



APPENDIX A

# **VICTIMS AND WITNESSES STRATEGY**





## **VICTIMS AND WITNESSES STRATEGY**

### BACKGROUND

- PCC Priority for Victims
- Police and Crime Plan Priorities

### OVERALL AIM

### PRINCIPLES

- Consultative
- Evidence based
- Collaborative
- Governance and Delivery

### LOCAL CONTEXT (Appendix A)

- Domestic Abuse Services
- Early Intervention
- Restorative Justice

### NATIONAL CONTEXT

- Getting it right for Victims
- Swift & Sure Justice
- Revised Code of Practice for Victims Services
- Revised Witness Charter
- EU Directive on the Rights, Support and Protection of Victims of Crime
- Ministry Of Justice Commissioning Framework

### REVISED CODE OF PRACTICE FOR VICTIMS / WITNESS CHARTER

### OUTCOMES FOR VICTIMS AND WITNESSES

Key Aims and Outcomes of the Strategy

APPENDIX A: - Local Context



## **VICTIMS AND WITNESSES STRATEGY**

### **BACKGROUND**

This Strategy sets out my vision for an ambitious programme to transform victim and witnesses services in Lancashire. It sets out how I intend to deliver my manifesto commitment to 'Champion the Rights of Victims', as set out in my first Police and Crime Plan and the five Victim Pledges which I signed up to shortly after becoming Lancashire's first Police and Crime Commissioner. These were:

- Be open and accountable to victims and witnesses, seeking out and acting on their views;
- Ensure that victims and witnesses get the high quality help and support they need, when they need it;
- Make the police more victim-focused and more effective at meeting their needs;
- Give victims and witnesses an effective voice in the wider criminal justice system;
- Constantly work to develop new ways of delivering justice for victims.

This Strategy is linked to the priorities I detailed in my Police and Crime Plan including:

Defending Front Line Policing

Protecting Vulnerable People

Targeted Initiatives to tackle Crime and Reoffending

My statutory duty to work with criminal justice partners to secure an effective and efficient criminal justice system, together with my duty to consult with victims means that I will have a key role in securing improvements in services for victims and witness and an exciting opportunity to explore the potential to work differently to achieve improved outcomes.

Clive Grunshaw - Police and Crime Commissioner for Lancashire



## OVERALL AIM

The overarching aim of my strategy for Victims and Witnesses is to put the voice of victims and witnesses at the heart of the service, simplify and improve the victim and witness experience by developing the best possible provision for victims and witnesses in Lancashire to:

- Prevent re victimisation;
- Protect victims and witnesses from further harm;
- Support victims to cope and recover

## STRATEGY PRINCIPLES

There are a number of key principles that have been adopted in developing this strategy:

**Consultation** – seeking views of victims and witnesses, service providers and partners to understand and improve victim and witness services.

**Evidence based** – building a picture of the current victim and witness experience, identifying what works, areas for improvement, gaps and duplication to inform recommendations for the future.

**Collaborative** – working with criminal justice agencies, the judiciary, voluntary and community sector providers and end users to develop a ‘whole system’ approach to victim care; recognising and developing the respective roles in improving services for victims.

**Governance** – to support the delivery of the Strategy the Commissioner will establish a ‘Victims and Witnesses Strategy & Delivery Reference Forum’, chaired by Saima Afzal, Assistant Police and Crime Commissioner, with representatives from statutory agencies, service providers and user groups.

## LOCAL CONTEXT

The provision of services and support for victims and witnesses cannot be seen in isolation and will link to a number of other local and pan-Lancashire initiatives and programmes.

These will include services for victims and witnesses of specific crime types such as Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault and Rape as well as a wider range of activities that support vulnerable people. Other relevant initiative will contribute to reducing crime, making victims feel safer and offering alternative methods for reporting crimes and incidents.

Details of the key areas of work and relevant publications are in **Appendix A**.



## NATIONAL CONTEXT

As well as addressing local issues and concerns there are a number of publications and developments at a national level which influence this strategy:

***Getting it Right for Victims and Witnesses*** (MoJ 2012) sets out the Government's strategy to improve services for victims.

***Swift and Sure Justice*** White Paper (July 2012), sets out a range of reforms aimed at making the criminal justice system more efficient and effective.

***Revised Victims Code of Practice (VCOP)*** (October 2013) details the rights and entitlements for victims at every stage of their journey, focusing support on victims of serious crime, those that are persistently targeted and those that are vulnerable or intimidated. This came into force on 10 December 2013.

***Revised Witness Charter*** (December 2013) Standards of care for witnesses in the criminal justice system.

***EU Directive on the Rights, Support and Protection of Victims of Crime Articles 8 and 9*** (effective from November 2015) creates minimum standards for victim support services, and includes provisions for victims to be able to access services regardless of whether or not they have reported to the police.

***The MoJ Commissioning Framework*** - published on 30 May 2013 ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/victims-services-commissioning-framework](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/victims-services-commissioning-framework)).

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has confirmed that responsibility for commissioning services will pass to PCCs, with MoJ retaining responsibility for specific national services. These include: victims of trafficking; those bereaved by homicide; victims of sexual violence; the witness service; some national helplines.

All national services will be commissioned through a competitive process. In addition to rape support centres some other support services for victims of sexual and domestic violence will also be nationally commissioned. The MoJ will undertake further work, engaging with victims' groups and support providers, to determine which ones.

Indicative funding for local commissioning has been confirmed for a period of 18 months (1 Oct 2014 - 31 March 2016) and will be issued as a grant under the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 to support '*victims, witnesses or other persons affected by offences*'.



## REVISED CODE OF PRACTICE FOR VICTIMS AND WITNESS CHARTER

I will work with criminal justice services, to achieve the consistent and equitable implementation of the revised Code of Practice for Victims and Witnesses across Lancashire.

Whilst formal monitoring of the Code in Lancashire will be undertaken by the Lancashire Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) I will ensure that all the criminal justice agencies and, where applicable, commissioned services comply with the Code.

The importance of having a victim-centred ethos within the criminal justice system is fully acknowledged. This requires all criminal justice services to continue to become more victim and witness - focused and more effective at meeting victim and witness needs.

Under the Revised Code of Practice for Victims of Crime only a person who has “directly experienced criminal conduct” and who has made an allegation to the police in England and Wales, is entitled to receive services under the Code.

It is recognised that many people do not report crime but that those people, and those who have been a victim of what the system treats as a non-crime (such as anti-social behaviour incidents, hate incidents or road traffic collisions) may still need to be supported to cope and recover. I will work with all partners to ensure that suitable support services are available for all victims regardless of whether or not the incident is reported to the police.



## OUTCOMES FOR VICTIM AND WITNESSES

I have identified a number of key Aims and Outcomes which this Strategy will seek to achieve:

1. Victims and witnesses are be treated with dignity and respect and feel valued and safe at all stages of the process;
2. The needs of victims and witness are recognised by the constabulary and criminal justice partners and addressed in a consistent and effective manner;
3. Victims and witnesses receive accurate and timely information about their case and a better understanding of the criminal justice system, including what will be expected of them and what they can expect;
4. Victims and witnesses are able to report crimes via third parties and other public sector agencies;
5. Victims of all crime types, including Anti-Social Behaviour and Hate Incidents have access to appropriate services and support.
6. Victims have access to appropriate advice, high quality practical and emotional support services and, when needed, specialist services tailored to their individual needs to help them to cope and recover from their experiences, including those victims who choose not to report to the police.
7. The impact that crimes and incidents can have on those people who are indirectly affected such as parents, siblings, children, partners, close friends and local community is both acknowledged and addressed;
8. The needs of children and young people as victims and witnesses are recognised and services designed and delivered in a way that best suits them;
9. There is a strong, sustainable and effective restorative justice service which is primarily victim led and accessible to victims at a point in their journey that is most suitable for them.
10. Victims are regularly consulted and have influenced the design and delivery of support services which better meet their needs;







**APPENDIX A**

**LOCAL STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMMES**

***Commissioning of Domestic Abuse services by Lancashire County Council, Blackburn with Darwen Council and Blackpool Council.***

- LCC services re-commissioned in 2014
- Establishment of a Domestic Abuse Strategy and Strategic Group

***Rape and Sexual Assault Services***

- New Lancashire Centre opening in 2014 in Preston
- On-going work with providers of counselling and support services

***Lancashire Restorative Justice Strategy***

- Development of a Restorative Justice Strategy for Lancashire
- Establishment of a RJ Strategy and Delivery Forum

***Anti-Social Behaviour***

- Development of Community Remedies to enable victims to be more engaged in a restorative approach with offenders
- Use of the Community Trigger to ensure that repeat cases of ASB are identified and addressed.

***Early Intervention Strategies and Programmes***

- Police and Crime Commissioner awarded Early Intervention Place Status in 2013 for the whole of Lancashire
- Blackpool Council awarded Early Intervention Place Status 2013
- Blackburn with Darwen Council awarded Early Intervention Place Status 2013

