



**6 February 2024**

**Police and Crime Commissioner for Dyfed-Powys response to**

**Meeting the Needs of Victims in the Criminal Justice System: An inspection of how well the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Probation Service support victims of crime**

I welcome this report and its recommendations. Effectively meeting the needs of victims across the criminal justice system is essential to provide them with the best opportunity to cope and recover.

I acknowledge the findings set out within the report and am reassured that discussions are ongoing locally and at an all-Wales level in relation to a number of the recommendations put forward.

Whilst just one of the six recommendations includes a specific ask of Chief Constables, all recommendations will impact upon the future work of both my Office and Dyfed-Powys Police (DPP). I have therefore set out my thoughts on all recommendations as well as assurances received from the DPP Chief Constable, Dr Richard Lewis at a meeting of my Policing Board on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024.

**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.**

This recommendation has been registered on DPP's HMICFRS portal and a Chief Inspector from the Criminal Justice Department has been appointed as lead to ensure progress is made.

The governance will sit under the Strategic Criminal Justice, Custody, Intelligence and Investigation Board where an update will be required at every meeting. My office will monitor progress through attendance at this meeting.

I am aware of the Force's ongoing work to improve victim service as a result of an area for improvement set out within the DPP PEEL 2023-25 inspection findings. This work is closely aligned to the above recommendation, encompassing awareness raising and upskilling on the completion of victim needs assessments. Since the inspection the Force has circulated guidance to staff on the completion of the victim needs assessment template; and undertaken dip sampling on several aspects of incident response and investigation, including victim needs assessments. This ensures that common issues and errors made are fed back to officers.



### **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.**

I welcome any opportunities for my Office to feed into any such review. Similarly, the Chief Constable agrees that the Force should engage with the review if required to do so. Officers on the frontline and in specialist departments will have valuable insight to share and will be glad to advocate on behalf of the victims they work hard to get justice for.

I would also emphasise the importance of including victims and survivors in the review. It is essential to hear directly from those with lived experiences. The Dyfed-Powys Victim Engagement Forum is co-ordinated by my Office, and I would encourage engagement with our Forum members, whom have all been affected by crime, for feedback on their experiences as part of the review.

My Office also works closely with the Mid and West Wales Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Partnership, which has a Survivor Advisory Panel whose members could also be approached as part of the wider review.

### **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.**

Whilst I am in support of the introduction of performance metrics, we must not wait until March 2025 to scrutinise performance against the Victims' Code. Locally, discussions continue between DPP and my Office in relation to important ongoing Victim Code of Practice (VCOP) compliance scrutiny activity.

In addition to this, my Office and DPP are involved in conversations at an all-Wales level, through the Criminal Justice Board for Wales, as to what current VCOP compliance activity ought to look like whilst we await the Ministry of Justice's performance metrics.



The Criminal Justice Board for Wales brings together criminal justice agencies and devolved partners across Wales to work collaboratively on common issues and challenges; VCOP compliance being one of these. It has been agreed that each organisation will share their individual VCOP compliance data with Police and Crime Commissioners, to be discussed at our Local Criminal Justice Boards. This will increase transparency and accountability of VCOP compliance by all.

Importantly, at this all-Wales level, consideration is also being given to a scrutiny approach which will effectively capture the quality of the victims' experience in a way in which the quantitative VCOP compliance data will not be able to. In the coming months, a new qualitative scrutiny approach will be introduced via our LCJBs whereby we will be able to test whether agencies' compliance with VCOP results in a better overall experience for victims. The Criminal Justice Board for Wales is liaising with Ministry of Justice colleagues to ensure our Wales-wide approach will be in line with their research.

#### **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.**

My Office recently co-ordinated a domestic abuse attrition workshop with criminal justice and support service partners, where the reasons for victim withdrawal of support were discussed. Suggestions as to how attrition could be reduced were put forward and are now being actioned by all involved. This piece of work is being co-ordinated within each of the four Welsh police force areas and will enable national consideration of common themes.

Of specific relevance to this inspection, workshop attendees highlighted the importance of effective communication between criminal justice organisations and support services. This ensures all have the relevant knowledge and awareness of victim services, enabling them to better advise victims and ensure victims' needs are met.

#### **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.**

My thoughts on this recommendation have been captured below, within my response to recommendation 6.



### **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.**

Discussions were also had at the above-mentioned workshop in relation to the Victim Contact Scheme: a lack of awareness of the Scheme, by both criminal justice agencies and victims, was highlighted as a potential reason for attrition.

An action from the workshop was for staff at the Victim Contact Scheme to work with criminal justice partners to raise awareness of the Scheme. This will assist with the asks under Recommendations 5 and 6, ensuring all eligible victims across the Dyfed-Powys area are referred to the Victim Contact Scheme.

I will continue to scrutinise the Force's progress against Recommendation 3 specifically, as well as the work undertaken locally and at an all-Wales level against the remaining recommendations.