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Version:	
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1. ***DIBEN AC ARGYMHELLIAD | PURPOSE AND RECOMMENDATION***

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is for information, assurance and scrutiny.
- 1.2 There are no recommendations made requiring a decision.

2. ***CYFLWYNIAD A CHEFNDIR | INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND***

- 2.1 During 2025/26, Victim Services and Victim Care continued to support victims and witnesses throughout their criminal justice journey. Despite sustained demand within the Victim Care Unit and increasing post-charge demand within Witness Care, service delivery was maintained throughout the year.
- 2.2 Throughout 2025/26, the force progressed a number of key initiatives aimed at improving victim care, strengthening governance and organisational understanding of victim needs, and enhancing the quality of service provided to victims and witnesses. This report details the activity undertaken and progress achieved during the reporting period, whilst also identifying areas requiring further focus and improvement during 2026/27.

3. ***MATERION I'W HYSTYRIED | ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION***

Significant progress was made during 2025/26 in developing the force's approach to victim care, including progression of the Victim Care Guiding Principle within the Quality of Investigations and Victim Care Change Programme, continued development of Citizen First, strengthened Local Criminal Justice Board governance arrangements, enhanced survivor engagement activity and approval of a redesigned Victim and Witness Care operating model.

Whilst these developments provide a strong platform for future improvement, challenges remain in evidencing consistent delivery of victim updates, understanding compliance with the Victims' Code of Practice and converting



established improvement plans into measurable frontline outcomes that deliver an improved service to victims.

The force recognises that, whilst significant progress has been made in developing improvement plans, governance arrangements and supporting programmes of work, the most significant challenge is ensuring that victim care is consistently understood and delivered as a core component of investigative quality across the organisation. Sustained improvement will therefore depend upon translating these expectations into consistently evidenced frontline practice, ensuring victims receive the service, communication and support to which they are entitled.

The focus for 2026/27 will therefore be on enhancing a victim-first culture, strengthening performance and compliance frameworks, improving victim feedback mechanisms and ensuring improvement activity translates into a consistently positive victim experience

3.1 Victim Care Unit Performance

Every 24 working hours, all occurrences with an identified aggrieved party are referred to the Victim Care Unit. The current service delivery model operates in accordance with the Victims' Code of Practice, assessing whether victims are eligible for a standard or enhanced level of service. This provides an additional layer of assessment alongside the ICP01 assessment recorded within NICHE. New NICHE templates for use by officers following their attendance and interactions with victims are due to be introduced to coincide with the launch of Citizen First (see section 3.14), which will further strengthen the assessment and identification of victims' needs.

Victim Care Unit Referrals

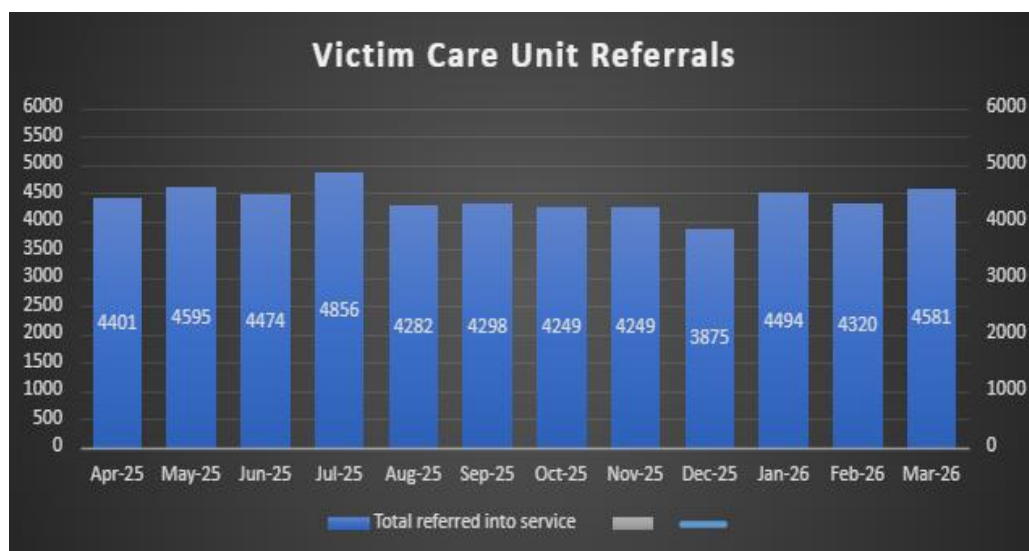


Figure 1: Victim Care Unit Referrals 2025-26

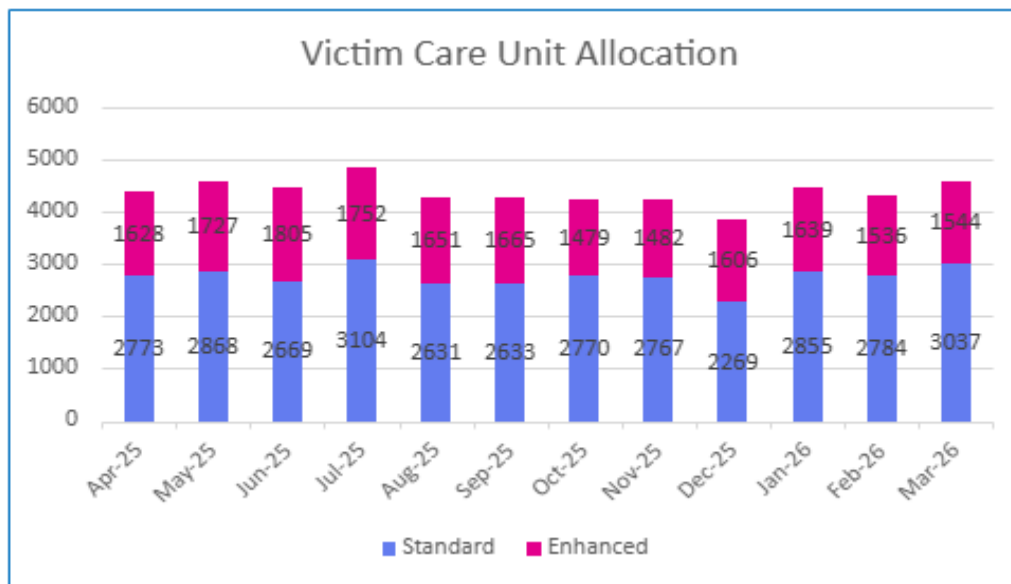


Figure 2: Split of Enhanced and Standard cases dealt with in the VCU per month 2025-26

During 2025/26, the Victim Care Unit continued to manage a substantial and steady level of demand. Standard service cases formed the majority of referrals, representing almost two thirds of overall demand, while enhanced service cases accounted for just over one third.

Victim Contact

The Victim Care Unit aims to contact all victims in accordance with the Victims' Code of Practice. For victims assessed as requiring an enhanced service, the Unit will attempt telephone contact within one working day to offer support, advocacy and guidance throughout the criminal justice process, while ensuring they are aware of their rights under the Code.

The VCU will attempt three calls to a victim eligible for enhanced service before the matter is closed. Where telephone contact with an enhanced victim is unsuccessful, every effort is made to provide the same information through alternative means, where it is safe and appropriate to do so. This may include sending information electronically or by post. Even where a victim chooses not to engage with the Unit, they will still receive information about their rights under the Victims' Code.

For victims assessed as requiring a standard service, an information pack is issued within five working days. This provides details of their rights under the Code, information on available support services and referral pathways, and contact details for the VCU should they require assistance or wish to receive updates.



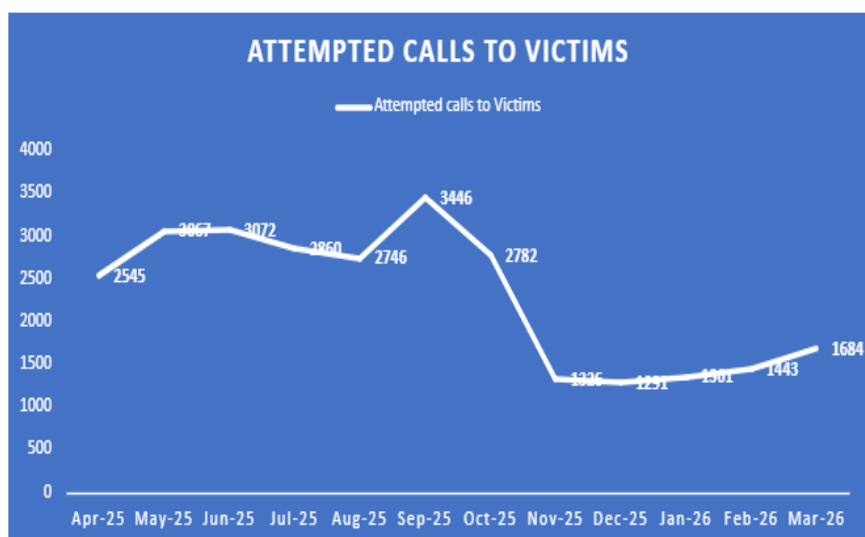


Figure 3: Attempt calls to victims per month 2025-26

* A change was made to the NICHE templates from November 2025 onwards. Prior to this date, the recorded figures included both telephone contact attempts for enhanced service victims and information packs issued to standard service victims. From November 2025, the measure was revised to record telephone contact attempts for enhanced service victims only. In addition, figures relating to call attempts include cases where multiple attempts were made to contact the same victim (up to three). As a result, data before and after November 2025 is not directly comparable and should be interpreted within this context.



Figure 4: Successful call to victims per month 2025-26

The VCU continues to make significant efforts to engage victims eligible for enhanced services. Whilst successful contact rates fluctuate, this is influenced by a range of factors including victim availability, vulnerability, confidence and willingness to engage with criminal justice agencies. As a result, successful engagement should be considered alongside wider outcomes such as completed needs assessments and referral activity.

Detailed Victim Needs Assessment

When successful contact is made, a detailed needs assessment should be completed with the victim to enable a tailored support plan and appropriate referrals to partners/safeguarding pathways where required. The needs assessments focus around the areas of growth/deficiency in the victim's life outside of crime to ensure an effective approach to help them cope and recover, minimise the risk of repeat victimisation, and remain engaged in the criminal justice process.

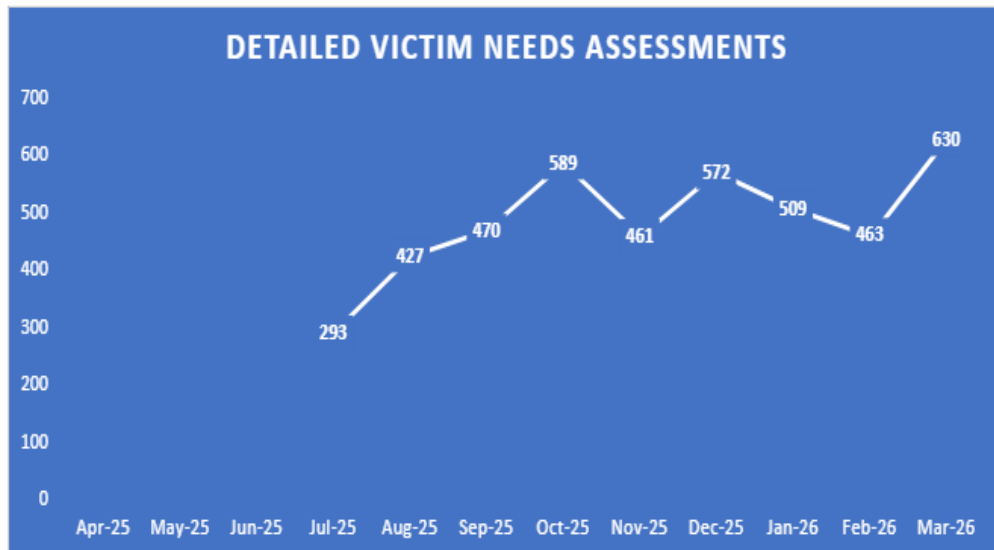


Figure 5: Detailed Victim Needs Assessments 2025-26

**To note, data is missing for April-June 25, due to an issue following a Niche upgrade that impacted on reporting on the needs assessment template.

Completion of a victim needs assessment is one of the most important opportunities to understand vulnerability, safeguard victims and identify support requirements.

The increase in completed assessments during the reporting period is considered positive as it demonstrates active engagement with victims and improved understanding of individual need. Whilst increasing volumes can indicate greater complexity within the victim profile, they also provide reassurance that victim needs are being actively considered and that opportunities for support and referral are being identified. Continued monitoring will be required to understand future demand implications and the impact upon VCU capacity.

Referrals for Support



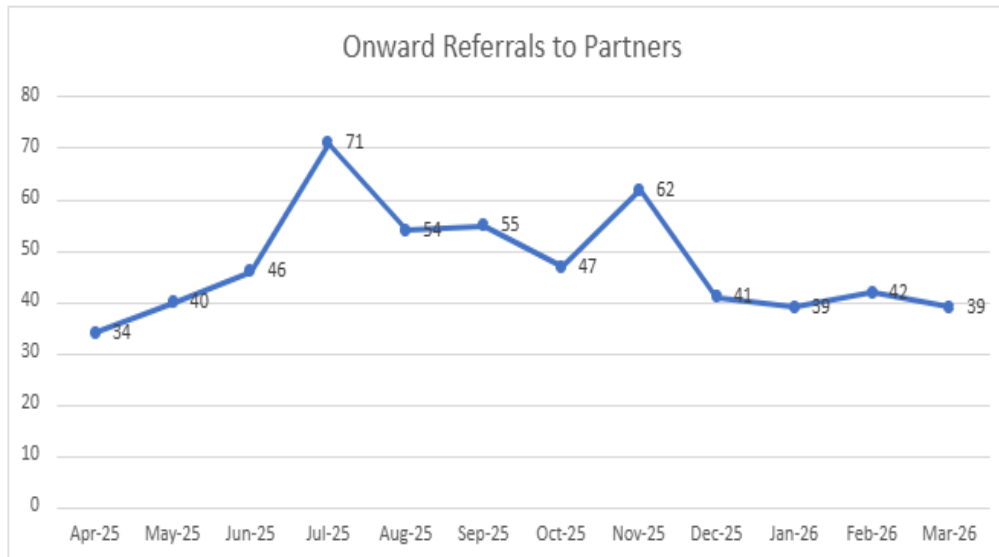


Figure 6: Onward referrals made by VCU to partners 2025-26

During 2025/26, the VCU made an average of 47.5 referrals to partner agencies each month. While the number of onward referrals remains lower than the number of completed needs assessments, this should not be viewed in isolation as an indicator of underperformance. The purpose of the needs assessment process is to identify whether a victim requires additional support beyond the information, advocacy and updates routinely provided by the VCU, and not all assessments result in a referral being necessary.

Throughout 2025/26, the Victim Care Unit continued to work closely with commissioned and specialist support services to ensure victims could access appropriate emotional, practical and advocacy support beyond that provided directly by Gwent Police. Whilst the Victim Care Unit provides information, updates and criminal justice advocacy, commissioned services play a vital role in helping victims cope and recover from the impact of crime. The introduction of the new Victim Support contract in April 2025 provided an opportunity to further strengthen referral pathways, partnership working and the wider support available to victims across Gwent. The Victim Care Unit maintains regular engagement with commissioned providers to ensure referral processes remain effective, victim needs are understood, and any emerging issues are identified and addressed through existing governance arrangements.

Nevertheless, the Head of Victim Services recognises that there is an opportunity to ensure the full range of support available through partner organisations is being utilised where appropriate. A review of current processes is therefore underway to provide assurance that all identified victim needs are considered and that referrals are made consistently whenever additional support would be beneficial. As part of this work, further analysis will be undertaken during 2026/27 to improve understanding of referral activity across offence categories and protected characteristics, helping to identify any disparities in access to support services. This analysis will need to recognise that the Victim Care Unit does not manage all victim cohorts. For example, victims of rape and certain other serious offences are often supported through dedicated specialist pathways rather than standard VCU referral processes,

meaning referral rates and comparisons between crime types may not always provide a complete or meaningful picture of support provision

Similarly, in the same period, the VCU received a monthly average of 122.5 contacts into the unit from partners. These contacts can vary from update requests, referrals, feedback or service recovery needs.

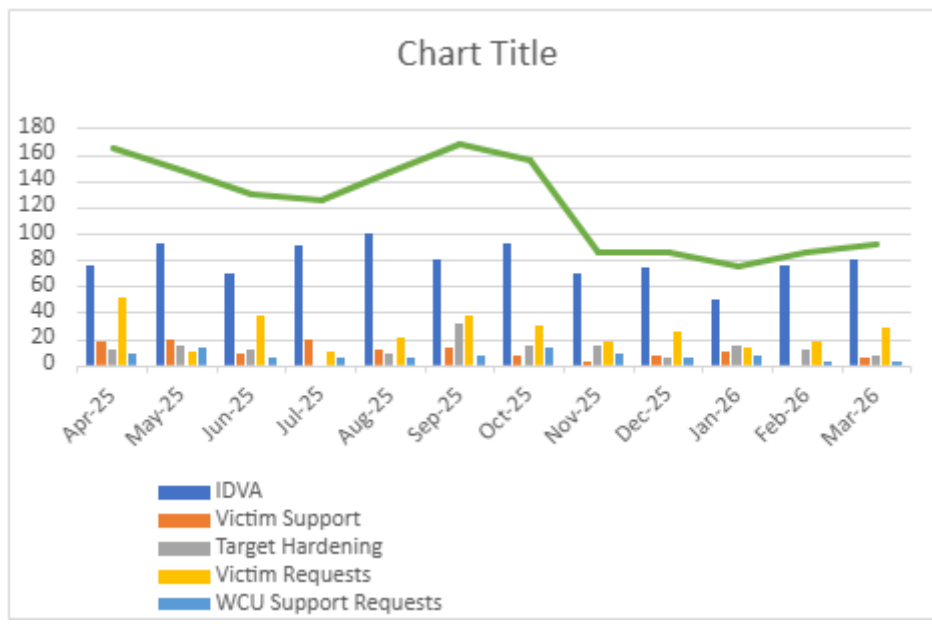


Figure 7: Referrals from partners into the VCU by partner 2025-26

Regular Investigation Updates

The VCU will maintain regular victim contact with key stage updates being provided by the Officer in the Case.

During 2025-26, the VCU provided an average of 843 regular victim updates per month during 2025-26

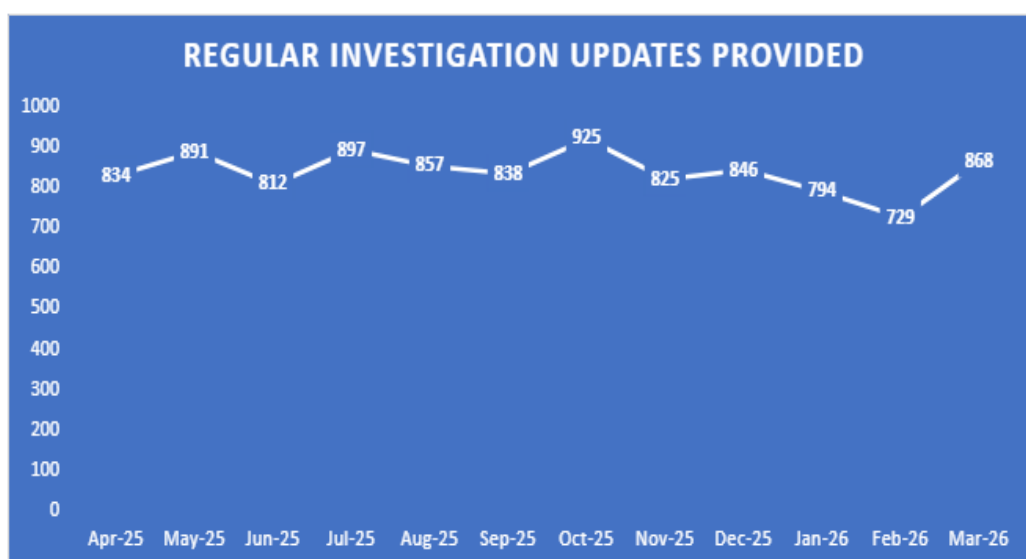


Figure 8: Regular Victim updates provided per month 2025-26



Whilst expectations regarding victim updates are well established, scrutiny activity, victim feedback and performance discussions continue to identify inconsistency in frontline delivery of providing key stage updates. The challenge is therefore less about establishing processes and more about ensuring they are consistently embedded within operational practice. Improving the quality, consistency and timeliness of key stage victim updates remains a key priority within the Quality of Investigations and Victim Care Change Programme.

Improvement activity includes the introduction of revised NICHE templates, victim-focused training, strengthened supervisory expectations, Citizen First implementation and the development of enhanced VCOP performance measures. Collectively, these initiatives are intended to improve compliance, provide greater assurance and ensure victims are kept informed throughout their investigation in a meaningful and consistent manner.

3.2 Witness Care Unit Performance

The Witness Care Unit continues to operate in a demanding environment shaped by wider criminal justice system pressures, including court delays, increasing trial volumes and extended case lifecycles.

Although these pressures originate largely outside the direct control of Gwent Police, they have a significant impact on victim and witness experience and increase the workload carried by Witness Care Officers. Historic comparison demonstrates a marked growth in demand, with victims and witnesses supported increasing by approximately 68%, live cases increasing by approximately 70% and trials increasing by more than 170% since 2017.

Despite these pressures, Witness Care continues to maintain support to victims and witnesses through the court process, providing a level of resilience which should be recognised as a significant achievement during 2025/26.

For context the demand on the WCU can be shown as below since 2017.

	2017	2023	2025-26
Victims/Witnesses Supported	5059	7371	8501
Live Cases	632	973	1074
Trials	201	403	549

It should be noted that the force's ability to understand and report on aspects of Witness Care performance remains constrained by limitations within national criminal justice systems. The primary system used to manage post-charge victim and witness activity is owned and governed by the Crown Prosecution Service and provides limited reporting functionality for local performance purposes. As a result, there is currently little opportunity to routinely analyse activity by crime type, protected characteristic, vulnerability or other demographic factors without significant manual examination of individual cases. This represents a wider national challenge across the criminal justice system and limits the level of performance insight and assurance that can currently be derived from available data.

Live Cases

Despite continued high demand in the Witness Care Unit, the number of live cases showed a slight downward towards the tail end of 2025/26.

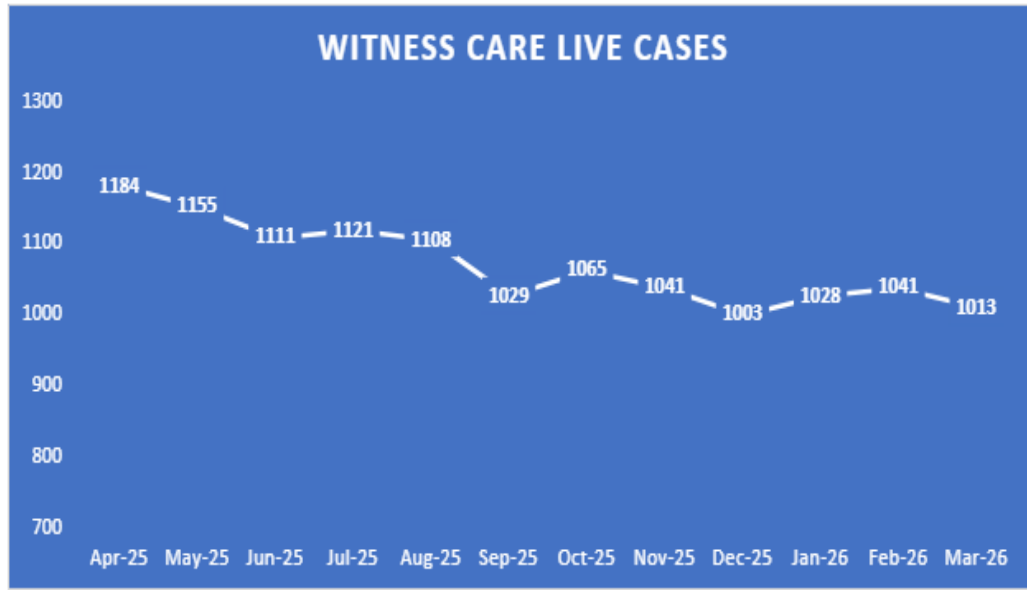


Figure 9: Witness care live cases by month 2025-26

Trials

Witness Care Officers fulfil a dual role, managing witness attendance arrangements for court hearings while also providing victims with key stage updates in accordance with the Victims' Code. Despite a reduction in overall live cases, trial volumes remain comparatively high, meaning workload pressures have not reduced proportionately. Current court listing practices require significant resource to repeatedly warn and de-warn witnesses, coordinate attendance arrangements, and communicate delays, adjournments and relisting decisions. As a result, a considerable proportion of Witness Care capacity continues to be focused on managing the impacts of wider Criminal Justice System demands on victims and witnesses.



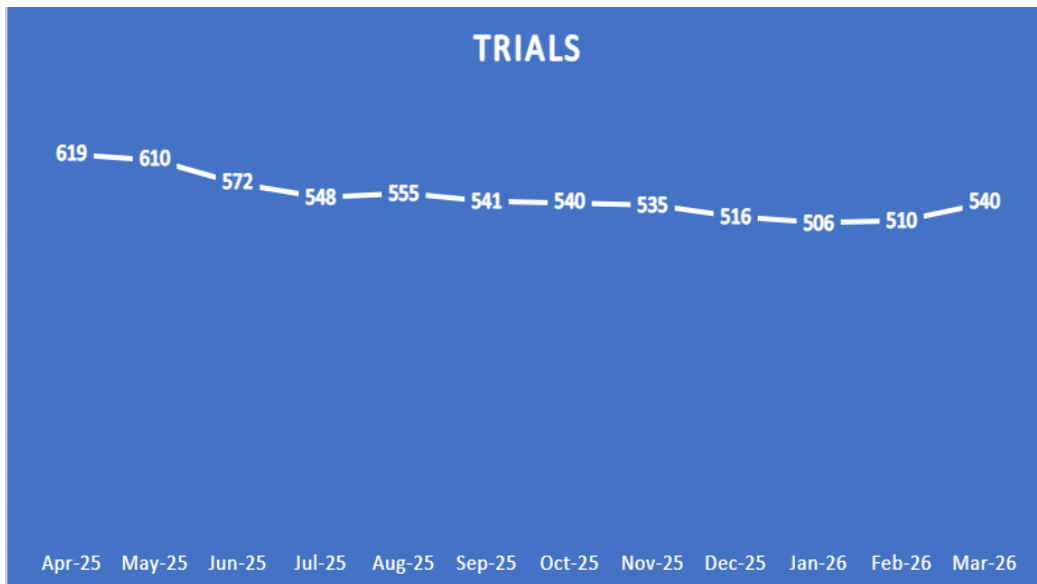


Figure 10: Number of live trials by month 2025-26

Post Charge Support

All victims and witnesses within the cases above have their needs assessed by Witness Care and are referred for the necessary support where required and link in with existing partners; the unit also quality assure case file gaps such as the need for special measures, victim personal statements and where appropriate restraining order requests. Like the number of trials, the number of victims and witnesses being supported post charge has not reduced to the same degree as the total number of live cases.

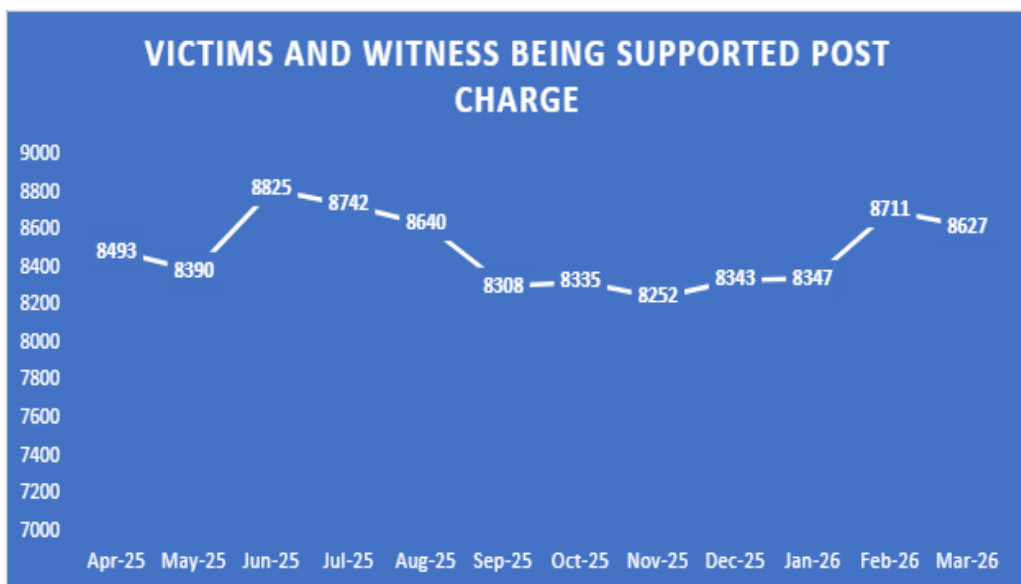


Figure 11: Number of victim and witnesses being supported post charge per month 2025-26

Attendance Figures

Witness attendance is measured by comparing the number of victims and witnesses requested by the CPS to be warned for court with the number who ultimately attend. Performance remains strong and demonstrates the

effectiveness of the support provided by the Witness Care Unit, particularly in circumstances where victims and witnesses may be hesitant to engage with the court process. Through proactive contact, reassurance and practical support, the WCU plays a key role in maximising attendance and supporting the effective progression of cases. Further work is underway to understand the reduction recorded in March 2026 and determine whether any targeted interventions are required.

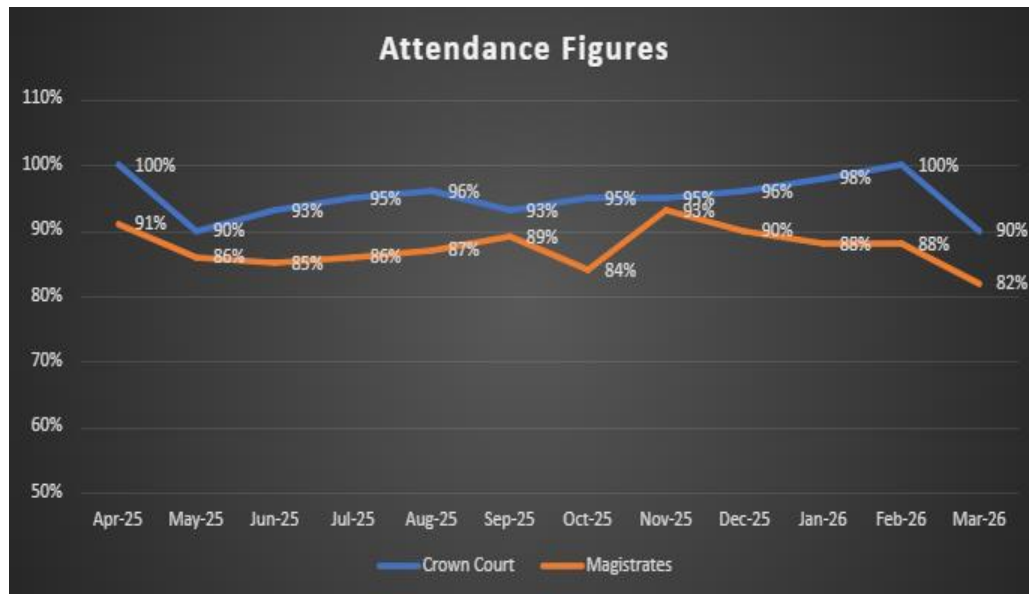


Figure 12: Attendance figures for Magistrate and Crown Court per month 2025-26

3.3 Survivor Engagement Coordinator

The Survivor Engagement Co-ordinator (SEC) continues to play a key role in ensuring that victims' voices and lived experiences shape service delivery and organisational learning.

The SEC continues to engage with survivors through self-referrals, agency referrals and police referrals and feed these through the governance structure to implement change and ensure the victims voice is at the centre of all we do. The Survivor Engagement Co-ordinator continues to play a key role in ensuring that victims' voices and lived experiences shape service delivery and organisational learning.

During 2025–2026, 143 survivors were engaged to provide feedback. The role has maintained strong engagement with victims and partners, facilitating meaningful contributions to service development, policy discussions, and the work of the Survivor Reference Group.



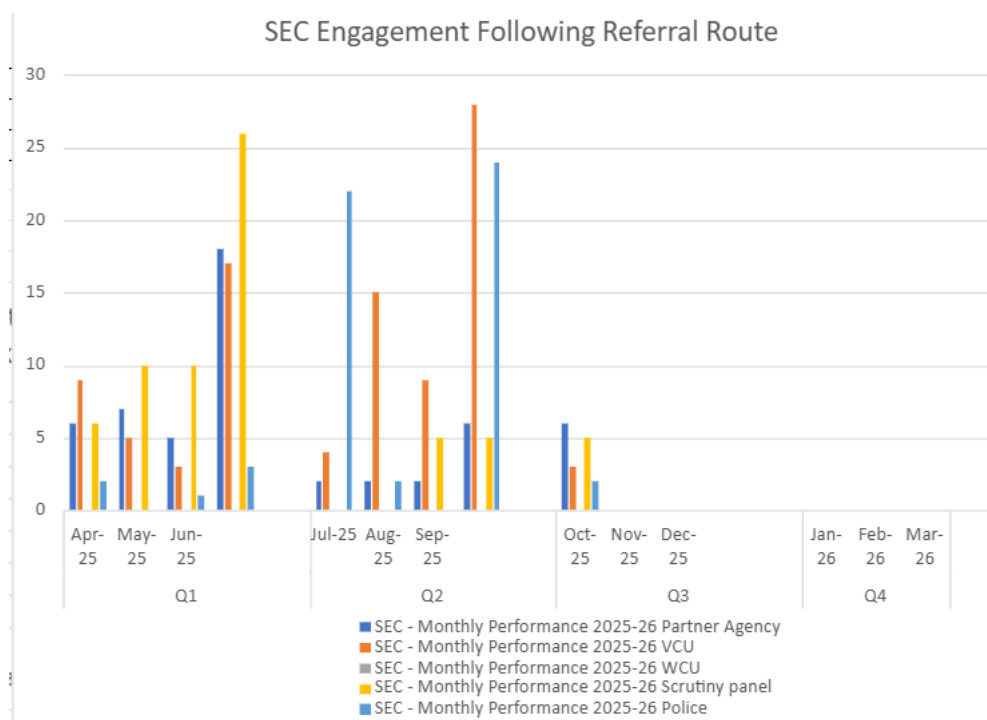


Figure 13: Number of SEC engagements by referral type 2025-26

The SEC was absent from work between November 2025 and March 2026. Under the operating model in place at that time, there was limited resilience within the VCU to provide cover for the role during periods of extended absence. As part of the departmental review (see Section 3.13), cross-cover arrangements have now been established between the SEC and the Special Measures Advocate (SMA), creating greater resilience within the team and reducing the risk of service disruption in the event of future absences.

In addition to core engagement activity, the role has supported the completion of Domestic Abuse (DA) and RASSO Outcome 16 reviews, established an internal DA support group to strengthen organisational understanding and response, and worked collaboratively with service leads to inform the Op Soteria transformational work, NOM implementation planning, and the development of the survivor framework.

The role has also contributed to the DA charging pilot by incorporating survivor feedback, ensuring lived experience informs operational change. Furthermore, key process and policy documentation has been developed for both the Survivor Engagement Co-ordinator function and the Survivor Reference Group, embedding consistent and sustainable approaches to survivor engagement.

Through this combined activity, the role continues to ensure that victim perspectives remain central to improvement, supporting a more responsive, informed, and victim-centred approach across the organisation.

The Survivor Reference Group is a victim-centred forum established by Gwent Police to ensure lived experience directly informs service development and improvement across the criminal justice system. Meeting regularly, members provide insight, consultation and challenge to enhance the quality, accessibility and effectiveness of victim services, with a focus on improving trust, satisfaction and engagement.

During 2025–26, the group has contributed to both regional and national conversations, including engagement with public health partners on domestic abuse needs, collaboration on the Welsh Government VAWDASV strategy, and direct dialogue with national policymakers such as the Minister for Safeguarding. Key priorities identified include sustainable funding for specialist services, improved refuge and housing provision, stronger protections for victims, and better support for children affected by abuse. Overall, the SRG continues to act as a collective voice for victims, driving meaningful change and influencing policy and practice at multiple levels.

3.4 Special Measures Advisor

The Special Measures Advisor (SMA) provides a central and proactive function to support victims and witnesses in accessing appropriate Special Measures, ensuring their needs are identified and addressed at the earliest opportunity.

Throughout 2025–2026, the SMA undertook monthly reviews of all not guilty anticipated plea (NGAP) domestic abuse and sexual violence cases, identifying gaps and taking action to improve the quality and timeliness of Special Measures applications.

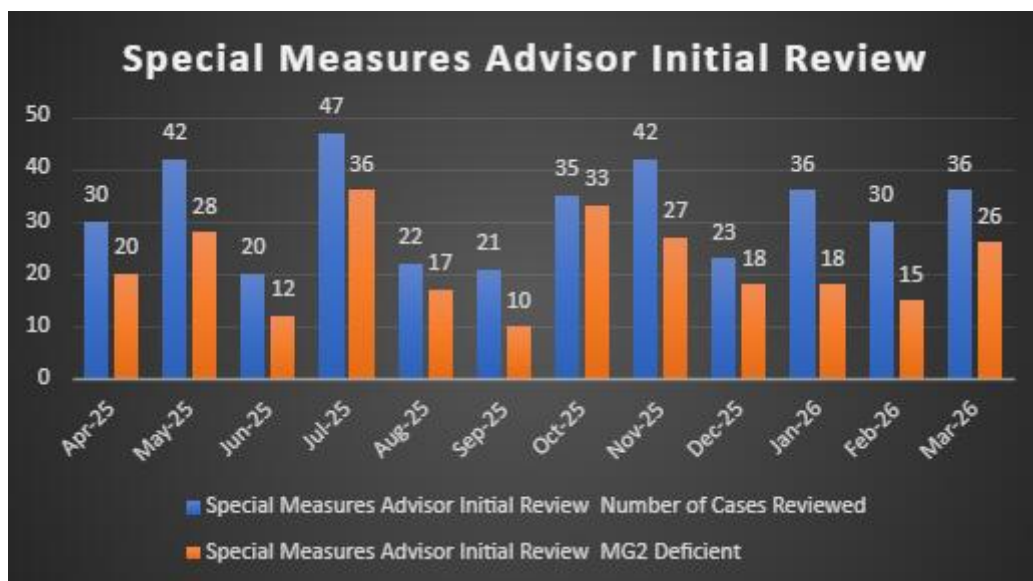


Figure 14: Special Measure Advisor Initial Review by month 2025-26

Acting as a single point of contact, the SMA offered guidance and support to officers on eligibility and processes, including direct engagement with victims and witnesses to complete applications where required. During this period, 137 victims and witnesses were supported, with 73 MG2 (Special Measures) applications submitted to facilitate their participation in the criminal justice process. Through this work, the role has strengthened compliance, improved victim experience, and promoted effective and consistent use of Special Measures across the force.





Figure 15: Special Measure Advisor Action by month 2025-26

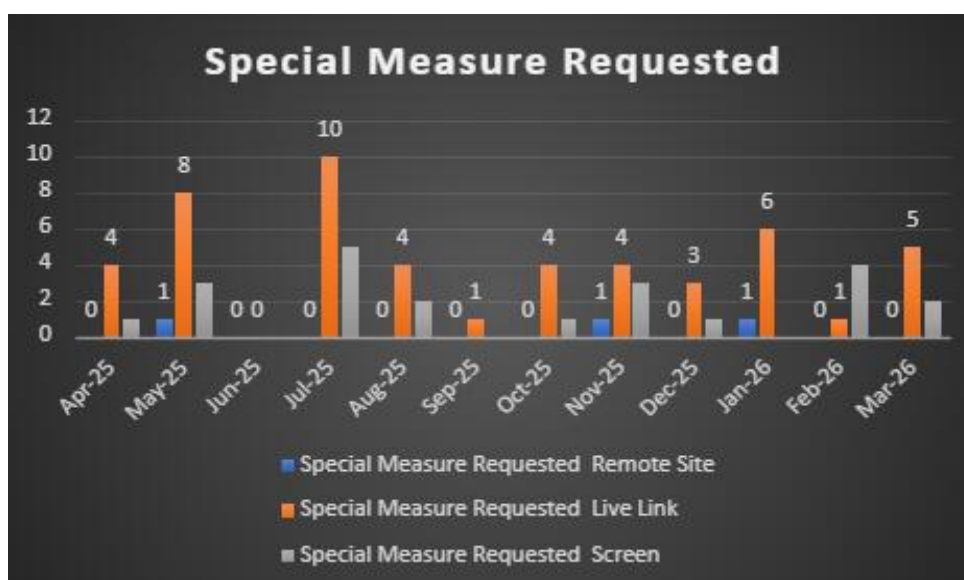


Figure 16: Special Measures requested by type by month 2025-26

The SMA also fulfilled the role of the organisation's point of contact for Victims' Right to Review, receiving 108 applications during the reporting period, of which 67 were accepted and 41 declined following assessment against legislative criteria.



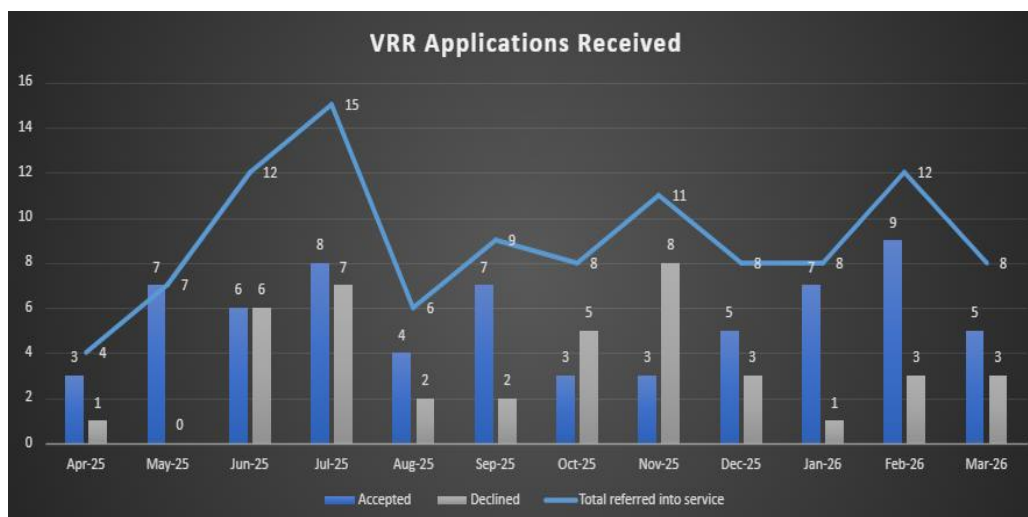


Figure 17: Total VRRs by Month, Showing Accepted and Declined Cases, 2025/26

The SMA ensured all eligible cases were referred for supervisory decision-making and remained the conduit between decision makers and victims, maintaining clear communication and support throughout.

Work is currently underway to strengthen VRR reporting within force governance processes by providing more meaningful analysis, identifying emerging themes, and capturing lessons learned to drive improvements in investigative quality and victim engagement. In addition, data relating to VRR compliance and reviewer adherence to required timescales will now be recorded and monitored. This will improve understanding of performance in this area and support timely intervention where required, recognising that delays in delivering a VRR can adversely affect the victim experience and confidence in the process.

Whilst the SMA post is currently vacant and will be recruited into as part of the department review (see section 3.13), the risk to compliance and victim experience is negated through other members of the department trained in and fulfilling key aspects of the role. The new departmental structure will see the SMA line managed by the SEC who will also be able to provide resilience to the role.

3.5 Repeat Victims

From a prevention perspective, the Neighbourhood Pillar have introduced measures to improve the understanding of repeat victims and, where appropriate, implement multi-agency problem-solving approaches aimed at reducing the risk of repeat victimisation. Level 1 Tasking provides a mechanism for the scrutiny of repeat victim cases and offers assurance that effective problem-solving activity is being identified, coordinated and implemented to prevent further harm. As these measures have embed, their effectiveness will be assessed during 2026/27 through monitoring repeat victimisation trends, the use of problem-solving activity and outcomes achieved for identified repeat victims.

3.6 Quality of Investigations and Victim Care Change Programme



The Head of Victim Services is strategically positioned within the Investigations and Victims Strand of the Crime Pillar and plays a lead role within the Quality of Investigations and Victim Care Change Programme. Through the Victims Guiding Principle, the programme brings together national requirements, HMICFRS recommendations, PCC priorities and local learning into a coordinated force-wide improvement plan, delivered collaboratively with colleagues across operational and enabling services.

The programme was established in recognition that victim care and investigative quality are intrinsically linked. Whilst policies, processes and governance arrangements are in place, the force recognises that the greatest challenge is ensuring these expectations are consistently translated into frontline operational practice. Victim care must be understood as a core component of investigative quality and public service, rather than a separate administrative process. Delivering meaningful victim engagement, quality needs assessments and timely updates are essential elements of a quality investigation and are critical to improving victim confidence and trust in the criminal justice process.

During 2025/26, several improvements have already been delivered through the programme. These include a review and redesign of NICHE victim templates, providing officers with clearer prompts around victim updates, needs assessments and victims' rights under the Victims' Code of Practice (VCOP). The revised templates are designed to improve the quality and consistency of victim contact, support earlier identification of vulnerability and strengthen compliance with VCOP requirements. Implementation will coincide with the go-live of the Citizen First programme, creating a more streamlined and victim-focused approach to communication and engagement.

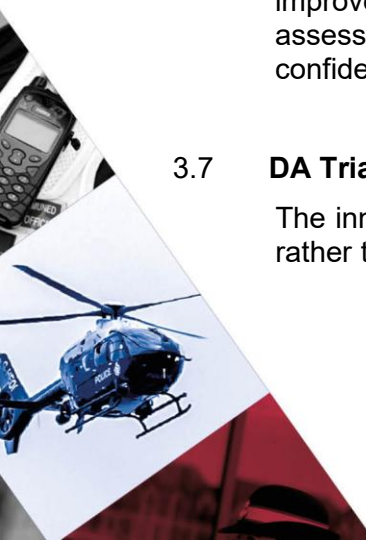
Further improvements have been made to force performance products through the introduction of reporting that distinguishes victim-based crime from state-based crime. This provides greater organisational understanding of victim outcomes and supports the force's response to the HMICFRS Area for Improvement relating to achieving the most appropriate outcomes for victims. Improved performance insight will support more effective governance, supervision and accountability for victim-focused outcomes.

In addition, a victim-focused training package developed as part of the Digital Case File (DCF) programme has been reviewed and adapted to reflect the operational context of Gwent Police. The training is intended not only to improve understanding of VCOP requirements but also to reinforce a victim-centred culture, helping officers and staff understand the impact that communication, engagement and investigative decisions have on victim confidence, participation and satisfaction.

The programme remains a key mechanism for driving organisational improvement and strengthening the relationship between investigative quality and victim experience. Success will ultimately be demonstrated through improved victim feedback, greater consistency in victim updates and needs assessments, stronger compliance with VCOP requirements and increased confidence that victim-centred practice is embedded across the force

3.7 DA Triage

The innovative Domestic Abuse (DA) triage meeting continues, now fortnightly rather than monthly. The meetings assist in identifying investigative gaps, with



the aim to address these in readiness for trial, to achieve positive outcomes for victims.

Agencies involved in this process include Gwent Police Victim and Witness Care Units, Crown Prosecution Service, Special Measures Advocate, IDVA Service and Gwent Police File Management Unit.

This has been recognised by NPCC as best practice and shared nationally with interest from other forces hoping to adopt.

3.8 Victim Satisfaction Survey

The volume of responses remains relatively low, with 195 responses recorded during the 2025/26 financial year. Whilst the feedback received provides insight and learning opportunities, the low response rate means that the current methodology provides limited organisational assurance and insufficient confidence that findings accurately represent the wider victim population. This restricts the force's ability to fully understand victim experience, assess the impact of improvement activity and identify emerging themes requiring intervention.

It is recognised that the current survey approach requires redesign to capture more meaningful, representative and actionable victim feedback. Victim feedback is one of the most important mechanisms available to understand whether organisational improvements are translating into improved victim experience, increased confidence and compliance with the Victims' Code of Practice (VCOP). As such, strengthening this area remains a key priority.

A joint working group, comprising representatives from Gwent Police and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), has been re-established to review benchmarking information from other forces, identify best practice and consider alternative approaches to gathering victim feedback. This review will consider how response rates, independence, representativeness and the quality of insight can be improved to provide greater confidence in the findings and strengthen organisational learning.

This work will inform the development of a future proposal which will be presented to the Victims Meeting in September 2026. The proposal will align with wider force priorities including victim care, Citizen First, service recovery, VCOP compliance and the Quality of Investigations and Victim Care Change Programme, ensuring victim feedback becomes a more effective driver of organisational improvement and assurance.

3.9 Data Reporting and Annual Data Return (ADR)

It is recognised that the force currently has a limited ability to report internally on compliance with the Victims' Code of Practice (VCOP), restricting its ability to fully understand performance and provide comprehensive assurance regarding the consistent delivery of victims' rights. Whilst activity data is available across several areas, the force is currently less able to evidence whether all relevant rights under VCOP are being delivered consistently and recorded appropriately throughout the victim journey. This remains one of the least assured areas within the victim care portfolio and has been identified as a key area for improvement.

The Ministry of Justice and Home Office are developing an Annual Data Return (ADR) for VCOP compliance and have been undertaking data-mapping activity across forces in England and Wales to understand the current data landscape and inform future reporting requirements. As part of this work, forces were



requested to pause significant local development activity pending further direction and technical guidance from the Ministry of Justice.

With little further national direction being provided, it has now been assessed that the risk of continuing to wait outweighs the potential risk of progressing local development ahead of complete national guidance. As a result, work will continue to develop meaningful VCOP performance measures that improve understanding of compliance, service delivery and victim outcomes, whilst also ensuring the force is better prepared for future ADR requirements.

A review and prioritisation exercise will be undertaken during 2026/27, focusing initially on those VCOP rights and performance measures which are most closely linked to victim experience, trust and confidence. This phased approach will support the development of an improved performance framework and enable stronger governance, scrutiny and organisational learning.

The intention is to develop an initial VCOP performance framework during 2026/27, with progress reported through existing governance structures, including the Victims Meeting and Quality of Investigations and Victim Care Change Programme. Success will be demonstrated through improved organisational understanding of compliance, greater assurance regarding delivery of victims' rights, a stronger evidence base to inform improvement activity, performance management and inspection readiness, and most importantly increased confidence that victims are receiving the service, support, communication and rights to which they are entitled under the Victims' Code. Through strengthening performance insight and assurance, the force will be better positioned to identify gaps, intervene where required and drive improvements that enhance victim experience, trust and confidence throughout the criminal justice journey.

3.10 Scrutiny Panels

During 2025/26, scrutiny activity has continued to evolve to focus on driving meaningful improvements in both victim care and investigative outcomes. The Domestic Abuse (DA) Scrutiny Panel has transitioned to a Domestic Abuse Improvement Meeting, using performance data and case review findings to develop a broader understanding of victim experiences and identify opportunities for tangible organisational change. Early feedback from participants has been positive, and the force is engaging with academic partners associated with the national Project Brightlight programme to support understanding and evaluation of the revised approach.

Within the Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) scrutiny process, it was recognised that rape investigations were consistently demonstrating positive feedback linked to the implementation of Operation Soteria principles. As a result, scrutiny activity was expanded to include other sexual offences, including sexual assault and indecent exposure, to identify further opportunities for improvement. Following the review of indecent exposure investigations and the introduction of targeted measures, improvements in service delivery and victim engagement are now being monitored through ongoing scrutiny activity.



Feedback from survivors has highlighted several positive developments, particularly in relation to initial police contact. Victims have reported feeling more listened to, believed and supported by attending officers at the first point of contact. Survivor feedback has also demonstrated the positive impact of Operation Soteria approaches, with Sexual Offence Liaison Officer (SOLO) updates being recognised as more victim-centred, informative and responsive to victims' needs throughout the investigation process.

3.11 Victims Meeting

The Victims Meeting is held quarterly and chaired by the Detective Chief Superintendent for Crime. This meeting seeks to secure and scrutinise the effective delivery of a consistent and good quality service for victims and witnesses.

The meeting reviews current delivery and performance and agrees any changes to the delivery of Victim Services to ensure it meets the requirements set out within the Victim Strategy, Police and Crime Plan, Victims' Code of Practice and Witness Charter.

During 2025/26, the meeting has overseen a number of significant developments across the victim services portfolio. This has included consideration of Survivor Reference Group feedback, victim-focused template changes through the Quality of Investigations and Victim Care Change Programme, oversight of work to review the force's approach to victim satisfaction and feedback, and oversight of the introduction of victim-based crime reporting. Collectively, these developments have strengthened organisational understanding of victim outcomes and helped ensure victim voice continues to influence service development, performance oversight and improvement activity

3.12 Local Criminal Justice Board

The LCJB Victims and Witnesses Subgroup is made up of representatives from all criminal justice partners. Over the past 12 months, the subgroup has established a robust partnership governance structure to improve outcomes and experiences for victims and witnesses across Gwent. Led jointly by Gwent Police and the CPS, the subgroup has developed a comprehensive performance framework, established the Victim Journey Oversight Group, strengthened scrutiny of Victims' Code compliance, overseen improvements to rape investigation outcomes, monitored victim attrition and court timeliness, and supported the successful reopening of the Gwent Remote Evidence Site.

Through the use of performance data, victim feedback and partnership collaboration, the subgroup has delivered tangible progress against the LCJB Strategy 2025-29 objectives to improve victim experience, increase confidence in the criminal justice system, improve timeliness and strengthen multi-agency accountability.

The maturity of the subgroup and the breadth of activity delivered during 2025/26 provides increased assurance that victim and witness issues are being considered across the criminal justice system rather than solely within individual organisations. Importantly, the partnership has moved beyond information



sharing and now provides a mechanism for collective problem solving, performance oversight and joint accountability for victim outcomes.

The reopening of the Gwent Remote Evidence Site is a tangible example of how partnership working can directly improve the experience of victims and witnesses by increasing accessibility and reducing some of the barriers associated with participating in the criminal justice process. Similarly, improved oversight of victim attrition, court timeliness and rape investigation outcomes supports a greater understanding of those areas where victims are most at risk of disengaging from the justice system.

During 2026/27, the subgroup will continue to strengthen its performance framework and use victim feedback, compliance data and partnership learning to improve understanding of the victim journey. Success will be demonstrated through enhanced collaboration, stronger accountability, improved outcomes for victims and witnesses, and increased confidence that criminal justice partners are collectively delivering a more effective and victim-centred service.

3.13 **Departmental Review**

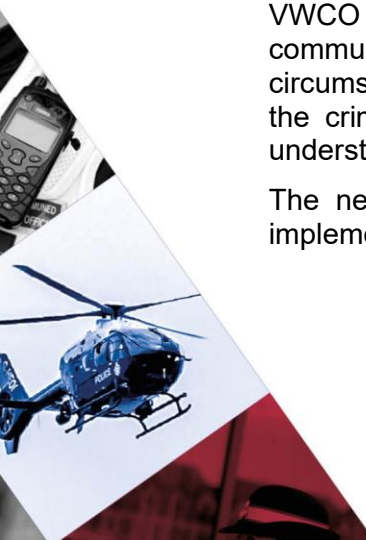
During 2025/26, a full review of the Victim Services Department (encompassing Victim Care Officers responsible for pre-charge matters and Witness Care Officers responsible for post-charge matters) has been undertaken by the Continuous Improvement Team, with a supporting Business Case approved at the Service Improvement Board in June 2026.

The review was commissioned in response to sustained increases in demand across the department, particularly within Witness Care, alongside a reliance on temporary staffing arrangements to manage that demand. The turnover associated with temporary staffing, combined with staff feedback regarding the current operating model, highlighted opportunities to improve resilience, service delivery and workforce capability. As a result, a comprehensive review was undertaken which concluded with the approval of a Business Case to implement a new omni-competent operating model.

The new model will remove the current distinction between pre-charge and post-charge roles. As a result, the same Victim and Witness Care Officer (VWCO) will support a victim from initial contact through to the conclusion of court proceedings. This approach removes the need for handovers as cases progress through the criminal justice process, reducing disruption and ensuring victims do not need to establish a new relationship with a different member of staff at what can often be a particularly important stage of their journey.

The revised model is intended to enhance the quality of service provided to victims by strengthening continuity throughout the victim journey, building trust and confidence, improving compliance with the Victims' Code of Practice (VCOP) and improving the overall victim experience. By allocating a single VWCO throughout the life of the case, victims will benefit from more consistent communication, a greater understanding of their individual needs and circumstances, and a clearer sense of support as their case progresses through the criminal justice system. The model will also support a more structured understanding of performance and outcomes across the victim journey.

The new operating model will be introduced through an 18-month phased implementation period commencing in November 2026. This approach will



provide sufficient time for recruitment, training and skills development, whilst ensuring existing service delivery is maintained throughout the transition.

Success will be measured through improved continuity of care, enhanced victim experience, increased compliance with VCOP requirements, improved staff resilience and flexibility, and greater confidence that victims are receiving a consistent and high-quality service regardless of where they are within the criminal justice process. A formal Post Implementation Review will be undertaken at the appropriate stage to assess whether the intended benefits have been realised and identify any further opportunities for improvement.

3.14 **Citizen First**

During 2025/26, a business case was approved for the introduction of Citizen First. The Citizen First Automated Victims' Journey and Victim Portal, led by DSD, introduces a new approach to keeping victims of selected crime types informed through clearer, more consistent and more timely communication. The programme is intended to modernise elements of the victim journey and improve how victims access information and engage with the criminal justice process.

Its implementation will streamline certain Victim Care Unit (VCU) processes for those cases categorised as 'Standard' under the Victims' Code of Practice (VCOP), whilst continuing to meet all VCOP requirements. During the 2025/26 financial year, 62.95% of VCU demand related to victims assessed as requiring a standard level of service, demonstrating the significant impact that Citizen First could have on the overall victim care model.

Whilst the programme introduces administrative efficiencies, its primary benefit is the improvement of victim experience. Standard-service victims will receive more consistent communication, improved access to information and increased visibility of their case journey. At the same time, the capacity created within the VCU will enable greater focus on victims assessed as requiring an enhanced service, allowing staff to spend more time supporting those with the greatest needs, vulnerabilities or safeguarding concerns.

Citizen First also supports wider organisational ambitions to improve compliance with VCOP, increase consistency of service delivery and strengthen the connection between victim care and investigative quality. Given that standard-service victims account for almost two-thirds of VCU demand, successful implementation is a key dependency in enabling the force to improve communication, enhance victim experience and support a more victim-centred approach to service delivery.

The VCU remains actively involved as a key stakeholder in the continued development and delivery of the project, ensuring that the design and implementation of the system remain focused on the needs and expectations of victims. Success will ultimately be measured through improved victim experience, increased consistency of communication, stronger compliance with victims' rights and greater confidence that victims are receiving the information and support they require throughout their journey.

3.15 **Op Soteria**

The Head of the Victim Care Unit and the Survivor Engagement Coordinator continue to contribute to the national Op Soteria programme in Pillar 3



(Procedural Justice Approach to Victim Engagement) as well as contributing through internal governance to the forcewide Op Soteria plan.

4. CYDWEITHIO | COLLABORATION

- 4.1 A Victim Services / OPCC review of Victim Satisfaction Survey is currently underway.
- 4.2 The Victim Care Unit continues to collaborate with the Citizen First Project to inform delivery of a product that meets the requirements of victims and their rights under VCOP.
- 4.3 The Victim Care Unit continues to work collaboratively with a wide range of partners to deliver services to victims and will further strengthen these relationships to ensure support remains relevant and tailored to individual needs.

5. CAMAU NESAF | NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 During 2025/26, significant work was undertaken to develop new approaches, governance arrangements, operating models and performance frameworks across Victim Services. The focus during 2026/27 will largely shift from development and design into implementation, performance review and benefits realisation.

Key areas of activity include:

- Implementation of the revised Victim and Witness Care operating model.
- Delivery and evaluation of the Citizen First victim journey and victim portal.
- Implementation of the Quality of Investigations and Victim Care Change Programme recommendations, including the introduction of revised victim-focused NICHE templates.
- Development of a Victims' Code of Practice performance and compliance framework.
- Improvement of victim satisfaction and feedback arrangements.
- Evaluation of outcomes arising from the Quality of Investigations and Victim Care Change Programme.
- Further development of survivor engagement activity and integration of victim voice into organisational learning.
- Improved understanding of referral activity, victim characteristics and support pathways.
- Continued development of Local Criminal Justice Board performance measures and partnership accountability arrangements.



Success during 2026/27 will be demonstrated not only through implementation of these initiatives, but through evidence of improved victim experience, increased compliance with the Victims' Code of Practice, stronger performance insight and greater confidence that organisational change is delivering measurable benefits for victims and witnesses

6. YSTYRIAETHAU ARIANNOL | FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

6.1

Whilst there are no specific financial considerations for this report it must be noted that following the submission of a comprehensive business case in June 2026 it was recognised that there would be a financial impact of £77, 249 recurring. This had been previously forecasted through the change programme and built into identified future organisational budget expectations. The business case was supported through the relevant governance forums by Chief Officers.

7. YSTYRIAETHAU PERSONEL | PERSONNEL CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 Absence of Head of Victim Services

The department experienced challenges during the early part of 2026 as a result of the absence of the Head of Victim Services. To maintain continuity, the role is currently being fulfilled by a Chief Inspector pending the return of the substantive post holder, ensuring appropriate leadership and oversight during a critical period. This continuity of leadership is supporting the progression of key workstreams and dependencies across the victim care portfolio, while also providing an opportunity to review existing processes from an operational perspective to enhance service delivery, improve outcomes for victims, and strengthen trust and confidence in the organisation.

7.2 Staff engagement and consultation is key to all of the change and improvement programmes and is being actively led by those engaged in the programmes.

8. YSTYRIAETHAU CYFREITHIOL | LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 The Victims Codes of Practice is a statutory obligation, placing a legal implication on Gwent Police to deliver the rights of the victims, held within. By failing to comply with these rights, there is a risk firstly of providing inadequate service to victims but also failing to comply with our legal duty.



9. YSTYRIAETHAU CYDRADDOLDEB A HAWLIAU DYNOL | EQUALITIES & HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 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. RISG | RISK

- 10.1 Through failing to deliver a consistent service to victims, there is a risk of trust and confidence being lost within the communities we serve and the partners with whom we collaborate.
- 10.2 There is a risk that progressing local data-reporting developments before further clarification and direction is received from the Ministry of Justice regarding the Annual Data Return (ADR) could result in future amendments being required to align with national requirements. This may lead to duplication of effort or the need for additional rework. However, given the current limited visibility of force performance in relation to the Victims' Code of Practice, it is recognised that delaying progress presents a greater risk to the force's ability to understand, monitor and improve services for victims. To mitigate this risk, a review and prioritisation exercise will be undertaken, focusing on those areas most likely to improve victims' experiences, strengthen trust and confidence, and enhance the force's understanding of VCOP compliance and performance.

11. BUDD Y CYHOEDD | PUBLIC INTEREST

- 11.1 In producing this report, has consideration been given to 'public confidence'?
Yes
- 11.2 Are the contents of this report, observations and appendices necessary and suitable for the public domain? **Yes**
- 11.3 If you consider this report to be exempt from the public domain, please state the reasons:

12. AWDUR YR ADRODDIAD | REPORT AUTHOR

- 12.1 Chief Inspector Shaun Conway, Head of Victim Services

13. PRIF SWYDDOG ARWEINIOL | LEAD CHIEF OFFICER

- 13.1 ACC Townsend



14. **ATODIADAU | ANNEXES**

14.1 None.

15. **CYMERADWYAETH LLYWODRAETHU A BRIF SWYDDOG | GOVERNANCE BOARD AND CHIEF OFFICER APPROVAL**

15.1 This report has been presented to the Vulnerability & SOC Board

Meeting chaired by: DCS Anne-Marie Salwey

Meeting date: 30.07.26

Actions or amendments arising from meeting:

Actioned 12.8.26 and paper resubmitted.

This report has been presented to the Scrutiny Executive Board

Meeting chaired by: DCC Nicholas McLain

Meeting date: 04.08.26

Actions or amendments arising from meeting:

15.2 I confirm this report has been discussed and approved at a formal Chief Officers' meeting 08.09.2026.

15.3 I confirm this report is suitable for the public domain for the reasons stated in 11.2.

Llofnod | Signature:



Dyddiad | Date: 23.09.2026

