October 2026

Ministry of Justice

Sector information on the victim support package

This document contains additional information about the £18.9m victims' support package that has been designed to support victims affected by the progression model. An original factsheet was distributed on 1 September 2026. This document provides the latest information on the three strands of support that are being funded by the Ministry of Justice.

If you have any questions, please get in touch with the MoJ Victim and Witness Commissioning and Implementation Unit: victimservicescommissioning@Justice.gov.uk

Background

- The Government has committed a total of £18.9m to supporting victims affected by the progression model.
- This is an increase to the previously announced £10m support package and in addition to the £550m funding for victim support over the next three years.
- The funding will be delivered across three years and is allocated to three strands of support: £1.56m for a national helpline, £8.19m for Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), and £9.15m for a VAWG programme.

Package of support

- The victims' support package across England and Wales has three strands:
    - **Victim Support: Offender Release Helpline:** A new, dedicated freephone helpline delivered by Victim Support, for anyone affected by the progression model.
    - **PCC Surge fund:** Additional surge funding for each Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) area to enhance local support.
    - **Progression model VAWG Fund:** A Community Services Support Fund, a new Progression Model VAWG Hub for England, and integration with Live Fear Free for Wales.

Victim Support: Offender Release Helpline

The Ministry of Justice has commissioned Victim Support to provide a dedicated national helpline from 1 October 2026.

The helpline will provide a clear route to information and support for people affected by offender release across England and Wales. Specialist Victim Support advisers will listen to callers' concerns, provide general information about the Progression Model and offender release processes, and help people understand what support may be available to them. Advisers can also provide emotional support, practical guidance, an assessment of needs, safety planning, signposting and referrals to other services where appropriate.

The helpline will not have access to offender case-management systems and will not be able to confirm whether a particular offender is being released, their release date, licence conditions or other offender-specific information. Where someone needs, and is entitled to, case-specific information, advisers will help them identify the appropriate route.

Who can use the helpline?

The helpline is available to people seeking information, reassurance or support in relation to offender release under the Progression Model, including:

- victims affected by, or concerned they may be affected by, offender release;
- family members, carers, supporters and witnesses;
- people experiencing distress, anxiety or uncertainty associated with offender release;
- people concerned about future harm or community safety;
- children and young people affected by offender release;
- parents, guardians, carers and trusted adults seeking advice or support on behalf of a child or young person; and
- professionals seeking information, advice or guidance to support individuals affected by offender release.

Enhanced caseworker support

Some people may need more than information or support during a single contact. Where an assessment identifies more complex or ongoing needs, Victim Support may offer support from a dedicated caseworker.

Caseworker support may be appropriate where a person needs ongoing emotional or practical support, safety planning, safeguarding support, help navigating several services, or assistance coordinating referrals. The caseworker can agree a support plan with the individual, review their needs and help them access appropriate local, specialist or statutory services. Eligibility will be based on assessed need rather than the type of victim, offence or referral route.

Support for children and young people

Children and young people affected by offender release will be able to access age-appropriate support through the helpline. This includes access to specialist children and young people's practitioners.

Victim Support will also offer the Future Me Programme, an online peer-support programme for children and young people aged 8 to 17 who are affected by changes to prison release arrangements. The programme runs over five sessions and supports children and young people to think about their wellbeing, safety, support networks, rights and ways of coping with uncertainty and change. Suitability for the programme will be considered with a specialist practitioner.

Working with existing services

The helpline is intended to complement, rather than replace, existing statutory, local and specialist support.

It will work alongside other support services, statutory organisations and criminal justice agencies as well, as other national and local organisations. The aim is to help people reach appropriate support while reducing unnecessary duplication or repeated hand-offs between services.

What we are asking from sector partners

We would be grateful if organisations could:

- ensure relevant staff understand the purpose and scope of the helpline;
- signpost or refer people who may benefit from information or support to the helpline;
- continue to use existing emergency, safeguarding and statutory reporting routes where these are required;
- avoid directing people to the helpline for offender-specific information which must be provided by the appropriate criminal justice agency. The Helpline, can, however help people understand what information may be available, identify the appropriate route to obtain it and support them to understand what to do next.

Contact details

From 1 October 2026, the Offender Release Helpline can be contacted on:

Telephone: 0808 168 9280

Website: https://victimsupport.org.uk/offender-release-helpline

Please do not publish or circulate the telephone number or website address before 1 October 2026. This is to ensure that people are not directed to the service before it is operational and ready to respond.

PCC Surge Fund

The PCC Surge Fund provides additional funding to every PCC area in England and Wales, between October 2026 and March 2029, to strengthen local support for victims affected by the Progression Model. The Fund will enable the commissioning of local services and projects that help those impacted by the Progression Model to feel safe, informed and supported, while also strengthening local service provision and partnership working.

Each PCC has the flexibility to use the funding to meet local need, in line with existing service provision. Their funded activities will be in place by 1 October and meet one or more of the following objectives:

- To ensure that those impacted by the Progression Model feel safe, informed and supported.
- To ensure local support providers are well equipped to deliver appropriate support for those impacted.
- To support join up between the Victim Support: Offender Release Helpline and dedicated local support funded through the Progression Model VAWG Fund, other local and relevant national services, and criminal justice agencies.

Examples of funded activities include:

- **Dedicated progression model victim roles** such as Victims' Champions, Advocates, Single Points of Contact (SPOCs), who will provide advocacy, risk assessments, safety planning, emotional support and coordination with criminal justice partners, as well as join

up with the Victim Support: Offender Release Helpline and local support funded through the Progression Model VAWG Fund.

- **Target hardening and victim safety measures** providing CCTV, video doorbells, personal alarms, locks, lighting, SmartWater packs and other practical security interventions for victims.
- **Communications and awareness campaigns** including specifically dedicated webpages, information resources, public awareness activity and improved signposting to support services and visibility of dedicated support.
- **Training and workforce development** including trauma-informed practice, Progression Model awareness and multi-agency training for frontline professionals.
- **Therapeutic and counselling support** that is specifically available for victims affected by the Progression Model.
- **Enhancements to existing victim service capacity**, including funding casework capacity, increased triage and assessment capacity, spot-purchasing arrangements and capacity funds to help services respond to increased demand.

Progression Model Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Fund

The department is investing £9.15 million in a Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Fund. The Fund aims to ensure access to practical and emotional support for those VAWG victims affected by the release of offenders managed under the Progression Model.

Women's Aid Federation of England (WAFE) is leading delivery of Fund's programme, in partnership with Welsh Women's Aid and other specialist VAWG organisations.

There are three components to the support model:

1. **Community Services Support Fund:**

The Fund will provide a £400 targeted contribution towards the costs incurred by eligible organisations when supporting an eligible victim.

The victim being supported must meet **all** the following criteria (a - c):

a. Be a victim of violence against women and girls (VAWG), including men, children and young people;
b. Have been impacted by an offender whose custodial release date has been brought forward under the Progression Model;
c. Be experiencing, or be anticipated to experience, an impact on their safety, emotional wellbeing or stability as a result of the offender's release. Victims do not need to wait for a breach of licence conditions or contact from the offender before accessing support.

The organisation providing support must meet **both** the following criteria (a and b):

a. Independent, voluntary, community or social enterprise (VCSE) sector victim support organisation, providing specialist VAWG service(s);
b. Based in England and / or Wales.

WAFE will administer the Fund. Payments will be made retrospectively to successful applicant organisations. More details on the application process, including links to the application form and details about the application processing / payment timelines, will be available on WAFE's website in early October.

2. **Progression Model VAWG Hub for England:**

The Progression Model VAWG Hub for England will provide direct support to eligible victims. Victims can reach the Hub via transfer from the dedicated Victim Support: Offender Release Helpline or direct professional referral. Person-centred advocacy and support will be delivered by qualified, specialist VAWG practitioners. Support may include safety planning, practical needs assessment, emotional support and multi-agency advocacy.

The Hub can be contacted on 0808 500 5555 or VAWGHub@womensaid.org.uk, Monday to Friday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. Please note that the freephone number and email address should only be shared with victims you have assessed to be eligible for the service.

Specialist consultation and advice will also be available to assist voluntary and statutory sector practitioners with system navigation, safety planning and supporting eligible victims. Practitioners can contact the service can be accessed via VAWGHub@womensaid.org.uk or via the WAFE website from 1 October 2026. Please note that these contact details are for practitioners only.

3. **Integration with Live Fear Free helpline in Wales:**

The Live Fear Free helpline in Wales will receive referrals of eligible victims from Victim Support's dedicated helpline for all violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) victims based in Wales. Staff will support victims to understand the local support options available to them and will signpost or refer appropriately.

Pathways

Victim Support, Women's Aid Federation of England and Welsh Women's Aid have worked closely together to develop joined-up referral pathways and working arrangements. This will help ensure that victims and survivors affected by domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women and girls can access longer-term specialist support where needed through the most appropriate route.

How affected victims may be informed about a change in release date

Victims of specified serious sexual or violent offences, where an offender receives a prison sentence of 12 months or more, are eligible for the Victim Contact Scheme. Victims who opt into the scheme can receive information about an offender's release where appropriate, and can also make representations about licence conditions and supervision requirements. Probation will take these representations into account when considering licence conditions.

Victims who have opted into the scheme are assigned a Victim Liaison Officer who will keep them informed about any changes to an offender's release, and explain what happens next. They will also support the victim to make representations about licence conditions, if they wish to.

Eligible victims can opt-in to the Victim Contact Scheme at any point during an offender's sentence, even if they opted out in the past by contacting: VCSenquiries@justice.gov.uk

We have implemented a new process to enable victims who are not eligible for the Victim Contact Scheme to request information about an offender.

We will identify victims affected by these changes and contact them to explain how they can request information about their case.

Timelines for communications to affected victims

When	Content
June	Victims in the Victim Contact Scheme (VCS), where the offender was serving a relevant sentence, received a letter to let them know about the commencement of measures in the Sentencing Act. The letter did not provide case specific information, but informed them that the legislation meant that release arrangements would change from September.
August	Victims in the VCS received a letter to inform them of the Government's decision to review the progression model, and the exclusions to rape and certain child sexual offences as a result. It committed to providing them case-specific information once sentence recalculations had taken place in September.
From September	Letter to victims in VCS explaining what is happening in their specific case. This includes letters where there is no change to the release point. These are being sent to victims when sentences are recalculated.
At least 3 weeks in advance of a release window	Letter to non-VCS victims explaining how to request information.
In response to information requests	Letter to non-VCS victims where information can be provided. Includes release week, victim-related licence conditions and support signposting.
In response to information requests	Letter to non-VCS victims where legal criteria to provide information is not met. Reasoning would be drafted in specific cases based on the facts. The letter also includes routes for re-request or review and signposts to support.