

Public safety boost as major justice reforms come into force

- Overhaul of sentencing laws to make streets safer
- Serious violent and sexual offenders to spend longer behind bars
- Measures to help cut crime and better protect the public
- New powers to manage serious disruption caused by protests

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act equips police with the powers and tools they need to combat crime while overhauling sentencing laws to protect the public and keep serious sexual and violent offenders behind bars for longer.

These include making whole-life orders the starting point for pre-meditated child murder, introducing mandatory life sentences for those who unlawfully kill emergency workers in the line of duty, and ending the automatic early release of offenders deemed to be a danger to the public.

Crucially, the Act delivers on the Government's pledge to boost protection for women and girls.

Domestic abuse victims will now have more time to report incidents of common assault or battery, and taking non-consensual photographs or video recordings of breastfeeding mothers will be punishable by up to two years in prison. The most violent and sexual offenders, including rapists, will also be forced to spend longer in prison to keep the public safer.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

This Government is delivering on its commitment to make our streets safer.

We have changed the law so that dangerous criminals are given the sentences they deserve and kept behind bars, and we are backing the police with the powers they need to keep us safe.

We are well on our way to getting 20,000 more police officers, and we will continue to support victims seeking justice and bear down on crime so that everyone, in every town, village and city, has the security and confidence they deserve.

Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, Dominic Raab said:

From today our new laws will mean serious offenders spend longer in jail, including sex offenders, child abusers and those who kill emergency workers in the course of their duties.

We are also protecting breastfeeding women from being photographed without their consent and giving the victims of domestic abuse longer to report the crime to the police to help ensure they get justice.

Other sentencing reforms coming into force today include higher maximum penalties for a range of child cruelty offences, known as Tony's Law. In addition, judges will now be able to hand down life sentences to dangerous drivers who kill on our roads, and can impose whole life orders on 18-20-year-olds who commit the worst offences – for example, acts of terrorism which cause mass loss of life.

The PCSC Act also doubles the maximum penalty from 12 months to two years for those who assault police or other emergency workers, such as prison officers, fire service personnel or frontline health workers – helping to protect those who put their lives on the line to keep communities safe. It will also bring 'Harper's Law' onto the statute book, introducing mandatory life sentences for anyone convicted of killing an emergency worker whilst committing a crime.

From today, it will be a statutory offence to intentionally or recklessly cause public nuisance – ensuring that the penalties for these crimes reflect the severity of the rise in guerrilla protest tactics we have seen in recent years. The police will also be supported with new powers to tackle non-violent protests that have a significant disruptive effect on the public or on access to Parliament.

Home Secretary, Priti Patel, said:

The laws coming into force today show the Government's Beating Crime Plan in action and will help drive down crime, better protect victims and make streets safer up and down the country.

We are delivering on the people's priorities. Whether it's tackling knife crime, violence against women and girls or anti-social guerilla protest tactics, these measures are all about backing the police and standing up for the law-abiding majority of the British public.

Also from today, police will be able to obtain a search warrant for evidence related to the location of human remains where it is not possible to bring about a prosecution.

The Government is also investing £477m to deliver speedier justice for victims and reduce the backlog of court cases from the pandemic. This includes lifting the cap on Crown Court sitting days for another year to ensure courts can continue working at full capacity to minimise delays.

In May, ministers published a draft Victims' Bill to amplify their voices and make justice agencies more accountable for the service they deliver.

Notes to editors:

Measures coming into force today include:

- Mandatory life sentences for those who unlawfully kill an emergency worker in the course of their duty, known as Harper's Law.
- Increasing the maximum penalties for child cruelty offences, including up to life imprisonment for those who cause or allow the death of a child or vulnerable adult in their household, known as Tony's Law.
- Creation of new offences of breastfeeding voyeurism punishable with up to 2 years in custody.
- Extending the prosecution time limit for domestic abuse-related common assault and battery charges from 6 months of the offence to 6 months of it being formally reported to the police, up to a maximum of 2 years.
- Whole life orders will be the starting point for the premeditated murder of a child as well as enabling judges to hand out this maximum punishment to 18-20-year-olds in exceptional cases to reflect the gravity of a crime. For example, acts of terrorism which lead to mass loss of life.
- New powers to halt the automatic early release of offenders who pose a danger to the public.
- For children who commit murder, introducing new starting points for deciding the minimum amount of time in custody based on age and seriousness of offence, and reducing the opportunities for over 18s who committed murder as a child to have their minimum term reviewed.
- Ending the halfway release of offenders sentenced to between 4 and 7 years in prison for serious violent and sexual offences such as rape, manslaughter and GBH with intent. Instead, they will have to spend two-thirds of their time behind bars.
- Ensuring the courts pass at least the minimum sentence for certain offences, including repeat knife possession and third strike burglary, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- Increasing the maximum penalty to life for the offences of causing death by dangerous driving and causing death by careless driving when under the influence of drink or drugs.
- Creating a new offence of causing serious injury by careless driving.
- Tougher community sentences which double the amount of time offenders can be subject to curfew restrictions to 2 years.
- Extended 'positions of trusts' laws to protect teenagers from abuse by making it illegal for sports coaches and religious leaders to engage in sexual activity with 16 and 17-year-olds.
- New rules to end the need for participants to travel unnecessarily to court by allowing criminal courts to maximise the use of video and audio

technology as it develops.

- For the first time enabling profoundly deaf people who need a BSL interpreter to sit on juries. Current laws ban the presence of a 'stranger' being in the jury deliberation room – this will be scrapped and instead allow a British Sign Language interpreter into the room.
- Removing the consideration of monetary value with respect to criminal damage to memorials and ensuring that even 'low value' claims can be heard by the Crown Court, with the result that the full range of sentencing powers will be available – including the ten-year maximum
- Doubling the maximum penalty for assaulting an emergency worker from 12 months to 2 years.