



VICTIM CARE STRATEGY FOR HUMBERSIDE

1. Purpose of the Strategy

- 1.1 This strategy has been informed by the Code of Practice for Victims of crime and the Ministry of Justice's 2012 'Getting it Right for Victims and Witnesses'. Outcomes have been devised following consultation with stakeholders from the Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), Humberside Criminal Justice Board (HCJB) and the voluntary sector.
- 1.2 It is intended to provide a corporate and consistent approach for local agencies and partnerships that have a legal and moral responsibility to provide support services to victims of crime and anti-social behaviour. Whilst it is not prescriptive in defining actual actions or activities that need to be implemented, the belief being that this is best determined at a local level; it does provide some areas where more concerted effort might help achieve the desired outcomes for victims.
- 1.3 The needs of victims are complex, dynamic and wide ranging, which is why a partnership approach is required to firstly understand these needs and secondly to tailor support services that are responsive to these needs. This strategy will help to shape local policies and practices across the full range of partnerships and individual agencies, including communities, from initial contact with victims to final healing and restoration.

2. Scope of the Strategy

- 2.1 This strategy is aimed at all victims of crime and anti-social behaviour but centred on a vulnerability and harm based approach rather than one focused on the actual crime type. With that in mind particular support should be prioritised to:
 - a) **Victims of serious crime** – rape, sexual and domestic violence, violent crime such as robbery, wounding or grievous bodily harm with intent are areas where the impacts of crime can be far reaching for victims.
 - b) **The most persistently targeted** – crime and anti-social behaviour, even where seemingly less serious, can have a devastating impact on victims when committed again and again over a period of time, particularly where a victim is deliberately targeted. This should be taken into account as individual needs are assessed, and support provided.

- c) **The most vulnerable and intimidated** – these are the people who are most likely to become victims, or who need particular assistance in coping with the consequences of crime or to engage with the criminal justice system. They might include people who are isolated, or lack social and family support; those who need assistance in managing their own affairs; those who are more likely to be a victim of crime than members of the community generally (for example because of age, race, disability or a medical condition) or less able to cope with the consequences if they do.

2.2 This strategy should be adopted by all those providing a service to victims of crime or anti-social behaviour, including statutory criminal justice agencies such as the police; generic victim services providers such as Victim Support and specialist providers from the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors.

3. Victim Needs

3.1 Whilst this strategy is predicated on understanding that each individual victim is unique with their own particular circumstances and needs the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) have identified, during the consultation 'Getting it right for victims and witnesses' eight categories of need that support services should aim to help victims with during the course of their intervention. These categories of need are:

- Mental, physical and emotional health
- Shelter and accommodation
- Family, friends and children
- Education, skills and employment
- Drugs and alcohol
- Finance and benefits
- Outlook and attitudes
- Social interactions

3.2 It is important that any victim who has needs can get the help they require as soon as possible. They should be made aware of the extent, range and applicability of services available and that these services are professional and of high quality.

4. Aim of the Strategy

4.1 There is a need to ensure the voice of victims is heard in developing services. If services are provided in accordance with what victims' needs are then there is every likelihood that the usage of victim services will increase as victims feel more confident that they will receive the service(s) that they require.

4.2 As such the aim of the strategy is:

To provide accessible, targeted and integrated victim services based on a clear understanding of victim needs that fulfil their expectations and contribute to the broader outcomes.

5. Outcomes of the Strategy

5.1 This strategy is intended to galvanise partnership working with respect to the provision of services to victims that will:

- Improve the health and wellbeing of victims through an increased ability to cope with the immediate post victimisation experience.
- Enable the victim to cope with the immediate post victimisation experience
- Ensure the longer term recovery of the victim is managed through a range of support services
- Contribute to empowering the victim in order that they might 'get their life back' to how it was prior to the victimisation
- Leave the victim satisfied with the efficient, effective and seamless provision of support services from the statutory and voluntary sector
- Strive to ensure the victim feels as safe as those who have never been a victim of crime or anti-social behaviour.

5.2 If all agencies work towards the above aim (see 4.2) the likelihood that specific victim support services will be effective (i.e. the interventions will have the desired impact) is heightened.

5.3 The outcomes identified above are those which all statutory and voluntary agencies, working in partnership, should aim to achieve and evaluation of the success of this strategy will be against these outcomes. These outcomes should ensure the holistic needs of victims are met.

6. Objectives of the Strategy

6.1 These objectives are designed to bring some additional focus to help guide the resources and efforts of individual agencies and partnerships to provide the best possible chance of achieving the strategy aim and ultimately the strategy outcomes.

1. Improve flexibility of response and quality of information

There is a need to adopt the new Victims Code of Practice and be more responsive to the rights as well as the different needs of victims. For example victims have a right to be kept informed at all key stages of the process, from investigation, court

proceedings through to custody and release of the offender and of the services available to them. The ability to relate to victims as individuals independently of the case itself is just as important as solving the case and bringing offenders to justice.

There is a need to better inform victims about what will happen or could happen following their victimisation and to better raise awareness of the services that are available to them. The adoption of 'track my crime' for example would help keep victims informed and an online directory of services hosted on the Police and Crime Commissioner's website could help promote current service provision. Such tactical actions and the manner of the response could contribute to the desired outcomes.

2. Protect victims from further victimisation

The evidence suggests that for crimes such as domestic abuse, burglary or hate crime there is a significantly high probability that one will be re-victimised in the short term, suggesting that victimisation is the best single predictor of future victimisation. High crime rates and hot-spot areas are as they are primarily because of rates of repeat victimisation. Agencies should ensure they have systems and processes in place that enables them to identify cases of repeat victimisation and provide appropriate interventions to minimise a repeat occurrence.

Protecting victims from further victimisation, particularly the most vulnerable makes eminent sense in that focusing on repeats automatically concentrates on individuals at greatest risk of future victimisation. Adopting a concept of repeat victimisation is, in essence, a form of victim support service.

3. Develop restorative justice interventions

This objective is about developing the referral pathways to specialist support when the victim needs it focusing specifically on restorative justice at each stage of the criminal justice system. There is now significant evidence in relation to how restorative justice can have a positive impact on victim satisfaction. Restorative Justice can reduce crime victims' post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms and related costs, provides victims and offenders with greater satisfaction with justice and reduces victims' desire for violent revenge against their offenders.

Restorative Justice is not appropriate for everyone so the selection of cases is critical to success and delivering a positive victim experience. Obviously there needs to be an offender to make the process work and the offender should be approached first as to their willingness to participate, to avoid raising the victims' expectations unnecessarily.

4. Engage communities in addressing victim needs

To support the creation of communities with low crime rates and therefore a reduction in the number of victims it will be necessary for a wide range of agencies to play a part in supporting and engaging communities to help deliver early intervention and preventative work. The idea of communities playing a more active part in the identification and solution of community problems is a central plank of the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan. This objective could involve an exploration of the merits of Community Impact Statements, Neighbourhood Justice Panels and the Community Remedy.

- 6.2 Each agency should develop an improvement plan to help deliver these objectives or construct an interagency plan to ensure co-ordination and coherence and to ensure victims are given appropriate access to support.

7. General Operating Principles

- 7.1 Evidence of 'what works' in relation to victim services suggests that the following principles are critical to the success of such services which ought to inform future policies and practice. In effect these can be referred to as a set of common ground rules for all those organisations dealing with and supporting victims of crime and anti-social behaviour.

- Victim support services must always seek to meet the needs of victims.
- Systems and processes should be able to clearly identify victim needs.
- Service providers and partnerships need to take account of factors influencing victim need when designing and delivering services.
- There is a need to respond fairly, respectfully and compassionately to all victims.
- Victims should be protected from re-victimisation.
- Where required victims should be referred to support services as soon as possible after victimisation.
- Victims should be kept up to date with developments in their case in a timely manner.
- The provisions of the Code of Practice for Victims and the EU Directive on Victims should be embraced (see appendix 1).
- The right of victim confidentiality will be respected.

- 7.2 It goes without saying that all victims want to be listened to and taken seriously and that services to victims need to be kept as simple and user friendly as possible, particularly for those victims who might be viewed as vulnerable.

8. Victim Rights

8.1 Key themes outlined in the Code of Practice for Victims and the EU Directive includes:

- the rights of victims to choose which service best suits their needs.
- the right to be informed.
- promoting a safe space for victims.
- respecting the right of victim confidentiality.

8.2 In addition to the above operating principles these tenets need to be embraced by all agencies providing services to victims and in so doing agencies must recognise their responsibilities to victims.

9. Partnership Based Interventions

9.1 As mentioned at the outset the complex and dynamic nature of victims' needs means that a multi-agency partnership approach will be more effective than single agency, single strand approaches. The Community Safety Partnerships and the Humberside Criminal Justice Board could and should play a critical role in giving direction to the specific activities and action plans needed to effectively implement this strategy. They could also (in conjunction with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner) provide quality assurance, ensuring that victims are supported efficiently and effectively.

9.2 With reference to those voluntary organisations providing specialist services in one particular area it would make sense, to plug any obvious gaps in service provision, if separate (but complementary) services worked together as a possible 'consortia' to offer a broader range of accessible services.

10. Challenges

10.1 Effective partnership working rests on the following challenges being addressed:

- Funding and resourcing issues that could affect the sustainability of multi-agency approaches.
- Diverse agency cultures, both within and across sectors.
- Competing agendas and priorities across agencies

10.2 A reminder of the mechanisms associated with more effective partnership working is provided at appendix 2.

11. Strategy Evaluation

11.1 It is very difficult to measure outcomes for victims of crime and anti-social behaviour. They are influenced by several factors; the difficulty of defining 'cope' and 'recovery' as well as 'empowerment' etc. in a measurable way; the variation

between each individual's ability to manage their own recovery; concerns that seeking feedback from victims on the effectiveness of services could re-traumatise them.

- 11.2 It may be the case that we need to place greater reliance on gaining assurance over the quality of services delivered to victims. Processes need to be established that can measure both the impact and the quality of the services delivered. An inability to do this could, in the future, place pressure on service deliverers to demonstrate the impact of the services required.

APPENDIX 1 – EU Directive

Article 8 refers to Member States taking measures to establish specialist support services in addition to, or as part of, the more general victim support services which are offered. Services should be available to victims in accordance with their specific needs and to family members in accordance with their specific needs and the degree of harm suffered as a result of the offence committed against the victim. As with general support services, access to specialist support should not depend on whether the crime has been reported.

Article 9 describes what support services must, as a minimum, be provided and these are set out in a list. The list includes:

- Information, advice and support relevant to the rights of victims including how to access national compensation schemes and the victim's role in relation to the trial;
- Emotional and, where available, psychological support;
- Advice on financial and practical matters including, unless available elsewhere, advice relating to the risk and prevention of re-victimisation, intimidation and retaliation.

APPENDIX 2 – MECHANISMS ASSOCIATED WITH BETTER PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Leadership

- Shared vision, values and norms of partners involved to establish collaborative advantage.
- Strong leadership and strategic direction (focused on providing a central co-ordination effort, getting buy in from partners and managing the project).
- Full integration of project aims into partner organisations
- Clear project brief, roles and responsibilities.
- Core groups to oversee problem solving approach.

Data Sharing and Problem Focus

- Clarity regarding the problem(s) being tackled through focused analysis to ensure a properly problem focused intervention.
- Regular exchange of relevant information.
- Having focused interventions in each area.
- Including researchers within the partnership.
- Continual evaluation to review and inform activity of the group.

Communication and co-location

- Regular face to face contact and communication between partners
- Co-location of agencies, partners and staff
- Presence of partners at a local level

Structures

- Flexibility of structures and processes.
- Having a research partner as an active member of the partnership
- Clear monitoring, accountability and integrity mechanisms.
- Having operational groups to implement strategies
- Involvement of the most appropriate agencies.

Experience

- Prior experience in working together in partnership i.e. established partnerships.
- Secondment of skilled officers into joint teams.
- Careful selection of appropriate partners
- Joint training of team members.