



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Bellamy KC
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
for Justice

Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts CBE,
Baroness Brinton,
Lord Harries of Pentregarth,
Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle,
House of Lords, London, SW1A 0PW

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25th March 2024

My Lords,

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

At Lords Committee Stage a number of amendments were tabled seeking to make specific provision for restorative justice on the face of the Victims and Prisoners Bill. I thank you for speaking to these points during the debate and I am writing to set out the action that the Government is taking regarding improving access and awareness of restorative justice services.

Amendments were tabled to create a legislative right to access or be signposted to restorative justice. As my colleague Minister Argar, so eloquently set out at as the Bill progressed through the other place, we remain firmly of the view that singling out the provision of restorative justice in the Bill is not necessary, or appropriate. However, you should be assured that this government remains committed to the effective use of restorative justice in appropriate cases. When delivered in the right circumstances, it can improve victim satisfaction and reduce reoffending. Therefore, following careful reflection on the debate, I would welcome your views on how the below proposals might meaningfully advance that shared agenda.

The Victims' Code already sets out what restorative justice is and includes an entitlement for victims to receive information about restorative justice. This ensures that victims are aware of the choice and opportunity to access restorative justice if they wish to do so. We will consult on a new Victims' Code following Royal Assent, and we have committed to consult on an addition to the Code so that victims will not only be told about restorative justice when they report an offence but also again once the offender has been convicted. Effective and timely communication is important to allow victims to consider whether restorative justice may be right for them.

To help inform good practice for commissioners when they are considering restorative justice provision, we will also provide guidance to commissioners of support services for victims or crime (such as Police and Crime Commissioners) about restorative justice, as part of wider guidance on commissioning services. We aim to publish drafts of the new Code wording and restorative justice guidance during Lords Report Stage and would welcome any views on this.

In recognition of the need to encourage consistent provision of services, I would be willing for the Ministry of Justice to convene a roundtable with Police and Crime Commissioners and the Probation Service to identify any barriers and encourage co-commissioning of restorative justice services.

Concerns were also raised during debate on the need for guidance on restorative justice for service providers. Relevant service providers already have guidance about restorative justice. I am open to considering whether, in an effort to better encourage effective and consistent provision of restorative justice services, we could work with the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners and the National Police Chiefs' Council to promote existing guidance amongst service providers.

I would also be open to engaging with the All- Party Parliamentary Group on Restorative Justice to convene a working group of key stakeholders to help identify and share best practice. Through this work there may be opportunities to properly assess whether there is a need for additional guidance for restorative justice practitioners, and if so, how that might be achieved to best effect.

Through these actions I want to ensure that we are playing our part in supporting the use of restorative justice.

I am depositing a copy of this letter in the House library.

Yours sincerely
Chris Hope Bellamy

LORD BELLAMY KC