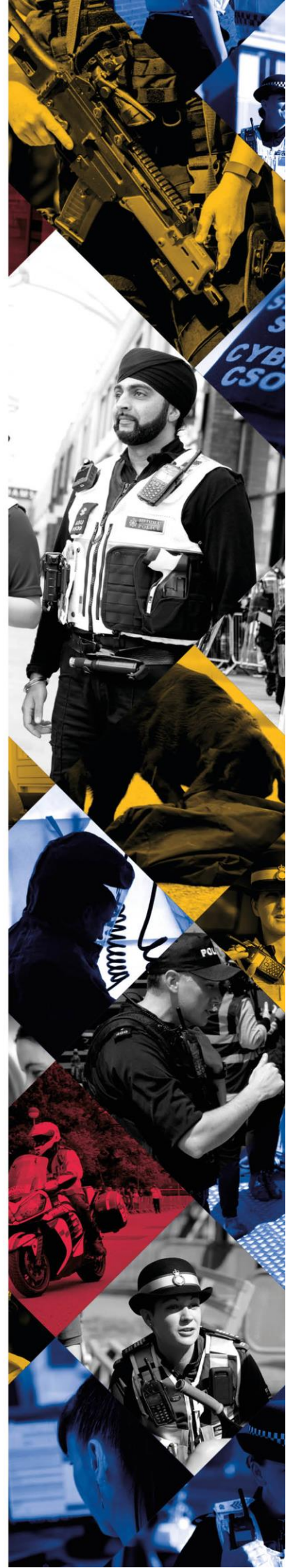




Office of Police and Crime Commissioner
Office of Chief Constable

Victim Code of Practice (Key Entitlements) Compliance

Annual Report 2021 / 2022



1.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 To continue to monitor and report compliance with the Victim's Code of Practice (VCOP), utilising performance and compliance data obtained from the Victim Care Unit (VCU).
- 1.2 To monitor the implementation and impact of the Victim Care Unit on Victim's Code Compliance and victim satisfaction.

2.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In September 2018, the UK Government Published a Victim Strategy, detailing its vision for how victims should be supported during their journey through the criminal justice system. Within the strategy was a commitment to 'hold agencies to account for compliance with the Victim's Code through improved reporting, monitoring and transparency'. To fulfil this commitment, it was agreed that Police and Crime Commissioners would oversee the monitoring of criminal justice agencies compliance with the Victim's Code of Practice (the Code) and report this to the Ministry of Justice (MoJ).

The MoJ released guidance stating that this process would be done via dip sampling 30 cases per quarter against the '5 key entitlements' within the Code. This process was completed for the financial year 2019 – 20. However, the MoJ put this process on hold for the year 2020 – 21 due to feedback querying the value and validity of the results as they are taken from a very small sample.

The MoJ are yet to release how they see this process will operate going forward and we continue to work closely with them to build this. There is still work ongoing Nationally via the NPCC Victim and Witness Governance Group chaired by ACC Ackland to agree a common and effective way of monitoring compliance with the Code. Therefore, in Gwent we decided to continue the previous process while awaiting further information. However, this changed in the second half of the year to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) DIP sample which captures compliance for the criminal justice journey in its entirety for each victim.

The 5 key entitlements captured in the DIP sample are:

- Be informed at key stages of the investigation (pre-charge)
 - Be informed of key stages of the case (post charge)
 - Be offered to make a Victim Personal Statement (VPS)
 - Agree to make a VPS
 - Complete a VPS
- 2.2 Since the development of the Victim Care Unit we are able to further monitor other areas of compliance within the Victims Code of Practice and this report will detail the results of these since the implementation in July 2021 (Q2).



- 2.3 In May 2019, a Victim Board was established and is chaired by the Assistant Chief Constable. This board seeks to secure and scrutinise the effective delivery of a consistent and good quality service for victims and witnesses. The board reviews current delivery and performance and agrees any changes to the delivery of victim services in order to ensure it meets the requirements set out within the Victim strategy, Police and Crime Plan, Victim's Code of Practice and Witness Charter.

The board has overseen considerable work over the last 3 years to improve compliance with the Code. A significant piece of work the board overseen has been the design of a restructured victim services model. The business case for the restructure was approved by the Service Improvement Board in December 2020. The restructure involved establishing and introducing a Gwent Police Victim Care Unit (VCU) into Connect Gwent Victim's Hub which went live in July 2021.

It should also be noted that a revised version of the Code was published in April 2021. The national work around compliance, mentioned above, relates to the revised Code. The revised Code does not alter our obligations to victims under the Code, instead it has simplified the lay out to enable both criminal justice agencies and victims to interpret the Code and understand victims' rights. Communications have been released to Gwent Police personnel to enable them to understand that there is a new iteration of the Code and understand their obligations to victims.

- 2.4 This report details the findings of the dip sample process and data collected through the Victim Care Unit since its implementation in quarter two.

3.0 ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 When the Victim Care Unit (VCU) was created so was a performance framework that would allow us to report Victims Code of Compliance (VCOP) on a much wider scale. A checklist was created to be completed by the VCU and would enable VCOP to be monitored for all cases that have engaged. We are awaiting a QlikView function that will support this.

4.0 COMPLIANCE

- 4.1 To be provided with information when reporting a crime.

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Data unavailable	43%	89%	55%

We cannot send letters to victims of domestic or sexual offences without explicit consent

One of the functions within the VCU is to send a victim information pack along with the crime letter. This requires significant resource which was impacted during the pandemic due to the restrictions in place. Changes in process now

means the VCU is responding to daily demand as it comes in and at the time of writing this report compliance is much higher.

Prior to the VCU the baseline figure for compliance was 11%.

4.2 To be referred to support services and have needs assessed to enable a tailored service from partner agencies.

All cases where there is an aggrieved attached are transferred to the Victim Care Unit which is the support service and access to independent advocacy as per the code. Of those where successful contact was made the below is the compliance where a thorough needs assessment is completed. Where required a referral is made for specialised advocacy from our partner agencies that is tailored around the information within the assessment, thus enabling bespoke support.

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Data unavailable	92%	84%	76%

Victims being willing to complete the needs assessment will impact the overall figure.

This compares to a 69% average in 21/22.

4.3 To be provided with information about the investigation and prosecution:

Key stage updates provided:

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
70%	88%	83%	70%

Key stage updates remain the responsibility of the Officer In Charge (OIC). This DIP sample assesses how many key stages there were in the investigation and how many of those stages had the update given within the relevant timescale.

This compares to a 63% average in 21/22.

4.3 To make a Victim Personal Statement

Offered to make a VPS:

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
73%	93%	83%	92%



The code states we should be offering a VPS at the point of taking a witness statement and continue to offer throughout the life of the case as we recognise the point of crisis may not be a suitable time for the victim.

This compares to a 95% average for 20/21.

Agreed to make a VPS:

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
27%	18%	60%	50%

Uptake for VPS is low but does increase throughout the year. What this suggests is how the offer is being made to victims is now more informative and officers are now fully explaining the purpose of the VPS and how it can impact sentencing which is increasing the uptake in submissions. This has been addressed through training to all frontline officers.

Data is unavailable for 20/21 as not captured in the previous DIP sample.

Complete a VPS (of those who agreed)

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
73%	100%	100%	100%

If a victim has agreed to make a VPS we should be ensuring they can do so.

In 20/21 the DIP sample was 100% compliant.

4.4 To be given information about the trial

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
95%	100%	83%	92%

The Witness Care Unit are responsible for key stage updates after the first hearing. This DIP sample captures how many updates there were and if they were provided in the relevant timescale.

This data is unavailable for 20/21 as not captured within the previous DIP sample.

5.0 NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 To await the outcome of the work of the NPCC Victim and Witness Governance group to inform how compliance will be monitored and reported on in the future, however we have already developed a framework through consultation with the MOJ that should match.

- 5.2 To continue to develop the Victim Services model to assist Gwent Police in providing an excellent service to victims of crime, ensuring they receive their entitlements under the Code.
- 5.3 To monitor performance information from Victim Services in relation to the Victims Code.
- 5.4 To use performance data to inform future training, communication and improvements in the Victim Services model.

6.0 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial considerations at this stage.

7.0 PERSONNEL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 No personnel considerations at this stage.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no legal implications at this stage.

9.0 EQUALITIES AND HUMAN CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 In preparing this report, consideration has been given to requirements of the Articles contained in the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998.

10.0 RISK

- 9.1 None.

11.0 PUBLIC INTEREST

- 11.1 There are no public interest matters.

12.0 REPORT AUTHOR

- 12.1 Elizabeth Lowther – Head of Victim Services.

13.0 LEAD CHIEF OFFICER

- 13.1 T/ACC Mark Hobrough

14.0 ANNEXES

- 14.1 Documents embedded.

15.0 CHIEF OFFICER APPROVAL

- 15.1 I confirm this report has been discussed and approved at a formal Chief Officer's meeting.
- 15.2 I confirm this report is suitable for the public domain.





Signature:

Date: 10.08.2022

Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent

I confirm that I have considered whether or not I have any personal or prejudicial interest in this matter and take the proposed decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct.

The above request has my approval.

Signature:

Date:

