



OFFICIAL

Dame Vera Baird QC
Victims Commissioner for England and Wales
Clive House
70 Petty France
London
SW1H 9EX

MoJ ref: SUB94055

26 January 2022

Dear Dame Vera,

VICTIMS' BILL CONSULTATION PERIOD

Thank you for your letter dated 16 December 2021. I appreciate your interest in the Victims' Bill consultation and value your ongoing engagement in this field.

I sympathise with the exceptional challenges that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has presented to the victims' sector, which I appreciate will have impacted both the demand for support and the capacity of some organisations to provide services to victims. I understand that the eight-week time frame of this consultation might overlap with other Government consultations that have been launched recently and are related to the victims' sector.

Whilst I am aware of existing time pressures, the Government has made a commitment in the Queen's Speech to introduce a draft Victims' Bill in this parliamentary session. To meet this commitment, we are all working to incredibly tight timescales. Therefore, it will not be possible to grant a general extension to the consultation period. However, my department is willing to consider individual extension requests of up to two weeks, made either on the grounds of accessibility or exceptional pressures on organisations as a result of COVID-19 (such as acute levels of staff absence), on a case-by-case basis.

It is a key priority of my department to ensure that this consultation is as accessible as possible and to ensure the voice of victims is heard. From publication, we made the consultation document available in an accessible PDF format, as well as in large print (on request). Further to this, the consultation was, as you know, published in an accessible HTML format on 12th January and in a British Sign Language (BSL) format on 19th January. To maximise the opportunity for engagement, we are also working with partners in the victim support sector to deliver engagement events with both frontline practitioners and victims and survivors throughout the consultation period. You will be in receipt of a further letter in response to your letter to me, dated 24th January, imminently.

If you, or anyone you are in contact with wishes to request an extension on the grounds set out above, please contact **victimsbillconsultation@justice.gov.uk** clearly outlining the reasons for your request. My team will consider and respond to any requests as soon as possible.

Once again, thank you for your continued engagement in the victims' sector and I look forward to working with you further as we move towards introducing a draft Bill later this year.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tom Pursglove', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive.

TOM PURSGLOVE MP