

Press release: Government moves closer to introducing Sentencing Code

Judges currently have to contend with more than 1,300 pages of convoluted and overlapping law – making it difficult to apply the law consistently and causing unnecessary delays to the justice process.

The Sentencing Code will bring greater clarity to sentencing laws, reducing the number of errors made whilst making sentencing hearings more efficient.

The Sentencing (Pre-consolidation Amendments) Bill brought forward today will make necessary technical amendments and remove historic, now redundant layers of legislation, to pave the way for the Sentencing Code.

This will include enacting a ‘clean sweep’ to sentencing procedural law, which will allow for all offenders convicted after the Sentencing Code comes into force to be sentenced according to the most up to date law, irrespective of when they committed the offence.

The clean sweep will be subject to exceptions to make sure that no offender is subject to a greater penalty than was available at the time the offence was committed.

Justice Minister Robert Buckland said:

It is vital that judges have complete clarity when making sentencing decisions, so we want to do all we can to reduce the complexity of the law, some of which is centuries old.

This Bill will pave the way for the Sentencing Code, simplifying the statute book and helping the public to better understand the sentencing process.

Neither the pre-consolidation amendments nor the Code introduce any new substantive law or alter the maximum or minimum penalties available for an offence.

In 2014, the government agreed that the Law Commission should undertake a project to consolidate sentencing procedural law, and the Code has been subject to four formal public consultations.

Notes to editors

- In 2014, the government agreed that the Law Commission should undertake a project to consolidate sentencing procedural law.
- The Sentencing Code will present the law in one place, in a more logical order, and in simpler terms. These improvements will assist legal professionals in applying the law, thereby reducing the risk of error,

appeals and delay in the process.

- Before the Code can be introduced, this PCA Bill must be introduced to remove historic layers of legislation and correct minor errors and ambiguity in the law to enable the consolidation in the Code to happen.
- [Both pieces of draft legislation](#) were published by the Law Commission in November 2018.
- The Sentencing (Pre-consolidation Amendments) (PCA) Bill was introduced in the House of Lords on Wednesday and published today (23 May 2019).