



<b>OFFICE OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER</b>	
<b>LEAD CHIEF OFFICER:</b>	<b>ACC Edwards</b>
<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>Victim Code of Practice (Key Entitlements) Compliance</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>3 June 2020</b>
<b>TIMING:</b>	Annually
<b>PURPOSE:</b>	For monitoring
<b>1.</b>	<b><u>RECOMMENDATION</u></b>
1.1	To continue to monitor and report compliance with the Victim's Code of Practice.
1.2	To improve data collection processes, including how quality of updates can be assessed, and explore whether there is capacity to increase the size of sample.
<b>2.</b>	<b><u>INTRODUCTION &amp; BACKGROUND</u></b>
2.1	<p>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 begin by agencies reporting against the '5 key entitlements' within the Code via a dip sample of 30 cases per quarter.</p> <p>The 5 key entitlements are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be informed at key stages of the case</li> <li>• Be referred to organisations supporting victims of crime</li> <li>• Be provided with regular updates on the progress of their case</li> <li>• Be given the opportunity to make a VPS and be informed how it was used in court</li> <li>• Under the Victim Contact Scheme, be informed when an offender is released (does not apply to policing)</li> </ul>
2.2	<p>To support agencies to report on these the MoJ provided questions, specific to each agency, to be answered via the dip sampling process. The questions for police forces are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the victim receive a written acknowledgement that a crime was</li> </ul>

	<p>reported?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the victim assessed and, unless opting out referred to support services, within 2 days?</li> <li>• Are the updates the victims receive on the next steps including arrest, charge and bail, timely and of high quality?</li> <li>• Is the victim informed of the end of their CJS journey?</li> <li>• Was a VPS taken?</li> </ul> <p>For the Witness Care Unit (WCU) the questions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the updates the victims receive on the next steps including plea, appearance at court timely and of high quality?</li> <li>• Is the victim informed of the end of the CJS journey?</li> <li>• Was the use of the VPS reported back to the victim?</li> </ul>
2.3	<p>In May 2019, a Victim Board was established and is chaired by ACC Edwards. 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.</p> <p>The board has overseen considerable work over the last 12 months to improve compliance with the Code, although further work is required to ensure that victims receive the highest level of service. The board has commissioned a review of the end to end journey of a victim’s involvement with Gwent Police and an options appraisal is due to be submitted in May. The options appraisal will provide alternatives to the way victims are currently supported in order to improve the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of service.</p>
2.4	<p>The OPCC are responsible for monitoring and reporting criminal justice agencies’ compliance with the key entitlements of the Victim’s Code to the MoJ. To support this the OPCC established and chairs the Victim Code Compliance Group, which is attended by personnel from Gwent Police, HMCTS, HMPPS and CPS. The group seeks to agree data collection methods, review compliance, identify good practice and areas for development and coordinates multi-agency working to improve Victim Code compliance. The group feeds compliance information, issues and development to Gwent Police Victim’s Board and the Gwent Criminal Justice Board.</p>
2.5	<p>This report details the findings of the dip sample process for each of the above questions as well as work that has taken place and is planned to improve compliance and the service victims receive from Gwent Police.</p>
2.6	<p>As mentioned above, the dip sample is only of 30 occurrences per quarter and therefore findings may not be an accurate portrayal of performance as a whole but should provide an indication of areas of good practice and areas that require improvements. The sample was selected by randomly selecting</p>

	<p>30 occurrences per quarter. Selecting the sample randomly meant that not all questions could be answered for all cases due to the different journeys they took through the criminal justice system, for example a proportion were closed at FPOC and therefore would not have made a VPS or had ongoing updates about an investigation. Discussion is due to take place at Victim Code Compliance meeting about different approaches to selecting a cohort for 2020 / 21.</p>
<p><b>3.</b></p>	<p><b><u>ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION</u></b></p>
<p>3.1</p>	<p>The embedded document below provides full details of the results of the dip sampling of 120 cases over the year, both per quarter and as an annual figure. The below graphs depict the annual findings for each question.</p>  <p>Police VCOP dipsample results Apr</p>
<p>3.2</p>	<div data-bbox="395 779 1294 1256" style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> <p>Did the victim receive a written acknowledgement that a crime was reported?</p>  <p>■ Yes ■ No</p> </div> <p>From investigating why there was poor compliance in this area it was identified that there was a breakdown in the process of sending Victim of Crime Letters due to a perceived issue with compliance with GDPR.</p> <p>Work has been undertaken to improve this over the last year including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarified and amended procedure / guidance for sending Victim of Crime Letter.</li> <li>• The Victim of Crime letters have also been reviewed by victims during a focus group whom feedback that they were happy with the content of the letter and found the information useful and easy to understand.</li> <li>• A Victim Postcard has been designed and launched in recent months. The postcard enables officers to record basic details of the offence and provide these to the victim. This, with the Victim of Crime letter, provides another opportunity for the victim to receive this written acknowledgement.</li> </ul> <p>Work that is planned for the coming year to improve this area includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closely monitor that Victim of Crime letters are being sent.</li> </ul>

3.3

### Was the victim assessed?



55%, of those cases sampled, indicated that the victim had been assessed to determine whether a referral to support services was required. There is evidence of improvements in the second half of the year with 41% being assessed in the first quarter of the year and 63% in the last.

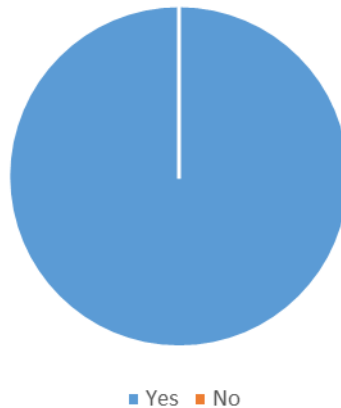
Work has been undertaken to improve this over the last year including:

- Training all sergeants on the Code, with a particular focus on assessing victim's needs.
- Increased focus and scrutiny on the completion of the Victim Contact Management module (VCM), including providing detailed guidance and communications on its importance.
- Changes to the NICHE template to make it easier to create a VCM and also an application for change made for the VCM made to MINERVA to improve usability of the VCM.
- The design of a Victim focused force training day which focuses on the Code and ensuring victims needs are understood and met.
- The launch of the victim postcard that includes a reminder for officers to ask whether the victim would like to be referred to support services.

Work that is planned for the coming year to improve this area includes:

- The roll out of the Victim focused training day.
- The submission of an options appraisal to explore if there are more effective ways of providing services to victims, including the assessment of need and provision of support.
- Continued communications on the importance of understanding victim's needs.

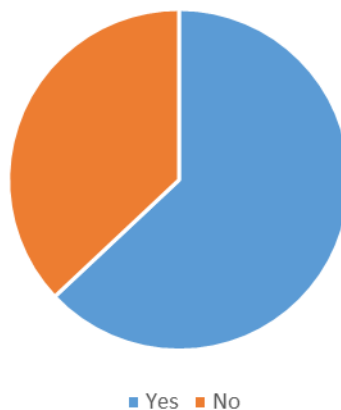
If found to be in need were they referred to support services?



Due to the opt out model Gwent Police currently operate, all victims that required support were referred to support services. However, it is worth noting that, because of the opt out model, 90% of victims referred to Connect Gwent do not require support, which is evidence of inefficiencies with this approach. An options appraisal is due to be submitted that will offer alternatives to this approach.

3.4

Were updates (key stages) provided within timescale?



For the year as a whole 63% of victims were informed of key stages of the investigation within the timescales set out in the Code. However, improvement can be seen over the course of the year with 90% of updates provided in timescale in quarter 4 compared to 63% in quarter 1.

Work has been undertaken to improve this over the last year including:

- Training all sergeants on the Code, with a focus on keeping victims up dated and how this can be done in a variety of ways according to the victim's needs (phone, email etc)
- Increased focus and scrutiny on the completion of the Victim Contact

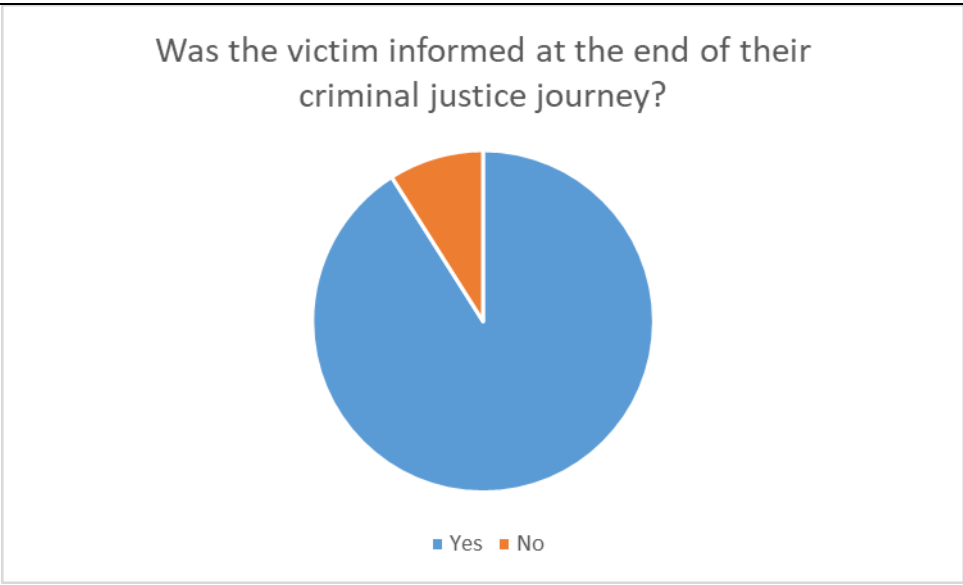
Management module (VCM), including providing detailed guidance and communications on its importance.

- Changes to the NICHE template to make it easier to create a VCM and also an application for change made for the VCM made to MINERVA to improve usability of the VCM.
- The design of a Victim focused force training day which focuses on the Code and an understanding of the importance of keeping victims updated during the investigation.
- The launch of the victim postcard that includes a section for officers to inform victims in what timescale they will be provided.
- Additional questions added to the victim survey about being updated to allow a better understanding of quality issues.
- Discussions at victims focus groups about what is important to them when receiving updates that will be fed into future training.

Work that is planned for the coming year to improve this area includes:

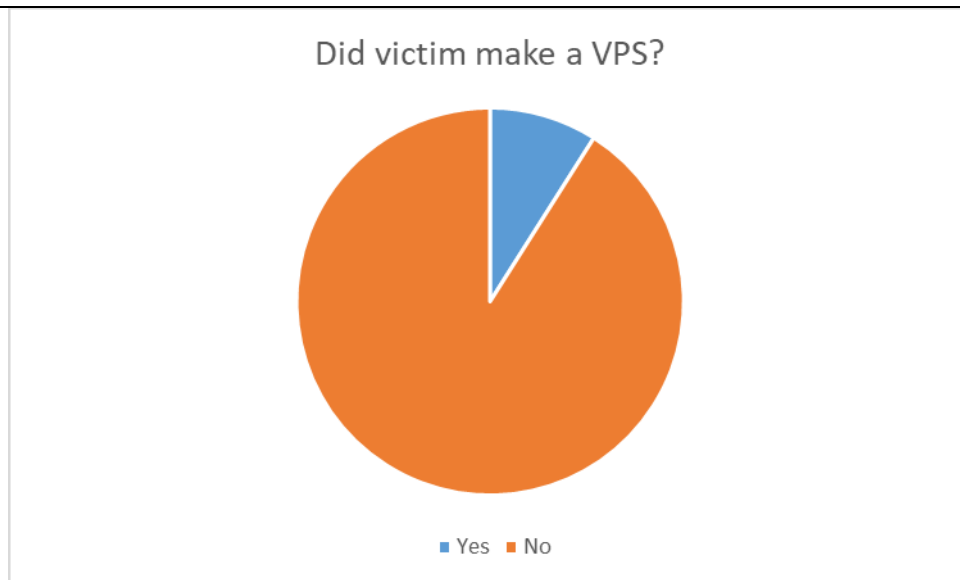
- The roll out of the Victim focused training day
- The submission of an options appraisal to explore if there are more effective ways of providing services to victims, including victims updated.
- Continued communications on the importance of updating victims.

3.5



Compliance is high within this area. The work completed and planned for this area is the same as 'were updates (key stages) provided within timescale?' as the two are closely linked.

3.6



Only 9% of those cases dip sampled included a Victim Personal Statement (VPS) made by the victim. However, this question from the MoJ, does not accurately indicate performance of police officers as the victim may have been offered the opportunity to make a VPS but declined. In addition, the Code states that victims should be offered an opportunity to make a VPS at the same time they make a witness statement. On further investigation of the cases within the cohort sampled, a significant proportion of victims did not have a witness statement recorded. Another significant proportion were offered the opportunity to make a VPS but declined.


Of the 120 cases sampled 49 witness statements were identified, of those victims providing a witness statement 88% (43/49) were offered the opportunity to make a VPS. This indicates that a high proportion of victims are being offered the opportunity to make a VPS but only a small proportion of these are taking this up. Work is therefore needed to understand why this is the case and what Gwent Police can do to encourage more victims to provide a VPS.

Work has been undertaken to improve this over the last year including:

- Training all sergeants on the Code, with a focus on offering victims the opportunity to make a VPS
- Additional questions added to the victim survey to check, from a victim's perspective, whether they were offered the opportunity to make a VPS

Work that is planned for the coming year to improve this area includes:

- The roll out of the Victim focused training day – which will include the offer of a VPS
- The submission of an options appraisal to explore if there are more effective ways of providing services to victims, including offering and

	<p>obtaining a VPS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued communications on the importance of offering / taking a VPS.</li> <li>Engagement work with victims to understand what barriers may exist to making a VPS.</li> </ul>
3.7	<p>The below embedded document provides full details of the results of the dip sampling process for the Witness Care Unit (WCU).</p> <p> WCU VCOP dipsample results A1</p> <p>25% of communications from the WCU to victims about the trial were not in timescales as set out in the Code. Contributing to this was vacancies within the team. This year 2.5 FTE vacancies have been filled (2 still on induction and training), The impact of this can be seen in the improvements over the year with only 13% of communications outside of timescales. When the new staff are fully trained this should further improve compliance.</p> <p>98% of victims were informed of the end of their criminal justice journey (outcome of trial). Over the year, only 2 victims have been identified as not being updated, however from investigation with the team it was recognised that this was a recording issue and the victims were informed.</p> <p>The third question for the WCU was whether the use of the VPS was reported back to the victim. As can be seen in the attached data, it was not possible to answer this question for 97% of the cases sampled. This is due to the way that the dip sample was selected, meaning for those cases the WCU were not informed whether a VPS was used and therefore unable to inform the victim (if one was provided). Discussion with criminal justice partners is due to take place on how we can improve the way in which the samples are selected.</p>
<b>4.</b>	<b><u>NEXT STEPS</u></b>
4.1	To complete work planned as detailed above.
4.2	To review dip sampling process with criminal justice partners to improve process.
4.3	To explore whether there is capacity to increase the size of the sample.
4.4	To review revised code when it is published to understand any changes to the way services should be delivered.
<b>5.</b>	<b><u>FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS</u></b>
5.1	There are no financial considerations at this stage.
<b>6.</b>	<b><u>PERSONNEL CONSIDERATIONS</u></b>
6.1	No personnel considerations at this stage.
<b>7.</b>	<b><u>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</u></b>



7.1	There are no legal implications at this stage.
<b>8.</b>	<b><u>EQUALITIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS</u></b>
8.1	<p>This report has been considered against the general duty to promote equality, as stipulated under the Strategic Equality Plan and has been assessed not to discriminate against any particular group.</p> <p>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. There are no identified concerns and no collateral intrusion.</p>
<b>9.</b>	<b><u>RISK</u></b>
9.1	There is no risk to consider as part of this report.
<b>10.</b>	<b><u>PUBLIC INTEREST</u></b>
10.1	There are no public interest matters.
<b>11.</b>	<b><u>CONTACT OFFICER</u></b>
11.1	Sam Heatley – Victims Lead for Gwent Police
<b>12.</b>	<b><u>ANNEXES</u></b>
12.1	Documents embedded.

For OPCC use only

**Office of the Chief Constable**

I confirm that the Victims Code of Practice Compliance report has been discussed and approved at a formal Chief Officers' meeting.

It is now forwarded to the OPCC for **approval / information / monitoring purposes.**

**Signature:**



**Date: 11/05/2020**

**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:**