



Putting victims first in County Durham and Darlington

Delivering change for victims and witnesses: *From policy to reality*

6th October 2016

Contents

	Page
Foreword	2
1. Executive Summary	3
2. Introduction	5
3. Commissioning Processes	6
4. Victim Priorities	7
5. Partnership Working	12
6. Restorative Justice	14
7. Conclusion	15

Foreword

Over the course of my career I have gained first-hand experience of the often devastating impact that crime has on victims, those closest to them and our wider communities. For this reason I am determined to ensure that the needs of victims and witnesses are central both to the work of the police and to the rest of the criminal justice system.



Providing appropriate support that enables victims to deal with the immediate aftermath of a crime, regain control over their lives and participate in criminal justice processes can be complex. I intend to work with partners to overcome the challenges involved and deliver on my commitment to improve victims' experiences. Ensuring victims receive high quality support that is tailored to their circumstances, is provided at the right time and is delivered in a sensitive and respectful manner will be the central aim of all future planning and commissioning.

As an acknowledgement of the importance with which I regard my responsibility towards victims, I have taken the bold step of amending my title to Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner. This change of title comes with a pledge to ensure that in County Durham and Darlington, victims can be confident that their voice will be heard and services will be tailored to their needs and driven by their strengths.

Ron Hogg

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ron Hogg'. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

**Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner for
County Durham and Darlington**

1. Executive Summary

The vision of the Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner (PCVC) continues to be a transformation of the way victims and witnesses are supported to cope with the immediate aftermath of a crime and achieve their long-term recovery aspirations. In parallel, he is committed to ensuring that the needs and wellbeing of victims are central to Criminal Justice System (CJS) processes.

In preparation for local commissioning of victim services, work was undertaken in 2014 to:

- Identify and map current support for victims;
- Identify perceived needs, gaps and solutions;
- Make recommendations for improvements.

This work culminated in the production of the 'Delivering Change for Victims and Witnesses' report where a number of recommendations were made to improve support for victims and witnesses. Although the recommendations were wide ranging, it was possible to identify three distinct areas where particular attention was needed:

- Access to support that is tailored to the needs of the individual, treats victims and witnesses with dignity and respect, validates their concerns and provides clear and relevant information in a timely manner;
- Better co-ordinated and more seamless pathways;
- Improved collaboration between and across relevant agencies, particularly those involved in CJS processes.

Significant progress has been made in addressing the issues identified in each of these areas. In particular:

- A new model for delivery of referral and support for victims has been commissioned that will focus on outcome based needs assessment and care plans tailored to the needs of individual victims rather than the crime type;
- From autumn 2016, independent advocacy will be available to support victims with mental ill health or victims of hate crime;
- Work is currently being undertaken to strengthen support for victims of domestic abuse, rape or sexual violence, including exploring new models of supporting victims of child sexual abuse or exploitation;
- A commissioning model has been introduced to ensure services are victim-centred, based on evidence of need, use collaborative approaches where appropriate, achieve best value, efficiency and effectiveness;
- A review of partnership arrangements has been completed and recommendations are being implemented relating to improving collaboration, co-operation and co-ordination in terms of planning, commissioning and delivering support for victims and witnesses;
- Victim initiated Restorative Justice has been developed along with support to introduce a range of restorative approaches that enable early intervention and seek to prevent situations escalating to a point where a criminal justice outcome is the only alternative.

Priority areas for the coming months and years have been identified and will become part of the OPCVC work programme across the entire CJS pathway, including:

- Further development of formal and informal pathways across service providers and initiatives that facilitate co-ordinated support for victims;
- Development and maintenance of a directory of resources that deliver victim-centred services;
- Development of ongoing relationships with culturally and/or geographically specific programmes and resources to ensure equitable access for victims;
- Further improving collaborative working arrangements across partners to deliver end-to-end support for victims and maximise existing/available resources;
- Exploring new ways of integrating and delivering victim-centred services;
- Helping to build and maintain collaborative relationships across all stakeholders involved in planning, commissioning and delivering support to victims of crime;
- Developing a mutual understanding of definitions relating to the rights and support of victims and witnesses and the role of individual partners in upholding these e.g. enhanced services, special measures, victim personal statements;
- Support the development of effective policies and protocols to connect the work between appropriate partners, ensuring clear definition of roles and responsibilities, to facilitate a 'whole systems' approach in terms of the development, delivery and evaluation of support for victims;
- Developing and putting in place formalised arrangements for monitoring and evaluation of commissioned services and measuring victim experience.

2. Introduction

Improving care and support for those who become a victim of, or a witness to, crime in County Durham and Darlington continues to be a top priority for the PCVC. In 2014, the report 'Delivering Change for Victims and Witnesses' was published by the OPCVC. The report brought together evidence from a number of sources with the intention of:

- Identifying and evaluating the support available for victims at that time;
- Summarising needs, gaps and solutions as perceived by a range of stakeholders, most importantly victims and witnesses;
- Outlining proposed actions to address the issues identified.

The purpose of this report is twofold:

- To provide an update on progress towards implementing the recommendations made in the 2014 report;
- To set out OPCVC plans to further improve the care and support for victims and witnesses.

2.1 Background

The introduction, in April 2015, of local commissioning of services that support victims of crime presented the opportunity to focus on the needs and priorities of local communities and deliver support based on the needs of individual victims rather than crime types. There were however, inherent challenges including:

- The shift from output to outcome based performance;
- Developing the dynamic process of "understand, analyse, plan, do and review" that effective commissioning is based on;
- The need to secure value for money and best use of resources in a challenging economic climate;
- How to build sustainable relationships and develop proactive engagement with key stakeholders.

The evidence gathered during the production of the 'Delivering Change' report was the catalyst for the approach used in respect of commissioning victim services in County Durham and Darlington. The report was based on the perceptions of victims, partner organisations and other key stakeholders as well as drawing on evidence from local, regional and national research and taking account of national policy and guidance relating to the rights of and support for victims of crime.

The report provided the foundations on which the OPCVC's strategy for planning and commissioning victim services was built.

It is two years since the 'Delivering Change' report was published. This report provides details of the significant progress made in delivering on the recommendations and outlines priorities for the coming year.

3. Commissioning Processes

3.1 Values and Principles

The OPCVC has adopted a set of values and principles that are central to the commissioning of victim services. These include:

- Commissioning support that is victim-centred and driven by the needs, strengths and voices of victims;
- The identification and development of solutions that are innovative and creative;
- Developing positive, respectful, and professional relationships with all stakeholders;
- Encouraging partnerships and collaboration that support trust, shared commitment and collective action and result in high quality outcomes for victims.

The overarching aim is to ensure that services:

- Are specific, appropriate and culturally and physically accessible;
- Driven by the needs of the individual;
- Place the well-being of the victim at the heart of the process;
- Include support for primary and secondary victims¹ as well as broader communities affected by crime.

Throughout commissioning processes, the PCVC has been keen to emphasise that any services commissioned are expected to demonstrate innovation; be flexible to the needs of victims; encourage the exercising of choice and facilitate compliance with the rights, responsibilities, protection and support of victims as enshrined in national policy and guidance, in particular, the Victims' Code.

3.2 The Provider Landscape in County Durham and Darlington

There continues to be a number of diverse organisations delivering support to victims and witnesses. While some are specifically designed to support victims and witnesses across the entire pathway, others focus on specific aspects of need, e.g. accommodation, welfare rights, employment, education, etc. In addition, the way in which these organisations are funded continues to be very different. For instance, while some small voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations lack the capacity to enter into procurement processes and subsequently rely heavily on grant funding, others are able to enter into much larger and more formal arrangements linked to contracts and service specifications.

Contracts involving significant amounts of funding are only awarded to organisations that can enter into and comply with robust procurement requirements. This helps to ensure that the OPCVC is delivering value for money. However the OPCVC continues to provide grant funding, following an open bidding process, to initiatives through partnership arrangements with the County Durham Community Foundation. The OPCVC has also provided funding to enable VCS partners, where appropriate, to access independent advice on developing sustainable business plans. This is helping to support the development of a vibrant VCS in County Durham and Darlington.

¹ **Primary** victims are those who have been directly targeted or involved in a crime or incident, a **secondary** victim is someone who suffers harm (physical, emotional, psychological or practical) as result of witnessing a crime or incident.

4. Victim priorities

The 'Delivering Change' report provided significant evidence that victims want:

- Information and communication to be clear, appropriate and given in a timely manner;
- Consistency in the initial response that validates their concerns and deals with immediate issues such as safety and security;
- Earlier and more effective overall assessment of need;
- Support based on the individual needs of the victim rather than the type of crime;
- An acknowledgement that victims are central to, and have a vested interest in, how their case progresses;
- To be treated with dignity and respect;
- Better co-ordination across agencies and more efficient referral and handover processes;
- Better information and accessibility in relation to availability and eligibility of support.

The PCVC also acknowledges that there are often two separate and distinct levels at which victims and witnesses may require support. Cope and recovery models of support recognise a number of areas where assistance may be needed to cope with the immediate aftermath of a crime and aid long-term recovery, namely:

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

Given the diversity and specialist nature of these potential needs it is not likely, nor should it be expected, that single agencies can deliver on all aspects. As a result, effective and reciprocal pathways are crucial to delivering seamless care.

Separately, while all CJS agencies strive to actively involve victims in processes associated with achieving a criminal justice outcome, these are often long and complex and there are likely to be occasions when substantial difficulties are identified in relation to a victim being able to:

- Understand and retain relevant information;
- Use the information they have been given to make informed choices and decisions as part of the process of being involved;
- Communicate their views, wishes or feelings.

Consequently, specialist knowledge and expertise should be available for victims who may experience obstacles in attempting to navigate and participate in criminal justice proceedings.

4.1 Progress to Date

A redesigned service specification for the delivery of an overarching victim needs assessment and referral service has been developed and the organisation Safe in Tees Valley was

successful in winning the contract for delivery of the new service. Alongside this, specific work has been undertaken in relation to additional support for some of our most vulnerable victims and witnesses, particularly those with mental ill health or those who have experienced hate crime. This has resulted in two new services being commissioned that will provide independent advocacy in these specialist areas of need.

Separately, there are a range of initiatives that are currently in the development stage and will come to fruition over the next few months; these will inform our priority areas of work and include victims of domestic abuse, rape or sexual assault and children and young people who have been victims of crime. Alongside these, child sexual exploitation (including historic abuse), trafficking, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage all continue to be priority areas that will be considered in terms of assessing local need and resilience of any existing services delivering support to victims of these crimes.

4.2 Victim Assessment and Referral

The victim assessment and referral service (known as VCAS – Victim Care and Advice Service) was launched in April 2016 and will be the main mechanism by which victim needs are assessed and care pathways agreed. The new service will:

- Respond to referrals from various sources, including self-referral from victims;
- Undertake assessment and care planning tailored to the individual needs of the victim rather than the crime of which they have been a victim;
- Include ongoing assessment of need with regular review and evaluation;
- Have well developed reciprocal referral pathways and protocols with other specialist and mainstream service providers to ensure speedy onward referral/access to other more appropriate support where necessary;
- Respond to and prioritise immediate needs e.g. health, safety of person and property, available support networks;
- Take an outcome based approach to care planning that has the cope and recovery needs of the victim, their families and wider networks at the centre of the process.

VCAS will continue to deliver an independent service to victims but will work closely with the police and other CJS partners based on the premise that a more effective alignment of the different systems and processes to which victims are often subject will result in a more streamlined and co-ordinated service that reduces duplication and confusion.

Notwithstanding the introduction of this new service, which is available to any victim of crime, the PCVC is keen to promote a tailored approach to the way in which vulnerable victims of crime are supported to cope and recover and participate in CJS processes. This encompasses delivery of a range of specialist support that will enable people to make informed decisions and exercise choice. Equally, it is recognised that vulnerable victims who do not wish to participate in CJS processes should still have access to support that could help to prevent repeat victimisation. Two particular areas of vulnerability that have been identified for additional specialist support are victims of crime with mental ill health and victims of hate crime.

4.3 Mental Health

While the introduction of the new Victim Care and Advice Service will be the initial point of contact for most victims requiring support, victims with mental ill health are deemed to be significantly more likely to report adverse effects from experiencing crime than the general population. The obstacles that victims with mental ill health face when attempting to navigate the processes involved in coping with the immediate aftermath of a crime, long term recovery and engagement with CJS processes are well documented in national and local research. Although all CJS agencies strive to actively engage with victims, there are likely to be occasions when difficulties are identified in relation to a victim with mental health issues being able to:

- Understand and retain relevant information;
- Use that information to make choices and informed decisions;
- Communicate their views and wishes.

Subsequently, autumn 2016 will see the launch of a new service that will provide early access to independent advocacy for victims of crime with mental ill health and help to promote social inclusion, equity and high quality support.

4.4 Hate Crime

Crime that is motivated by hostility or prejudice towards any aspect of a person's identity including disability, gender identity, race, religion or sexual orientation is particularly corrosive and can have devastating consequences for victims, those closest to them and the wider community. Nationally, and locally, there is evidence that these crimes are significantly under reported. In cases that are reported to the police and proceed through the CJS, prosecutions often fail because the victim retracts, unexpectedly fails to attend court or their evidence doesn't support the case. Providing specialist support for victims of hate crime, their families and wider networks, is considered to be crucial if these issues are to be addressed.

The Hate Crime Advocacy service will be delivered by a consortium of organisations that each have a track record in providing specialist support tailored to victims of crime related to their race, religion, disability, gender identity or sexual orientation.

The consortium will work closely with existing providers of support for victims of crime and partnership arrangements to enhance rather than replace any existing service delivery and focus on:

- Delivery of independent specialist advocacy for victims of hate crime;
- Providing 'end to end' support for victims who report the crime, those closest to them and their wider networks;
- Providing support to those victims who choose not to report the crime;
- Promoting social inclusion, equity and high quality services across all communities.

4.5 Domestic Abuse

Supporting victims of domestic abuse is an area where there are joint responsibilities both in terms of the nature of the support required and commissioning activities. Durham County Council completed a strategic review of domestic abuse services in March 2016 and the OPCVC will be using the information from the review to ensure consistency of access to support across the Police Force area. The OPCVC is also in the process of exploring opportunities for joint and/or co-commissioning that will lead to additional capacity and sustainability of existing

services, improve quality and accessibility, enable early intervention and prevent escalation of risk to victims. A specific piece of work being undertaken is exploring the potential benefits for victims of the presence of an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate in Remand Courts while maintaining this service in the Special Domestic Violence Court.

4.6 Sexual Violence

Support for victims of rape and sexual assault is another area where there are partnership arrangements in place. In particular, there are very clear responsibilities outlined in respect of commissioning services provided by the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC). While the SARC continues to provide high quality support and is valued by victims, the PCVC is currently supporting the development of an overarching Partnership Board that will put in place and oversee governance arrangements in relation to delivery of SARC activities. The Partnership Board will bring together key representatives from the OPCVC, the police, NHS England, Clinical Commissioning Groups and Local Authorities to work towards the shared aims of ensuring safe and effective care that improves health outcomes for victims, reduces inequalities, protects the public and reduces reoffending.

Voluntary and Community Sector partners are crucial to supporting victims of rape or sexual assault and work has begun on identifying how support pathways can be extended to deliver a wider range of support that complements existing counselling services; helps to create additional capacity to enable Independent Sexual Violence Advocates to focus on their specialist area of expertise; can be delivered in parallel to existing services and subsequently speeds the cope and recovery period for victims. Specifically, the intention is to ensure availability of high quality services that empower victims of rape and sexual violence to regain control of their lives. This will encompass practical help and support to identify areas that victims may be struggling with and working with them to develop action plans that encompass a range of day-to-day issues such as housing; finance; welfare rights and benefits advice; returning to work; improving qualifications and help with drug and alcohol problems.

Separately, Durham Constabulary has been successful in securing funding to explore new models of supporting victims of child sexual abuse or exploitation, including adults who retrospectively disclose being subject to these crimes as children. The OPCVC will be working closely with the constabulary as they trial new approaches particularly in respect of ensuring sustainability of those that are proved to be effective.

4.7 Children and Young People

A number of new and innovative projects for supporting children and young people who have been victims of crime have been introduced over the past year. However, the PCVC is keen to support evaluation of these to avoid duplication or fragmentation and ensure equity of access, viability and future sustainability. Work will be undertaken over the coming months to initiate discussion with relevant partners in this respect.

4.8 Acquisitive Crime

Crimes such as theft and burglary continue to be given a high priority and support is currently available to victims through police crime prevention initiatives and VCAS. However, more will

be done over the next 12 months to ensure access to crime prevention advice and safety planning is available across all of our communities.

4.9 Cyber Crime

Regular monitoring and reviewing of patterns and trends demonstrates the constantly changing nature of crime and a significant increase in the number of victims subject to cybercrime has been identified. This type of crime can take the form of fraud, bullying and harassment among other things. The OPCVC is working with a range of partners to develop prevention programmes and support for those who have fallen prey to this type of offence.

4.10 Business Crime

Supporting victims of this type of crime is another priority area for the OPCVC in terms of understanding the nature and scale of the issue and establishing the most effective means of delivering support. As with other types of victimisation, the OPCVC is determined to ensure services are tailored to the needs of the victim and acknowledges that different approaches will be necessary to ensure that small, medium and large businesses affected by crime receive the most appropriate support. Work will be undertaken over the coming months and years to consider this issue and development victim-centred solutions.

4.11 Next Steps

Work will continue with partners and those services directly commissioned by the OPCVC to develop and implement a range of best practice measures including:

- Routine review and refresh of commissioning strategies;
- Development of formal and informal pathways across service providers and initiatives that facilitate co-ordinated support for victims;
- Development and maintenance of a directory of resources that deliver victim-centred services;
- Development of ongoing relationships with culturally and/or geographically specific programmes and resources to ensure equitable access for victims;
- An emphasis on collaborative working arrangements across partners to deliver end-to-end support for victims and maximise existing/available resources;
- Exploring new ways of integrating and delivering victim-centred services.

In addition, the OPCVC will develop a monitoring and evaluation process that ensures commissioned services and programmes continue to be relevant and viable and contribute to the care and support of victims. In particular:

- Regular updating of strategic and business plans to reflect internal and external changes and challenges and to ensure relevance;
- Routine engagement with victims and key stakeholders to ensure their views and perceptions are taken account of and acted on;
- Conducting ongoing evaluation of service impact, outcomes and satisfaction, including input from victims, staff, partner agencies and communities;
- Putting in place a process that ensures feedback from engagement activities is integrated into planning, commissioning and improvement;
- Regular review of identified issues and trends, and opportunities and challenges that may affect the quality of services to victims and their effectiveness and sustainability.

5. Partnership Working

A key recommendation in the 'Delivering Change' report was the need for relevant partners to take collective action if victims are to be supported in a meaningful way. Victim needs are often complex and cannot always be met by changes to systems and processes particularly if they are concentrated on single agency initiatives and do not routinely examine the issues in terms of the total impact and outcomes for victims and witnesses. Given this complexity, it is unlikely that individual agencies could, or should, be expected to deliver the full range of support that some of our most vulnerable victims require. In addition, while victims are often expected to engage with a number of different agencies it is evident that pathways between agencies are rarely linear and there are a few 'clean' handovers. Subsequently, the need for effective integration between not only CJS agencies but a range of other partners is vital.

5.1 Progress to date

The OPCVC is a key member of a number of partnership arrangements including, but not restricted to, Community Safety Partnerships (CSP), the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB), Health and Wellbeing Boards, Mental Health Partnership Boards and each of their associated sub-groups. In addition, the Victims and Witness Planning Group was introduced by the OPCVC to establish a joint approach to identifying and taking collective action to address issues surrounding delivery of integrated cope and recovery models of care for victims and witnesses.

The OPCVC has led a review of LCJB arrangements to identify opportunities for more effective co-ordination across CJS agencies and other partners who are crucial to supporting victims to cope and recover from their experience and participate in CJS processes. A number of recommendations have been made intended to increase connectivity between the various structures, streamline planning and delivery, reduce duplication and confusion for victims and subsequently result in a more efficient use of resources.

The terms of reference and membership of the Victims and Witness Planning Group have been reviewed and the process for agreeing priorities, monitoring victims' experiences, devising and implementing work programmes and monitoring and evaluation arrangements has been strengthened. The mission of the group will be to ensure that victims and witnesses receive a service that is tailored to their individual needs and involves co-ordinated care and support that:

- enhances the ability to cope with the immediate aftermath of a crime;
- Facilitates short and long term recovery;
- Enables positive engagement with CJS processes.

In recognition of the crucial role that the VCS plays in relation to supporting victims, a VCS consultation forum is being established by the PCVC to enable these key partners to participate in identifying any gaps or barriers being encountered along with potential solutions and to advise on perceived capacity issues.

5.2 Next Steps

Following implementation of the recommendations from the LCJB review the OPCVC intends to support continuous improvement in CJS responsiveness to, and understanding of, the needs of victims by:

- Helping to build and maintain collaborative relationships across all stakeholders involved in planning and delivering support to victims of crime;

- Developing a mutual understanding of definitions relating to the rights and support of victims and witnesses and the role of individual partners in upholding these e.g. enhanced services, special measures, victim personal statements;
- Supporting the development of effective policies and protocols to connect the work between appropriate partners, ensuring clear definition of roles and responsibilities, to facilitate a 'whole systems' approach in terms of the development, delivery and evaluation of support for victims;
- Promoting accountability, transparency and openness across all relevant partners;
- Exploring what opportunities exist for securing additional funding for services for victims and witnesses across the Criminal Justice System, including greater devolution of existing national budgets to PCCs.

6. Restorative Justice

Restorative Justice is primarily about facilitated communication between individual victims and their offender. Appropriate risk assessment and support is provided for the victim throughout the process. Within the CJS it has a particular meaning in that it recognises someone has been harmed (the victim) and that someone has inflicted that harm (the offender). It is intended to result in positive outcomes by giving victims the opportunity to explain the impact the crime has had on their life, ask questions and achieve a sense of closure. For offenders, it is the chance to reflect on the harm they have done and consider their future in terms of not reoffending. National research suggests that 85% of victims who take part in face to face conferences were satisfied with the experience with 72% saying it had given them a sense of closure.

The Victims' Code includes the entitlement for victims to have information on restorative justice, however participation is voluntary and both the victim and offender must agree to it before it can happen. Restorative justice can be through a face-to-face meeting (known as conferencing), facilitated and supported by a trained expert, or indirectly through a mediator or a letter. Research suggests that face-to-face conferencing is the most helpful in supporting and empowering victims in their journey to move on after crime, although this is also considered to be the most complex option.

The inclusion of it in the Victims' Code has led to significant work being undertaken by the PCVC to both raise the profile of Restorative Justice in terms of supporting victim initiated action, ensuring services are delivered and regulated in a consistent manner and the development of common policies, principles and practice based on local priorities. All work is underpinned by ensuring victims can make an informed choice about participation and that robust risk assessment procedures have been carried out.

Separately, the PCVC recognises that there are benefits in developing wider restorative practice to enable early intervention and prevent situations escalating to a point where a criminal justice outcome is the only alternative.

Consequently, the PCVC has:

- Built on work already achieved in Co Durham and Darlington by introducing a Restorative Approaches Hub and associated co-ordination of restorative practice;
- Used the lessons learned from a national pilot on pre-sentence Restorative Justice and, working in collaboration with key partners, made this available to victims in Co Durham and Darlington. To date, the approach taken has demonstrated positive outcomes for the victims who have participated;
- Introduced a Peer Mentor project designed to support individuals and communities.

Over the coming months, further work will be undertaken to evaluate these activities with a view to ensuring the sustainability of those deemed to be achieving positive outcomes and extending them where appropriate to ensure equity of access.

7. Conclusion

Significant progress has been achieved in the implementation of the recommendations from the 'Delivering Change for Victims' report produced in 2014. All of these developments have been underpinned by the following principles:

- Understanding the needs of our local communities through engagement with the full range of partners and stakeholders;
- Working with partners, including those from the voluntary and community sector, to agree priorities and outcomes;
- Putting outcomes for victims at the heart of the strategic planning process;
- Mapping the fullest practical range of providers with a view to understanding the contribution they could make to deliver those outcomes;
- Ensuring processes are fair and transparent;
- Facilitating long-term contracts and risk sharing, wherever appropriate, as ways of achieving efficiency and effectiveness;
- Seeking feedback from service users, communities and providers in order to review the effectiveness of the commissioning process in meeting local needs.

However, the PCVC is clear that more needs to be done, and in the coming months and years will continue to:

- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of support for victims and witnesses;
- Identify and act on opportunities to further enhance or add value to existing services;
- Engage with victims, witnesses and local communities to ensure they are fully involved in identifying and addressing issues and solutions;
- Work with partners to improve collaboration and co-ordination and ensure seamless pathways;
- Monitor the changing nature of crime and victimisation and commission services appropriate to the needs of our communities.

In delivering the priorities identified in this report, the OPCVC is confident that by 2020:

- Systems, processes and services that have been designed around victim needs will be in place;
- Support for victims will be integrated, seamless and co-ordinated;
- Victim needs will be central to criminal justice processes;
- Victims are supported to remain engaged with criminal justice processes and subsequently the number of prosecutions that fail because victims feel unable to participate is reduced;
- Opportunities for victims to cope and recovery from their experience will be optimised.

Note: This report is published on Ron Hogg's website, at: www.durham-pcc.gov.uk.