



MP Ellie Reeves

I was proud to recently be promoted to the Shadow Justice team as the Shadow Justice Minister. I have loved being Shadow Solicitor General over the last year and a half and am really excited to now build on top of this work in the new Justice team.

One of my priorities that I will continue pushing forward is our work on Ending Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG). The first responsibility of any Government is the safety and security of its citizens.

However, rape prosecutions and convictions are at record lows, domestic abuse is soaring, and last year the number of female homicide victims reached its highest level since 2006. Despite all of this the Government has no real plan beyond a few gimmicks to address these failings.

In response we have published a Green Paper on Ending VAWG and I led the development of Labour's Survivors' Support Plan to reverse the falling prosecution rates for rape. This plan called for the fast-tracking of cases throughout the criminal justice system, a full legal advocacy scheme for victims and a named Minister for Survivors to give this issue proper accountability.

Meanwhile, it took the Government over two years to conduct their rape review which in the end made only piecemeal suggestions like extending the pilot of fast-tracking cases to just six crown courts. We could have had this operating in all crown courts back in March if the government were serious about this yet it took until December to get an announcement they would roll it out. It's not good enough and its victims who are being let down.

One of my other priorities in the new role will be women in prisons, many of whom are themselves the victims of crime. Evidence shows that for the majority of offenders community-based solutions through Women's Centres are much more effective at preventing reoffending and are far more cost effective than prison.

Indeed, the Government's own female offender strategy promises a focus on early intervention and community-based solutions. Despite this they are investing £150 million to build 500 new prison cells for women instead of investing in what works - women's centres and community sentences. This needs to be robustly challenged.

Finally, we need to challenge the Government's ambition to scrap the Human Rights Act and curtail judicial review. These are cornerstones of the rule of law that underpin democracy - and ensures that no one, not even Government Ministers, are above the law. It's yet another example of one rule for them, another for the rest of us.

This attack on our rights comes at a time when the justice system has never been more vulnerable. 11 years of Conservative cuts, a backlog of over 60,000 cases in the Crown Courts and victims dropping out because of these delays. It's clear that we will have our work cut out defending our Justice system.

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