



domestic
abuse
commissioner



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Sent by email

Dear Lord Chancellor, Home Secretary and Attorney General

Falling criminal justice outcomes for victims of domestic abuse

We are writing to you in response to the latest figures, published by the Crown Prosecution Service, which demonstrate a worrying fall in all criminal justice outcomes for victims of domestic abuse, and call on you to take swift action to reverse this.

It is deeply concerning that despite increasing volumes of domestic abuse cases being reported to and recorded by the police, the numbers of perpetrators being convicted for their crimes has fallen. While police recorded domestic abuse incidents increased by 24% in the year to 2018/19 and by 8% in the year to 2019/20, referrals from the police to the CPS fell by 18.8%, and the total number of perpetrators prosecuted fell by 22% in just one year. Charge rates by the CPS have remained fairly static, which is surprising given fewer cases being brought to them by the police – one might expect to see the charge rate *increase* with a smaller caseload (if only so-called 'stronger' cases are making it through the system).

It is vital that this is understood better, and there will be parallels between the fall in domestic abuse outcomes and the fall in rape outcomes, which has been subject to an ongoing cross-government review. We urge you to take a strong stance against this fall in outcomes, grip the issue firmly and take action to reverse this drop in prosecutions as a matter of urgency.

The hard work of the specialist sector, Government and criminal justice agencies to bring domestic abuse out of the shadows and encourage victims to come forward must not be in vain. Without an effective response – and clear results – even fewer victims will come forward and perpetrators of these terrible crimes will not be brought

to justice. We still know from the Crime Survey of England and Wales that just 20% of victims of domestic abuse report to the police. We must do all that we can to increase this, and must not let down those few victims who have the courage to report and seek justice.

Equally, we know that perpetrators of domestic abuse are typically repeat-offenders, who, even if a victim can escape, may well move onto their next victim and the cycle repeats again. The criminal justice system can play such an important role in disrupting these perpetrators, bringing dangerous offenders into custody or monitoring and delivering interventions to reduce their risk of harm to the public.

Therefore, we call on you to conduct a rapid investigation into the reasons behind these falling outcomes, and action to be taken across the police, CPS and court system to reverse them.

As ever, we stand ready to support in this important work to help keep victims safe and bring perpetrators to justice.

Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicole Jacobs', written in a cursive style.

Nicole Jacobs
Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vera Baird', written in a cursive style.

Dame Vera Baird QC
Victims Commissioner for England and Wales