victims of fraud, bribery and money laundering offences could be better compensated without the need for civil proceedings to recover their losses or compensation.

BARONESS BRINTON

After Clause 7, insert the following new Clause –

“Access to free court transcripts for victims

- (1) Victims of criminal offences shall be entitled to receive, without charge, court transcripts of –
 - (a) sentencing remarks;
 - (b) judicial summings-up;
 - (c) bail decisions and conditions relevant to their case.
- (2) The Secretary of State must ensure that such transcripts are provided within 14 days of a request.
- (3) The duty under subsection (1) shall apply irrespective of whether the victim gave evidence in the case.”

Member’s explanatory statement

This new clause would give victims a right to receive, free of charge, court transcripts of sentencing remarks, judicial summings-up, and bail decisions relevant to their case. It requires that transcripts be provided within 14 days of a request and clarifies that this right applies whether or not the victim gave evidence in the case.

BARONESS BRINTON

After Clause 7, insert the following Clause –

“Application of the victims’ code in respect of victims of murder, manslaughter or infanticide abroad

- (1) The Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 is amended as follows.
- (2) After section 4, insert –

“4A Application of the victims’ code in respect of victims of murder, manslaughter or infanticide of a close family member abroad

- (1) This section relates to victims as defined under section 1(2)(c) who are close family members of a British National resident in England and Wales who was the victim of –
 - (a) murder,
 - (b) manslaughter, or
 - (c) infanticide,committed outside the United Kingdom.
- (2) The Secretary of State must by regulations issue an appendix to the victims’ code, setting out how the code applies to victims in the circumstances set out in subsection (1).
- (3) The appendix must set out the services to be provided to victims as defined under subsection (1) by those persons based in England and Wales appearing to the Secretary of State to have functions of a public nature relating to –
 - (a) victims, or
 - (b) any aspect of the criminal justice system.
- (4) The appendix must make provision for services based in England and Wales which reflect the principles that victims require –
 - (a) information to help them understand the criminal justice process,
 - (b) access to services within England and Wales which provide them with emotional and practical support (including, where appropriate, specialist services),
 - (c) in circumstances where the criminal justice process is engaged in England and Wales, the opportunity to make their views heard in the criminal justice process, and
 - (d) the ability to challenge decisions which have a direct impact on them.
- (5) In setting out the services to be provided to victims under this section, the Secretary of State must specify the following –
 - (a) how such services will be provided with accessible information;
 - (b) how they access emotional and practical support.””

Member's explanatory statement

This new clause requires the Secretary of State to create an appendix to the Victims' Code which outlines how the code applies to victims whose close relative was the victim of murder, manslaughter or infanticide outside the UK.

BARONESS BRINTON

After Clause 7, insert the following Clause —

“Right to referral to restorative justice services

- (1) A victim of an offence has the right, at any stage following the commission of the offence, to receive from a relevant criminal justice body —
 - (a) information about the availability and purpose of restorative justice services, and
 - (b) a meaningful referral to restorative justice services, where those services are available.
- (2) A referral under subsection (1) must be made —
 - (a) as soon as is reasonably practicable after the offender is identified, and
 - (b) at subsequent appropriate stages of the criminal justice process (including pre-charge, post-charge, and post-conviction) or if requested by the victim.
- (3) In exercising the right under this section, a victim must at all times give informed consent, and participation in any restorative justice process shall be voluntary.
- (4) A relevant criminal justice body must maintain a record (in such form as may be prescribed by regulations made by statutory instrument) of —
 - (a) the times when referrals under subsection (1) are made, and
 - (b) statistical information on how many victims accept, decline, or do not respond to referrals.
- (5) For the purposes of this section, “relevant criminal justice body” includes (but is not limited to) —
 - (a) the police;
 - (b) the Crown Prosecution Service;
 - (c) His Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service;
 - (d) the Courts;
 - (e) commissioned victim service providers.
- (6) The victims’ code must include provision consistent with this section for —
 - (a) the form, timing, and content of information to be given to victims about restorative justice,
 - (b) mechanisms and standards for referral and re-referral, and
 - (c) oversight and review of compliance with this section.
- (7) A statutory instrument containing regulations under this section is subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

- (8) In this section “restorative justice services” means services facilitating a process through which a victim and offender (or their representatives) may, with appropriate support, voluntarily engage to deal with the harm arising from the offence by means of a facilitated dialogue or meeting such as conferencing, or indirect exchanges of communication via trained practitioners.”

Member's explanatory statement

This new clause seeks to strengthen victims' statutory rights to access restorative justice services.

BARONESS BRINTON

After Clause 7, insert the following Clause —

“Duty to report on the use of restorative justice services

- (1) The Secretary of State must, within a year of the passing of this Act, undertake an assessment of the use of restorative justice services by victims in England and Wales.
- (2) The assessment under subsection (1) must consider —
 - (a) the level of use of restorative justice services,
 - (b) recommendations for increasing the use of restorative justice services, and
 - (c) any other matters that the Secretary of State deems appropriate.
- (3) The Secretary of State must lay a copy of the assessment before Parliament.
- (4) In this section “restorative justice services” means services facilitating a process through which a victim and offender (or their representatives) may, with appropriate support, voluntarily engage to deal with the harm arising from the offence by means such as mediation, conferencing, or reparation, under standards of safety and fairness.”

Member's explanatory statement

This new clause would require the Secretary of State to carry out an assessment of the level of use of restorative justice services, and make recommendations for increasing their use.

After Clause 12

BARONESS CHAKRABARTI
LORD ARBUTHNOT OF EDROM
LORD BEAMISH
BARONESS KIDRON

After Clause 12, insert the following Clause —

“Removal of presumption of computer reliability

- (1) Section 69 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 is reinstated.
- (2) Section 60 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 is repealed.”

Member's explanatory statement

This new clause removes the statutory rebuttable presumption that a computer system is working correctly for the purposes of criminal evidence produced by it. Instead, prosecutors would have to offer a reasonable demonstration of the reliability of any relevant hardware and software on which it proposes to rely, thus giving the defence an opportunity to scrutinise and challenge the same.

BARONESS CHAKRABARTI

After Clause 12, insert the following Clause –

“Creative and artistic expression: admissibility in criminal proceedings

- (1) Evidence of a person’s creative or artistic expression, whether original or derivative, shall not be admissible in evidence against that person or another person in criminal proceedings unless the conditions in subsection (2) are met.
- (2) The conditions in this subsection are that the court is satisfied to the criminal standard that –
 - (a) the expression has a literal, rather than figurative or fictional, meaning,
 - (b) where the expression is derivative, the person who created the derivative work intended to adopt the literal meaning of the work as that person’s own thought or statement,
 - (c) the expression refers to the specific facts of the crime alleged,
 - (d) the evidence is relevant to an issue of fact that is disputed, and
 - (e) it is necessary to admit the evidence as the issue cannot be proven by other evidence.
- (3) In deciding whether the conditions in subsection (2) are met, the court must have regard to the linguistic and artistic conventions of the expression, the social and cultural context of the expression, and the context in which the expression was created, including (but not limited to) –
 - (a) the extent to which the expression conforms to the conventions of its genre;
 - (b) when the expression was created and whether it was created before or after the crime alleged;
 - (c) where the expression takes the form of written or spoken words, who wrote the words;
 - (d) where the expression takes the form of lyrics or music, how the creator intended it to sound or be heard by the listener;
 - (e) where the expression takes the form of a video, the role played by the relevant participant, with mere presence not being sufficient;
 - (f) where the party making the application seeks to rely on an excerpt from the expression, how that excerpt fits into the broader context of the expression;
 - (g) whether the expression contains information not readily available to the individual(s) it would be used against.
- (4) The court shall not make a determination under subsection (2) except on the written or oral evidence of an independent expert who, in the opinion of the court,

is suitably qualified to give evidence about the linguistic and artistic conventions and the social and cultural context of the creative or artistic expression.

- (5) When a court admits evidence of a person's creative or artistic expression in criminal proceedings under this section, it must redact any part of the evidence in respect of which, in the opinion of the court, its prejudicial effect outweighs its probative value.
- (6) When a court admits evidence of a person's creative or artistic expression in a trial on indictment under this section, the judge must give such directions to the jury as they think necessary to ensure that the jury's consideration of that evidence is not influenced by racial or other stereotypes."

Member's explanatory statement

This new clause attempts to prevent unjust criminal convictions obtained by prejudicial over-reliance on a person's musical taste as probative of criminal proclivity or intent.

Clause 13

LORD KEEN OF ELIE
LORD SANDHURST

Clause 13, page 16, line 36, at end insert –

“(aa) in that sub-paragraph for “28” substitute “56”;

Member's explanatory statement

This amendment increases the window for applying to the Unduly Lenient Sentences Scheme from 28 days to 56 days.

LORD KEEN OF ELIE
LORD SANDHURST

Clause 13, page 16, line 38, after “(2)” insert “unless an application is made by a victim, or the deceased victim's next of kin, in which case notice of an application shall be given within 56 days”

Member's explanatory statement

This amendment increases the window for applying to the Unduly Lenient Sentences Scheme to 56 days for a victim of a crime or a deceased victim's next of kin.

LORD KEEN OF ELIE
LORD SANDHURST

Clause 13, page 17, line 6, leave out “28-day” and insert “56-day”

After Clause 14

LORD KEEN OF ELIE
LORD SANDHURST

After Clause 14, insert the following new Clause –

“Court transcripts of sentencing remarks

- (1) Where a request is made for the sentencing remarks delivered in the Crown Court, the court must, subject to subsection (2), make those remarks available within one month of the request being received.
- (2) Sentencing remarks may be published only where a judge of the Crown Court has approved their release, having regard to –
 - (a) the accuracy of the record, and
 - (b) the need to comply with any reporting restrictions or other legal prohibitions.
- (3) Sentencing remarks made available under this section must be published free of charge and may be made available online.”

LORD KEEN OF ELIE
LORD SANDHURST

After Clause 14, insert the following new Clause –

“Sentencing guidelines on court fines

Within 18 months of the day on which this Act is passed, the Sentencing Council must revise relevant sentencing guidelines so that the court must award compensation to a victim to the value of items stolen when imposing compensation for the offence of theft, burglary, fraud, or any other crime that has resulted in a financial loss to the victim.”

Member's explanatory statement

This new clause would require the Sentencing Council to revise sentencing guidelines so that a court must impose compensation commensurate to the value of stolen items when issuing fines.

BARONESS SATER

After Clause 14, insert the following new Clause –

“Dealing with offenders for crimes committed as children

Where a court is dealing with an offender for a crime committed before the age of 18 but at the time of the first court appearance the offender is older than 17 but younger than 21, the offender must be dealt with by a youth court and sentenced according to the sentencing guidelines which apply in a youth court.”

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