



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Alex Chalk MP  
Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice  
Ministry of Justice  
102 Petty France  
London  
SW1H 9AJ

27 November 2023

Dear Secretary of State,

### **Cost of Court Transcripts**

We are writing to you regarding the cost of obtaining court transcripts and to urge the Government to make provisions in the Victims' Bill to ensure victims are able to access these transcripts free of charge.

Victims are often charged thousands of pounds to obtain a transcript of Crown Court proceedings. Juliana Terlizzi was quoted £7,500 to obtain a transcript of the 10-day trial in which she was a victim of rape, whilst another victim has been quoted an astonishing £22,000.

We are pleased that the Ministry of Justice acknowledges that "accessing transcripts from proceedings in serious criminal cases is not only a fundamental right of victims but is also essential for maintaining transparency and accountability within the justice system".<sup>1</sup> However, at present, the cost of obtaining a transcript of court proceedings is a major barrier to justice for many victims and bereaved families.

Victims routinely do not attend trial. Some are actively discouraged from attending, whilst others face the prospect of having to sit by the defendant's family and friends in the courtroom should they do so.

Without a transcript of court proceedings, victims are unable to find out exactly what happened during the trial which can make it very difficult for them to come to terms with how the verdict was reached.

Existing provisions in place to make transcripts available - such as providing a transcript at the Judge's discretion or publishing sentencing remarks in certain cases - are insufficient or unaffordable. Not only is this a barrier to justice, it is also a major barrier to victims' recovery.

Victims and campaigners have long been calling on the Government to take action to address this injustice, but no progress has been made. Meanwhile, the Scottish Government has committed to a pilot scheme to waive court transcript fees for victims of sexual violence.

We therefore urge you, the Secretary of State for Justice, to take much-needed action to support victims and make provisions in the Victims' Bill to enable victims to request to receive a court transcript free of charge.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Olney – Member of Parliament for Richmond Park

**Co-signed by charities/organisations:**

Joanne Early – CEO, SAMM National

Lucy Hadley – Head of Policy, Women's Aid

Nicky Harkin – Co-Chair, Rape Crisis England & Wales

Ellen Miller – Interim CEO, Refuge

Jemima Olchawski – CEO, The Fawcett Society

Heidi Riedel – CEO, Woman's Trust

Andrea Simon – Director, End Violence Against Women

Anthea Sully – Chief Executive, White Ribbon UK

Gary Williams – CEO, Survivors UK

Jodie Woodward – Co-Chair, Rape Crisis England & Wales

Harriet Wistrich – Director, Centre for Women's Justice

**Senior figures:**

Cherie Booth CBE KC – Ambassador, Refuge

Claire Waxman OBE – Victims' Commissioner for London

**Parliamentarians:**

Peter Bottomley MP

Ian Byrne MP

Wendy Chamberlain MP

Sarah Champion MP

Jackie Doyle-Price MP

Sarah Dyke MP

Richard Foord MP

Sarah Green MP

Harriet Harman MP

Wera Hobhouse MP

Dame Margaret Hodge MP

Sir Bob Neill MP

Kim Johnson MP

Ben Lake MP

Emma Lewell-Buck MP

John McDonnell MP

Layla Moran MP

Helen Morgan MP

Gavin Newlands MP

Kate Osborne MP

Kirsten Oswald MP

Liz Saville Roberts MP

Jim Shannon MP

Hywel Williams MP

Baroness Burt of Solihull

Baroness Shaista Gohir

Lord Beith

Lord Russell of Liverpool

1. Written Question, UIN 197500, 4 Septemeber

2023: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-09-04/197500>