

House of Commons: Written Statement (HCWS141)

Ministry of Justice

Written Statement made by: **The Minister of State for Policing, Criminal Justice and Victims, Ministry of Justice (Mike Penning)** on 16 Jul 2015.

Consulting on revisions to the Victims' Code

The previous government updated the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (the Victims' Code) in 2013 to give victims clear entitlements - including the right to ask to read their personal statement to the court - and to give greater flexibility to core criminal justice agencies to tailor services according to individual need. We are investing more than ever before in services and support for victims of crime but we can, and should, do more.

We have said that we will introduce measures to further increase the rights of victims of crime and we will publish draft clauses in due course.

Before we do so, I am pleased to announce that the Government is consulting on some additional changes we plan to make to the Victims' Code as part of our commitment to implement the EU Victims' Directive by 16 November 2015.

It is crucial that the needs of victims of crime are put first and the proposed changes will entitle more victims to receive services from a bigger number of organisations.

The first main change we propose is to broaden our definition of a victim so that victims of all criminal offences are entitled to receive support and information under the Victims' Code. Currently, victims of offences such as careless driving and drink driving are not entitled to receive such support and we propose to close this gap.

The second main change is to extend the Victims' Code to apply to relevant agencies outside the core criminal justice system who provide services to victims of crime. Most crimes are dealt with by the police and Crown Prosecution Service but there are other organisations with powers to investigate and prosecute. I want to make sure that the victims of crime these agencies deal with are eligible to receive services under the Victims' Code.

The third main change will entitle victims who report a crime to the police or other competent authority to receive a written acknowledgement which states the basic elements of the criminal offence concerned.

We are also proposing to make a number of smaller amendments to the Code, mostly to clarify it in places or to reflect more accurately what happens in practice.

The consultation documents have been published today and can be found on the Ministry of Justice website at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/revising-the-victims-code>.

A copy of the consultation document and draft Victims' Code have been deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.