

Pre-recorded evidence for rape victims rolled out to courts across the Midlands

- pre-recorded evidence now available in 4 more courts in the Midlands.
- measure aims to reduce trauma for victims and witnesses to help them give better evidence
- rollout means it is now available in over two-thirds of all Crown Courts in England and Wales

The measure, which has already been successfully introduced in 54 Crown Courts across England and Wales, allows victims and witnesses of crimes such as rape and modern slavery to have their cross-examination video-recorded and played later during trial. This is subject to a successful application to the court.

The recording takes place as close to the time of the offence as possible, while memories remain fresh, and helps victims avoid the stress of giving evidence in a courtroom setting, which many find traumatic.

From today, the measure will be available immediately at Birmingham, Coventry, Derby and Wolverhampton Crown Courts.

The move follows the successful implementation for vulnerable victims, such as children or those who have limited mental capacity, across the country – with more than 2,500 witnesses having already benefitted from the technology since August 2020.

Justice Minister, Tom Pursglove, said:

We're overhauling the entire response to rape and rolling out pre-recorded evidence to every Crown Court in England and Wales is a key part of that – sparing victims the stress of testifying during a live trial.

We're also recruiting more independent sexual violence advisors, improving collaboration between police and prosecutors, and delivering a Victims' Bill to ensure they get the justice they deserve.

While there is still much more to do, we are starting to see the results of these efforts, with rape convictions up by more than a quarter since before the pandemic.

This extension means it is now available for victims of rape at 58 Crown Courts, over two-thirds of all Crown Courts in England and Wales. The

government is committed to rolling it out nationwide by the end of September.

The measure is also designed to maintain a defendant's right to a fair trial and any decision to pre-record evidence is made by a judge on a case-by-case basis.

The roll out of pre-recorded evidence is a key pledge within the government's Rape Review Action Plan. The plan sets out clear actions for the police, prosecutors, and courts. These include a new approach to investigations, reducing the number of victims withdrawing from the process, increasing the volume of trials being heard, protecting the public and putting more rapists behind bars.

In June, the government published the latest Rape Review Progress report and committed to piloting specialist rape support in three courtrooms as recommended by the Joint Inspectorates of the CPS and Police. This would offer support, such as Independent Sexual Violence Advisors, within the court itself, as well as providing trauma training to court staff. These courtrooms will be set up at Snaresbrook Crown Court in London as well as Leeds and Newcastle Crown Courts.

Today's announcement builds on recent government action to make our streets safer and increase confidence in the justice system, including the publication of a draft Victims' Bill. The legislation seeks to amplify victims' voices, and places greater accountability on agencies such as the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and police for the service they provide to them.

Guidance:

- Both the defence and prosecution lawyers will be present in court during the pre-recording as will the judge and the defendant.
- The independent judiciary will be responsible for overseeing the use of pre-recorded evidence and will have discretion to ensure that the interests of justice are served.
- Pre-recording cross-examination preserves a defendant's right to a fair trial.
- Vulnerable witnesses and victims are defined as all child witnesses under 18 and any witness whose quality of evidence is likely to be diminished because they are suffering from a mental disorder or physical disability or has significant impairment of intelligence and social functioning.
- Intimidated witnesses and victims for the purposes of this pilot were defined as complainants of sexual offences and modern slavery offences who are witnesses in proceedings relating to that offence, or that offence and any other offences.
- There are 71 Crown Court Centres in the UK, and a total of 83 Crown Court locations.
- Rape convictions are increasing – there has been a 15 percent increase in the number of people convicted for rape offences in the last three months. There were 467 convictions last quarter (CPS Prosecution Statistics – October to December 2021), compared to 407, 398 and 376 in

the quarters before. Total completed prosecutions for rape cases have increased by 10 percent from 600 (July – September 2021) to 661 (October-December 2021).

- The average number of days for adult rape from CPS charge to the case being completed continued to fall, down by 38 days (8.3 percent) since the peak in June 2021 – down from 457 days to 419 in October – December 2021.
- The measure is being rolled out to the following courts today:
 - Birmingham
 - Coventry
 - Derby
 - Wolverhampton
- The Courts already operating pre-recorded evidence for intimidated victims are:
 - Bolton
 - Burnley
 - Preston
 - Carlisle
 - Lancaster
 - Warrington
 - Chester
 - Manchester Crown Square
 - Manchester Minshull Street
 - Swindon Crown Court
 - Sheffield
 - Doncaster
 - Newcastle
 - Portsmouth
 - Southampton
 - Isle of Wight
 - Winchester
 - Bournemouth
 - Bristol
 - Exeter
 - Gloucester
 - Plymouth
 - Salisbury
 - Truro
 - Liverpool
 - Leeds
 - Kingston-Upon-Thames
 - Harrow
 - Isleworth
 - Wood Green
 - Durham
 - York
 - Grimsby
 - Hull
 - Bradford
 - Teesside Crown Court
 - Warwick

- Shrewsbury
- Stafford
- Stoke-on-Trent
- Worcester
- Hereford
- Nottingham
- Lincoln
- Leicester
- Northampton
- Taunton
- Caernarfon
- Cardiff
- Merthyr Tydfil
- Mold
- Newport
- Swansea
- Preston Crown Court and Family Court (Sessions House)