

The Rt Hon. The Lord Gove
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

MoJ ref: SUB131268

29 January 2026

Dear Michael,

ADDRESSING DELAYS IN RAPE AND SERIOUS SEXUAL OFFENCE CASES

Thank you for participating in the debate on restriction on jury trials on 10 December 2025. You asked two questions, in answer to which I said I would write to you with further information. I apologise for the delay in this response.

You asked for an update as to work between police forces and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) when it comes to making sure that rape and serious sexual offences are brought to court more quickly. A cross-system approach is vital to tackling delays, to achieving fair outcomes and to improving confidence in the justice system. This starts from the point of report to the police. Sexual offence investigations are inherently complex and we must ensure that, in striving for timeliness, we do not compromise quality. Indeed, our goal should be to achieve both. That is why we are investing £13.1 million in 2025-6 in the National Centre for Violence Against Women and Girls and Public Protection (NCVPP) which launched in April 2025. The NCVPP will ensure that the police have the right skills and training to respond appropriately to violence against women and girls (VAWG). It aims to drive up investigative and operational standards across all police forces in England and Wales in tackling these crimes.

The NCVPP also brings existing operational VAWG programmes together to strengthen nationwide consistency in police practice. One of those programmes was Operation Soteria, which launched in 2023 and aimed to create effective, suspect-focused investigations and improve the police response to sexual offending.

It is essential that every police force has the correct specialist capability thoroughly to investigate sexual offences in order to deliver timely justice for victims. That is why we will embed specialist rape teams in every police force by 2029, to ensure the right expertise is in place to investigate these crimes effectively.

As I have already said, a cross-system approach is key to improving outcomes and timeliness. That is why the CPS is continuing to strengthen their work with the police. This includes an offer of early advice, enabling the police to seek advice from a prosecutor during the early stages of the case, improving the

quality of investigations and setting a strong foundation for evidence collection and case development. The CPS also ensures that all action plans provided to the police are proportionate, high-quality and focussed on following reasonable lines of enquiry. The aim is to reduce delays in investigation and prosecution. In addition, the CPS is committed to ensuring that prosecutors have the appropriate training, tools and support to make high-quality legal decisions. This includes updating the RASSO Legal Guidance and providing enhanced assurance as to prosecutors' decision-making.

We are facing a record (and rising) open caseload, which is currently close to 80,000 criminal cases waiting to be heard in the Crown Court. We have already announced our intention to implement a bold package of structural reforms, designed to restore stability and confidence in the system. The reforms announced will maximise savings in the Crown Court and create a more stable and sustainable criminal justice system, in which victims and the public can have confidence. The record number of sitting days we have funded will mean more cases, including RASSO, can be heard.

You also asked whether some police forces have been resistant to the idea that the speed with which these cases are processed should be published. This is not the case; data on timeliness is published by police force areas and is broken down to show timeliness for adult rape and all crime. Further detail on outcome timeliness can be found in the [Crime outcomes in England and Wales 2024 to 2025](#) bulletin. The latest data from the published sources, as well as data for previous time periods, is available from [Police recorded crime and outcomes open data tables - supplementary crime outcomes metrics](#) and [criminal justice delivery data dashboards - criminal justice delivery data](#).

The data shows that timeliness, specifically in rape investigations, remains a challenge. The latest published data on adult rape shows the median time from when an offence is recorded to charge is 337 days nationally (excluding Greater Manchester and Humberside, as these forces did not provide offence-level data for the reporting period) with wide variation between forces. For example, Bedfordshire averages 14 days, whereas Sussex averages 870 days. This data is used to monitor performance, identify areas for improvement and hold forces to account through regular reviews and targeted interventions. The data collected helps provide transparency as to how cases progress through the criminal justice system and this can be used to identify delays and bottlenecks as well as support evidence-based decisions designed to improve efficiency and victim experience. It also enables performance benchmarking across police forces and CPS areas, informs resource planning and tracks progress against key Government commitments.

Thank you again for raising these important issues as part of the debate. I will deposit a copy of this letter in the House Library.

Yours ever,



THE BARONESS LEVITT KC