



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

Victims and Witnesses Strategy

2018 - 2021

Introduction

Policing nationally is facing significant challenges: for the first time in many years we are seeing an increase in more 'traditional' acquisitive crimes; high harm crimes including violence, domestic abuse and rape continue to rise; and we're only now understanding the scale of new and emerging crimes like cyber-enabled crime and child sexual exploitation.

Given these challenges it is essential that the force puts victims and witnesses of crime at the forefront of all that we do. In doing this our aim is simple – to provide the best possible service and resolution.

From the initial call through to court, we want all officers and staff to recognise the unique needs of victims and witnesses, and our obligations under the Victims' Code of Practice, to deliver the best possible service. Of course victim care is not our responsibility alone: others in the system play a part, but we are central to it.

It is critical, too, that from the earliest opportunity we identify when a victim or witness may be vulnerable, so that appropriate safeguards can be put in place, whether call-taker, attending officer or any other staff member who comes into contact with the victim during their journey through the justice system.

This strategy builds on the good work undertaken by the victims and witnesses service improvement group to improve our practice, from raising awareness of victims' entitlements under the Code of Practice, to examining the support provided to vulnerable victims and driving improved investigation and file quality.

The new policing model is now in place: we have stood up our resolution centres to provide a more timely and efficient service to victims; we have invested in detective numbers to raise investigative standards; and we are increasing neighbourhood officers to identify vulnerability earlier and intervene more swiftly to reduce the calls on our service. But this is just the start. In this strategy we focus on putting the victim at the forefront of all we do, further improving the quality of our investigations and resolution, and the work we will undertake with partners to provide support to victims throughout their route to justice, making certain they have access to support, tailored to their needs, which assists them to cope with and recover from the crime they've experienced.

Gareth Morgan
Chief Constable

Context

In September 2018 the cross-government victim strategy was launched, setting out the government's ambition for the treatment of victims and witnesses. It emphasises monitoring of compliance with the Code of Practice; the key role of the police in early identification of victims' vulnerability; and opportunities to increase, through engagement with victims, appropriate alternatives to court. The NPCC victims' strategy will develop across the Autumn/Winter 2018.

We have assessed our performance against the Code and developed a comprehensive action plan, progress updates and performance measures, to enable us to demonstrate where we are compliant and where we need to improve.

It is paramount that compliance with the Code translates into the best service possible for victims. Our current overall satisfaction levels amongst victims is relatively high - a testament to the good work officers and staff carry out daily. However, with the removal of the annual data return by the Home Office we can now explore, more meaningfully, what *really* matters to victims and witnesses. Through the Staffordshire Commissioner's Office (SCO) victim and witness needs assessment work is ongoing to provide an up to date picture of related needs, their expectations, experiences from initial contact to final outcome and beyond, and where we need to focus our resources in the future. We know victims and witnesses want resolution to the incident they've reported. Our approach to the quality of our investigations is critical to ensuring the right justice outcome is achieved, and in the last year, following a review of the Justice Services function, we have seen a significant improvement in the quality of "good" files submitted to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS); we top the region for conviction rates at crown court. The review also enabled the force to focus more on enhancing victim and

witness care, and introduce innovative tactics to improve court attendance (for instance, the use of texting to keep victims informed and an increased use of "live link" facilities for vulnerable and intimidated victims and witnesses).

This strategy aims to deliver the four outcomes set out in the force's policing plan:

- 1. Victims and witnesses feel better able to help themselves**
- 2. Victims and witnesses are satisfied with the services provided**
- 3. Victims and witnesses are helped to cope and recover effectively**
- 4. Victims and witnesses are protected from further harm**

To achieve these outcomes this strategy is divided into five strategic 'thematic' areas:

1. Confidence with service
2. Delivering victims' entitlements
3. Supporting vulnerable victims
4. Building confidence to report
5. Better outcomes for victims

Each area will be supported by full implementation plans with specific actions, named owners and clear timescales. The strategy will be overseen by the Assistant Chief Constable, Investigations and Operational Support, bringing together all directorates to ensure delivery and assess effectiveness. But above all, it will be delivered by all of us, as we look to increase victim care in Staffordshire.

Victims and witnesses

Supporting victims and witnesses

‘Making it easier for victims and witnesses to receive the support they need’

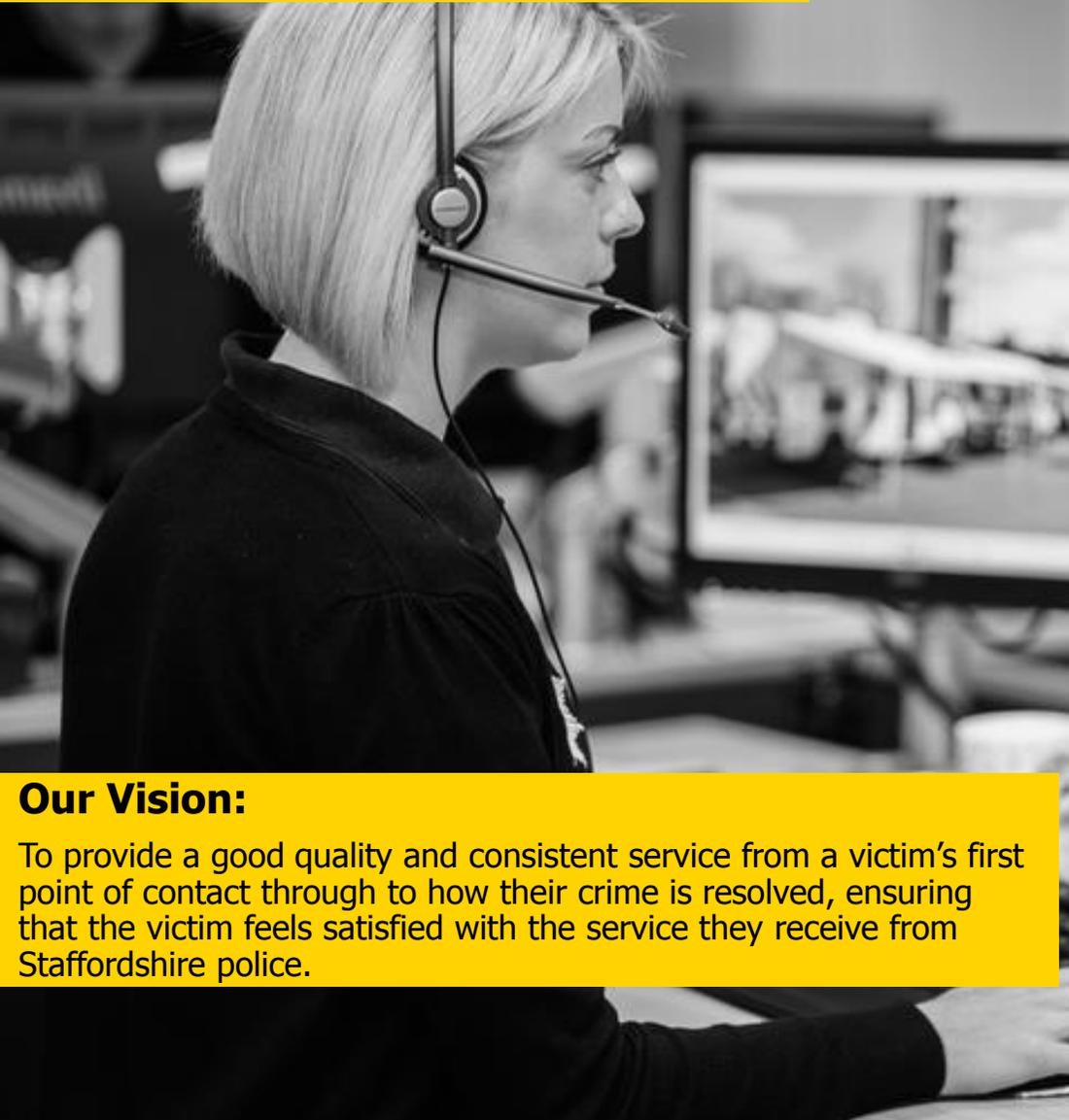


Victims and witnesses feel better able to help themselves	Victims and witnesses are satisfied with the services provided	Victims and witnesses are helped to cope and recover effectively	Victims and witnesses are protected from further harm
<p>Through a better understanding of communities, we can provide information and support that will enable them to better help themselves. And through new technology, make it easier for victims to report, track and monitor low-level crime without relying on officers to update them.</p>	<p>We intend to embed a service excellence model across the force, ensuring that victims receive the best possible service and level of care. Through our resolution centres, we intend to begin the investigative process sooner, providing more swift and effective justice.</p>	<p>We will strengthen our relationship management systems so that we can develop a better picture of citizen contact, tailoring our service accordingly.</p>	<p>Using information and data more effectively, with our partners, we aim to intervene more effectively to protect those that need our support to prevent them from becoming repeat victims.</p>

Victims and witnesses



1. Confidence with service



Our Vision:

To provide a good quality and consistent service from a victim's first point of contact through to how their crime is resolved, ensuring that the victim feels satisfied with the service they receive from Staffordshire police.

We will do this through:

- Ensuring incidents are responded to and resources are deployed in a timely manner.
- Prioritising vulnerable victims so that they receive appropriate support from the outset.
- Keeping victims and witnesses informed about the progress of their crime or incident.
- Minimising points of contact for victims so that they receive a better service experience.
- Ensuring effective communication and consistent information is available and accessible to victims and witnesses.
- Building and fostering effective working relationships with partners across the criminal justice system, the SCO and third sector.
- Talking to victims, listening to their views and making improvements to the service provided based on their feedback.
- Providing victims with choice over communications and support.
- Delivering the policing role within criminal justice effectively.

2. Delivering victims' entitlements

Our Vision:

To ensure that victims receive their entitlements as set out in the Code of Practice, not as a 'box ticking' exercise, but as a means for ensuring that they receive the best service possible

We will do this through:

- Ensuring the force has an effective referral process to statutory and non-statutory support services for victims, and that referrals are made in a timely manner.
- Ensuring victims are updated about the progress of their case via their preferred communication method as part of their victim contract or witness care.
- Streamlining and simplifying witness care to minimise contact points for victims, working with other CJ agencies to achieve this.
- Offering a Victim Personal Statement to victims and making it easier for them to do so, harnessing new technologies and communication methods.
- Demonstrating compliance with the Victims' Code across key entitlements.
- Embedding within organisational culture the importance of the Code of Practice.

3. Supporting vulnerable victims



Proud of our

professional
training
success

strategic

people



Our Vision:

We will ensure that vulnerable victims receive the support and safeguarding, where appropriate, required to cope with the consequences of the crime experienced, engage with the criminal justice system and prevent further victimisation.

We will do this through:

- Ensuring officers and staff are adept at identifying vulnerability and assessing risk and need, leading to appropriate safeguarding and referral to bespoke support services.
- Having a workforce who are well informed and trained where necessary to Achieve Best Evidence (ABE) within an investigation and to support vulnerable victims with consideration of Special Measures.
- Ensuring officers and staff consider the range of Special Measures and support for vulnerable and/or intimidated victims and witnesses in all investigations.
- Ensuring that officers and staff are aware, and utilise, the available tools and services to protect and prevent further victimisation.
- Developing a strong partnership approach to preventative and early intervention work to prevent victimisation and to support those who are vulnerable.
- Considering all options in order to resolve a crime and prevent further victimisation including out-of-court disposals, protection notices and other civil remedies
- Having specialist officers and staff to support victims and families following the most serious of crimes.

4. Building confidence to report

Our Vision

To ensure that victims have the confidence to report crime regardless of the circumstances and the passage of time, through our victim-centred approach and wider public confidence in the service we provide.

We will do this through:

- Developing an organisational culture built on quality of service.
- Ensuring officers and staff treat victims and witnesses with dignity, respect and fairness from the moment of first report.
- Listening to victims and being open and transparent in our role of impartial investigators.
- Taking a proportionate approach to investigation based on threat, harm and risk but ensuring all victims are kept updated.
- Having suitably trained officers and staff to investigate and support victims of non-recent offending.
- Maximising external media and communications to share court results and other outcomes.
- Identifying and targeting hard to reach groups to improve awareness and confidence.



5. Better outcomes for victims

Our Vision:

Through a consistent focus on quality and victim care we will ensure that victims receive an effective resolution to their crime. Resolution could be through a criminal justice outcome or via an out of court disposal and, where resolution isn't possible, victims understand clearly why an outcome hasn't been achieved.

We will do this through:

- Improving the quality of our investigations by ensuring that they are legally sound, proportionate and timely.
- Ensuring we have a capable and skilled workforce that can capture the best possible evidence to support an investigation, prosecution or other outcome.
- Having a clear crime allocation approach so that crimes are investigated and resolved by the most appropriately trained and skilled colleague.
- Increasing awareness and uptake of out-of-court disposals and other outcomes if a criminal justice outcome is not possible.
- Ensuring all case files are completed to a high standard to avoid rework and delay for the victim.
- Work closely with both CPS and HMCTS to improve victim and witness attendance at court.

Being Staffordshire Police

We will identify and address the root cause of issues, preventing problems and keeping people safe from harm throughout Staffordshire by developing the following behaviours as outlined within our People First strategy.

We do things **properly**



Ethical
We always do the right thing

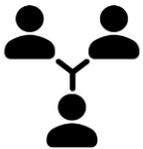


Supportive
We care about the wellbeing of others



Courageous
We face challenges confidently

We are **modern leaders**



Collaborative
We create solutions with others



Agile
We are smart and efficient with time



Diverse
We value different opinions and ideas

We **trust** and **enable** our people



Accountable
We make things happen



Empowered
We are proactive problem solvers



Adaptive
We are always learning and improving