

£5m increase for rape and sexual abuse victims

- £1 million towards recruiting more Independent Sexual Violence Advisors
- Second time in six months that government has boosted cash support for rape victims
- Government moves to enshrine victims' rights in law

The move will see a 50 per cent increase in the money available – up from £8 million to £12 million per year – for a range of services across the country, including tailored face-to-face support and counselling.

£1 million will be invested into recruiting more Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs), who provide advice and support for victims, acting as the link between police, support services and criminal justice agencies. New national minimum standards for ISVAs will also be developed to ensure victims across the country receive consistent, high-quality support.

This additional funding will form part of a Rape Victims' Pledge, which will provide additional support and information for victims, in order to make their engagement with the criminal justice system simpler and less distressing.

The Government is also accelerating plans to enshrine the support victims are entitled to receive in legislation – with a new Victims' Law to be consulted on early in the new year. A revised Victims' Code – which will clearly set out the minimum level of service victims can expect from criminal justice agencies – will also be published in early 2020.

Justice Minister Wendy Morton MP, said:

Rape and sexual assault are horrific crimes, and this cash injection will boost vital services so every victim can access the specialist emotional and practical support they need.

There is still much more to do, but by increasing funding twice this year and bringing forward plans for a Victims' Law, this government is sending a clear message that we stand shoulder to shoulder with those who face recovering from such terrible crimes.

Today's announcement follows a 10 per cent uplift in March, meaning government funding for rape support will now total £32 million over the next three years. Furthermore, the end-to-end review into how the entire criminal justice system responds to rape and serious sexual offences is continuing at pace, and has committed to publishing a full action plan next year.

The new funding builds on recent government action to restore the public's confidence in the justice system. The Prime Minister has announced the government will recruit 20,000 more police officers, spend up to £2.5 billion on a further 10,000 prison places, and review sentencing to make sure violent and sexual offenders are properly punished and the public is kept safe. In addition, a further £85 million is being invested in the Crown Prosecution Service over the next two years to build capacity and ensure it can deal with the cases brought by the police.

Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales, Dame Vera Baird QC, said:

Complainants of rape and sexual assault who have the courage to report their experience demonstrate immense bravery and must be given all the support they need so that justice can be done.

I very much welcome this additional funding but there is much more to do, including improving the way police and prosecutors handle these horrific crimes.

I welcome the government's commitment to bring forward the long-awaited Victims' Law and updates to the Victims' Code early in 2020. Backing up current rights with legislation and strong implementation will ensure justice is improved.

Amelia Handy, Rape Crisis England & Wales says:

Rape Crisis England & Wales is encouraged by the announcement of much-needed additional funding for specialist Rape Crisis Centres, and by the Government's recognition for specialist services for victims and survivors.

Last year nearly 80,000 individuals accessed Rape Crisis services, meaning this funding uplift will contribute towards specialist Rape Crisis service delivery at a time when need, demand and service provision are at unprecedented levels.

Today's announcement coincides with the one-year anniversary of the Government's Victims' Strategy, which aims to boost the support on offer to victims at every stage of the justice system.

Over a third of the commitments contained in the strategy have already been delivered, including abolishing the pre-1979 'same roof rule' so that more victims of abuse can claim compensation for their ordeal, increasing and extending funding for sexual support services and consulting on strengthening

the Victims Code.

Notes to editors

- An additional £5 million worth of funding is being awarded to specialist sexual violence support services, which includes £1 million towards recruiting more Independent Sexual Violence Advisors.
- The Government's [Victims' Strategy](#) committed to consulting on a revised Victims' Code and to consult on the detail of victims focussed legislation.
- Today we are confirming an updated Victims' Code and consultation on a Victims' Law will be introduced early in the new year.
- MOJ funding for victim support services has almost doubled since 2012/13 (by increasing revenue raised from offenders). This year, we plan to spend about £96 million on these services.
- MOJ provides a contribution to 96 rape support centres across England and Wales and the level of grant funding varies. In 2018/19 we allocated around £7.2 million to these centres to provide independent, specialist support to female and male victims of sexual violence, including victims of child sexual abuse. From next year this will increase to £12 million annually.
- These services offer specialist emotional and practical support, available free of charge in all 42 of country's Police and Crime Commissioner areas.
- In 2018/19 we allocated Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) around £68 million funding to locally commission emotional and practical support services for victims of crime as they are best placed to respond to local need.
- Last year we [announced](#) that providers will be able to compete for grant funding for three years, rather than the one-year grants previously awarded, providing greater long-term security.
- As part of the refreshed [violence against women and girls \(VAWG\) strategy](#), the Government announced a review into how the criminal justice system deals with rape and sexual violence. It will look at the entire system, from police report to conviction or acquittal in court and make recommendations for change to ensure that victims have the confidence that if they report their crimes, action will be taken.

- The [Crime Survey for England and Wales](#) estimated that 20% of women and 4% of men have experienced some type of sexual assault since the age of 16, equivalent to an estimated 3.4 million female victims and 631,000 male victims.