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Sent by email

30 June 2026

Dear Deputy Prime Minister,

I am writing as Baroness Helen Newlove's final Annual Report as Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales is laid before Parliament. This serves as a moment to reflect on the breadth of her work, her achievements, and the lasting impact she has had.

Helen was a tireless and dedicated champion for victims. She took a profound private tragedy and forged it into a powerful public mission. She used her own experience to shine a light on the injustices in our system, ensuring those who felt silenced were heard. Her courage in the face of tragedy was a source of strength to many, and the impact of her work will be felt for years to come.

As Victims' Commissioner, she was a force for real change. From her pioneering work on anti-social behaviour to her relentless focus on ensuring victims' rights under the Victims' Code were delivered and agencies held to account, she provided both the heart and the evidence.

For Helen, the rights under the Victims' Code were not a set of aspirations. They were a promise that had to be kept: respectful treatment, clear and timely information, and access to appropriate support. These are essential if victims are to understand what is happening, make informed choices, and remain engaged with the justice process.

As Commissioner, I have a statutory duty to monitor the operation of the Victims' Code and how agencies such as the police, CPS and courts deliver victims' rights and entitlements in practice. At present, that duty cannot be meaningfully fulfilled - reflecting longstanding weaknesses in the systems for monitoring compliance, including limited national data, little independent scrutiny, and insufficient use of victim feedback.

The Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 was intended to address this, introducing the mechanisms needed to bring transparency and accountability to how victims are treated. At its heart is a clear expectation: that victims' rights, as set out in the Victims' Code, are not simply promised but actively and consistently delivered in practice.

I was honoured to work with Helen in securing the passage of this legislation. However, two years on there remains no framework for measuring how criminal justice agencies comply with

their obligations under the Victims' Code. There is still no clear, consistent understanding of what data can be collected, or when.

There is now a real risk that, by the end of my term, I will still not have the tools required to fulfil my statutory duties. Until the Government puts those systems into operation, victims will continue to face a gap between the rights they are promised and the support they receive, with limited recourse to put things right.

I know you share my commitment to promoting the Victims' Code. It is the bedrock of improving the victim experience. Just as offenders are made aware of their PACE rights in custody, I view it as essential that victims are equally aware of their entitlements under the Code. Yet we will not drive sustained improvements in victim treatment unless government delivers the systems we were promised.

Public confidence in the criminal justice system remains fragile. Only around half of victims say they believe it is fair or effective, and even fewer feel confident that reporting a crime will result in justice.

Through my extensive victim engagement as part of the recent Victims' Code consultation, I heard time and again that the Code is 'toothless'. It will remain so unless and until government delivers the system for monitoring compliance and holding agencies to account that it committed to two years ago.

I recognise the complexity of implementing these reforms, and I welcome the direction of travel. This is not a question of intent, but of delivery.

Since taking up post in January, I have not yet had the opportunity to meet with you. I would welcome the opportunity to do so to discuss these reforms further. I would also welcome your assurance that a clear timetable for the Code compliance framework will be set out in the near term, and that your department will commit to delivering it in full.

If we are to honour Baroness Newlove's legacy and realise the full intent of the legislation she worked so hard to secure, we must ensure that the foundations for accountability are in place without further delay.

I remain committed to working constructively with you and your ministerial team to ensure that this work and those commitments are finally delivered - so that victims' rights are not only set out in law but consistently upheld in practice.

Yours sincerely,



Claire Waxman OBE
Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales