

Victim innovation network

A network to support forces with the Victims' Code of Practice (VCOP) by encouraging peer networking, innovation sharing and discussions around legislation.

First published

8 June 2026

Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Organisational
Topic	Violence & Crime Against the Person Public Protection, Safeguarding & Vulnerability Contact management
Organisation	Avon and Somerset Police
Contact	Robert Fortune
Email address	robert.fortune@avonandsomerset.police.uk
Region	South West
Partners	Police Criminal justice (includes prisons, probation services) Government department
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	May 2026

Key details

Scale of initiative	National
Target group	Victims Workforce

Aim

The aims of the victim innovation network (VIN) are to:

- facilitate communication and engagement between forces involved in victim-focused work
- encourage forces to raise issues, queries, and challenges relating to victim-focused work
- promote collaboration by sharing innovation and ideas with forces to improve services for victims and witnesses
- support continuous improvement in victim services, including compliance with the Victims' Code of Practice (VCOP) and emerging legislation

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of the VIN are to:

- increase the number of victim-focused initiatives and innovations shared across participating forces
- reduce the gaps and inconsistencies in victim service standards between forces
- increase compliance with the VCOP across participating forces
- improve victim satisfaction survey results
- improve the timeliness and quality of information shared with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) governance group

Description

The VIN was initially developed by Essex Police, following an identification of a gap in the national coordination of forces delivering victim-focused services. Through engagement with colleagues across policing, Essex Police recognised that while many forces were independently developing

innovative approaches to enhance victim satisfaction and comply with VCOP, there was no consistent or structured mechanism for sharing this learning.

The initial planning process involved informal discussions through existing professional networks and national forums. These discussions led to the formation of a voluntary network. Forces have been invited to participate through established policing contacts and peer relationships. Involvement from forces has been organic, with organisations nominating appropriate representatives at both strategic and operational levels.

The VIN brings together a broad range of roles and teams connected to victim services. The core participants include:

- head of victim services
- public protection leads
- VCOP compliance leads
- performance and governance managers

They are supported by wider operational teams such as witness care units, safeguarding teams, and service delivery managers. Over time, the network has also expanded to include partner organisations, including representatives from Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) offices, commissioned victim support services, third-sector providers, and occasionally wider criminal justice partners. This mix of roles ensures both strategic oversight and practical insight are represented within discussions.

Implementation of the network has been designed to be accessible and sustainable. The meetings held on a bi-monthly or quarterly basis and are conducted online via Microsoft Teams, to maximise national participation. Each meeting follows a flexible, structured format that includes national policy updates, legislative developments, and contributions from the NPCC or Home Office. A key feature of the meeting is the presentation of innovative practice by individual forces, enabling attendees to learn from real examples of service improvement. The meeting also includes thematic discussions on shared challenges, such as improving victim satisfaction, managing demand, and strengthening VCOP compliance, alongside opportunities to capture learning and encourage ongoing collaboration between forces.

The VIN has been intentionally designed to operate with minimal financial burden. There is no required dedicated central funding, instead the network relies on existing staff time and resources already available within forces, including digital platforms such as Microsoft Teams. Any costs associated with hosting or events are absorbed within existing budgets or shared across participating organisations. This low-cost model has supported ease of adoption and reduced the need for complex funding approvals.

Within Essex Police, the network aligned clearly with organisational priorities around victim service improvement and compliance, which enabled straightforward endorsement from senior leaders. Across participating forces, approval to engage in the network has been secured at superintendent, chief superintendent, or head of service level.

Following the establishment of the network by Essex Police, Avon and Somerset Police have assumed leadership to ensure its continued development and long-term sustainability. This transition has been driven by a combination of factors, including the need for ongoing coordination and Avon and Somerset's capacity, capability, and strong engagement in victim-focused work.

Avon and Somerset Police's role has involved:

- organising and chairing meetings
- managing communications and attendance
- setting agendas
- ensuring that content remains relevant and aligned with national priorities

Avon and Somerset have enhanced the network by incorporating partner updates into meetings and strengthening engagement across policing and external stakeholders.

Overall impact

The network has created a consistent and structured forum for collaboration, improving the communication between forces working on victim-focused initiatives. It has created a sustainable mechanism for innovation that is influencing practices at both local and national levels. There has been increased visibility of innovative practice, enabling forces to better understand what works and share learning opportunities. Several ideas and innovations shared through the network have been adopted or adapted by other forces, demonstrating early signs of wider roll-out. This has also led to an increase collaboration between forces on shared challenges, with some workstreams

progressing jointly beyond the meetings.

VIN members have reported an improved awareness of VCOP compliance approaches, performance monitoring methods, and emerging national priorities. The inclusion of partner updates has strengthened the multi-agency understanding and broadened perspectives beyond policing.

Learning

- Implementing the practice demonstrated that building a strong and engaged network is fundamental to success. A key strength has been the willingness of members to openly share both challenges and successes. This has been supported by a clear structure, regular meetings, and strong alignment with national priorities, all of which helped create a purposeful and trusted environment.
- While the network has ensured low-cost delivery and accessibility, maintaining consistent engagement across forces and managing competing operational demands has proved challenging.
- Variations in force structures and resources also affected the ease with which ideas could be applied locally, and there was limited early formal evaluation or tracking of how innovations were adopted.

Copyright

The copyright in this shared practice example is not owned or managed by the College of Policing and is therefore not available for re-use under the terms of the Non-Commercial College Licence. You will need to seek permission from the copyright owner to reproduce their works.

Legal disclaimer

Disclaimer: The views, information or opinions expressed in this shared practice example are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or views of the College of Policing or the organisations involved.