



**Baroness Newlove of Warrington**  
**Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales**

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The Rt Hon David Lammy MP  
Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor, and Secretary of State for Justice  
Sent by email: [PS.LordChancellor@justice.gov.uk](mailto:PS.LordChancellor@justice.gov.uk)

12 September 2025

Dear Deputy Prime Minister,

**Spending Review: urgent concerns regarding victim support services**

You assume your responsibilities at a critical juncture for victims, particularly in the context of the recent Spending Review, and it is on this urgent matter that I write to you today.

Following June's Spending Review, your department must now make crucial decisions on funding allocations. I previously wrote to your predecessor, in July, to urge that support for victims be treated as a priority in that process. Unfortunately, I received no reply. I am writing to you now to reiterate these concerns. Victim support services are already under significant strain and cannot absorb further cuts without serious consequences, for victims and the wider criminal justice system.

I appreciate that the Ministry of Justice received a relatively strong settlement in a difficult fiscal environment, in no small part to the work of your predecessor. I also appreciate the many competing demands your department faces – across prisons, courts and probation. In such an environment, even a funding increase can feel limiting. However, I remain concerned that support for victims is slipping behind other priorities, despite its critical role in a functioning justice system.

These concerns are not without foundation. Last November, despite the Ministry of Justice receiving an additional £1.9 billion in its budget settlement, victim services faced significant cuts amounting to millions of pounds. The 4.2% reduction imposed by the department on core funding for Police and Crime Commissioners (who are responsible for commissioning most local

victim services), alongside real terms cut to domestic abuse and sexual violence support, has had serious consequences.

In preparing my [Spending Review submission](#), which I shared directly with your predecessor and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, I sought feedback from victim support organisations on the impact of these cuts. Their message was clear and unanimous: they are financially at breaking point. Three quarters reported plans for job cuts or recruitment freezes, and several support centres have already been forced to close. Without urgent action, more closures will follow - just as demand for support reaches record highs, worsened by the ongoing crisis in our courts. These cuts have real-world consequences, directly impacting victims' safety, wellbeing, and access to justice.

Since the Spending Review concluded, my concerns have only deepened. An [accompanying Treasury document](#) stated the Ministry of Justice will "continue to investigate efficiency opportunities in key policy areas such as legal aid and victims." Of course, Ministers have a duty to seek efficiencies when allocating taxpayers' money, but after many years of frozen grants, services tell me they have already identified and implemented every conceivable efficiency. They are now at a point where they are operating at – or beyond – breaking point. There is nothing left to trim. We should be under no illusion that any further cut will result in a significant reduction in frontline services, dismantling the infrastructure victims rely on to recover and stay engaged in the pursuit of justice.

I recognise the severe pressure on public finances. But I cannot accept that victims – many of whom are among the most vulnerable in society – should be expected to bear the burden.

In its determination to deliver real efficiencies, the Ministry of Justice should start by tackling one of the most glaring inefficiencies in the justice system: the chronic failure to collect offender-imposed financial penalties, particularly the Victim Surcharge.

Revenues secured under the Victim Surcharge help fund vital services, from local victim support services, commissioned by Police and Crime Commissioners, to national provision such as the Court-Based Witness Service and the Homicide Service. It is a legally mandated penalty imposed on offenders to ensure they contribute to the cost of supporting victims and witnesses. After all, it is offenders who are responsible for creating victims of crime.

The Victim Surcharge is not an optional payment. Yet current enforcement practices risk giving the impression otherwise - and short-changing the very victims it is meant to support.

According to [HM Courts & Tribunal Service records](#), in the 2024-25 financial year, just £75 million in victim surcharges was collected, against nearly £106

million imposed during the same period. Even more troubling, over £914,000 was written off entirely during that period.

This [collection rate has fallen sharply](#) from 96% in 2020-21 to a record low of 63% in 2023-24. While it has recovered somewhat in 2024-25 (71%), the long-term picture is troubling: over £181 million in victim surcharge payments remains outstanding, unpaid year after year. This is money legally owed by offenders, specifically ringfenced for victims, yet left uncollected. What's more, the headline recovery figures actually [include payments for surcharges imposed in previous years](#), giving the illusion of progress while masking poor year-on-year enforcement.

The uncollected Victim Surcharge is just the tip of the iceberg. As of March 2025, the Ministry of Justice was owed £1.8 billion in unpaid fines and court fees, of which the Victim Surcharge is just one component. At a time when victim services are being forced to close their doors, and court rooms are falling into a state of disrepair, it is disappointing that the government is unable to collect money already owed to it by offenders. Meanwhile, offenders face few consequences for non-payment, further undermining public confidence in the justice system.

The payment of fines, fees and surcharges must not be allowed to become optional. Yet current practices are not just inefficient, they are unjust. Victims are being let down twice: first by the offender, and then by the state.

I am calling on the Ministry of Justice urgently to invest in fine enforcement. The message must be clear: if you are ordered to pay, you will pay. A fraction of the unpaid fines, compensation orders, and victim surcharges currently outstanding could safeguard the future of victim services.

In conclusion, I am asking for the Ministry of Justice to set out a clear and credible plan to significantly improve collection of the Victim Surcharge and other offender-imposed penalties – and to ensure that the additional revenue raised is invested in victim support services. These services will keep victims engaged with the justice process, help them cope and recover, and crucially, prevent re-victimisation. This would be the right thing to do for victims and for justice.

A copy of this letter will be published on my website.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helen', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

**Baroness Newlove LLD (hc) DCL**  
**Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales**

Copied to:

Alex Davies Jones MP, Minister for Victims and Violence Against Women and Girls

Deputy Director, MoJ Victims and Witnesses Policy and Strategy