



Home Office

Baroness Williams

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BY EMAIL ONLY  
Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle  
House of Lords  
SW1A 0PW

6 January 2022

Dear Natalie

**POLICE, CRIME, SENTENCING AND COURTS BILL: EXTENDING THE SCOPE OF THE DISREGARDS SCHEME**

I am writing to provide further information in response to your question, raised on behalf of Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb, during the Committee Stage debate on amendments 266 and 267 to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, on 17 November (Official Report, column 393). As you stated, these clauses would provide for people to continue making applications to the Home Secretary for a disregard. You asked why we cannot have a situation in which we identify all relevant cases and wipe them clean.

When the disregards scheme was being established in 2012, the Police estimated that around 50,000 convictions for offences under sections 12 and 13 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956 were recorded on police systems. Sections 12 and 13 also covered behaviour which would still be an offence today under laws that are currently in force, the most obvious examples being where the act was not consensual, or the other party was underage.

The aim of the scheme relates solely to behaviours which are no longer illegal, and we must have a process whereby we have the opportunity to review the context and details surrounding the offending, to ensure we do not risk capturing those behaviours we do not wish to disregard. In order to do this effectively, we sometimes require a certain amount of information from the individual concerned, to ensure we can locate all available records, since many of these may not have been digitised due to the age of the convictions, and will not be readily accessible.

Finally, we judge that it is better to allow individuals to choose for themselves whether to follow the procedure; some people may not want such matters brought up

from their past. For these reasons, the only viable means of delivering the scheme is via an application-based approach.

I am copying this letter to Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb, Lord Cashman, Lord Lexden, Lord Paddick and Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede and placing a copy in the House Library.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'S'.

**Baroness Williams of Trafford**  
**Minister of State**