

The Victims' Voice



County Durham & Darlington

Victims' Champions Annual Report
January 2024



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Introduction

The role of the Police and Crime Commissioner is to secure efficient and effective policing. In exercising those statutory functions, the Police and Crime Commissioner has a legal duty to consult with victims in setting policing priorities and commissions many of the services that support victims to comply with the victims' code of practice. Putting victims first remains the 'golden thread' of the Police and Crime plan.

Prior to being elected, the Police and Crime Commissioner for County Durham and Darlington, Joy Allen, consulted with members of the public to inform the development of the Police and Crime Plan 2021-2024. As part of that initial consultation, 34% of people who had been victims of crime and anti-social behavior said they did not report it, and 68% said they found it difficult to report issues.

This mirrored the findings from the National Crime Survey in 2019 and the report "Living a Nightmare" (2019) published by the Victims' Commissioner for England & Wales, Baroness Newlove, who concluded that victims of anti-social behaviour are being let down by police, local councils and housing providers, with many victims having to suffer in silence.

Reports published by Victims Commissioner, Dame Vera Baird (2019-22) highlight the broader and varied issues impacting victims, including delays in the criminal justice process, unsatisfactory outcomes and attrition rates. The Victim Commissioner's reports set out a vision for enhancing victims' rights and reconceptualizing the role of victims as active participants within the justice system; she outlined what is needed in the Victims' Bill to transform the victim experience of the criminal justice system. Four key principles were identified for 'what works' in supporting victims of crime: information and communication; procedural justice; multi-agency working; and professionalized services. More information can be found at www.victimsc commissioner.org.uk

In setting out the Police and Crime Plan, in order deliver her vision to reduce victimization and ensure that her approach was victim centric, Durham's Police and Crime Commissioner appointed three Victims' Champions in December 2021 to act as an independent voice for victims, one each for anti-social behaviour, crime, and domestic abuse. The Commissioner's Champions are there to ensure that victims' voices are heard, and their lived experiences help shape future policy, planning and the commissioning of victim support services.

Executive Summary

The Victims' Champions have engaged with victims to learn of their 'lived experience' from initial contact through their individual criminal justice 'journey' adopting different approaches and methods.

They have established a pattern of emerging themes with case studies and together with further research have helped to inform policy, planning and the commissioning of services for victims. The report categorizes concerns from victims into three key areas: Reporting & communication; investigative criminal justice process and victim impact.

Examples of ongoing current research include: the difficulties of successfully progressing through the Criminal Justice System for victims with a cognitive impairment; the re-traumatizing of victims of rape and serious sexual offences due to initial over-listing and repeated re-listing of cases; and the difficulties encountered in getting to, and being at court, such as transport, childcare and the up-front financial costs.

Victims of crime can often feel that they have been victims of the criminal justice process too, whilst victims of ASB often feel let down by agencies perceiving little is being done to tackle the incidents they report. The optics of an effective system needs to be through the 'eyes' of victims rather than the efficiency 'lens' of the agencies involved. Both Durham Constabulary and the Office of Durham's Police and Crime Commissioner have written 'Victim Impact Assessments' into their respective Governance Statements, to ensure that key decisions are assessed for their potential impact on victims. This is something Durham's PCC would like other criminal justice agencies to adopt.

Victims of ASB have no statutory entitlements under the victims' code of practice (VCOP) or funding to access victim support services. In County Durham and Darlington the Police and Crime Commissioner has commissioned victims' services through the award-winning Community Peer Mentors to support vulnerable victims of repeat ASB, recognising cumulative impact which can have a long lasting devastating impact affecting their mental health and well-being and placing greater demands on stretched public health services.

Victims of ASB often become isolated, living in fear in their own homes and afraid to go out, causing significant distress and harm where often the only solution is to move house. Engaging with victims has identified that agencies often view ASB incidents as low level, in isolation and do not identify repeat victims at an early stage. Reported incidents that are classed as neighbour disputes are not always investigated or progressed and officers can often fail to recognise the cumulative impact and the high level of harm caused. Response teams are often called to incidents offering little or no continuity of officers or knowledge of the local community. The victims lived experience tells us the greatest impact comes from neighbourhood disputes and victims are often faced with having to move home because of the impact the ASB is having on them. Not everyone can do this, nor should it be the victim that should be forced from their home as a means of escape. This too is often the case for victims of domestic abuse, having to move from their home and uproot their children to escape. They are often faced with moving out of the area isolating themselves from family, friends and support networks and made to feel they are the one being punished.

The report highlights the important role for housing providers in taking a greater responsibility in protecting their tenants and tackling ASB. Also, local authorities around selective licensing to hold private landlords accountable in tackling ASB.

Greater efficiencies could be achieved if both CCTV and ICT systems were improved and used to provide effective data analysis and intelligence.

Effective and consistent communication with victims is absolutely fundamental in providing the best victim and witness care by ALL agencies.

There is much to celebrate with multiple achievements, not least the introduction of Operation Crystal improving investigative standards, crime recording and victim care. Stronger partnership working, new strategy, signposting and improved reporting has been introduced. Raised awareness about the use of the ASB Case Review and new ASB escalation processes. The ASB Case Review is now administered in its entirety by the Office for Police and Crime Commissioner and a new independent appeals process for case review has also been introduced, we believe, the first of its kind nationally.

Victims, however, are becoming increasingly aware of the resourcing pressures placed on the public sector and empathise with the constabulary, often suffering in silence rather than reporting incidents. Whilst some have lost faith in reporting altogether contributed by long wait times, or perceived inaction, others don't want to burden the authorities. The situation can be likened to what can only be described as "Stockholm syndrome". As greater demand is created for the decreased resources available one should ask "Why should victims in County Durham or Darlington be worth less than victims in other parts of the Country?"

Despite limited resources, credit must be afforded to the innovation of agencies working together to find new approaches to tackling crime and anti-social behaviour, not least Durham Constabulary for consistently remaining one of the best performing Police Forces in the Country.

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Meet the Champions

Andrea Patterson

Victims' Champion – Anti-Social Behaviour

The Anti-Social Behaviour Champion works to capture lived experiences from victims to help inform the commissioning of services, working with policy officers to ensure services meet the needs of anti-social behaviour victims. The Anti-Social Behaviour Champion sits on key strategic boards and works directly with senior officers, directors, and partners on behalf of the Police and Crime Commissioner, having those conversations at that strategic level to help shape and change service provision, making a difference for victims of anti-social behaviour across the community safety partnerships.



Michael Banks

Victims' Champion – Crime

The Victims' Champion for Crime engages 'one to one' with victims and with a variety of victim support services. This ensures that both personal 'journeys' through the criminal justice system can be understood and identifies themes, trends and gaps in service provision to victims so that the development of policies, planning and commissioning can be framed with their needs in mind. 'Victims' Voice' case studies inform 'Root Cause Analysis' of these cases to understand what went well, and not so well, to inform service improvement. With the active support of the Police and Crime Commissioner the Victims' Champion for Crime is encouraging all criminal justice agencies to conduct a Victim Impact Assessment on policies and practices.



Vacant

Victims' Champion – Domestic Abuse

The Domestic Abuse Victims & Survivor Champion works with all major partner agencies, organisations and systems which provide support and services to victim/survivors of Domestic Abuse (DA). The Champion's main task is to independently seek the views and lived experiences of domestic abuse victims and survivors, which involves conducting individual interviews, discussion groups, video interviews/conversations, and using any combination of these and other methods. This work then feeds into the work of the Force and partners including through the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Group.

All three Champions work alongside policy officers, to ensure that the victims' voice is central to service planning and commissioning. The expected impact will be that services provided truly respond to the stated needs of victims and survivors and systems are easier for them to understand and use. The victims' Champions also engage with the National Victims' Commissioner's Office; the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary to identify national initiatives and good practice which can be tailored to our local needs.

Placing Victims at the Centre of Services

The Ministry of Justice’s vision is “a justice system that supports even more victims to speak up by giving them the certainty that they will be understood; protected and supported throughout their journey in the criminal justice system regardless of circumstances or background”. The Ministry of Justice recognises that a victim of crime should not become a victim of the criminal justice process as well. The consistent message from victims is to be treated fairly, properly and with dignity; clearly, in a timely way and with accurate information; and the opportunity and support to make their voice heard. The Ministry of Justice revised the Victims Code of Practice in 2021 and is currently consulting on the metrics for measuring compliance with it by criminal justice agencies. The Victims and Prisoners Bill is currently progressing through Parliament.

His Majesty’s Inspector of Constabulary Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS) assesses the service that Police Forces give to victims of crime and anti-social behaviour. “The duty of the police is to Keep the Peace, prevent crime and disorder and bring offenders to justice. If the service provided to victims of crime is not handled properly and in accordance with the established rules the police cannot perform these duties well. A failure of a police force to correctly deal with the victim at any point, from the initial call to the conclusion of a case, will not only let down a victim, but an offender may be missed as well as a possible opportunity to prevent further crime. It will also reduce public confidence in the police”. (HMIC/GMP/2020)

“No one chooses to become a victim of crime. And they have no choice as to which police force investigates that crime...”

“All victims of crime have the right to expect that forces will allocate their crime to someone with the appropriate skills to investigate it”.

In terms of supervision of investigations, “without direction and support, workloads can become unmanageable and the time taken to investigate increases. Investigators may not follow all lines of enquiry and evidence may be lost. For a victim of crime, this means a longer wait to find out if there will be some justice in their case, and less likelihood of there being any justice. This can increase the distress of being a victim of crime and can lead to loss of faith in the Criminal Justice System. It can mean that victims withdraw from the justice process altogether. (HMIC: Spotlight Report 2020)

Durham Constabulary’s Plan on a Page 2023-25 cites a vision which includes “inspiring confidence in victims”, with outcomes “to give victims a voice and ensure that the victim is at the heart of everything we do; ensure victims and witnesses are referred to appropriate support services; and that the Force adheres to the Victims’ Code of Practice”.

The Local Criminal Justice Board Strategy

Durham has a revitalised Local Criminal Justice Board, which has a Victim and Witness Delivery Group. The vision of this group is that “We will ensure that victims and witnesses are fully supported throughout the Criminal Justice System, with high quality services that meet their needs”. Key objectives are:

1. Provide co-ordinated end to end care and support for victims and witnesses
2. Ensure a partnership focus on victims and witnesses to assist their ability to cope, recover and participate in the Criminal Justice System
3. Demonstrate partnership compliance with the Victims’ Code of Practice

The Police and Crime Commissioner appointed three Victims' Champions to ensure that the voice of the victim is at the centre of everything we do. The Victims' Champions assist the Police and Crime Commissioner to work with partners to ensure delivery of seamless, high quality support for victims that enables them to cope with, and recover from their experience and also participate in the criminal justice system. The Police and Crime Commissioner will ensure compliance with the Code of Practice for Victims of crime, so that victims are aware of and can access their rights. The Police and Crime Commissioner will commission high quality services so that victims have access to a range of specialist support services which respond to the different needs and requirements for them and their families at any point and whether they report to the police or not. Key outcomes for our Police and Crime Commissioner include: Reduced Victimisation; Victims and the vulnerable feel supported; People have confidence in the Police and Criminal Justice System.

Capturing Lived Experiences

The Victims' Champions capture lived experiences through a variety of different methods to inform the Police and Crime Commissioner and wider partners of the victims' voice. These have included gathering statistical information from data sources, monitoring HMIC reports for good practice and areas of improvement in relation to victims, victim satisfaction surveys, one to one meetings with victims to directly listen to their experiences, feedback from scrutiny panels, meetings with community and residents groups as well as feedback from Town, Parish, Borough and County Councillors, engagement with victims' charities and support organisations to capture their first-hand experience. The Victims' Champions listen to the lived experiences of victims so that their voice informs policy, and services can be commissioned with their needs in mind. The Champions:

- Engage with local Criminal Justice agencies to understand their individual and collective (as the Local Criminal Justice Partnership) approach to victims of crime and its efficacy
- Engage with the Victims Commissioner; Association of Police and Crime Commissioners' lead for victims; National Police Chiefs' Council, His Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary, Durham Constabulary, Ministers, All Party Parliamentary Groups and other strategic bodies to ascertain work programmes for local consideration
- Engage with Community Safety Partnerships
- Scrutinise local policy and working practices to ensure victims are at the centre of everything we do
- Scrutinise local compliance with the Victims' Code to ensure victims receive their rights and feel supported and empowered to participate in the CJS and pursue justice
- Through Root Cause Analysis; 'Deep-Dive' research; and targeted surveys, build a body of evidence of victims' experiences, identifying themes, patterns, trends and gaps which can be triangulated and presented to inform policy, planning and commissioning
- Scrutinise the effectiveness of the ASB Case Review on behalf of victims

A great deal of engagement has taken place since the Victims' Champions roles were introduced in December 2021, and progress has been made against each of the areas outlined in the Police and Crime Plan. Progress is reported and regularly monitored through the Police and Crime Panel.

Victims' voices are painting a picture of their experiences and a Root Cause Analysis Group, consisting of representatives of Criminal Justice Agencies, is convened to look at individual case studies and make recommendations to the Local Criminal Justice Board about changes to policies, processes and commissioned services. It can also be fed into training for officers and staff to improve engagement with victims and service delivery, thereby improving confidence and satisfaction. Areas of improvement have been identified including:

better quality and consistency in recording interaction with victims; better Victim's Needs Assessment and Victim's Personal Statement; better Victim Code compliance; correct referrals to Victims Care & Advice Service.

Through listening to victims **and** their needs, victims of ASB are now fully supported through victims' services and the PCC Community Peer Mentor Team despite there being no long term national funding. A joint ASB Strategy has been developed based on 8 key principles and underpinning objectives and adopted by both the Safe Durham Partnership and Darlington Community Safety Partnership for a joined-up approach to tackling ASB. A new three step process to tackling ASB, handling reports and complaints has been introduced including a comprehensive ASB Case Review and appeals process led by the Office for Police and Crime Commissioner to support victims. For the first time in County Durham and Darlington, victims now have the right to attend case reviews or provide victim impact statements. The independent ASB Case Review Appeals Process is the first of its kind nationally, giving victims a greater say in actions taken by agencies to prevent ASB.

Lived Experience Survey

The Victims' Champions developed a lived experience survey for all victims and survivors to put forward their experiences to help inform practice and ultimately help others facing similar situations in the future.

This consultation provided evidence of what victims experienced and it helped the Police and Crime Commissioner to drive change, putting victims at the forefront of commissioned and in-house services. The survey received 77 responses from victims, one for domestic abuse, 6 for crime and 70 from victims of ASB. Further information is available in the report: Anti-Social Behaviour – "Living a Nightmare" in County Durham & Darlington 2023.

The Victims' Champions plan for the survey to form part of a rolling consultation to continually provide feedback to the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Responses from surveys returned suggested victims of crime and domestic abuse are generally happy with the response received from their initial contact with the Force, whilst victims of anti-social behaviour feel their initial contact does not meet their expectations. The reasons listed from ASB victims show a clear disconnect between the public expectations of the service they should receive when reporting anti-social behaviour in comparison to the service they are entitled to or do receive.

What stood out was the detrimental impact on the victims' mental health and well-being which was common throughout all responders.

"Partner does not leave the flat, we have both tried to commit suicide, Taxi's won't come to the address, so this restricts us from leaving the home. We have had numerous takeaways delivered which we didn't order. Impact is horrific."

Emerging Themes

A key part of the Victims' Champions' roles is to hear the 'lived experience' of victims. Often this is an account of their individual 'journey' from their first point of contact, and their experience through the criminal justice process. The detrimental impact this can have on victims of crime and anti-social behaviour is of significant concern.

In its Victims' Strategy, the Government states that victims of crime should not become victims of the criminal justice system too. Sadly, the quotations cited below reflect a not uncommon position. The Victims' Champions use the testimonies of victims to inform service providers and improve policies, planning and commissioned services for victims.

"What is the point in reporting, nothing gets done about it"

"A victim needs consistency. The same officer, better trained in empathy, use of language and reassurance from the outset"

"I was given wrong information, poor information and time delays make you feel like a victim of the process."

"Justice has failed at multiple points. It has failed me. Justice hasn't been done. I am a victim of the Criminal Justice System"

TOP CONCERNS FROM VICTIMS

The Champions found the top concerns from all victims can be placed into three categories:

1. **Reporting & Communication**
2. **Investigative & Criminal Justice Process**
3. **Victim Impact**

Reporting

Communication

Investigative &
Criminal Justice
Process

Victim Impact

1. Reporting & Communication

Reporting and poor communication were the main concerns raised by victims citing several reasons ranging from initial contact, call handling and responses times to ongoing communication about individual cases. There was an apathy in re-reporting where victims had previously encountered poor customer service and the lack of explanation about the investigative and criminal justice processes often led to differences in public expectation and perception versus reality.

Victims' cases of harassment and ASB were often not followed up or they were not given reasons why they were not followed up across all agencies. Often emails re shift patterns and other priorities advising victims that their case is being closed down as time has lapsed and there have been no further reported incidents led to victims losing faith and confidence in reporting.

There is a clear difference between public expectation and current practice. If a member of the public reports an incident to any of the agencies, they expect someone to contact them in a timely manner with an update; and provide updates on what has happened or what is going to happen. Not being able to identify a perpetrator leads to cases being closed with no further action further adding to victim frustration and whilst there is a general acceptance around prioritising high harm and resourcing the question to ask is "why should a victim in County Durham or Darlington receive a different service based on their postcode"? For example, victims in rural areas felt the police do not respond or are unable to, due to lack of resourcing. When they do respond the response is often too late to catch the perpetrators in action.

Whilst there have been some improvements to the 101 service to reduce call handling times and commitment to recruit more call handlers, during high demand times, victims claim they are still waiting up to 50 minutes to get through.

A lot of processes are in place which, if followed, would ensure victims were regularly contacted within agreed timescales and kept updated. However, victims report hearing nothing for weeks and months and having to resort to chasing up officers and staff themselves. The lack of an effective customer relationship management system means greater demand is placed on 101 when victims are seeking an update on their case.

Policing is a busy, complex and demanding business. Officers and staff will be under pressure due to the demands of work, but for a victim, this can be a life changing situation from which many struggle to cope and recover. They need consistency and their rights outlined in the Victims Code of Practice (VCOP) upheld. Police and Criminal Justice agencies need to be able to demonstrate compliance. However, the rights within VCOP does not apply to victims of ASB. The Community Peer Mentors commissioned by the Police and Crime Commissioner provide valuable emotional and practical support to those victims who would otherwise be left to suffer alone. The ASB Victims' Champion and the Victims Commissioner continue to lobby for ASB Victims to be included in the Victims and Prisoners Bill of Rights.

As well as insufficient information, victims refer to a lack of explanation. For instance, many have no previous experience of reporting a crime or anti-social behaviour and have no knowledge of the investigative and criminal justice process which is to follow. For example, why did the police not attend the scene, or only visit the victim several days later, or in some cases not visit at all? Why was some forensic evidence not seized or presented? Why haven't they checked CCTV? Why wasn't a statement taken at the earliest opportunity? Why weren't some witnesses spoken to? Why were some charges preferred to others? Why did the investigation take so long? Why has the case been relisted? What do some sentences mean?

Sometimes the language used by officers and staff within Criminal Justice agencies, however well intended, can have a detrimental impact on victims. Some feel that the warnings given of the 'perils' of the Criminal Justice process ahead is to put them off proceeding with the case. Some feel that the emphasis on Restorative Justice and other Out of Court Disposals, shows more concern for the offender than for them as the victim. Others report none-verbal communications and tone being dismissive, condescending, blasé, feeling like they are wasting police time, over-reacting, their concerns not being taken seriously and worst of all victims blaming. Victims had no choice in becoming a victim. It was done to them. Having choices throughout the investigative and criminal justice processes can empower victims, help them cope and recover. For example, the victim having a choice in whether they are dealt with by a male or female officer in cases of sexual assault; considering Out of Court Disposal Options; consideration of Special Measures; whether to read or have read out for them their Victim Personal Statement.

“If there is a choice then all options need to be explained, discussed and agreed with the victim. If the Officer in Charge prefers a specific option, then the rationale needs to be explained to the victim. No assumptions should be made”.

We know from the National Crime survey that Anti-social behaviour is under reported. In County Durham & Darlington there is a downward trend in reporting anti-social behaviour. However, it is often the case that 'high callers' no longer report through 101, but instead call the neighbourhood police teams and this may account for the downturn in reporting together with apathy around reporting. Also, the way in which ASB is recorded is often a crime so cannot always be traced back or included in ASB statistical analysis. Further work would have to be undertaken to establish the root causes however, anecdotally, the single biggest issue around anti-social behaviour is around poor communication and inconsistent information from all partners.

Victims desire a single front door approach to reporting anti-social behaviour and options for self-service to be kept up to date about progress on their case. Often, they receive an email stating their case is closed or no further action which is common cross agencies with no further information. This adds to the frustration and apathy over the perceived lack of action. Knowing where to report which issues to, was also a problem, with conflicting information on partner websites signposting them elsewhere. Some victims thought ASB was a Police problem and others didn't perceive graffiti, littering and fly tipping as an ASB issue. ASB is often linked to a related crime such as criminal damage further adding to public confusion. Victims felt housing partners have a greater role to play and could be instrumental in preventing and stopping ASB in and around their properties. Improved recording of incidents and quicker action to issue warning notices were cited as needed by victims.

2. Investigative and Criminal Justice Process

In a criminal justice process which involves many independent agencies mistakes will be made. The consistency, empathy, reassurance and support received by a victim can vary greatly and depending on the nature of the case these can have a significantly enhanced impact on victims.

In addition the whole court experience can contribute to the re-traumatisation of a victim:

- Court building ergonomics can place victims face to face with the alleged perpetrator or their family
- Special Measures not in place at court as requested
- Video link allowed victim and suspect to see each other
- Restraining orders not requested
- Compensation not requested
- Victim learning of court result from other than a professional service
- Not referred to a support service until months after the offence

- Referred to the wrong service
- Victim feeling they are being punished rather than the perpetrator
- Victims of ASB not having their day in court due to lack of evidence
- Victims feeling robust action is not present for breaches of bail and breaches of protective orders
- Officers and other professionals “advising victims to obtain their own non-molestation orders”
- Non-molestation order not always pursued - 1 victim advising the DA Champion that 47 breaches had not been acted upon.

However, it is deliberate practices which causes more trauma and anxiety to victims. Re-listing of cases due to over-listing is one such practice which is particularly impactful on victims of rape and serious sexual offences and assault. Support services report some victims being listed for a fourth time! In addition, the gap between findings of guilt and subsequent sentence adds to the anxiety of the victim and an inability to move on. It appears that these systems are for the efficiency of the court, but it risks re-traumatising the victim.

“There’s no appreciation of the building up of trauma. You don’t sleep, you don’t eat properly and it impacts on your physical and mental health”.

The trial date and hearing at court can mark the beginning of the end of a long criminal justice journey. It is unsurprising that victims can become more anxious, having to re-live their victimisation in the hope of seeing justice. However, there are a number of factors which can add to the stress and anxiety of the actual trial:

- The location of the magistrates’ court:** This can be miles from a victim’s home. Is thought given to selecting a Magistrates’ Court which is closest to the victim’s home? Since most public transport links converge in Durham, should a Magistrates Court be sited there?
- The travel to court:** Difficulties arise in getting to court, or arranging child-care, to get there for a 9.30am start. Victims and witnesses may find the public transport with the defendant and family/friends.
- Special Measures:** The importance of identifying a need for special measures and then getting the right one in place to suit the victim and their circumstances. This could be linked to pre-trial visits. For example, a screen where a victim cannot be seen, may be preferable to a video link, where that victim has to return to the same community where the defendant resides.
- Victims with additional needs:** An example was given of a female victim brought up from down south, housed in a hotel overnight and transported to court the following day. She had addiction issues and was on a methadone programme; homeless; no money; no phone credit. A lengthy wait for her case to progress was aggravated by all these issues. Again, the effort appears to be in getting the victim to court to give evidence. Less so with what happens afterwards.
- Court Buildings:** Newton Aycliffe has a single entrance used by victims, witnesses and defendants. Some court waiting rooms have no windows. Toilet access an issue. There is reticence in moving around the court building in case of contact with the defendant or family. The availability of a room if the prosecutor needs to speak with victim or witness can be an issue.

- f. **Court Staffing:** Communication during the court session can be an issue. Information is key to keep victims and witnesses updated. It can be difficult for Witness Service to glean this information if one usher is serving two courts. Similarly the CPS caseload can impact on time available for communication.
- g. **Intimidation in court:** Victims and witnesses can be vulnerable to intimidation in the court building. There are 'chance' encounters with the defendant, their family and friends. There are reports of victims being followed when they leave the building, even photographed.

The above 'pieces of jigsaw' are individually relatively easy to solve and by addressing these then collectively they combine to present a better picture of the victims' journey through the CJS. The PCC has funded some ergonomic changes at courts to keep victims from defendants. Consideration is being given to 'stand-by' arrangements so that a victim only need to come to court at the last minute.

3. Impact on victims' lives

There are some key points from Domestic Abuse victims' feedback:

- Investigations involving coercive control and stalking: some victims didn't feel that officers (who were not specialists in this crime type) understood the complex nature of their abuse, especially with regards to coercive control. In particular, some victims didn't feel confident that officers knew how to evidence the crimes they were reporting. These types of offences involve a pattern of behaviour rather than a single incident on a particular day, and it is vital officers feel confident of the different types of ways they can evidence these crimes, and also understand these types of behaviours are the most dangerous patterns of behaviour.
- Victim Contact: some victims reported not getting timely updates. Where No Further Action was cited, sometimes there was no discussion as to why, or any advice about a Victim's Right to Review.
- Recognition for action for breaches of non-molestation orders; restraining orders; breaches of bail and other breaches of legal protective orders: Some victims reported having to pay privately for legal representation to obtain non-molestation orders as perceived breaches of bail were not acted upon. This puts the onus on a victim to protect themselves and not all can afford to do so. Furthermore, some report breaches of non-molestation orders not being pursued.
- The Domestic Abuse Victims' Champion had concerns that delays in arresting suspects and a reliance of voluntary attendance for interview, left victims unsafe, unprotected by a lack of bail conditions, a feeling of increased risk having reported the abuse and left to manage their own risk.
- 1 in 5 adults experience domestic abuse during their lifetime and so it stands to reason this will include members of the force. Police perpetrated abuse occurs, and often those victims and survivors will be police officers and police staff. Consideration should be given on how best to support our internal staff members. A potential suggestion is to consider an IDVA role which is solely to support officers and staff.

We've heard about victim impact as a result of the investigative and criminal justice process whereby victims don't just suffer as a result of the crime committed and the same can be said for repeat victims of ASB where the cumulative impact increases traumatisation.

The greatest impact on mental health and well-being for repeat victims of ASB derives from neighbourhood disputes. The highest number of reported ASB incidents in County Durham and Darlington are typically in areas of high deprivation with either the victim or the perpetrator living in either registered social housing or private rented accommodation. More often than not these result in counter allegations and escalation from low level

neighbour disputes to more serious crime. When not effectively tackled the victim often becomes the perpetrator taking matters into their own hands. Housing providers and private landlords are key to tackling ASB and there needs to be sufficient powers in place to allow them to take action against non-compliant tenants. Lobbying has taken place around “The Renters (Reform) Bill” and the Government’s white paper proposes to scrap section 21 notices and introduce new powers to protect tenants as well as make it easier for landlords to repossess properties where tenants are at fault for example in cases of anti-social behaviour.

The current criminal justice systems allow victims of repeat ASB and harassment to be retraumatised through the courts, where the perpetrators can use the court system to drag out cases or make counter allegations against victims. An additional issue for victims of ASB and harassment is that ‘thresholds’ for repeated offending or ‘breaches’ seem to them to be too high for police to take action against perpetrators. This is a consistent aspect of those completing victim satisfaction surveys as ‘completely dissatisfied’. The problem is not solved. The problem is ever present. The victimization persists.

For victims of domestic abuse, operational decisions around delaying an arrest or a decision to undergo an investigation first and invite perpetrators in to be voluntary attendees can have a huge impact. This can leave victims unsafe, not protected by bail conditions, and can lead Family Court blind to some of the risks families are facing.

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Achievements

There is some exceptional work ongoing to improve the service to victims of crime and anti-social behaviour. Durham Constabulary has introduced Operation Crystal in response to victims needs:

- Ease of contact
- Arrival time
- Actions taken
- Follow up
- Treatment

“Process Improvements = Victim Improvements”

Operation Crystal is improving investigative standards, crime recording and victim care: improved Victim Needs Assessments; Victim Contact Contracts; Victim Care Finalisation; and Investigation Plans

Durham Constabulary has also introduced a Victims Code of Practice (VCOP) Tracker tool, which identifies the best processes for delivering each of the 12 victims’ rights. Unfortunately, not all victims of anti-social behaviour are entitled to the same victims’ rights under VCOP.

The Victims’ Champions have contributed to the following:

- The introduction of Victim Impact Assessments
- The development of a VCOP compliance tool
- Multi-agency Root Cause Analysis meetings of Victims’ Voices case studies
- A referral mechanism from victims via Witness Service at Courts
- Referral mechanisms from victim support organisations
- Commissioned research into over-listing contributing to re-traumatising of victims of rape and serious sexual offences
- Commissioned research into the experiences of people with cognitive disability through the criminal justice system
- Enlisted ‘Experts through Experience’ as a consultative mechanism
- Enlisted a victim of stranger rape to assist with investigative training
- New Joint ASB Strategy adopted by both Safe Durham Partnership and Darlington Community Safety Partnership
- New three step “Tackling ASB” process adopted by partner agencies
- New interactive signposting tool to get people to the right agency first time
- Introduction of Victim Centric Case Review (formerly Community Trigger) administered by the Office for Police and Crime Commissioner in its entirety
- Introduced an Independent Case Review Appeals Process
- Victim vulnerability and impact assessments when not meeting the threshold for case review Single Point of Contacts identified by each partner agency to lead on ASB
- ASB Scrutiny Panel Terms of Reference drafted
- Memorandum of Understanding Signed with Housing Providers
- Commissioned victim support through Community Peer Mentors

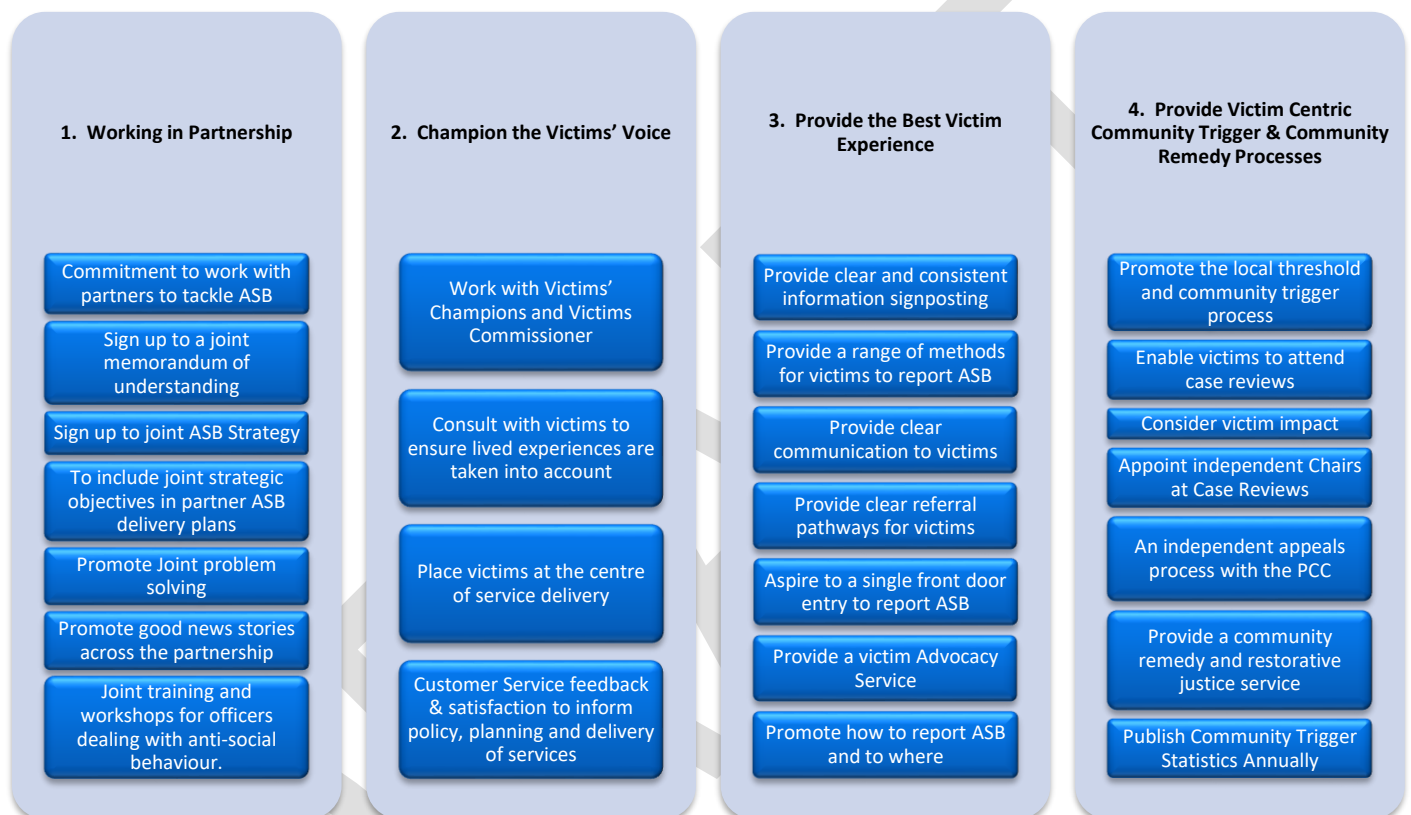
In County Durham and Darlington the Anti-Social Behaviour Champion has worked tirelessly to place victims at the centre of how agencies deal with ASB, working with our partners, the Home Office, Ministers, All Party Parliamentary Groups and ASB Help to ensure that the impact that persistent and repeated ASB has on victims is recognised across the board. In June 2022, new guidance was published on case review and community remedy, closely followed by the Government’s ASB Action Plan in March 2023. The lived experience of victims in County Durham and Darlington has helped to shape new policy, strategy and improved service provision for

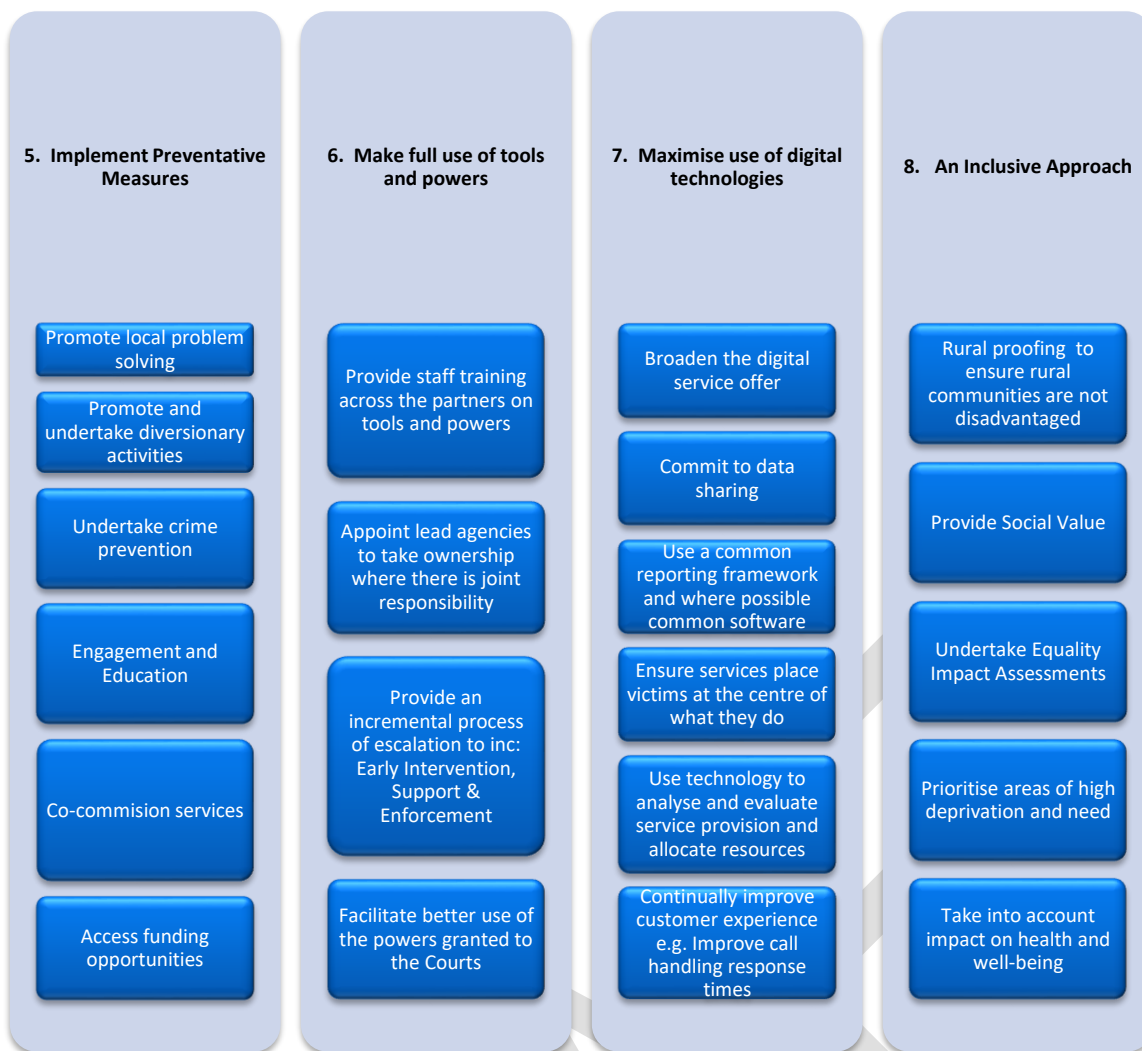
victims both locally and nationally. County Durham and Darlington were named as one of the trailblazer areas for hotspot policing and restorative justice in tackling local ASB. Combined with multiple successful bids to safer streets County Durham and Darlington remain at the forefront nationally in tackling ASB.

1. Joint ASB Strategy

The Joint ASB Strategy in setting out the vision to place victims at the centre of service provision, the Victims Champion for ASB has engaged with many partners to establish key principles and objectives to tackle ASB. Both the Safe Durham Partnership and Darlington Community Safety Partnership have committed to a new joint ASB Strategy and adopted the eight key principles and underpinning objectives.

VISION: Improving Lives through tackling anti-social behaviour ***Eight Principles***





2. One Approach to Tackling ASB

In addition to the joint strategy, we have agreed a new three step “Tackling ASB” process with all partners across both the Safe Durham Partnership and Darlington Community Safety Partnership which incorporates clear signposting for victims to get them to the right agency first time when reporting incidents, setting out clear responsibilities for key agencies including handling complaints when things go wrong. The new approach also gives clear guidance about the ASB case review process which is now administered by the Office for Police and Crime Commissioner in its entirety with dedicated resource and introduction of the first independent appeals process.

3. Improved Signposting and Awareness

Our key partners have signed up to the common information signposting and interactive signposting tool online and are linking into the PCC website across their ICT platforms. We continue to raise awareness of how and where to report ASB with regular campaigns. Our “Don’t Suffer in Silence” Campaign was launched in July 2023 during Anti-Social Behaviour Week, and we continue to build on its success.

4. Case Review (formerly known as Community Trigger)

The **Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014** introduced specific measures to give **victims and communities** the right to request a multi-agency case review where a local threshold is met. In County Durham and Darlington, together with our partners we are leading the way introducing a new process that removes barriers for victims, improves service provision and provides commitment to undertake a case review to determine if more could be done. We are committed to tackling anti-social behaviour from that very first incident, so victims don't need to wait for three incidents to understand how their case is being progressed. We have:

- a three step, tackling ASB process
- committed to having independent Chairs for case review hearings
- introduced victim support for our most vulnerable victims of ASB
- dedicated support for victims going through the case review process
- given victims the opportunity to attend the case review hearings and/or provide victim impact statements
- introduced case review hearings for vulnerable victims not meeting the threshold of three incidents
- introduced a range of methods for victims to initiate the case review process, making it more accessible
- introduced an independent appeals process for case review
- introduced monitoring and evaluation of the case review process

The Police and Crime Commissioner's Office will now actively monitor the case review process, undertake an annual audit and publish case review statistics annually.

5. Community Remedy

The Community remedy approach has recently been reviewed to consider the list of actions which may be chosen by a victim for the perpetrator to undertake in consequence of their behaviour or offending. Consideration should be given to making better use of the community remedy to give victims a say in the out-of-court disposals of perpetrators of less serious crime and anti-social behaviour, including allowing them to consider a restorative justice approach. The Community Remedy should be considered when it is proposed that a perpetrator be given a conditional caution or youth conditional caution as a means of consulting the victim about the possible conditions to be attached to the caution. If the perpetrator fails to comply with a conditional caution or youth conditional caution, they can face court action for the offence.

6. MOU with Housing Providers

The Police and Crime Commissioner signed a memorandum of understanding in March 2022. This has paved the way for closer working relationships and making better use of tools and powers for our housing partners to tackle anti-social behaviour for victims.

Since the signing of the memorandum of understanding working with housing providers has become an integral part of the anti-social behaviour agenda. We know that there is a clear link between anti-social behaviour and areas of high deprivation. By cross referencing the geographical demand from anti-social behaviour data reported to Durham Police, we established the high impact callers and high demand areas

were in those areas with registered social housing, high deprivation, and a high proportion in left behind towns. Successes in partnership working to place anti-social behaviour victims first include:

- Housing partners having a seat at key strategic groups
- Key housing partners working directly with the Victims Champion
- Commitment to sharing information signposting pages to provide clear messaging
- Direct involvement in the case review process and community remedy
- Joint visits and walkabouts to areas of concern

PCC signed March 2022 – MOU insert graphic

“Durham Police and Crime Commissioner, Durham County Council and Housing Associations working in the County will work together to put those experiencing anti-social behaviour first. We will promote awareness, make reporting easier and set out who we are, what we do, and the service those experiencing anti-social behaviour can expect. As partners we will share intelligence, promote joint working and maximise the impact we can have collectively on community safety within County Durham. “

7. Improved Scrutiny and accountability

The Office for Police and Crime Commissioner is currently undertaking a review of scrutiny and accountability to help the PCC hold the force to account. The Champions are supporting the PCC in her public accountability role by engaging at a strategic level to identify issues received first hand from victims. Dealing with a single issue that focuses on the victim gets the attention it deserves and provides insight to senior officers and decision makers to bring about change for the greater good of the victim. The unique insight into the victims’ lived experience is helping PCC to fulfil the victims element of the Police and Crime Plan.

Victims want something good to come out of a bad experience and feel that by contributing they are helping to bring change for other victims who may find themselves in similar situations.

To support the Police and Crime Commissioner in her role in holding Durham Constabulary to account on the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan, a new open and transparent public scrutiny panel for Anti-social behaviour is being considered for 2024. The proposal is for the panel to be made up of volunteers to represent the neighbourhood policing areas across County Durham and Darlington and to be recruited through an open recruitment and selection process to act as independent scrutineers on the anti-social behaviour agenda. The panel will have responsibility for helping the Police and Crime Commissioner monitor performance on anti-social behaviour, auditing case reviews and as act as an independent panel to hear Case Review Appeals on behalf of partners. The panel will have a term of office of a minimum of two years and will be politically restricted.

8. Improved Victim Support

An innovative single ‘Front Door’ approach has been implemented to receive and triage referrals for victims and others that need support across County Durham and Darlington. Replacing multiple and often complicated referral pathways, the new approach provides an opportunity to assess individual needs centrally and in a timely way ensuring the most appropriate support is put in place when it is needed most.

The Front Door incorporates the newly established use of First Contact RASSO Navigators who will offer practical information and conduct an initial needs assessment. They will work closely with our local sexual violence support services to reduce the need for those victims and survivors to have to re- tell their story unnecessarily.

Our award-winning Community Mentor Service also sits behind the Front Door offering support to victims of ASB, to those members of our communities who are vulnerable or isolated together with supporting those that place a high demand on policing services.

This approach allows us to make a pro-active offer of support to victims and witnesses of crime following a charging decision, victim care and restorative justice practitioners that can act as a continuous point of support for those that need help to guide them through the potentially daunting Criminal Justice experience.

Commissioner Allen said "It can be so complicated for victims of crime to access the support they need and often they don't even know what support is available. The Front Door service is there to really make it easy to access support without the complications of a complicated and unclear referral pathway."

Commissioning - RSACC

In August 2022, Commissioner Allen contracted the Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Centre (RSACC) to provide specialist counselling for victims of sexual violence. In procuring the new service the PCC Core budget was used to fund a 3-year contract for the service. The OPCC later welcomed the Ministry of Justice commitment to multi-year funding.

Isabel Owens, CEO of RSACC, said "Securing 3 years funding has allowed us to address the increasing demand for specialist support for survivors of sexual violence. Recruiting counsellors with the expert skills and experience to support survivors is always challenging, but short-term funding adds to this challenge as it only allows us to offer staff short contracts which are not attractive to many. Long term funding allows us to plan how to best use our resources over the coming year to meet the rising demand for support, as we are not working each year to secure funding for the next".

In addition to the multi-year funding commitment, we have sought to encourage a healthy procurement market by working with Go4Growth who support potential bidders through the procurement process and breaking-down larger contracts into smaller geographical lots, making it simpler for a range of providers to compete.

Commissioner Allen said "As Commissioner, I am aware of the unprecedented demand being placed on services supporting survivors of these most awful crimes. I hope that by affording these organisations funding stability we can start to address demand and use resources to develop sustainable provisions that best meet the needs of future victims."

9. Witness service

The Victims' Champion regularly liaises with the Regional lead for the Citizens Advice Bureau Witness Service and with Witness Service staff at the Magistrates and Crown Courts. There is now an agreed referral process via the 'Front Door' where triage is undertaken by the Victim Care and Advice Service manager.

10. Victims and Prisoners Bill

The draft Victims and Prisoners' Bill is, at the time of writing, progressing through Parliament, with Royal Assent expected in Spring 2024.

"...our vision is to see a cultural shift so that victims' experiences become central to the way our society thinks about and responds to crime, with five critical elements for delivering a world-class service to victims"

1. Amplifying victims' voices in the Criminal Justice Process
2. Increasing the transparency of the performance of criminal justice agencies
3. Ensuring there are clear lines of oversight for when victims are treated poorly
4. Supporting victims to rebuild their lives through accessible and professional services and ensuring that criminals pay more to support these services.
5. Ensuring there are better tools to protect victims and prosecute criminals

"We will amplify victims' voices and make sure victims are at the heart of the criminal justice system"

- Enshrine the overarching principles of the Victims' Code of Practice in primary legislation
- Include Community Impact Statements in Victims Code Of Practice

"We will strengthen transparency and oversight of criminal justice agencies at local and national level so that victims' experiences support them to engage, and remain"

- Introduce a duty for CJ agencies to collect data and keep under review their compliance with the Victims' Code and to take into account feedback from victims about their experiences to contextualise and add to Code compliance data
- A duty for PCCs to take a convening role in monitoring compliance locally so there can be a better view of how the system treats victims
- Ensure regular joint thematic inspections by criminal justice inspectorates take place on victims' issues with ratings for agencies on how victims are treated and processes in place for agencies which inspectorates rate poorly
- Require the Victims' Commissioner to lay their annual report in Parliament and require relevant agencies and departments to respond to recommendations and to enhance scrutiny of actions being taken
- Simplify complaints processes for victims against agencies and when escalating them to Ombudsman. Police, CPS Courts to report annually on victims' complaints and resolution
- Introduce a joint statutory duty on PCCs, local authorities and health bodies to collaborate when commissioning support services (Domestic Abuse; Sexual and serious violence) so that services are more holistic and better coordinated. Expectation PCCs will play a convening role.
- Publication of a Local Commissioning Strategy, with special consideration of service needs of victims who may experience barriers to using generic support services
- Introduce a statutory definition for ISVAs and IDVAs to raise profile, professional standing and greater collaboration with other agencies. Standardised guidance for commissioning services with a duty for those that work with ISVAs and IDVAs to have regard of the guidance.

“When a victim reports a crime, they should rightly expect to see justice served. We want to empower victims so that they are able to have more confidence in the criminal justice system and remain engaged in the process, enabling more offenders to be brought to justice”

- Introduce a duty in victims’ code requiring CPS to meet with victims in certain cases before a hearing takes place, where the victim is willing to do so
- Review information in Victims’ Code about the Victims’ Right to Review
- Reduce delays in CJS and reduce impact of delays
- Increased and sustainable funding (Victims’ Funding Strategy)
- Develop a Best Practice Framework for RASSO cases in Crown Court

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Opportunities for Change

There are many opportunities for change to improve the victims' journeys and their experiences.

1. Changing existing working practices

- Existing working practices of individual criminal justice agencies eg, court listing practices
- Improved communication on all levels from beginning to end
- Tackling the failure to adequately respond to 101 phone calls quickly especially during peak times
- Introduce PIP2 trained officers to have oversight on all stalking and coercive control investigations
- Introduce a process to identify "repeats" ie repeat victims and repeat breaches
- Introduce specialised Officers/supervisors to oversee the next steps of repeat victims and/or repeat breaches e.g. for stalking
- Have DVAs and ISVAs present during Officer training
- Officers spending time in the domestic abuse and sexual violence services would assist them in understanding the roles more

2. Introduce an Independent Victim Care HUB

Give consideration to introducing an independent Victim Care HUB for when victims are not getting the right or "good" response, and they need someone to intervene to improve the response. This type of model could have huge advantages and would ensure victims become reengaged again in the criminal justice system. The complaints process does not help these victims who need their live investigation to improve, the complaints process is formal, lengthy and is often focussed around whether processes were followed following the end of an investigation.

Victims often do not want to complain, they just want their investigation to improve and their experience to feel better whilst it is happening. The Victim care HUB could also support officers who may be under considerable pressure themselves with the investigation to ensure that victims have a dedicated named contact who they know they can contact for updates and this is their sole responsibility. This would also be a valuable service for VCAS, IDVAs and ISVAs to be able to link into, rather than possibly tracking to track down individual officers in the case.

There are examples where victims have been updated by e-mail often during the night that their case has been closed with no further action, without discussions as to why, or how to complete a Victims Right to Review. Whilst there may be operational reasons why an officer may do this during a night shift, having a dedicated Victim Case HUB can ensure these updates are done with more sensitivity and discussion as to reasons why so victims can make an informed choice about whether to pursue a Victims Right to Review. E-mail updates to tell a domestic abuse victim there is no further action is not appropriate, and discussions around ongoing support, VRR and current risk should be reviewed at this point.

3. Making better use of ICT

- Monitored CCTV is a must to give Officers direct access to local intelligence to help identify perpetrators and collate evidence

- Investment in new modern ICT platforms to enable better case management, information signposting, reporting and analytical capabilities to provide greater efficiencies.
- A single front door Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system for victims to fully engage, report and “Self-serve”
- Opportunities for agencies to improve information sharing by making better use of common/shared ICT platforms

4. Making Better Use of Tools and Powers

- Increase the use of tools such as selective licensing for Social Landlords and expand areas as it doesn't cover all areas – Example Top 20 ASB areas. Continue to lobby for reform and greater tools and powers under the Renters Bill.
- In legislation PCSOs have the same tools and powers as Police Officers, however contractual arrangements often prevent them from being maximised. Consider contractual changes and a career progression pathway and increased powers for PCSOs
- To enable them to direct progression through to Police Constables to enable more efficiency and less hand over. This will help with staff retention and provide progression and advancement for PCSOs

5. Resourcing

- Investment in dual “on/off road bikes” for Operation Endurance
- Investment in suitable CRM for victim journey, reporting and self service e.g. Salesforce
- Increase investment in Neighbourhood Policing. Neighbourhoods know their localities and are best placed to deal with ASB and local crime. They provide continuity and reassurance to victims.

Continue to lobby for increased resourcing Nationally including:

- Rural services delivery grants
- Funding for areas of deprivation
- Less “sticking plaster” approaches with one off funding streams
- More investment in neighbourhood policing

6. Changes in Legislation

- Changes in legislation to be more victim centric and include Victim Impact Assessments. Both the Victims and Prisoners' Bill and the Victims code of practice excludes victims of persistent anti-social behaviour. The victims code of practice should be revised to recognise the impact on victims of persistent ASB and afford them the same entitlement to victim support as all other victims of crime.
- Case Review thresholds set locally doesn't help the victim – geographical areas are not co-terminous with other statutory partners for example housing. In the interests of victims one National threshold should be set for all.
- Changes in legislation repealing the Vagrancy Act – options to replace should consider offenders as victims and like the Darlington model, consider empathy, engagement, education and support as options before enforcement.
- Renters (Reform) Bill – greater powers for landlords to take action against tenants committing ASB

- A legal requirement for Local Authorities, Police and Crime Commissioners, Police and housing associations to display accurate guidelines on the Case Review prominently on their websites and notice boards and publications, enabling all victims to seek help.
- A call for the Home Office to consider replicating legal powers available to police in Scotland who can serve warnings, fines and seize noisy equipment.
- With multiple independent agencies involved in the criminal justice system, it is imperative that their interoperability is constantly under review so that marginal gains can be identified, with these often small changes having a significant positive impact on a victim's journey.

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Next Steps

The Champions have collectively identified areas of improvement required to enhance the victims' journey, it is now up to the agencies and the respective community safety partnerships to respond and introduce measures to bring about change.

There is an overwhelming need for the Champions to remain an independent voice of victims to ensure lived experiences are taken into account when deciding on policy, strategic approaches and overall service delivery. The Champions see their role as raising awareness, allowing agencies to respond locally and where national input is required, the Police and Crime Commissioner will seek reform - "The Three R's"

THE THREE R's



The Champions will continue to lobby on behalf of victims and continue to advocate victims rights.

TOP TEN ASKS – Victims of Anti-Social Behaviour

1. Victims and Prisoners' Bill and the Victims code of practice to include repeat victims of anti-social behaviour
2. Fair funding for Police Forces to allow for greater investment in neighbourhood policing. Funding should take into consideration, rurality, deprivation and need and be based on actual levels of crime and anti-social behaviour
3. Funding to support victims of anti-social behaviour not just crime.
4. A single front door for victims to report anti-social behaviour which can be triaged
5. One National recording system for all agencies, to enable effective case management, early identification of repeat victims, greater intelligence gathering, improved data analysis and effective customer relationship management
6. One National threshold for entitlement to case reviews
7. Legislation to: provide greater powers to landlords; and to make landlords more accountable for their tenants
8. Improved access to public health services for victims i.e. mental health services
9. Improved Court escalation processes ie to be much quicker and more robust, so offenders see the consequences of their actions and victims feel justice is served
10. Introduction of a multi-agency inspection framework for tackling ASB for improved accountability

TOP TEN ASKS – Victims of Crime

1. Re-introduce HMCTS Inspectorate.
2. Victim Impact Assessments to be adopted by all CJ agencies and relevant HMG Departments when developing policies, processes, and practises.
3. Specialist RASSO Courts.
4. Review of Court locations so that they are more easily accessible by public transport.
5. Review of court ergonomics and set compulsory standards, e.g., separate entrances for complainant and defendant.
6. Review of Court Listing Policies.
7. Review of expenses payments for Court attendance, so that there are no upfront costs for victims.
8. Victim access to support services at time of need (e.g., counselling waiting lists unacceptable for victims to cope and recover).
9. Extension of s.28.
10. Review of Protection from Harassment Act (so that it has more impact for neighbour disputes).

Top 10 ASKS – Victims of Domestic Abuse

1. Legal aid for all victims of domestic abuse (and not means tested) as victims and survivors not eligible for legal aid are getting into significant debts / or needing to self-represent and face their abusers without legal representation in the Family Courts.
2. Ensuring that migrant victims with No recourse to public funds can access domestic abuse services including Refuge
3. Appropriate Funding to ensure victims have access to specialist independent domestic abuse services who can support them all the way through the Criminal Justice Journey including from the point of report to the outcome (whether this be via conviction and sentence or specialist support for victims to request reviews of decisions)

4. Recognition of domestic abuse as a health issue – funding to ensure health professionals have specialist domestic abuse training for further opportunities for disclosure and support for early intervention and to prevent escalation.
5. National register for stalking and domestic abuse serial perpetrators.
6. Ensuring all stalking victims have access to a stalking specialist. Stalking is a complex crime, and victims must be supported by specialist advocates who have expertise in the area.
7. Perpetrators of coercive control and stalking to lose parental rights over child where it has been deemed not in the child bests interest to have contact (cannot keep controlling parenting decisions against the child and safe parent’s wishes)
8. A specialist training package on coercive control and how to evidence it to be mandatory for all professionals dealing with victims of domestic abuse (including police, CPS, judiciary, children’s services etc)
9. All professionals dealing with victims of domestic abuse to have trauma informed training.
10. Review of court ergonomics and set compulsory standards, e.g., separate entrances for complainant and defendant. Video link to be allowed including in Family Court.

Further Information

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

Email contact general.enquiries@durham-pcc.gov.uk

Possible links to:

- Police and crime plan link
- Annual report link
- Victims Commissioner Office Report “Living a Nightmare?”
- Government ASB Action Plan
- Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour