

Please ask for: Arron Cullen
Telephone Number: 0121 626 6060
wmpcc@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk



An inspection of how well the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Probation Service support victims of crime. Response from Simon Foster, West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner.

Published on the 19th December 2023, the inspection contains findings on how well the police, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the Probation Service support victims of crime. The inspection aimed to evaluate what support victims need, how successfully the Criminal Justice System (CJS) meets the needs of victims, and whether the CJS bodies provide a good quality service from the time when a victim reports an offence, up to the time after the offender has been convicted. Whilst West Midlands Police (WMP) was not one of the five forces visited, this report and its recommendations are relevant to all force areas nationally.

As the report sets out, the CJS has a significant responsibility for ensuring the needs of victims are met, and it is imperative that all CJS bodies ensure this victim care process is being followed faultlessly. Whilst the inspectorate mostly addressed the downfalls of the CPS and the Probation Service, in relation to their roles in meeting the needs of victims and their quality of services, there were some key assessments in relation to the police.

For example, the inspection identified that there were discrepancies with the completion of Victims Needs Assessments, with high workloads impacting the quality of investigations, and a lack of officer compliance with the Code of Practice for victims of crime. The inspectorate pinpointed multiple areas for improvement, leading to the construction of 6 national recommendations, 1 recommendation was specifically directed towards the College of Policing, National Police Chiefs' Council and Chief Constables:

“By 31 December 2024, the College of Policing should work with the National Police Chiefs’ Council and chief constables to develop minimum standards for the completion of victim needs assessments. These should include standards for timeliness of completion and clarity on the information to be recorded”

The inspection highlighted how police officers did not always complete Victim Needs Assessments and where they were completed, often lacked important details making them unsubstantial. Victim Needs Assessments are the foundation of response to victims. Therefore, if police officers fail to understand a victim’s needs at the start of an investigation, it is more likely that other CJS bodies will not consider these needs in the later stages of the investigation or prosecution.

I will hold the Chief Constable to account, to maintain a commitment to enhancing the accuracy and efficiency of data recording and ensuring the timely completion of Victim Needs Assessments. WMP already

has in place a mandated requirement to confirm recording of victim needs assessments. Recognising the pivotal role that meticulous data management and assessment play in optimising our services, I am dedicated to contributing to the continuous improvement of these processes. Together, we must embark on the crucial task of formulating minimum standards for Victim Needs Assessments. By aligning our practices with these standardised criteria, we not only demonstrate a commitment to prioritising the welfare of those impacted by crime, but also establish a solid foundation for a uniformed approach across policing and wider CJS bodies.

In summary, I welcome this inspection as it provides valuable awareness into the areas of victim support processes, which require refinement and may benefit from improvement. While WMP was not one of the police forces inspected, the findings from this inspection will guide my efforts to continuously enhance our approach to victim support and contribute to a more effective and responsive system.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Foster', written in a cursive style.

Simon Foster

West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner