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In my role as Shadow Solicitor General I have been doing a lot of work around victims of crime. Sadly, victims are being let down on all fronts and this is most apparent for victims of rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO).

Prosecutions for these crimes are at their lowest recorded level and victims are being left to wait years for cases to get to trial. This is completely unacceptable and countless survivors feel that the system is working against them, not for them. The government announced a rape review to look into this, but this was two years ago, and we are still waiting for it.

So, in the total absence of any urgency I coordinated a taskforce across the Shadow Justice, Health and Home Office teams to look into this issue and outline what a Labour Government would do to tackle this injustice and support rape survivors. The result is our Survivors Support Plan which we published in March.

Under our plan RASSO cases would be prioritised and fast tracked through the police, Crown Prosecution Service and the courts instead of waiting years to reach a conclusion. It would also allow all victims to be able to have their evidence recorded and be cross examined as soon as possible prior to trial.

This would help to improve the accuracy of testimonies as memories fade, and relieve some of the stress and anxiety caused while awaiting a trial. It would then also allow victims to pursue pre-trial counselling and prevent re-traumatization which currently often occurs when a victim has to relive the experience when providing evidence years later.

Our plan would also establish better training for professionals around the myths and stereotypes of rape and include a pre and post-trial support package, including health interventions like counselling and leave from work and a full legal advocacy scheme for victims to help them navigate the complicated rules around their rights and process of pursuing justice.

Finally, our plan would appoint a dedicated Minister for RASSO Survivors to investigate and tackle the root causes of delays in the system, and act as a champion for victims. Ministerial oversight in this way would not only help to drive change, but also offer high profile acknowledgement that the Government is prioritising and supporting RASSO victims.

Given the Government's delay and our clear plan I asked the Attorney General if he would back it. Instead of taking this seriously he deflected accusing me of being 'emotive'. This is an appalling response when thousands of women are being let down and have no confidence in the system. But we will continue to push on this until victims can once again have confidence in the criminal justice system.

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