

Justice overhaul to better protect the public and back our police

- punishments to reflect severity of crimes with police given stronger powers and protections
- child sex abuse laws extended to cover sports coaches and faith leaders
- Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill introduced to Parliament today

Cutting crime and building safer communities will be at the heart of new legislation unveiled in Parliament today, as the government delivers on its pledge to restore confidence in the criminal justice system.

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill seeks to equip the police with the powers and tools they need to protect themselves and the public, while overhauling sentencing laws to keep serious sexual and violent offenders behind bars for longer, and placing greater emphasis on rehabilitation to better help offenders to turn their lives around and prevent further crimes.

Measures include widening important laws which prevent adults in 'positions of trust' from engaging in sexual relationships with young people under the age of 18, bringing sports coaches and religious leaders in line with other occupations such as teachers and doctors. The move follows an extensive review which raised concerns that predators could exploit the particular influence these roles can often have in a young person's life – making them vulnerable to abuse.

Meanwhile, new court orders will boost efforts to crack down on knife crime, as well as make it easier to stop and search those suspected of carrying a blade. New laws will also enable police to better tackle unauthorised encampments, and safely manage protests where they threaten public order or stop people from getting on with their daily lives.

The Bill will also enshrine a Police Covenant in law, strengthening the support received by serving and retired officers, staff and their families. In addition, maximum penalties will be doubled from 12 months to 2 years for those who assault police or other emergency workers, such as prison officers, fire personnel or frontline health workers – helping to protect those who put their lives on the line to keep communities safe.

Other sentencing reforms – first outlined in a landmark government white paper last year – will also be brought into legislation to ensure punishments fit the severity of crimes. These include Whole Life Orders (WLOs) for child killers, with judges also allowed to impose this punishment on 18 to 20 year olds in exceptional cases – for example, acts of terrorism which cause mass loss of life. The Bill also introduces life sentences for killer drivers who wreak havoc on our roads, ends the automatic halfway release for serious violent and sexual offenders, and ensures community sentences are stricter and better target underlying causes of crime such as mental health issues, alcohol or drug addiction.

Lord Chancellor and Justice Secretary, Robert Buckland QC said:

This government has pledged to crack down on crime and build safer communities. Today we are delivering on that commitment.

We are giving the police and courts the powers they need to keep our streets safe, while providing greater opportunities for offenders to turn their lives around and better contribute to society.

At the same time, we are investing hundreds of millions to deliver speedier justice and boost support for victims, and will continue to do everything it takes to build back confidence in the criminal justice system.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

On becoming Home Secretary, I vowed to back the police to cut crime and make our streets safer.

This Bill delivers on that promise – equipping the police with the tools they need to stop violent criminals in their tracks, putting the thugs who assault officers behind bars for longer and strengthening the support officers and their families receive.

The government has already recruited over 6,600 of the additional 20,000 police officers and every single one of them has my full support. This Bill enshrines my commitment to those brave officers who put themselves in danger to keep rest of us safe into law.

Further changes will see tougher penalties for those who vandalise memorials, and a statutory duty placed on local authorities and criminal justice agencies to tackle serious violence through better sharing of data and intelligence.

The legislation builds on extensive work already underway to deliver a smarter, fairer justice system as the country builds back safer from the pandemic. This includes hundreds of millions being invested in courts to deliver speedier justice and reduce court delays, unprecedented funding for victim support services, the recruitment of 20,000 police officers and a £4 billion investment in extra prison places.

The APCC's Criminal Justice Lead David Lloyd said:

The public needs to have confidence in the criminal justice system, or else they will lose faith in reporting crime. By ensuring those who commit the most serious violent crimes spend the bulk of their sentences in prison, we send a clear message that we are on the

side of victims.

But we must look to reduce re-offending through more effective community sentences, for lower level offenders where they are appropriate.

New laws to reform sentencing, the courts and offender management:

- Whole life Orders for the premeditated murder of a child as well as allowing judges to hand out this maximum punishment to 18 to 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 four and seven 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.
- Changing the threshold for passing a sentence below the minimum term for repeat offenders, including key serious offences such as 'third strike' burglary which carries a minimum three-year custodial sentence and 'two strike' knife possession which has a minimum 6-month sentence for adults, making it less likely that a court will depart from these minimum terms.
- Reforming criminal records disclosure to reduce the time period people have to declare previous non-violent, sexual or terrorist convictions to employers – covering both adult and youth offences.
- Introducing life sentences for killer drivers.
- 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 from engaging 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.
- Enshrining open justice principles by allowing for remote observers – using video and audio technology – across the vast majority of our courts and tribunals improving public access and transparency.
- For the first time enabling profoundly deaf people 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.
- Increasing the maximum penalty for criminal damage of a memorial from 3 months to 10 years.
- Stronger youth community sentencing options, including greater use of location monitoring and longer daily curfews, providing robust

alternatives to custody.

New protections and powers for the police include:

- Serious Violence Reduction Orders – new stop and search powers against convicted knife offensive weapons offenders designed to ensure offenders are steered away from crime and if they persist in carrying a knife or an offensive weapon, that they are more likely to be caught and put in prison.
- A legal duty on local authorities, the police, criminal justice agencies, health and fire and rescue services to tackle serious violence through sharing data and intelligence.
- Homicide reviews following deaths of adults involving offensive weapons to better understand the drivers of violent crime and stop it happening in the first place.
- Enshrining the police covenant in law.
- Doubling the maximum sentence for assaulting an emergency worker from 12 months to 2 years.
- A new law to allow police to obtain a search warrant for evidence related to the location of human remains where it is not possible to bring about a prosecution, for example where a suspect is dead, unfit to plead, or has already been convicted of the offence in the absence of a body
- Strengthen police powers to tackle non-violent protests that have a significant disruptive effect on the public or on access to Parliament;
- Reform pre-charge bail to better protect vulnerable victims and witnesses. Known as Kay's Law this will put victims of crime at the heart of police decision making and support the timely progression of investigations.
- Strengthen police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments that significantly interfere with a person's or community's ability to make use of the land

Notes to editors

- The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill will be introduced to Parliament today (9 March 2021). The full list of measures will be available on the Parliament website on Tuesday 9 March 2021.
- The majority of the MOJ measures will apply to England and Wales only, with road traffic offences and driving disqualification measures applying to Great Britain and certain courts and tribunals measures relating to virtual hearings applying UK-wide.

[Commonwealth Day Climate Action Photo](#)

Contest Now Live – Bahamas

In honour of Commonwealth Day on Monday 8 March, the British High Commission Nassau is holding a climate action photography contest for young Bahamians (ages 11-18).

Details of the contest are on the [UK in The Bahamas Facebook Page](#). Young Bahamians aged 11-14 and 15-18 years old can submit photos that represent Nature-based Solutions to Combat Climate Change and its Impacts. Prizes in each age category include a Go Pro Hero 5 camera worth over \$400 and a snorkel experience at the BREEF Coral Reef Sculpture Garden and Coral Nursery.

The contest is organised by the British High Commission Nassau in partnership with the Sustainable Development Goals Unit [SDG Unit](#) of the Office of the Prime Minister and the Bahamas Reef Environment Education Foundation [BREEF](#).

Protecting the environment and combatting climate change are very important for the 54 members of the Commonwealth.

- Did you know? 31 of the Commonwealth's 54 member countries are small island states
- Did you know? The Bahamas is part of the Commonwealth action group on mangroves
- Did you know? The Bahamas is part of the Commonwealth action group on the Blue Charter (shared oceans, shared values)
- Did you know? Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II is the head of the Commonwealth

So join us in raising awareness about The Bahamas' role in combatting climate change through the promotion of Nature-Based Solutions. Your photo should capture the unique way that an island archipelago in the Commonwealth like The Bahamas can address climate change and its impacts.

Take an original still photo that reflects a 'nature-based solution' to climate change. Nature based solutions can counteract climate change in all sorts of ways, such as:

- the protection, restoration and sustainable management of mangroves and their ecosystems
- supporting woodlands
- protecting coral reefs and their ocean habitats
- sustainable farming and agriculture
- celebrating and protecting biodiversity on land and sea

The winners of the competition will be awarded prizes and have their photography featured in a virtual Gallery Space on the [UK in The Bahamas Facebook Page](#).

Contest Details and Rules

- Contest will run on [UK in The Bahamas Facebook Page](#) beginning on 8 March 2021
- This contest is only open to residents of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas
- Pictures submitted have to reflect on the theme: Nature based solutions to climate change
- Each participant is allowed to submit one (1) photograph only
- We reserve the right to refuse entry of any photo that we feel is inappropriate, i.e. portraying violence or abuse
- Photos need to be the original work of the contestants, and to be shot in The Bahamas. Contestants will be responsible for any copyright violation committed in entries
- Photo Submission: All pictures are to be sent to ukinthebahamas@gmail.com in a .jpg format, and a maximum size of 5mb, along with a short description, as well as the name and age of the photographer and the town/city they are from and contact details. Students are encouraged to submit their school, college or University name. Contestants are responsible for having obtained any necessary permission from any person/persons appearing in their photographs
- All pictures will be posted in two age-based albums (11-14; 15-18) on the UK in The Bahamas Facebook Page on and voting on pictures can take place as soon as pictures are posted
- Deadline for voting is 26 March 2021. Voting on pictures will be done by 'liking' the photos in the age-based albums. The five photographs with the top number of 'likes' by the end of this contest, will be judged by an independent judging panel
- A first, second and third prize will be awarded to six photographers—two from each age group on 29 March 2021 via Facebook announcement and email notification
- In entering, you agree to allow the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to use your image on FCDO social media channels, and/or without restrictions, although credit will be given where appropriate

Deadline for Submitting Photos

26 March 2021 by 5:00pm Bahamian time. Any picture submitted after this deadline will NOT be considered.

Prizes

• First prize: GoPro HERO5 Action Camera (valued at \$450) • Second prize: \$200 Sports Centre Vouchers • Third prize: snorkel experience at the BREEF Coral Reef Sculpture Garden and Coral Nursery

Learn more

For more inspiration you can explore the following information on climate change and its impacts:

- Nature Based Solutions – Ecosystem Based Adaptation [Video](#) (United Nations Environment Programme)
- The Commonwealth of Nations and the Environment
 - o [The Blue Economy](#)
 - o [Coral Reefs](#)
 - o [Mangroves](#)
- Climate Action: United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 13 [here](#)

To learn more about the Commonwealth, have a look at:

- [The Commonwealth](#)
- The Commonwealth Heads of Government [\(CHOGM21\)](#)

[Commonwealth Day 2021 speech by High Commissioner Charles Hay](#)

It's a great pleasure to be taking part in Commonwealth Day 2021 with at least a few people around me, even if we are all in masks. The very essence and heart of the Commonwealth is our people to people links, and while we have all got used to virtual meetings, having at least some people together to celebrate this day seems very appropriate. I am relieved that the latest MCO was lifted in time for us to have this event. My thanks to the Royal Commonwealth Society of Malaysia for hosting us this evening.

It seems an age ago now but it was just a year ago that the British High Commission, as Commonwealth Chair-In-Office, co-hosted Commonwealth Observance Day with the Royal Commonwealth Society of Malaysia. It was almost

the last 'normal' event we had before Malaysia and much of the world went into Covid lockdown.

This past year has been unique and difficult for all of us in different ways. We have faced multiple challenges and in many cases, personal tragedy or economic hardship. This has affected all countries large and small, rich and poor.

However, out of diversity, we find strength and resilience and we innovate to find solutions. Scientists around the world have worked at a speed few thought possible, to make multiple vaccines available, and the number of people vaccinated around the world multiplies by the day. We have all had to find virtues in the virtual world too – although we don't have many guests here with us tonight, for the first time we are filming and live-streaming this event to a much bigger virtual audience across Malaysia and overseas.

In the UK, for the first time in over 50 years the decision was taken to cancel the Commonwealth Day Service at Westminster Abbey. But instead, Commonwealth Day has been celebrated on television with the broadcast of a very special programme 'A Celebration of the Commonwealth' on BBC1 on the eve of Commonwealth Day.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also meant that the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting due to be held in Rwanda in June last year had to be postponed, which has meant that the UK has had a further year as Commonwealth Chair-In-Office.

Although the world has been in lockdown for much of the last year, the work of the Commonwealth has continued. This is a critical year for our natural world, which has long been a focus for the Commonwealth. 2021 is the first year of the UNESCO Ocean Decade. And this year will see both COP26 climate negotiations and COP15 Convention on Biological Diversity, when world leaders will come together to agree the steps to build back greener and live more sustainably and in harmony with nature.

I have been privileged as British High Commissioner here in Malaysia to represent the UK as Chair in office for two years now and to witness the steps Malaysia has taken in that time to progress the Commonwealth's goals: Fairness; Prosperity; Sustainability and Security. Just to mention a few examples of many:

- the Parliament of Malaysia hosted the Commonwealth Partnership for Democracy's Asia Regional Women's Political Leadership Conference, focussing on policies and initiatives which mainstream gender equality across the Asia region
- Malaysia completed the SheTrades Commonwealth pilot, supporting women-owned businesses to become more competitive, promoting economic growth and job creation

- Malaysia was one of four Commonwealth member countries to have the I-Work project designed to improve the employment prospects of young people including those from disadvantaged backgrounds by piloting and introducing new approaches to employer-led skills development
- the Universiti Malaya is one of five new universities to host Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholars. Since April 2018, 47 scholars have benefited from this scholarship scheme
- Malaysia was the first country to begin creating an energy and emissions calculator, with the aim of creating easy-to-use energy models to support climate planning. For this, they used a £3.5 million budget extension to the 2050 calculator programme announced by the UK at CHOGM 2018

I was delighted that Dato' Sudha Devi, a most distinguished Malaysian diplomat, has been appointed Chair of the Commonwealth Foundation. And it has been very heartening to see young Malaysians being recognised and celebrated for their work and contribution to their communities, society and the environment.

This morning I was joined in a 'Blu Hope on Commonwealth Day' webinar by Mogesh Sabathy, who is the Co-Founder of Ocean Hope Project, a youth-led group that aims to raise the visibility of ocean issues and environmental conservation through campaigns and youth leadership training. Mogesh is a finalist in the Commonwealth Youth Awards 2021 – a great achievement in itself, and we very much hope Mogesh will go one step further and be one of the winners in the virtual ceremony to be held on Wednesday.

Malaysian co-founders of Zero Waste Malaysia, Khor Sue Yee and Aurora Tin are the most recent winners of the Commonwealth Points of Light Award. Their NGO is working in the community and with companies to get zero waste policies adopted by Malaysians and businesses. The Commonwealth Points of Light award celebrates outstanding acts of volunteering, thereby inspiring others to volunteer and make a positive impact in their community. I'm especially pleased that Zero Waste Malaysia have taken the time to participate and support the series of 'Blu Hope' webinars in 2020 to help educate and inspire Malaysians to live a zero or near-zero waste lifestyle.

Today, as well as Commonwealth Day we are also celebrating International Women's Day. The Commonwealth Secretariat have marked this event with two social media campaigns #SheLeadsTheWay – celebrating women's leadership in the Commonwealth and #SeatheShe – recognising women's contributions to ocean science.

I would like to particularly mention three Malaysian women scientists who are working to help protect the ocean:

- Assoc Prof Dr Goh Hong Ching, Senior Lecturer at Universiti Malaysia and

Malaysia lead for the Global Challenges Research Fund Blue Communities project and the NUOF Netcom Fish mangrove protection project

- Professor Zainura Zainon Noor, Deputy Director of the Centre for Environmental Sustainability and Water Security, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia and key collaborator for Global Challenges Research Fund Water Security Hub
- Hui Ling, PhD Student at the University of Nottingham Malaysia, who is researching the effect of micro-plastics in the ocean

I now take great pleasure in introducing this year's Annual Commonwealth Day Message from Her Majesty The Queen, Head of the Commonwealth.

[Foreign Secretary response to Myanmar Ambassador calling for release of Aung San Suu Kyi and President U Win Myint](#)

Press release

Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, is responding to the statement released on 8 March by Myanmar's Ambassador to the UK Kyaw Zwar Minn in which he called for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and President U Win Myint



Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

I commend the courage and patriotism of Myanmar Ambassador Kyaw Zwar Minn in calling for Aung Sung Suu Kyi and President U Win Myint to be released and for the results of the 2020 election to be respected.

The military regime must end their brutal crackdown, and restore democracy.

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[PM statement at coronavirus press conference: 8 March 2021](#)

Good afternoon

this has been a big day and an emotional day for millions of families up and down the country

as children see – and play with – their friends for the first time in months.

And although I know that some will have been anxious

as pupils always are on the first day of term –

I also know that the overwhelming feeling is one of relief.

And we all know that the education of our children is so important that the greater risk now is keeping them out of school for a day longer.

I want to thank all the teachers who have got their schools ready

and who have been teaching throughout the whole period

– whether that's remotely or in person –

your work has been astonishing.

And I want to thank the parents and all those who have been teaching at home

who have had to master Zoom

who've had to communicate every detail of the syllabus from fronted adverbials to quadratic equations.

And we all know that the burden has disproportionately fallen on women, often holding down jobs and providing childcare at the same time.

So our job now as government is to build on your efforts so that from now on our school children not only catch up on lost learning

but take the biggest possible step forwards with a concerted national

programme for educational recovery.

It is thanks to all of you

parents, teachers, pupils –

thanks to this huge national effort to keep kids at home

that we have been able significantly to reduce the spread of the virus.

And so today we have been able to take that crucial first step on what we hope is our cautious but irreversible roadmap to freedom

Today allowing people to meet one-on-one outside for the first time in months,

allowing care home visits to take place with all appropriate precautions.

And this first step on the road map is made possible above all by our NHS which has now vaccinated more than one third of the entire UK population.

And we take this first step with confidence because all four of the most vulnerable groups have not only been vaccinated in overwhelming numbers

but it is now at least three weeks since they received their first dose and so they will be feeling the full benefits of the vaccine protection.

We will continue on this roadmap

but we must remember that today's return to schools will of course have an impact on the spread of the virus

and so at all times and as we decide on the next steps when we take them we will be driven by the data,

and with the number of patients being admitted to hospital with Covid each day still around eight times higher than the lows of last Summer,

it is more vital than ever to follow the rules.

Hands, face, space,

and please continue to stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives.

Thank you very much.