

From: [Sonia Naomi Smith](#)
To: [sentencingcouncil](#)
Subject: Submissions by MeToo Group
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To the Sentencing Council,

I am writing to support the submissions and points made in the "Your Reference Ain't Relevant" campaign, advocating for the removal of character references in child abuse matters. The following submissions highlight some critical issues that must be addressed to protect the rights and dignity of victims, especially children, who are subjected to one of the most shocking crimes.

Child sex offences are uniquely insidious, as perpetrators often rely on an outwardly good reputation to perpetrate their crimes. This outward reputation bears no relevance to their propensity to offend behind closed doors. As such, allowing character references in sentencing these offenders is both inappropriate and unjust.

Several key points underscore the need for legislative amendment to exclude character references in child abuse cases:

1. **Perpetrators' Reliance on Reputation:** Perpetrators of child sex offences frequently use their outwardly good character as a shield, enabling them to commit heinous crimes. This disconnect between public persona and private actions justifies a legislative change to ensure that character references are not considered in sentencing.
2. **Inconsistent Outcomes for Survivors:** The current law results in inconsistent outcomes for child sex abuse survivors. Justice should not be dependent on the context of the offending or the offender's perceived character. All survivors deserve a fair and consistent application of justice.
3. **Rights of Victims and Children:** A rights-based approach to justice necessitates that victims, especially children, are treated with respect and dignity. This includes ensuring their right to safety and freedom from inhumane and degrading treatment, including within courtroom processes and rules of evidence.

Character references in child sex offence cases undermine these principles by potentially minimizing the severity of the crime and the harm done to victims. Such references can inadvertently re-traumatize survivors and perpetuate a system that fails to fully acknowledge the gravity of the offence and the offender's true nature.

The unique nature of child sex offences, whereby public reputation is often used to mask criminal behavior, justifies a complete removal of character references from sentencing considerations. This amendment will help ensure that justice is served

consistently and fairly, providing much-needed support and validation to survivors.

In conclusion, I strongly urge the Sentencing Council to consider these points and move towards a legislative amendment that removes the ability of character references to influence sentencing in child abuse cases. This change is essential for upholding the rights and dignity of victims and ensuring a legal system that protects instead of harms the most vulnerable who come before it seeking protection and justice.

Sincerely,

Sonia Smith

MeToo Law Courts