

Police and Crime Plan Priority: Satisfaction with police services

Title: Confidence and Satisfaction Report – Appendix A, OPCC Statement (included for information purposes only)

Presented by: N/A

Purpose of paper

1. The purpose of this statement is to provide the Strategic Police and Crime Board an update on the work of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner in respect of victim satisfaction. This statement is to be read in conjunction the Confidence and Satisfaction report. The statement includes updates on OPCC workstreams under improving access to justice, understanding procedural justice and measuring compliance against the Victims Code.

This paper is for reference

Background

2. Improving victims' experience of the Criminal Justice System is a key priority for the Police and Crime Commissioner, in his Police and Crime Plan 2021-2025, the Commissioner states;
3. "All victims should be able to access justice, be treated with dignity and respect, and be met with a trauma-informed response. Victims should be believed and supported to understand decisions about their case. The criminal justice system should not compound their trauma but provide a sense of justice. The Local Criminal Justice Board Victims and Witnesses Delivery Group will seek to offer effective oversight of the Code of Compliance for Victims and Witnesses, improve victim satisfaction and ensure

appropriate support and facilities for victims and witnesses. It will work closely with the Victims Commission. We will create appropriate, trauma-informed mechanisms for victim feedback so as to better understand the experience of victims and use this to drive improvements”.

4. Although ambitious, this work is critical if we are to restore the low levels of trust and confidence within policing which we are seeing not only in the West Midlands but also nationally.

The Victims Code

5. Under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (commonly known as the Victims Code). The PCC holds a duty to compile and report data on victim satisfaction to the Ministry of Justice (MoJ).
6. In December 2021, the Ministry of Justice published their consultation ‘delivering justice for victims: A consultation on improving victims’ experiences of the justice system’. This consultation was open to the public and ran until 3rd February 2022.
7. The consultation was intended to be “the first significant step towards a landmark ‘Victims’ Law’ – a Bill which will build on the foundations provided by the Victims’ Code to substantially improve victims’ experiences of the criminal justice system. It will make a tangible difference to ensuring victims receive the support they need, whether they report a crime or not.
8. The Force and the OPCC both submitted individual responses to the consultation, with the OPCC consulted the Victims Commission on 14th January to support our response.
9. In May 2022, the MoJ published the Draft Victims Bill together with its response to the consultation. The Draft Bill transfers responsibility for code compliance to PCC’s which is a welcome move as is the new duty for the National Victims’ Commissioner to conduct a review of the Code to lay before parliament which will include recommendation for all Criminal Justice Agencies. Although the Bill hold promise, it must go further if it is to truly transform the response to victims. This is why the West Midlands Victims Commissioner wrote to the national Victims Commissioner to pledge support and amplify the voice and needs of victims to the Justice Committee on 14th June.

Procedural justice

10. As part of the procedural justice work stream, we are working to understand the Victims Journey through the CJ process with a specific initial focus on Police and every touch point a victim may have with the Force when reporting. We are looking to ensure appropriate mechanisms to understand victim satisfaction and how this compares with code compliance.
11. On 15th November, the Victims Team held a Victims Code and satisfaction day with former Superintendent Karen Geddes and representatives of each department from the Force with contact with victims and responsibility to deliver their rights in line with the Code of Practice for Victims and Witnesses, otherwise known as the victims' code. This day enabled us to map the victims' journey to set out all possible touchpoints between a victim and the Force and the methods currently being used to capture victim's voice/ experience by the Force to understand what is already happening in this regard. During this day we also discussed the Ministry of Justice victims code compliance self-assessment outcomes, key learning drawn from this and areas for further exploration against each right. This was led by OPCC performance analyst.

Victims voice

12. The above was the first stage in the development of a Victims Voice Task & Finish group which seeks to understand whether victims' experiences of reporting crime to the Police matches the Force's perceptions of code compliance. This is a crucial element in improving procedural justice for victims; to listen and respond to victims' experiences of the reporting (and later criminal justice system) to improve victim satisfaction, ensuring they feel supported.
 - a) The priorities of the group will be:
 - b) Ensuring there are robust and effective mechanisms to hear victims' voices and experiences and utilise this to drive improvements;
 - c) Improving compliance against the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime;
 - d) Reducing attrition rates;
 - e) Increasing the likelihood that victims would report again;
 - f) Ensuring that victims are not retraumatised by the reporting and criminal justice process;
 - g) Increasing trust and confidence in policing, and subsequently feelings of safety

13. This is a jointly-owned meeting by the OPCC and WMP. Initially, there will be a Force specific focus, with a view to expand to the wider criminal justice system with responsibility for ensuring victims' rights are delivered. This will be once the Force have an established action plan. This task and finish group will report directly into the Force's Victims Code Champions meeting with a responsibility to update the Victims and Witnesses subgroup of the Local Criminal Justice Board on a quarterly basis.
14. Additionally, an improvement plan has been created by the OPCC to be held by the Force's Victims Code Champions meeting which was approved by the group and its chair in April 2022, following a change in the chair ship, upon Supt. Karen Geddes' retirement, to Supt. Phil Asquith.
15. The Victims Voice Task and Finish Group will seek to understand whether victims' experiences of reporting crime to the Police matches the Force's perceptions of code compliance and to understand if compliance means the same to victims of crime as it does to other agencies tasked with delivering justice.
16. We are working to actualise direct victim feedback into the Victim's code compliance and wider feedback through the Force Victim's champions network to ensure that there is a view from victims and witnesses that is included in the compliance framework as well as the self-reported information from criminal justice providers. This work stream will seek to better understand victim satisfaction, hear victims' voices within this and identify tangible ways to address the issues presented.
17. We intend to hold focus groups with victims/survivors, enquiring about their expectations from the CJS against the Code and compare this with understanding of responsibilities and the practicalities of delivering this by the Force. We hope to seek the support of the Victims Commission to amend the set of questions to be appropriate and nuanced for the particular crime types they represent and help us engage with the individuals they support.

VAWG specific feedback

18. The OPCC, in partnership with the University of Birmingham and West Midlands Police – have submitted a bid to the ESRC's 'partner with Police to tackle VAWG' research fund. Our research proposal is titled 'Is Anyone Listening? Bridging the Gap Between Female Victims of Gender-Based Violence and UK Police Forces through Collective and Direct Feedback' and presents a critical opportunity to inform the methods in which the Force

executes and implements the way in which lived experiences of women and girls will be heard and embed this best practice in our delivery.

19. Furthermore, the proposed research would enable us to address some of the key concerns and recommendations from the HMICFRS 2021 PEEL and VAWG Inspections. We are still awaiting the results to find out whether this work will be able to progress prior to starting the aforementioned victims voice work to ensure that the processes do not duplicate and to maximise effectiveness and impact. This will also ensure that individuals from the West Midlands who wish to participate can participate in the most appropriate process as not to have to repeat themselves or re-live trauma unnecessarily.
20. The key to this work is that victims feel their voice has been heard and that they see tangible change as a result.

Operation Soteria Bluestone

21. Through the specific work in Public Protection at WMP due to the force being a pilot force for the Home Office's response to the Government's National End to End Rape Review (published in June 2021) which included a pillar co-led by the force/OPCC on "Victim engagement and embedding a procedural justice approach" has led to several positive interventions in this area.
22. There has been a group set up in early 2022 entitled the "Voice of the Victim (VoV) Forum" which has met twice in 2022 so far and comprises of police, OPCC, third sector support organisations, CPS and others to work with partner organisations that support victims and survivors of Rape and Serious Sexual Offences to reflect on experiences of the investigative process, find opportunities for improvement and enhance positive outcomes for victims. The Objectives of this group are:
 - a) To actively **collate**, **listen** to and **reflect** upon the experiences of victims of Rape and Serious Sexual Offences when they have engaged with WMP.
 - b) To **identify** ways in which we can enhance force wide responses to reports of RASSO offenses and investigative standards.
 - c) To **enhance** relationships with Victims service organisations in West Midlands and remove obstacles to providing a robust investigation and supportive services to victims of crime.

23. This group has already made impact and change in other forums including the Rape Scrutiny panel where now ISVA services, CPS and Police all identify a case to bring for scrutiny from partners, it has also had an impact on the work of NFA letters whereby ISVA's have been consulted and in other multi-agency working to improve and enhance positive outcomes for victims. The academic deep dive into WMP concluded in May 2022 with an extraordinary meeting to present the findings to the VAWG sector booked for 20th June 2022 with the VoV membership included in this forum. Transparency across improvement methods is key to ensure that true progression and trust and confidence with victim's and survivors can improve.
24. We agree with WMP when they say in their report "it is clear that there is a need to direct efforts towards improving the quality of our everyday encounters with members of the public. Reducing the number of negative encounters will be effective in maintaining and building public confidence". We must concentrate our efforts on re building the trust and confidence of victims and communities and enable victims to report crime to the police in the knowledge that they will be listened to, taken seriously and treated with dignity and respect.

Next Steps

The board is asked to:

- a) Take account of the statement and the wider work going on within the OPCC on victim satisfaction