

# Serious violent and sexual offenders to spend longer in prison

- Automatic half-way release for serious offenders to end from April
- Ministers act to ensure punishment reflects the severity of the crime
- Laws introduced today are part of extensive overhaul to criminal justice system

Legislation brought before Parliament today (22 January) will end the automatic half-way release for offenders sentenced for crimes such as rape, manslaughter and GBH. Instead they will be made to spend two-thirds of their sentence in prison, before being subject to strict licence conditions upon release.

The changes follow yesterday's announcement of tougher sentences for the most serious terrorist offenders, and will apply to anyone handed a standard determinate sentence of seven years or more, where the maximum penalty is life. The most dangerous offenders already face life sentences and may never be released.

Justice Secretary & Lord Chancellor, Rt Hon Robert Buckland QC MP, said:

Time and again victims tell me they feel let down by a system that can see violent and sexual offenders back on the streets after serving just half their sentence.

So we will end the automatic half-way release for these offenders – ensuring punishment truly fits the crime and restore the public's faith in the justice system.

Since 2005 the majority of these criminals serve what is known as 'standard determinate sentences' and are released automatically at the half-way point, serving the second half of their sentence in the community. The Government will change the release point to two-thirds for certain serious offenders which will allow for a greater period of rehabilitation in prison as they prepare to resettle into the community.

The move is part of an overhaul of the criminal justice system which will see 20,000 new police officers, an extra 10,000 prison places and a new Sentencing Bill to ensure the most serious offenders spend longer in jail. The reforms include yesterday's [announcement](#) of tougher sentences for the most serious terrorist offenders.

## **Notes to editors**

- Two Statutory Instruments are being debated today, the Release of

Prisoners (Alteration of Relevant Proportion of Sentence) Order 2019 and the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 (Consequential Amendment) Regulations Order 2019. The first will change the release point for those serving standard determinate sentences of 7 years or more where the maximum sentence is life to the two-thirds point. The second SI is a technical instrument to ensure the changes can apply to those serving consecutive sentences.

- If approved by both Houses the changes will come into force on 1 April 2020 and will apply to relevant sentences imposed on or after that date.
- There are a range of sentences available for violent and sexual offenders which include: A life sentence – offender spends minimum period or “tariff” in prison before being considered for release by the Parole Board. The offender may therefore never be released. If released, offenders spend the rest of their life on licence and can be recalled to custody.
- Extended Determinate Sentence – offender becomes eligible to be considered for release by the Parole Board from the two-thirds point but can serve the full term in prison if not assessed to be safe to release earlier. The custodial term is followed by an extended period on licence for on-going public protection (of up to eight years for sex offenders and five years for violent offenders).
- Standard Determinate Sentence – the offender will be automatically released at the half way point in this sentence and be on licence in the community for the second half of the sentence. Those serving short sentences will have additional supervision in the community for a minimum period of 12 months.
- The vast majority of offenders who are sentenced for serious sexual and violent offences which carry a maximum life sentence receive a Standard Determinate Sentence.
- In 2018, there were over 4,000 Standard Determinate Sentences imposed for sexual /violent offences which carry a maximum penalty of life. There were around 250 Extended Determinate Sentences, and 400 life sentences for such offences.
- The changes will apply to the most serious violent or sexual offences which carry a maximum penalty of life. This could include crimes such as manslaughter, rape or GBH.