



VICTIMS' CHARTER AND VICTIMS' BOARD

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide members of the Panel with an overview of how the Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) Victims' Charter and Victims' Board support and enhance the delivery of the Victims' Code of Practice and the Witness Charter.

2. BACKGROUND

The revised Victims' Code of Practice came into force in November 2015. The code sets out several key responsibilities for the criminal justice system (CJS), which primarily focus on providing victims the right information at the right time. In addition the Code sets out the requirement that the CJS will conduct a needs assessment to identify what additional support may be required and for agencies to signpost victims to relevant services. Furthermore the Code enshrines a victims' right to make a victim personal statement.

The Witness Charter, which came into effect in December 2013, sets out 13 standards of care for how the CJS will treat all victims and witnesses.

However, both the Victims' Code of Practice and the Witness Charter fall short of enshrining a victims' ability to access services designed to help them cope and recover. The PCC is seeking to address this by developing a commissioning framework designed to provide a victim with access to the support they need, when they need it.

3. VICTIMS' CHARTER

As part of his first 100 days of office the PCC pledged to create a Victims Charter which would simply and clearly set out his commitment to ensure that victims and witnesses are treated with dignity and respect and receive the care and support that they require.

Between May and July 2016 the PCC carried out public consultation seeking to identify the priorities of victims of crime. The results of the consultation were used to develop the charter which was finalised and published in August 2016.

The Charter sets out the PCC's commitment to victims of crime. It builds on both the Victims' Code of Practice and the Witness Charter by setting out the PCC's vision for ensuring that victims not only receive the right information at the right time, but that they also have access to the support that they need. The Charter also pledges to

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support victims of crime regardless of whether they have reported to the Police or not and the governance of the charter will be conducted through the Victims Board.

A table is attached at Appendix A which maps out the pledges made in the Victims' Charter against key objectives set out in the Victims' Code of Practice and the Witness Charter. A copy of the Victims' Charter is also attached.

4. VICTIMS' BOARD

To provide the PCC with the assurance that the police and partner agencies are complying with the standards set out with the Victims' Code of Practice, the Victims' Charter and the Witness Charter, a Victims Boards has been established.

The Victims' Board will bring together partnership and agency leads and information. In addition, the Victims' Board will act as a strategic partnership board to assess the service provision in place to help a victim cope and recover. The board will direct activity designed to improve service delivery within the criminal justice system. The board will also monitor and make recommendations to improve a victims' ability to access services. The board will make recommendations to the PCC regarding potential gaps in service requiring future investment.

The first meeting of the Victims Board is on 24th November 2016 and it will meet on a quarterly basis following this. Membership of the Board includes senior representatives from the Police, Crown Prosecution Service, National Probation Service, HM Courts Service, Victim Support, the Witness Service, Public Health England and the third sector. A copy of the Board's Terms of Reference are attached at Appendix B.

All future meeting papers, to include assurance frameworks, delivery plans and performance management information will be published on the PCC's website.

5. CONCLUSION

Both the Victims' Charter and Victim's Board are designed to enhance and ensure that victims of crime are treated with dignity and respect, that they receive the right information at the right time and have access to support services designed to help them cope and recover. It is also designed to emphasise the need for partnership working with many other services/partners to reduce re-victimisation.

The Victims' Charter enshrines the PCCs commitment to victims and the Victims' Board will provide the PCC with the appropriate governance arrangements designed to ensure that partners and agencies are held to account for delivering outcomes.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the Panel are asked to note this report.

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APPENDIX A Comparison Map

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	Victims' Charter	Victims' Code of Practice	Witness Charter	Overlaps
1	Provision of Information and Tailored Support to help victims cope and recover	Provision of timely information to victims of crime	Provision of timely information to witnesses	VC overlaps with both VCoP and WC re: information provision. Nothing in VCoP or WC re: tailored support (except signposting)
2	Provide leadership to reduce re-victimisation			No overlap. Neither VCoP or WC set out an obligation to reduce re-victimisation
3	Equal access to tailored support, whether they have reported the crime or not	Provision of special measures and information re; services and signposting support services	Outlines CJS provision of special measures and additional support if giving evidence at court	Some overlaps with signposting to support services, but neither the VCoP or WC set out any obligation regarding access to services
4	Treat victims with respect, without prejudice and acknowledge vulnerabilities	Need and risk assessments, vulnerability, enhanced service and special measures	Treated with dignity and respect at all times, needs assessments, special measures,	Some overlap with the WC re: treatment of victims and witnesses.
5	Ensure victims have the chance to make a VPS and given support to make one if needed.	Entitled to make a VPS and have it read out in Court		Clear overlap with VCoP. Nothing in WC re: making a VPS.
6	Kept up to date re: case progression, court hearings and outcomes	Kept up to date: Police investigation, arrest, bail conditions, out of court disposals, decision to take NFA, charging decisions, court dates, court outcomes, appeals, release (if under the VCS)	Named point of contact, kept informed at all stages as the case progresses through the CJS.	Clear overlap with VCoP and WC. Both the VCoP and WC set out clear expectations and obligations that service providers keep victims and witnesses informed and updated.
7	Ensure victims receive a timely response from the police	Acknowledgement of the reported crime and subsequent updates to specific timescales	Kept informed by main contact re: case progression	Clear overlap with VCoP and WC. Both VCoP and WC cover this objective.
8	Ensure if property is seized as evidence it will be treated with respect and returned as quickly as possible.			No overlap. Neither the VCoP or WC include anything regarding seized property.
9	Listen to and understand issues and if necessary support the complaints process	Provide information regarding how and who to complain to.	Provide information on how to complain, signpost to relevant agency or national body	VCoP and WC only require agencies to signpost to relevant authority.

APPENDIX B Victims' Board Terms of Reference

Meeting:	Police and Crime Commissioner's – Victims Board
Purpose of group:	To improve outcomes and services for victims
Frequency:	Quarterly
Chair:	Police and Crime Commissioners
Members:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police and Crime Commissioners • Head of Commissioning, OPCC West Mercia • ACC Local Policing and Operational Support • Head of Criminal Justice – Warwickshire & West Mercia Police • Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutor - CPS • Assistant Chief Officer – NPS • Head of Service – West Mercia YOS • Regional Manager – NPS • Clerk to the Justices – HMCTS • Crown Court Representative - HMCTS • SSOCG – Chair • Strategic MARAC Board Chair • Regional Manager – Victim Support • Regional Manager – Witness Service • Public Health Representative – WCC • PHE Regional Commissioner • Criminal Justice Manager – OPCC
Core terms of reference:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that victims are at the heart of the criminal justice system. • To coordinate victim services and pathways which help victims cope and recover • To identify strategic priorities and align services and approaches • To champion the provision of enhanced support for the most vulnerable victims and witnesses. • To ensure that victims and witnesses receive the right information at the right time • To act on recurring concerns about victims in the CJS. • To identify and resolve issues regarding policies and processes relating to victims • To make sure services and approaches are aligned to strategic priorities • To provide a forum for strategic evidence and data sharing, review and problem solving • To ensure compliance with the Victims Code of Practice

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Input to meeting - as required:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic reports related to victim and witness issues as required. • Performance management information, related to victims and witnesses • Audits and inspections related to victim services • Issues and risk escalated from members and organisations • Commissioning updates related to victim services • Internal and external reviews related to victims and witnesses
Output from meeting:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record of actions and decisions • Delivery and action plan updates
Linked meetings:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Mercia Criminal Justice Board • PCC – Crime Reduction Board • WCC – Strategic Domestic Violence Forum • Police and Crime Panel • Strategic Sexual Assault Coordinating Group • Local Authority Domestic Abuse Forums • MAPPA • MARAC • EVODA • Strategic RJ Programme Board
Meeting support:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dates, meeting content and agenda – West Mercia OPCC • Minutes and action records – West Mercia OPCC