



Supporting victims -
Help. Cope. Recover.

Victim Strategy • September 2017



PCC
Office of the Police
and Crime Commissioner
Devon and Cornwall



Devon & Cornwall Police

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02. Foreword

Chief Constable

I am pleased to set out our shared commitment to a high quality service for victims of crime across Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

Victims are at the heart of our work in Devon & Cornwall Police. This strategy explains how, together with our partners, we will support victims of crime and ensure that our criminal justice processes are as effective and transparent as possible.

We are committed to improving the experiences of victims throughout their involvement with the criminal justice system and to working closely with our Local Criminal Justice Board Partners to achieve this. We strive to ensure that victims understand what is happening with their case, and that we provide timely and relevant updates to them. I am proud of the victim-focused service that Devon and Cornwall Police provides and I regularly receive very positive feedback regarding the way that individual officers and staff have supported victims of crime. However, I recognise that there is always room for improvement and this strategy makes it clear what victims can expect from the police and helps us to understand where we need to do more.

I recognise that being a victim of crime is a personal experience and that as far as is possible, each response should reflect individual victim needs. We have invested in well trained police officers and staff who are equipped to deal with the needs of all victims of crime, and our well-established Victim Care Network provides a range of victim-focused support services through specialist providers.

We have and will continue to listen to the views of victims and their representatives in developing this Victim Strategy, and will continue to be responsive to victims' feedback and experiences, allowing our service to continue to develop and improve.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Shaun Sawyer'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Shaun Sawyer

PCC

This Strategy is about building a safe, resilient, connected community for victims of crime. Every day in my role as the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, I meet people who have a personal experience of crime. That experience may be as a victim, as a person close to a victim such as a partner, family member or friend, as a member of a community or as a witness to a crime or incident. Their individual responses vary widely depending on the circumstances and this could be as simple as a shrug of the shoulders, to a person digging deep to put it behind them and move on with their life, to somebody who is intensely and traumatically affected by what has happened, unable to cope. Everyone is different.



People talk to me frankly and openly about their experiences; of the crime itself, how the police responded to a request for help and of the wider criminal justice system. I hear the frustrations, the concerns, the thanks and praise, the suggestions of how we could do things differently. I'm especially concerned about those people I do not hear and who remain silent.

We have already made significant improvements to the way we respond to the needs of people experiencing crime. Our Victim Care Network shows what can be done when we listen carefully and respond to feedback. There is always more that can be done; both the Chief Constable and I are committed to delivering excellent victim care according to individual need, to providing an efficient and effective policing service, to working with the voluntary sector and our community safety and criminal justice partners to improve the service provided to people experiencing crime, and of course, to driving crime down. This Victim Strategy sets out what we aim to achieve and describes my priorities for the coming two years. I look forward to sharing our progress with you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alison Hernandez', written in a cursive style.

Alison Hernandez

03. Introduction

Victims must be at the heart of all police work

Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly are amongst the safest places to live in the country. The police are here to keep our communities and visitors safe and in particular to come to our assistance when someone or something threatens our safety. To do this well, our police need to be efficient, effective and well connected to their communities.

Victims must be at the heart of all police work. This Victim Strategy sets out our commitment to victims of crime across Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly in line with the Police and Crime Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan and the Force Mission.

In publishing our joint strategy, we have taken into account the views and feedback of people who are themselves a victim of crime, local partner agencies, service providers and police officers and police staff. We recognise that every experience is unique and we must tailor our services to meet individual needs. Our aim is to inspire confidence in the criminal justice system and to ensure we effectively support those affected by crime to cope and recover from their experiences.

This Victim Strategy should be read in conjunction with the Force Prevention Strategy which sets out how police will work jointly with partners to develop an integrated, effective and proactive approach to problem-solving and the prevention of current and emerging crime. The aim is to reduce victimisation and offending with a particular focus on early intervention, listening carefully to our communities and increasing the connectivity between police and the public.

"The police officer in our case was brilliant - he was caring, thorough, helpful and he kept us informed and safe. He did an amazing job getting justice for my little girl."

04. Our Aim

Through a keen focus on delivering the work set out in this strategy, we will continue to develop a high quality, caring and timely service to victims – placing the person before the process at all times. We will work collaboratively with our partners in other criminal justice agencies, with the broader public sector and with the voluntary sector to better support victims of crime, to develop improved criminal justice processes and to reduce levels of repeat victimisation.



05. A high quality, caring and timely service to victims of crime

The modern criminal justice system is complex and can be bewildering and frustrating for a victim of crime. All too regularly the police and judicial processes take centre stage and the needs of the victim become secondary, at times lost in the bureaucracies of 'the system'. It is vital that the voice of the victim is listened to and lived experience is valued and responded to, preventing secondary victimisation. The repeatedly raised issue of victims lacking information on the progress of their case will be taken seriously and will be addressed through the introduction of new working practices.

Devon and Cornwall is fortunate to have an innovative and highly regarded Victim Care Service delivering tailored support services to victims according to their needs. We will continue to develop this service to ensure it remains relevant and responsive.

We will:

- Ensure victims of crime can access relevant and timely support at any time
- Continue to develop the reach, coverage and accessibility of the Victim Care Network, actively promoting and marketing the service to frontline officers, staff, local partners and to the public
- Further develop the specialist service for young victims of crime to provide counselling and support to a wider range of young victims including those experiencing abuse, exploitation, assault, bullying and harassment
- Work closely with Health and Local Authority partners to expand the availability and timely access to therapeutic support and counselling for victims of sexual offences, domestic abuse and exploitation
- Via the Commissioner's Office, raise the profile of the importance of sustainable health funding for the provision of timely therapeutic mental health services for victims of serious crimes to help them recover from trauma
- Introduce Track My Crime as one effective way of communicating with victims at their convenience, to allow them to securely track the progress of the investigation of their crime and receive information.

Case study

Bob is a visually impaired man living in a housing association flat with his support dog. He experienced issues with neighbours and their antisocial behaviour including drug dealing, noise levels and blocking his entrance with their vehicles. This led to a confrontation resulting in threats and assault.

During one particularly unpleasant episode Bob challenged the offenders and was spat at. The offender was charged and bailed which led to them further obstructing access to his property.

Devon & Cornwall Police Victim Care Network members Living Options were asked by the Victim Care Unit for assistance in relocating Bob. With support, he registered to qualify for a supported house move with assistance given in completing the housing forms.

Bob was due to give evidence at the Magistrates Court and it took some reassurance for him to realise he was not on trial. He required considerable ongoing support from the witness care scheme. There was a real possibility of confrontation between the victim, the defendant and also friends of the defendant at court. Living Options attended court with him to offer added support due to his disability; he was very anxious about where to stand and how to manoeuvre the court room.

Living Options proposed to the crown prosecution solicitor that a restraining order against the offender would be extremely helpful and this was applied for and put in place.

The defendant was found guilty in his absence. The defendant was ordered to make a compensation payment to Bob for the assault.

Time has moved on and things are good for Bob. His new flat suits his needs well and there are no issues with neighbours or his previous tormentors. Bob is aware of the various support agencies he can access as a victim of crime but things are now going really well and the case can be closed.

06. An effective criminal justice system that works for victims

The Chief Constable and Police and Crime Commissioner take their role in developing an effective and responsive criminal justice system across Devon and Cornwall extremely seriously. Much of the work will be done in partnership with other key criminal justice agencies and will be steered by the Local Criminal Justice Board. As individual agencies and jointly with partners, we will work to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system and will focus on improving the experience of victims of crime.

Jointly we will continue to develop our response to the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime ensuring a high quality response is offered to victims of crime in accordance with their entitlements as set out in the Code.

We will:

- Identify where existing policing and criminal justice processes impact adversely on victims of crime and make changes
- Improve the participation, engagement and satisfaction of victims in the system
- Focus on the treatment of victims of sexual offences within the criminal justice system, to identify ways of improving.
- Work with the Crown Prosecution Service to deliver an increase in prosecution resources for sexual offence cases
- Work jointly with the Crown Prosecution Service to improve the speed and quality of the service that victims of sexual offences receive by reducing the time that victims have to wait for the case to come to court

"It was unexpected to be shown such empathy. I shall certainly feel more safe and secure."

- Improve our information sharing agreements and protocols along with our IT systems to ensure the Force is equipped to share information keeping victims safe in a lawful, timely and effective manner
- Provide police officers and staff with relevant and effective training and guidance, equipping them with current information on how to offer the very best support to victims of crime.
- Improve the way in which compliance with the Code for Victims is monitored leading to improvements in the way victims receive their entitlements such as the opportunity to give a Victim Personal Statement

"Belief and acceptance of the events a victim has experienced, makes up a huge part of helping a victim towards their recovery."

Victim Commissioner Baroness Newlove:



Case study

Amy is a 13 year old who was a victim of crime when she was 10 years old. Having told someone about the crime earlier this year, the police were then involved. It was suggested to Amy's mother that she receive support from the Young Victims of Crime service in Devon and as a result she was introduced to a specialist youth worker. They talked about the event and how this had affected Amy and her family. Having discovered that Amy likes spending time around animals, visits to a farm, animal hospital and animal sanctuary were arranged. During these outings the youth worker and Amy talked about how the crime made her feel and how she managed her feelings. Now when Amy feels anxious she can remember that she had no control over those events but that she can control how she feels about them, enabling her to enjoy being herself and looking forward to living her life and achieving her goals.

Initially when Amy was offered support from the Young Victims of Crime Service she wasn't happy to engage and this increased her anxiety but the approach that was taken was calm and the supporter let her take the lead in how her support would be planned and what would be involved in helping her to move forward. This approach helped Amy to overcome the feelings of panic and upset every time she thought about what had happened.

Amy summed up her experience: *"I am now doing well in school and have recently won an award for writing a poem about the incident. I have learned that there is always someone who cares. There is always an opportunity to have our voice heard and someone who understands. I look forward to being able to use this experience in a way that will not let it hold me back but help me to be stronger. I am happy and trying new experiences such as playing sport to help me use my energy when I feel stressed or anxious. I am more able to cope with everyday problems now and feel that the support I have received has helped me achieve goals and identify more. Thank you Young Victims of Crime service."*

07. A victim-led approach to restorative justice

The Chief Constable and Police and Crime Commissioner are fully committed to developing a new and enhanced restorative justice service across Devon and Cornwall. Restorative justice gives victims the chance to meet or communicate with their offenders to explain the impact of the crime. With full support and involvement of the victim, it also holds the offender to account for their actions and helps them to take responsibility and make amends.

We will:

- Develop and embed the new restorative justice service to be delivered by Shekinah and Make Amends across Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly with effect from 1 October 2017
- Provide police officers and staff with training and information on how victims of crime they are working with can access the newly commissioned service
- Appoint a new Force Restorative Justice Co-ordinator working alongside the Victim Care Unit to ensure the access to the service is straightforward and timely
- Listen to people using the new service, incorporating their feedback to make continuous improvements jointly with the new service provider

08. Our Commitment

The Chief Constable and Police and Crime Commissioner will keep the joint Victim Strategy under regular review to ensure it remains current and relevant, producing refreshed versions on an annual basis.

The Strategy is underpinned by a Delivery Plan which sets out how the content of the strategy will be delivered, monitored and assessed. The Delivery Plan will set out what success looks like and give details about the outcome measures. Information about the plan will be published together with the Strategy on our websites.

The Strategy and Delivery Plan will be owned by the Force Victim Strategic Board and reports on progress will be made at regular intervals to the Joint Management Board.



Case study





“Due to my husband’s behaviour and abuse I was scared about talking to other professionals. He always told me that no-one would believe anything I said. That I was worthless. SAFE put me in touch with the most amazing lady who has helped and supported me. I have recently been to court and I talked through things with her. I have to go back and give evidence in front of my abuser for our divorce. I am dreading this. [SAFE] had found out that I can have a screen and I posted this on to my solicitor. If it wasn’t for this help I would have to stand in front of my abuser. This would be very stressful and he would only have to give me a “look” and I would be fearful again. I am so thankful you offer this one to one support. Please keep offering this vital service.”

Contact us



Non-emergency





If a crime has already happened, or to give information about a crime.

-  dc.police.uk/reportcrime
-  101@dc.police.uk
-  dc.police.uk/police-enquiry-office
-  101

999 Emergency

Where life is threatened, people are injured, offenders are nearby or if immediate action is required.

Deaf/hard of hearing or speech impaired

-  999 Emergency - SMS/text number
Register for this at www.emergencysms.org.uk
-  18000 Emergency - textphone/minicom
-  67101 Non-emergency - SMS/text number
-  18001 Non-emergency - textphone/minicom

Victim Care Unit

-  01392 475900
Lines open 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday
9am to 5pm Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays
-  victimservices@dc.police.uk
-  www.victimcare.org.uk

