

Press release: Attorney General helps record number of victims and families get justice

New statistics released today show the Attorney General's Office has helped more victims and their families get justice than ever before, after 141 criminals had their sentences increased under the Unduly Lenient Sentence (ULS) scheme in 2016.

The ULS scheme allows victims of crime, prosecutors and members of the public to ask for certain sentences to be reviewed. The Attorney or Solicitor General then asks the Court of Appeal to review the sentence to have it increased if they believe the Court made an error in sentencing.

32 criminals, including an arsonist, someone carrying a firearm and 2 men found guilty of child neglect, all had their community sentence quashed and replaced with an immediate custodial sentence. Of these, 17 sex offenders who originally escaped prison are now serving time behind bars.

1 rapist and 1 attempted murderer had their determinate sentence replaced with a life sentence and now can only be released with permission from the Parole Board.

The Attorney General Jeremy Wright QC MP said:

"The Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme allows victims of crime, their families and the public to challenge sentences that they believe are too low, and last year we saw a record number of sentences increased.

"A sentencing exercise is not an exact science and in the vast majority of cases, judges get it right. The scheme is available to ensure that the Solicitor General and I can independently review those cases where there may have been an error in the sentencing decision."

From 8 August, the scheme will cover an additional 19 terror-related offences including supporting extremist organisations, encouraging acts of terror or failing to disclose information about a terrorist attack. This extension is a first step to extending the scheme even further.

In 2016, 837 referrals were received by the Attorney General's Office, a 17% increase from the previous year. The Attorney and Solicitor General referred 190 cases to the Court of Appeal that they thought needed looking at again, compared to 135 in 2015.

Of the 141 offenders who had their sentences increased, these related to crimes in the following categories:

Grievous Bodily Harm with intent	19
Robbery	16
Firearms	11
Drugs	8
Burglary	7
Kidnapping	6
Manslaughter	6
False Imprisonment	6
Perverting the Course of Justice	4
Blackmail	3
Child Neglect / Cruelty	3
Arson	2
Death By Dangerous Driving	2
Conspiracy to cause explosions	2
Causing or allowing the death of a vulnerable adult	2
Attempted Murder	1
Murder	1
Threats to kill	1

141 cases resulting in sentence increases is a small proportion of the 80,000 Crown Court cases heard each year, but the ULS scheme is there to allow adjustment of those sentences where an increase is warranted.

The scheme was brought about after the public outcry that happened after the 1986 Ealing Vicarage rape case where 21 year old Jill Saward was brutally raped by a gang of robbers at her father's vicarage.