

## [Press release: Child sex offender to face custodial sentence](#)

A man who sexually assaulted a child has been given an immediate custodial sentence after a ruling by the Court of Appeal.

Louis Mireles, 21, put his hand down a child's trousers and touched their genitals, telling them to keep it a secret.

Mireles was given a community sentence at Portsmouth Crown Court on 29 March. The sentence was referred to the Court of Appeal on the grounds that it was unduly lenient. Judges at the Court of Appeal agreed and increased the original sentence to a custodial sentence of 2 years 6 months.

After the hearing, the Solicitor General Lucy Frazer QC MP said:

“Mireles was aware of his feelings towards children yet still sought contact – committing a crime severe enough to warrant a custodial sentence. The Court of Appeal agrees that his punishment was too lenient and the offender will now be imprisoned.”

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## [Press release: End to divorce 'blame game' moves closer](#)

- Cross-party support for landmark government bill as it enters the Commons today
- Ministers want to end unnecessary 'mudslinging' and allow divorcing couples to move forward amicably

Divorcing couples will soon no longer have to make allegations about each other's conduct, after a landmark bill was introduced by Justice Secretary David Gauke today (13 June 2019).

The Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill aims to make divorce less acrimonious – reforming our 50-year-old divorce laws – to ensure the process better supports couples to move forward as constructively as possible.

The government has acted to make sure that when a relationship regrettably breaks down, the law doesn't stir-up further antagonism but instead allows couples to look to the future and focus on key practical decisions – such as how best to cooperate in bringing up children.

Today's news comes after Ministers pledged to bring forward new legislation

following significant support for reform from across the family justice sector and from those with personal experience of divorce.

Justice Secretary David Gauke said:

Marriage will always be a vitally important institution in society, but when a relationship breaks down it cannot be right that the law adds fuel to the fire by incentivising couples to blame each other.

By removing the unnecessary mudslinging the current process can needlessly rake up, we'll make sure the law plays its part in allowing couples to move on as amicably and constructively as possible.

I'm proud to introduce this important legislation which will make a genuine difference to many children and families.

Margaret Heathcote, Chair of Resolution, the family justice professionals group, said:

We're delighted that the government is introducing legislation which will help reduce conflict between divorcing couples.

Every day, our members are helping people through separation, taking a constructive, non-confrontational approach in line with our Code of Practice. However, because of our outdated divorce laws, they've been working effectively with one arm tied behind their backs.

These proposals have the support of the public, politicians, and professionals. We therefore call on MPs and members of the House of Lords to pass this Bill without unnecessary delay, and end the blame game for divorcing couples as soon as possible.

Current law demands proof that a marriage has broken down irretrievably. It forces spouses to evidence this through alleged conduct such as 'unreasonable behaviour' or face at least two years of separation, even in cases where a couple has made a mutual decision to part ways.

Consultation responses, which included feedback from family justice professionals and those with direct experience of divorce, highlighted that this requirement can set the scene for acrimony and conflict – damaging any prospect of reconciliation and harming the ongoing relationship between parents in particular.

Therefore the government's reforms remove conflict flashpoints that exist in the current process and introduce a minimum overall timeframe, encouraging couples to approach arrangements for the future as constructively and cooperatively as possible.

Specifically, the Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill will:

- Replace the current requirement to evidence either a conduct or separation 'fact' with the provision of a statement of irretrievable breakdown of the marriage (couples can opt to make this a joint statement).
- Remove the possibility of contesting the decision to divorce, as a statement will be conclusive evidence that the marriage has broken down.
- Introduces a new minimum period of 20 weeks from the start of proceedings to confirmation to the court that a conditional order may be made, allowing greater opportunity for reflection and, where couples cannot reconcile and divorce is inevitable, agreeing practical arrangements for the future.

The Bill seeks to align the ethos underlying divorce law with the government's approach elsewhere in family law – encouraging a forward-looking non-confrontational approach wherever possible, thereby reducing conflict and its damaging effect on children in particular.

## Notes to editors

- The government published its response to the public consultation, [Reducing Family Conflict: reform of the legal requirements for divorce](#), on 9 April 2019.
- Current divorce law requires people seeking divorce to give evidence of one or more of five facts to establish the irretrievable breakdown of the marriage; three are based on 'fault' and two are based instead on a period of separation.
- The 5 facts are: adultery, behaviour, desertion, two years' separation (if the other spouse consents to the divorce) and 5 years' separation (otherwise). These are summary versions of the facts.
- The behaviour fact, for example, which was an issue in the case of *Owens v Owens*, is sometimes called 'unreasonable behaviour' but is actually 'that the respondent has behaved in such a way that the petitioner cannot reasonably be expected to live with the respondent'.
- Separation-based facts are effectively unavailable to those who cannot afford to run two households before resolving their financial arrangements on divorce
- At present, where both parties agree, the court can dissolve the marriage after the couple have lived apart for a minimum 2 years. Where one spouse disagrees, the other spouse will either have to wait to be separated for 5 years before a divorce is granted or may instead obtain a divorce if they demonstrate to the satisfaction of the court that their spouse has committed adultery or that they have behaved in such a way that the party cannot reasonably be expected to live with them. Desertion is rarely relied upon. The legal definitions of the facts can be found in [section 1\(2\) of the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973](#)
- Data shows that out of every 5 divorce petitions over the last 3 years, close to 3 rely on conduct facts and 2 on separation facts. Between 2016-18, the behaviour fact accounted for nearly half of all petitions (46.4%, or 47.1% when combined with the adultery fact). In 2018, 118,000 people petitioned for divorce in England and Wales.

- The ability to contest a divorce is rarely used (in less than 2% of cases). The Bill removes the possibility to contest a divorce but all divorce applications could still be challenged on the bases of jurisdiction, the legal validity of the marriage, fraud or coercion and procedural compliance.
- The current law does not require any minimum period of time to elapse before granting the decree nisi (conditional order of divorce). Between 2011 and 2018, around one in ten cases reached decree nisi within 8 weeks, and 3 in 10 cases between 9-13 weeks. It is expected that without the introduction of a minimum timeframe, the average time would reduce as online divorce is extended.
- The average period to the final decree is much more varied, as some parties take a long time to make financial arrangements before they apply for the final decree. We will retain the current minimum period of 6 weeks before a final decree can be applied for.
- The divorce will not be automatic at a fixed date at the end of the minimum timeframe, but will require the applicant to continue to affirm their decision to seek a divorce. This keeps the important safeguards of the existing process.
- Parallel changes will be made to the law governing the dissolution of a civil partnership which broadly mirrors the legal process for obtaining a divorce.
- The proposed legislation will not cover other areas of matrimonial law such as financial provision. Financial provision on divorce is handled in separate proceedings and the court has wide discretion to provide for future financial needs.
- For more information please contact MOJ press office.

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## [Press release: Work on water protection scheme at Lynemouth nearing completion](#)

Five new settlement lagoons are currently being built by the Coal Authority at the mine water treatment scheme at the former Lynemouth Colliery.

Once operational, the 5 new lagoons, along with the existing 2, will ensure water within the underground coal workings can be managed to prevent the contamination of groundwater.

The scheme will also prevent uncontrolled discharges into rivers and the sea.

Lagoon building works at Lynemouth mine water treatment scheme

The settlement lagoons substantially improve the water quality by reducing the elevated iron levels found in the mine water before the water is

discharged into the North Sea.

At full capacity the enlarged scheme will be able to treat over 6 billion litres of mine water annually – the equivalent of 2,400 Olympic sized swimming pools – removing 300 tonnes of iron in the process and protecting about 1.6 million cubic metres of drinkable water.

The new settlement lagoon taking shape at Lynemouth mine water treatment scheme

Jim Bagnall, Project Manager for the Coal Authority, said that 2 of the five new lagoons are due to be operational by July, with the remaining 3 operational by the autumn.

He added: “Works on this second phase began in September and once completed will provide the capacity needed to control the mine water emanating from the underground workings at not only Lynemouth but also the larger mining block linked to Ellington Colliery.

“Lynemouth Colliery was part of a larger mining block linked to Ellington Colliery, known as Ellington Combine, that worked reserves under the North Sea. The mining block extends from Morpeth in the west to West Chevington in the north.

“Historically, water levels were controlled at a number of pumping stations in the area. However, pumping stopped in 1994, with the colliery finally closing in 2005.”

Once pumping ceased, water levels in the workings began to rise, leading to concerns about the pollution of the aquifer lying above the underground workings. Once the pollution enters the aquifer it may not be possible to reverse the situation.

There is also a longer term risk if mine water is allowed to rise above sea level as there may be uncontrolled discharges into local rivers or the sea.

Although not harmful to people, the mine water contains elevated levels of iron that would have detrimental impacts on the local habitats and rivers. Potential discharge locations would be Blakemoor Drift, Newbiggin Shaft or smaller shafts and adits along the Wansbeck Valley.

A new cascade being built at Lynemouth mine water treatment scheme

“The scheme was always intended to be implemented in several phases with the first 2 lagoons being built and becoming operational in 2015,” said Jim.

“The intention was that this first phase would allow us to determine what long term treatment capacity would be needed. The pumping undertaken slowed the rise of the mine water but did not halt it, hence the current extension.”

Iron content in the mine water accumulates at the bottom of the lagoons as sludge, which needs to be removed periodically. Works are also underway at the site to construct 2 sludge drying beds, which will allow the efficient

de-sludging of the lagoons.

This will not only increase the available treatment capacity available but will also significantly reduce the quantity of sludge that has to be disposed of by removing the excess water.

### **Notes to editors**

The Coal Authority deals with mine water pollution and other mining legacy issues.

The scheme at Lynemouth is just one of the 75 mine water treatment schemes operated by the Coal Authority across Britain.

Together they treat over 122 billion litres of water and prevent 4,000 tonnes of iron solids from entering and polluting rivers and other local watercourses each year.

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## **[News story: Transport Secretary leads the way in transition to a zero-emission future](#)**

The Transport Secretary has set out plans for the government to move towards completely ultra-low emission car fleets over the next decade.

Last year's [Road to Zero strategy](#) set out a commitment to make all central government cars electric by 2030, electrifying at least 25% of the fleet by 2022.

The [Government Car Service](#), managed by the Department for Transport, is well on track to meet the targets, with electric vehicles making up nearly 23% of the entire fleet.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling has written to every government department to reinforce the pledge to move towards a completely electric government fleet by 2030.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling, said:

We want the UK to be the best place in the world to own an ultra-low emission vehicle, and as a government we have to lead by example.

I am pleased with the change we are making to the Government Car Service, but this now needs to be reflected in all fleets that are

controlled by government.

Only yesterday, the Prime Minister made the bold commitment that the UK will end its net contribution to climate change by 2050. It is absolutely vital that all parts of government play their part in delivering this ambitious target.

Every department has been given detailed guidance on how they can drive this transition in their own fleet, asking them to publish a yearly progress report.

The move is the latest step in the transition towards a greener-than-ever transport network and follows last week's £25 million investment to develop ground-breaking zero emission technologies across the country.

It also builds on the government's £1.5 billion Road to Zero strategy which outlines a series of ambitious steps to get more people into ultra-low emission vehicles. This includes infrastructure support, grants, and research and development, putting the UK at the forefront of the design and manufacture of zero-emission vehicles.

The government is also driving forward plans to reduce emissions, clean up our air, and deliver cleaner, greener transport across all modes.

These include a commitment to [end the sale of new conventional diesel and petrol cars and vans by 2040](#), investment in hybrid trains, the doubling of investment in cycling and walking since 2010, along with the £2.5 billion [Transforming Cities Fund](#) which will develop innovative public transport schemes in some of England's biggest cities.

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## **Speech: Queen's birthday celebration 2019 in Kinshasa, DRC: Ambassador's speech**

Welcome to the Queen's Birthday Party here at the British Embassy in DRC.

Today we celebrate the birthday of the world's longest serving Head of State: our Queen for more than 67 years.

To avoid this being misconstrued as an argument to abolish Constitutional term limits, I hasten to add that the Queen only reigns. She does not govern.

Throughout the Queen's reign she has been served by many Prime Ministers. Does anyone know how many? 10? 12? 14? Trick question! The answer is 170 because of course the Queen has been Head of State of 32 independent states

and remains Head of State in 16 countries.

In the UK alone, 13 Prime Ministers – from Winston Churchill to Theresa May – have served the Queen. As Theresa May has resigned today as Head of the Conservative Party, in the foreseeable future there will be a fourteenth. During her reign, political power has alternated between parties many times. The Queen has been a constant through many years of change: the end of Empire; joining the EU in 1973 and, in 2016, voting to leave it again.

It is true that the UK's relationship with Europe remains complicated. Many British voters don't want to leave Europe. Our football teams, in particular, all appear to have been determined to stay in as long as possible (and I must congratulate Liverpool, Chelsea, Tottenham and Arsenal for their success). Despite the success of our teams, what is clear, however, is that the British people voted for change.

The Congolese people also voted for change. Last year in my speech, I looked forward to the DRC's first peaceful transfer of power in January. I'm delighted that elections happened and that change is beginning. I'm proud that the UK was able to play a key role in the electoral process: supporting a technical analysis of controversial voting machines and financing over half of CENCO's 40,000 electoral observers.

Now that the electoral process is complete, it is up to Congo's politicians to deliver change. Change means: more peace and security; freedom from harassment by the police and the armed forces; access to education and health care and economic opportunity.

The UK will work with any partners in Congo that seek to deliver change. Conversely, those who oppose change will not be welcome in the UK.

In 2018, I spent much of my time thinking about one Joseph: former President Kabila. This year also sees me thinking about a second Joseph: my new son just six months' old. Yesterday at the Swedish National Day, my colleague Ambassador Maria said she has achieved 100% family increase during her stay in the Congo. Up to now, I have achieved 50%, but I still have time. When my new son Joseph has woken up for the 5th time and it's still only four in the morning, I'm reminded that, as with so many things in life, change – and enabling something new and worthwhile – isn't always easy and it takes time and effort.

There are no short-cuts to success. I encourage all of those who make up the new Parliament and government to remember this.

I'd also remind them that foreign partnerships don't undermine Congolese sovereignty. I believe that Liverpool would not have won the European Cup if they had relied only on players from that city. The reality is that foreign players like Salah and Mane gave them a cutting edge required to achieve their dreams. Is there any one supporter of Liverpool who thinks that Salah has reduced the sovereignty of Liverpool? On the contrary he helped them fulfil their dreams. Although we may lack their athletic ability, the whole of the British Embassy in DRC has a similar desire to support Congolese success.



British citizens are globally minded. UK law commits us to spending 0.7% of GDP on eliminating global poverty – without commercial preconditions. We therefore work to resolve conflict and to support good governance, education, health care – including the fight against Ebola – and the development of a more dynamic economy. Like Jurgen Klopp with Liverpool, we are with the Congolese people for the long term.

Speeches are often a time for goodbyes. In July, we will be saying goodbye to Bona Magongo, our Embassy translator, without whose work myself and many Ambassadors before me would have given speeches in much less sophisticated French (if you doubt me, read my tweets to see my real French!). Thank you Bona.

Then, later this month I will bid farewell to my Deputy, Nicholas Woolley and his wife, Debbie. Debbie has been a lynchpin of the Embassy team. Nick has been outstanding and I'm delighted he will soon take up his own Head of Mission role in neighbouring Zambia. Thank you both for your fantastic work. I'm very happy to welcome Harry MacDonald as our new Deputy Head of Mission. Welcome Harry!

Change can be daunting. The world changes fast. The challenges of the past will not be the challenges of tomorrow. We must adhere to change. The Queen has spent many years adjusting to the various changes in our culture. In my country that means looking forward to a new Global Britain, ready to promote trade and openness across the world.

It is my hope that DRC will similarly look forward and deliver the change that people voted for in December last year. We will be there to support you.

Now please join me in raising your glasses to Her Majesty Elizabeth II and to the good relations between our two countries.