

Improving the quality and consistency of victim services (Op Crystal)

Focuses on improving the service delivered to victims, in particular the quality and consistency of information and updates, as well as ensuring all victim needs are assessed and addressed.

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Key details

Does it work?	Untested – new or innovative
Focus	Organisational
Topic	Vulnerability and safeguarding
Organisation	Durham Constabulary
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Region	North East
Partners	Police Voluntary/not for profit organisation
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Start date	November 2022
Scale of initiative	Local

Key details

Target group	Victims
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Aim

This is an integrated strategy which aims to provide clarity for officers and staff about the standards required for:

- investigation plans
- crime recording
- victim care contacts

It introduces the standardised formatting of these records and supports the delivery of expectations through a training, performance management and governance framework. It provides the knowledge and certainty that allows all investigations to be built to the 'crystal standard'.

Intended outcome

Improvements in:

- the quality and consistency of information and updates provided to victims
- how victims' needs are assessed and addressed, which should in turn aid in improved coping and recovery
- victim satisfaction with the service received from Durham and improved compliance with the Victims Code of Practice (VCOP).

Description

Several key changes were made to the force's crime record management system (RMS), Red Sigma, to improve victim care - these included the following:

- The force uses a recently re-formatted and modernised victim of crime leaflet to ensure every victim receives a written confirmation of their crime being recorded. Compliance has historically been monitored via a victim care log entry on the crime log, however a record box has been

added to the victim care log where officers must state whether the leaflet has been provided to the victim and in what format. If an officer states this has not been done, the rationale must be recorded – this record box allows compliance data to be collected.

- A mandatory 'contact details left with victim' record box has been added to the victim care log whereby officers must state 'yes' or 'no'; if an officer states this has not been done, the rationale must be recorded – this record box allows compliance data to be collected.
- A mandatory victim needs assessment (VNA) question set has been added at the front-end of the victim care log. The VNA question set was co-produced between Durham Police and Durham's support services staff (VCAS) to ensure the question set was fit for purpose and covered all avenues of victim needs.
- Victim contact is managed between the victim and officer in charge of the case (OIC) using a method of contact that should be agreed at first point of contact with the victim and recorded on the victim log. It acts as a record that allows any officer who deals with a case to understand when, how and what the victim would like to be updated on and is a live record that can be updated and altered as and when appropriate or when any pertinent information regarding the investigation becomes available. Supervisor seven-day ring backs are also in place and carried out across a range of volume crime victims, including any crime dealt with by the virtual investigation team and hate crime victims (hate crime ring backs are carried out by cohesion officers to ensure a more bespoke service is offered) and act as a method of ensuring victims have received all necessary and pertinent information in the investigation to date as well as a service check to ensure the victim is happy with what has been and is being done to investigate their report. These fields are now mandated on the victim care log alongside refreshed and updated assistance call-out boxes and allows compliance data to be collected
- A record box has been added to the victim care log whereby officers must state whether the victim has been offered the opportunity to complete a victim personal statement (VPS). If an officer states this has not been offered, the rationale must be recorded – this record box allows compliance data to be collected.
- A record box has been added to the victim care log whereby officers must state when closing a crime and where the crime has been marked as no further action (NFA), if the victim has been informed about the victims right to review process and a rationale field if not.
- A record box has been added to the victim care log whereby officers must state when closing a crime whether the victim has been given information about compensation where appropriate and a rationale field if not.

- The system changes have been supported via several in-person supervisor briefings, chief officer and exec vlogs, and an online training package consisting of three videos which outline the changes and the rationale and offer guidance as to what is expected by officers. These training guides have been uploaded to both an Op Crystal tile and victim care tile on the force intranet to ensure they are easily accessible to all.

The training packages that support Op Crystal have been updated over the early summer (2023) and are now live and being delivered on a rolling programme basis.

The victim care processes implemented for victims of crime under Op Crystal were replicated for victims and witnesses of road traffic collisions (RTCs) within the Roads Policing Unit (RPU) in April 2023. This means that victims and affected witnesses of RTCs, who would not normally be offered support, (i.e. where no crime has taken place or, no family liaison officer (FLO) has been deployed but there is still an investigation taking place) are now being given the opportunity to have some support if required. A bespoke victim information booklet has also been created for the Roads and Armed Policing Unit that will be available for officers to give out in conjunction with this.

Overall impact

Phased evaluation work is planned across the winter months and therefore the overall impact of the initiative will not be understood until early Spring 2024.

Early metric indication suggests that compliance around VCOP is significantly improved.

The additional evaluation mentioned previously will add further context and qualitative understanding.

The internal phased evaluation work will involve analysis and sampling of crimes and data from across the strategy and assess the maturity and effectiveness of implementation. The methods outlined below will ensure accountability and ongoing delivery of the improvements:

- crime management unit inspection of investigative quality and NCRS compliance
- inspectors dip sampling returns
- locality policing performance
- DCI rape scrutiny panels
- detective inspector rape reviews
- monthly performance reviews

- operation policing performance (OPP)
- NFA rape scrutiny panels
- external crime scrutiny panels
- victim satisfaction survey analysis
- feedback from PCC and victim support services

Learning

There were two main implementation challenges.

Firstly, the creation and building of the documents within the Red Sigma record management system environment. As Red Sigma is Durham's bespoke RMS, any changes that are made have to be written and coded by the force's IT developers, and this can be a complex and timely process.

The second challenge was linked to the resources required to both undertake and deliver the training programme needed to support the operation. To be as effective as possible, we were keen for the training packages to cover both why Operation Crystal was being put in place and cover the practical elements, for example how the changes would impact officers and what they would be required to do. This training then had to be delivered to all operational officers and staff, which was a challenge in terms of managing resource abstractions.

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