

Claire Waxman OBE

Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales

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09 March 2026

Dear Member of Parliament,

Please listen to victims: their voices, their stories, and the reality of the waits they endure

As you prepare to debate the Courts and Tribunals Bill, I urge you to keep victims firmly at the centre of your deliberations.

Since the pandemic, I have witnessed first-hand the devastating impact of the agonising waits for court. Justice delayed is not an abstract principle - it is the compounding and prolonging of trauma. Victims are living for years in limbo while their cases sit in an ever-growing queue.

I have seen the human cost of these delays: people losing jobs, marriages breaking down, physical and mental health deteriorating. In the most heartbreaking cases, victims have attempted to take their own lives.

That is why I stood shoulder to shoulder with those across the justice system calling for investment in our courts, the removal of the cap on sitting days, and action on the inefficiencies that drive delays and adjournments.

Yet after years of inaction, the Crown Court backlog now stands at more than 80,000 cases and continues to rise.

The Government asked Sir Brian Leveson to find a way out before the system collapses. His conclusion is clear: investment and efficiency alone will no longer solve this crisis. Structural reform is now unavoidable.

I have asked countless victims stuck in our court system, a simple question: faced with waiting years for a jury trial, would they prefer to wait for a jury or accept a judge if it meant swift justice? Those enduring the longest waits have been clear - they would sacrifice the wait for a jury if it meant timely justice.

But they also stress important safeguards: tackling the lack of diversity on the bench, and ensuring judges are robustly trained in the dynamics of abuse and trauma.

Of course, Parliament must debate and scrutinise these proposals carefully. But here is the reality: if we debate endlessly and fail to implement urgent solutions that reduce waiting times, victims will simply stop engaging with the justice system altogether. They cannot endure years of uncertainty and re-traumatisation. Fewer will come forward. More cases will collapse. Offenders will act with increasing impunity, and public safety will suffer.

As you prepare to debate these crucial reforms, I simply ask that you do not lose sight of the people at its heart. Please listen to victims: their voices, their stories, and the reality of the waits they endure. Because without them, there will be no justice.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. Waxman', written in a cursive style.

Claire Waxman OBE
Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales