

Dame Vera Baird QC
Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales

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Soroptimist International

sent by email

Dear Member

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill (PCSC), digital disclosure and impact on victims

Rape is a particularly awful crime to experience, one that can have a deep and long-lasting impact on victims.

It is crucial that victims have the confidence to report rape to police. Unfortunately, victims who report offences often feel like they are on trial, facing intrusive and inappropriate requests for their personal data, including access to mobile phones. We want to ensure that any requests for data are necessary and victims are fully informed and supported to respond

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Bill is making its way through Parliament. The Bill contains clauses which provide police with a statutory power to scrutinise mobile devices and digital data. As it is currently drafted, the Bill jeopardises victims' ability to understand and give informed consent to share personal data and allows intrusive and unnecessary data requests. I have drafted clauses that could be introduced to the Bill to avoid these problems and will protect victims' rights. Importantly, the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for this area finds our amendments acceptable in giving them the power they need whilst protecting complainants. You can find further details in my attached briefing.

I need your help. The Soroptimists have a strong voice and we need to use it. I have attached a template letter. Please share this with your members and peers and ask them to complete it and send to their Member of Parliament or Members of the House of Lords. Your letters will highlight these problems and find a way forward.

Your voice can help to ensure that, whilst the police are given the power they require, victims of crime are also protected. Thank you for your support.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V Baird', written in a cursive style.

Dame Vera Baird QC
Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales