



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Jess Phillips MP
Minister for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls
by email
Our Ref: EC16555/TM

16 February 2026

Dear Jess

Re: Excessive delays in police investigations and charging decisions in rape and sexual offence cases

I met a constituent in my surgery who wanted to discuss the excessive time she has had to wait for a charging decision following a report of rape. She was motivated to meet me by the launch of a Super Complaint by the Centre for Women's Justice on 16.12.25 over 'Excessively Lengthy' Police Investigations into Sexual Offences.

My constituent has waited nearly seven years from the date that she reported rape. She has still not received a decision on whether the perpetrator will face prosecution. She waited more than three years before the police were ready to submit her file to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and has since been waiting in excess of three years for a CPS decision on whether to charge.

My constituent disclosed that excessive delay and continual waiting has had a massive impact on her life. She expressed that she is a different person to the woman she was seven years ago. She feels she has withdrawn from social life, missed out on job opportunities and that she is living in limbo wondering each day if she will receive the decision that will turn her life upside down. She feels that the delays that she and others experience are inhumane.

My constituent would like the Government to answer the following questions:

- What is a reasonable timeframe from reporting a sexual offence to a decision to charge?
- How does the Government plan to clear the backlog of sexual offence cases waiting over three years for a decision to charge?
- What message is being sent to women and girls who are considering reporting a sexual offence?
- Do excessive delays in the criminal justice system constitute a breach of human rights of the victims sexual offences?

Dr Ellie Chowns MP
Member of Parliament for North Herefordshire
House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E Chowns', written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr Ellie Chowns MP
Member of Parliament for North Herefordshire