

29 September 2026

Dear Prime Minister,

Any credible 'Plan for Britain' must include a plan for criminal justice

Our criminal justice system is in crisis. Record court backlogs are forcing victims to wait years for justice. Prisons are operating at capacity. Probation services are overstretched. Every part of the system is under severe strain, and senior leaders across policing and public protection are warning of growing risks to public safety.

In recent months, much attention has rightly focused on the intolerable situation in our prisons. But this was never simply a prisons crisis. The condition of our prison estate is merely the most visible symptom of a much deeper failure affecting criminal justice, public protection, and confidence in the state's ability to keep people safe.

For too long, governments have relied on short-term fixes while failing to address the underlying causes. Decades of underinvestment and mismanagement have left prisons, courts, probation, and policing struggling to deliver justice and protect the public. Victims, communities, and frontline services are paying the price.

These pressures do not exist in isolation. Failures in one part of the system quickly create pressures in another. A justice system stretched beyond capacity risks allowing operational pressures to take precedence over public protection.

While your government did not create this crisis, it now has a duty to confront it. How you respond will be a test of your leadership and the priority you place on criminal justice.

As you prepare to set out your ten-year vision for the country through your *Plan for Britain*, I urge you to place criminal justice at its heart. Victims need more than assurances that the system will hold together. The country needs confidence that your government understands the scale of the challenge and is prepared to deliver the long-term reform necessary to restore justice, strengthen public protection, and rebuild confidence in the system.

Without that leadership, we will continue to lurch from one emergency to the next, with victims and the public increasingly left to shoulder the consequences.

If national renewal is the mission, criminal justice reform must become a national priority. A government committed to social justice cannot afford to overlook criminal justice.

Yours faithfully,



Claire Waxman OBE

Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales