



Office of the Police and Crime

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Rt Hon James Cleverly MP

Home Secretary

2 Marsham Street

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14 February 2024

Dear Home Secretary

HMICFRS Report: An inspection of how well the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Probation Service support victims of crime.

Under Section 55(5) of the Police Act 1996, as Police and Crime Commissioner I am pleased to provide my formal response to the report by HMICFRS entitled 'An inspection of how well the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Probation Service support victims of crime.'

Both the Chief Constable and I welcome the publication of this report and the Chief Constable's responses to the recommendations are shown at Appendix 1.

The Cambridgeshire Criminal Justice Board (CCJB), of which I am Chair, has a role in understanding how partners from across the criminal justice system comply with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime. While there is still a lot of work to be done to embed this into day-to-day practice across the criminal justice system, positive steps are being taken at the strategic level to bring about change. In particular I am

pleased with the Constabulary's development of a dashboard to further understand local performance, monitor Victims' Code compliance to help drive improvements to the victim experience.

Locally we have re-emphasised the importance of incorporating the 'voice of the victim' into discussions. This has been achieved through including short case studies of victim experiences. The Board has found these inputs to be impactful as they highlight the effects that system-wide issues have on individual victims and how this shapes their perception of the local criminal justice system.

As stated in my Police and Crime Plan, I am committed to protecting vulnerable people and ensuring that victims and witnesses are placed at the heart of the criminal justice system, commissioning services to support them.

I currently fund 13 separate victim and witness support services – some for multiple streams of work. This includes specialist posts such as Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs) and Independent Sexual Violence Advocates (ISVAs). By the end of the four-year period (up to March 31, 2025) £10.2 million will have been invested into support services for victims and witnesses of crime in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. This is made up of central government grants (awarded and successful bids) and crucial contributions from local statutory agencies. My office is also working closely with the Integrated Care Board to explore increased funding into supporting victims of historic sexual abuse.

I hope this response, and that of the Chief Constable, provides reassurance regarding the commitment of both me and Cambridgeshire Constabulary to improving how partners across the criminal justice system work together to support victims of crime.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Darryl Preston', with a stylized 'D' and 'P'.

Darryl Preston

Police and Crime Commissioner for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Enc - Appendix 1 – Cambridgeshire Constabulary's response to HMICFRS report
'An inspection of how well the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and the
Probation Service support victims of crime.'

Cambridgeshire Constabulary's response to HMICFRS report 'An inspection of how well the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Probation Service support victims of crime.'

Recommendations:

Recommendation 1

By 31 December 2024, the Ministry of Justice, Home Office and Attorney General's Office should work together to use this inspection as the basis for a broader and fundamental review of the experience of victims of crime, involving other Government departments and agencies as necessary. Such a review could draw on evidence from this inspection and look more broadly at how best to include information on all services available to victims of crime, seeking to improve the availability of access for victims and the consistency of the service they receive. It could also seek to promote better sharing of information about positive practice and initiatives aimed at improving the victim experience.

Force response: This recommendation is for the Ministry of Justice, Home Office, and Attorney General's Office.

Recommendation 2

By 30 September 2024, the Ministry of Justice should develop Victims' Code performance metrics and reporting systems. These should include how criminal justice bodies engage with victims and the quality of the engagement. Performance metrics should also include measures of how well criminal justice bodies obtain feedback from victims and how well they use this to assess the quality of engagement and improve the quality of services. By 31 March 2025, the Ministry of Justice should implement these performance metrics and reporting systems across criminal justice bodies.

Force response: This recommendation is for the Ministry of Justice.

Recommendation 3

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

Force response: Cambridgeshire Constabulary welcomes the development of minimum standards for the completion of victim needs assessments and will implement once created. In the meantime, our current Initial Victims Needs Assessment (IVNA) itself identifies, across a seven-point question set, what the essential needs and vulnerabilities of every victim of crime and ensures we have a clear picture from the outset of how we can best meet these needs within, and during the investigation that follows. This is, of course, not an end in itself and the inclusion of the Victims Code of Practice (VCOP) and victim care focus pillar within the wider Project Sherlock (our investigative standards improvement strategy) ensures an audited scrutiny of our force-wide victim care performance across an enhanced set of metrics. In its simplest form, we audit officer compliance with the mandatory completion of IVNA's and the onward referral to our Victim and Witness Hub and specialist support services. This is then further and more broadly scrutinised through the tracking of all aspects of VCOP and a myriad, bespoke investigative and victim care elements such as quality and timeliness of reviews, frequency and appropriateness of victim contact and level of victim care as well as capture of victims' wishes on progress and disposal. This VCOP focus includes a specific VCOP dashboard – which also currently sits within the Custody Performance Report. As referenced above, this ensures we can track not just IVNA completion rates, but also Victim and Witness Hub referral rates and mandatory VCOP updates, aimed at monitoring compliance across the entirety of the Victims Code of Practice.

During 2024, we plan to evolve this VCOP dashboard through a PowerBI version which is currently being developed by our Corporate Performance Department and will enable specific searching and assessment of granular data and performance. Additionally, in the year ahead, we will continue to track compliance through the Victim Delivery Group and Investigation Standards Department with reporting into the force Crime Standards Delivery Group, and from there into the Force Performance Board.

We will also be repeating and expanding our VCOP training among student officers and staff as well as ensuring continuation of our Victim Care and Vulnerability sections within our Continued Professional Development (CPD) curriculum. Our provision and performance around victim needs and victim satisfaction will be further enhanced by the introduction of a two-month ‘Victim Voice’ engagement to capture more fully the experience and views of the victim during investigations that have continued through the two-month stage, to increase confidence and direct onward performance. We will also be piloting an online victim satisfaction questionnaire within a broad selection of appropriate investigations to ensure we can track individual officer performance around victim engagement and in doing so can encourage and direct better, more frequent, and more empathetic victim support and interaction.

Recommendation 4

By 30 September 2024, the National Police Chiefs’ Council and the Crown Prosecution Service should agree minimum standards and consistent processes for how witness care units or functions communicate with the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and victims to help effective, agile and timely information sharing so that victims’ needs are met.

Force response: This recommendation is for the National Police Chiefs’ Council and the Crown Prosecution Service.

Recommendation 5

By 31 December 2024, the National Police Chiefs' Council should work with His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service to make sure all eligible victims are referred to the Victim Contact Scheme.

Force response: This recommendation is for the National Police Chiefs' Council and His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service.

Recommendation 6

By 30 September 2024, the Probation Service should provide training on the work of the Victim Contact Scheme to all probation practitioners and those in training.

The learning should include:

- what is involved in the Victim Contact Scheme; and
- how probation practitioners work with victim liaison officers to keep victims safe.

Force response: This recommendation is for the Probation Service.