

Victim and Prisoners Act 2024 updates

Summary of what has been commenced:

Firstly, the government has commenced the obligation on those who provide Victims' Code services to comply with the Victims' Code unless there is a good reason not to. This underlines Government's commitment to ensuring victims receive the service that they deserve under the Victims' Code, and that agencies are held to account for delivering this.

Secondly, the government has commenced measures that will help the Victims' Commissioner to better hold bodies accountable for how they are delivering for victims. This includes:

1. bringing new bodies into the Commissioner's remit, including the criminal justice inspectorates and additional Government departments.
2. requiring that those subject to the Code compliance duty in section 5 of the Act to cooperate with the Commissioner, for example, complying with reasonable requests for data or access when requested, so far as it is appropriate and reasonably practicable.
3. making clear that the Commissioner can include recommendations in their statutory reports, whether made annually or to the Secretary of State throughout the year; and requiring that those within the Commissioner's remit respond to recommendations made in those reports where relevant to them within 56 days; and
4. requiring criminal justice inspectorates to consult the Commissioner when developing their inspection frameworks and programmes.

Together, these measures will enable the Commissioner to gain a deeper understanding of the victims' landscape. They will also foster greater transparency and accountability between authorities, encouraging good practice, and respectful treatment of victims.

The government has also commenced the measure that will simplify the complaints process for victims who need to escalate their complaints. Where victims of crime want to make complaints to the Parliamentary Health Services Ombudsman (PHSO) relating to their experience as a victim, this measure removes the so-called 'MP-filter' which required victims to make these complaints via their Member of Parliament. The measure also enables those acting on behalf of a victim to bypass the filter and make the victim's complaint directly. This means victims can choose whether to make their complaint themselves, or through an MP or other trusted person if they prefer.

By implementing this initial tranche of measures, the government is laying a stronger foundation for victims to have confidence that they will receive the information and support they need and deserve. The government will continue to build on this foundation through the Government's manifesto commitments to increase the powers of the Victims' Commissioner and introduce independent legal advisers for rape victims, ensuring there is more accountability where the needs of victims are not being met.

The commencement order also contains measures in Part 4 of the Act relating to other areas of policy, coming into force on 3 February:

Parole measures in Part 4 of the Act – coming into force 3 February

- Implementation of certain parole measures in Part 4 of the Act in relation to codifying the public protection test and making law enforcement members a statutory category of Parole Board membership.

MAPPA measures in Part 4 of the Act

- Implementation of measures, which will make controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship a Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) eligible offence.

Victims' Code, 'Understand Your Rights' Campaign Launch

The Ministry of Justice, in collaboration with partners in the criminal justice system, has developed a campaign which aims to raise awareness of the Victims' Code. Please find the press release, [here](#). Victims show extraordinary courage in coming forward to seek justice, yet too often they don't know about their rights and the support available to them, which can lead to them dropping out.

The government has also launched our *Understand Your Rights* Victims' Code Campaign, ensuring all victims know the Victims' Code is there for them, whatever the crime, as part of improving awareness. The campaign points to the Victim and Witness Information website (victimscod.org.uk) which serves as a central hub for information and resources, including a page dedicated to the Victims' Code, making it easier than ever for victims to find the support they need.

Link to explanatory notes.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/secondary?title=victims%20and%20prisoners%20act%20>

link to the victim code campaign

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-push-to-inform-victims-of-their-rights>