# Olivia's Law could force offenders to attend sentencing hearings under threat of harsher penalties



The refusal of some convicted criminals to attend their sentencing hearings has become a pressing issue in the UK justice system, prompting new legislative proposals aimed at ensuring that offenders face their victims and the consequences of their actions directly. Recently, North West Norfolk MP James Wild has endorsed "Olivia's Law," part of the broader Victims and Courts Bill, which aims to compel offenders to attend these critical hearings. The law is named in memory of Olivia Pratt-Korbel, a nine-year-old girl killed in Liverpool in 2022, whose murderer, Thomas Cashman, did not attend his sentencing.

The proposed legislation would empower judges to order defendants to appear at their sentencing hearings, applying sanctions—including potential lengthened sentences—if they fail to appear. This initiative responds to numerous cases of high-profile criminals who have evaded courtroom accountability, among them Malcolm Appleby, a convicted sex attacker from Norfolk who also chose to stay away from his own sentencing. Appleby was sentenced to 12 years for preying on a young girl, with a judge noting that his absence was a reflection of his shame, highlighting how such refusals can further traumatise victims and their families.

James Wild has made it clear that he views non-attendance as a significant form of re-victimisation. “When defendants hide in their cells and fail to appear for sentencing, they are effectively abusing their victim and the victim’s family once again,” Wild stated, speaking to local media. He believes that ensuring offenders are present in court is vital for public confidence in the justice system, reinforcing the notion that accountability is fundamental to the process.

The broader implications of such legislation resonate deeply within the community. Those in support argue that it not only affirms justice for victims but also sends a strong message about the seriousness of offenders’ actions. In addition to recent tragedies, Wild pointed out that other notorious criminals, such as Lucy Letby and Kyle Clifford, have similarly avoided in-person sentencing, raising questions about the adequacy of current legal provisions.

According to reports, Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood has also lent her support to Olivia's Law, suggesting that judges could even employ reasonable force to ensure compliance. During discussions surrounding this development, she met with Olivia's mother, Cheryl Korbel, further underlining the emotional and societal imperatives driving this legislative change. The anticipated reforms under the Victims, Courts and Public Protection Bill are expected to become a cornerstone of future justice-related legislation, providing a much-needed mechanism for holding offenders accountable.

As society grapples with complex issues of crime and punishment, the introduction of Olivia's Law could mark a pivotal shift in how diligence and accountability are ensured within the courts, ultimately aspiring to foster a sense of justice for victims and their families across the country.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25183544.mp-cites-norfolk-sex-attack-case-backs-olivias-law/?ref=rss), [[4]](https://www.itv.com/news/granada/2025-01-28/reasonable-force-will-be-used-to-make-offenders-attend-court-for-sentencing)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25183544.mp-cites-norfolk-sex-attack-case-backs-olivias-law/?ref=rss), [[2]](https://www.lynnnews.co.uk/news/defendants-who-hide-in-their-cells-abuse-their-victims-agai-9307715/), [[5]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/23436646.norfolk-man-jailed-sex-attack-rabbit-hunt/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.itv.com/news/2023-11-07/kings-speech-killers-to-be-forced-into-sentencing-hearings-under-olivias-law), [[6]](https://www.jameswild.org.uk/news/james-wild-mp-welcomes-changes-require-offenders-attend-sentencing-hearings)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.lynnnews.co.uk/news/defendants-who-hide-in-their-cells-abuse-their-victims-agai-9307715/), [[6]](https://www.jameswild.org.uk/news/james-wild-mp-welcomes-changes-require-offenders-attend-sentencing-hearings)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.itv.com/news/2023-11-07/kings-speech-killers-to-be-forced-into-sentencing-hearings-under-olivias-law), [[4]](https://www.itv.com/news/granada/2025-01-28/reasonable-force-will-be-used-to-make-offenders-attend-court-for-sentencing)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25183544.mp-cites-norfolk-sex-attack-case-backs-olivias-law/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.lynnnews.co.uk/news/defendants-who-hide-in-their-cells-abuse-their-victims-agai-9307715/> - James Wild, MP for North West Norfolk, has been advocating for legislative changes to compel offenders to attend sentencing hearings. This follows the case of Malcolm Appleby, who was sentenced in his absence for sexually assaulting a young girl. Wild emphasized that defendants who refuse to appear in court are effectively re-victimizing their victims and their families. He has been pushing for changes to make non-attendance an aggravating factor in sentencing. ([lynnnews.co.uk](https://www.lynnnews.co.uk/news/defendants-who-hide-in-their-cells-abuse-their-victims-agai-9307715/?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.itv.com/news/2023-11-07/kings-speech-killers-to-be-forced-into-sentencing-hearings-under-olivias-law> - The UK government is introducing 'Olivia's Law' to compel offenders to attend their sentencing hearings. This legislation, announced in the King's Speech, allows judges to order defendants to be present during sentencing, with the possibility of using reasonable force if necessary. The law is named after Olivia Pratt-Korbel, whose murderer, Thomas Cashman, refused to attend his sentencing. ([itv.com](https://www.itv.com/news/2023-11-07/kings-speech-killers-to-be-forced-into-sentencing-hearings-under-olivias-law?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.itv.com/news/granada/2025-01-28/reasonable-force-will-be-used-to-make-offenders-attend-court-for-sentencing> - Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood has backed 'Olivia's Law', granting judges the power to use reasonable force to ensure offenders attend sentencing hearings. This follows a meeting with Cheryl Korbel, mother of Olivia Pratt-Korbel, whose daughter's killer, Thomas Cashman, refused to attend his sentencing. The legislation is expected to be introduced in the Victims, Courts and Public Protection Bill. ([itv.com](https://www.itv.com/news/granada/2025-01-28/reasonable-force-will-be-used-to-make-offenders-attend-court-for-sentencing?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/23436646.norfolk-man-jailed-sex-attack-rabbit-hunt/> - Malcolm Appleby, 39, from Middleton, Norfolk, was sentenced to 13 years in prison for sexually assaulting a 12-year-old girl during a rabbit shooting trip. Appleby refused to attend his trial and sentencing hearings, leading to his conviction in absentia. The judge criticized his absence as being 'borne of shame' and highlighted the serious nature of the offense. ([edp24.co.uk](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/23436646.norfolk-man-jailed-sex-attack-rabbit-hunt/?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.jameswild.org.uk/news/james-wild-mp-welcomes-changes-require-offenders-attend-sentencing-hearings> - James Wild MP has welcomed reforms that require offenders to attend their sentencing hearings. The changes grant judges the authority to order offenders into the dock and impose additional prison time if they refuse to appear. This initiative aims to ensure that victims and their families can see justice served and follows high-profile cases where offenders evaded sentencing. ([jameswild.org.uk](https://www.jameswild.org.uk/news/james-wild-mp-welcomes-changes-require-offenders-attend-sentencing-hearings?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2023-11-28/debates/DAE52708-1BDF-4DB9-AC5D-3504754D3180/details> - In a parliamentary debate, James Wild MP supported the Criminal Justice Bill, which includes measures to impose tougher sentences and new measures to fight knife crime. He emphasized the importance of judges imposing sentences that reflect the intent of Parliament, citing cases where sentences were too short despite legislative changes. ([hansard.parliament.uk](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2023-11-28/debates/DAE52708-1BDF-4DB9-AC5D-3504754D3180/details?utm_source=openai))