

Knights of Saint Columba

Accrington Council 188

Bulletin No.2- F21

Source Christian Institute

A former Government minister has criticised the delay in introducing a law to protect children from abuse.

Tracey Crouch announced the change in 2017, but now says it has been “bogged down in bureaucracy”.

The Christian Institute has been calling for the reform, affecting the law on abuse of trust, since 2000.

Offence

At present it is an offence for teachers and care workers to have sex with people under the age of 18 in their care, but it does not cover sports coaches.

Crouch told MPs that the Ministry of Justice had agreed to a revision in England and Wales in November 2017.

But the former minister – who resigned late last year over delays to gambling reforms – said she now would consider attempting to change the legislation herself if the law is not amended soon.

Bureaucracy

Speaking to the BBC, Crouch said the alteration was “about protecting vulnerable people from an abuse of power”, but: “Frustratingly it seems to have got bogged down in bureaucracy at the Ministry of Justice”.

The NSPCC, which also supports the reform, said it was worried the Government was backtracking.

Responding to the criticism, the Ministry of Justice said: “We remain absolutely committed to protecting children and young people from the horrors of sexual abuse.

“Offenders already face tough punishments and we continue to keep the law under review.”

Vulnerable

At the time of the announcement in 2017, Ciarán Kelly, a Deputy Director at The Christian Institute, noted: “In 2000, we warned that the proposed abuse of trust offence was far too narrow.

“We knew that leaving out sports coaches would put vulnerable teenagers at risk from people with power over them.

“Tragically, the abuse scandal which has engulfed football confirmed our worst fears”.

Bernard Holden MBE JP

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