

2017/18 Annual Report

Victims' Commissioner
for England and Wales

Introduction Overview

Welcome to my 2017/18 Annual Report for the Secretary of State for Justice. It marks the end of my fifth year as the independent Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales. This report also sets out my objectives for the business year 2018-19 and reiterates strategic objectives for my second term which expires in March 2019.

As Victims' Commissioner, I welcome this timely focus on the needs and rights of victims. I've sought to play a significant part in shaping the debate, both in the media and Parliament.

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2017/18 has seen the treatment of victims move to the centre of political debate. There is a prevailing view that support received by victims is falling short and that we as a society must do better in supporting fellow citizens whose lives have been devastated by crime.

As Victims' Commissioner, I welcome this timely focus on the needs and rights of victims. I've sought to play a significant part in shaping the debate, both in the media and Parliament.

A number of triggers provoked this national debate. Undoubtedly, the catalyst was the case of serial rapist, John Worboys whose initial application for release on parole was successful. But there have been other major developments that can no longer be ignored. After a difficult start, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse is now firmly established. Its interim report set out recommendations for change. There is an expectation that Government will act.

We also have the Government Consultation on Domestic Abuse. Again, some proposals for change will have wide ramifications for the victim landscape. The terror attacks in 2017 raised yet more questions about how victims can be best supported. In Parliament, we have seen Private Members' Bills tabled, calling for better protection for victims of stalking, and delivering more effective support for victims of modern slavery.

My Annual Report touches on all these issues. We must use this momentum to deliver a seismic change in the way we treat crime victims in our criminal justice system.

MY MOTIVATION

My motivation for change is fuelled by my meetings with victims up and down the country, listening to their experiences of the justice system. Over the past year, I've been privileged to meet hundreds of victims whose courage and dignity in the face of terrible adversity, never cease to inspire me.

Their first-hand accounts of the justice system tell me that whilst much has been achieved in improving services, there is still so much more we need to do.

The basis for real progress must be a

Victims Law, which sets out statutory rights for victims. These rights should be underpinned by the following aims: the victims' right to be heard, to be informed and to challenge.

But giving rights to victims is only part of the picture. If we are committed to changing the victim experience, we need to look at the architecture of victim services.

I want to see victims provided with a seamless journey through the criminal justice system.

WORST CRIMES

Victims of the worst crimes need to be provided with a sole contact that I describe as an independent victim advocate. I see this advocate coordinating the victim journey, liaising with other criminal justice partners, signposting and advising. Importantly, they will represent the victim and not a particular agency.

Anecdotal evidence still suggests that compliance with the entitlements under the Victim's Code of Practice remains inconsistent. This was confirmed by my annual review of data collated by the Crime Survey for England and Wales, on the offer of Victims Personal Statements (VPS). I want to know every victim will receive all their entitlements, delivered with sensitivity and respect. One of the ongoing difficulties is the lack of data on Code compliance. This needs to be resolved if we're to establish effective systems to monitor performance.

Over the past year, I've continued to focus on support given to the most vulnerable of victims. In February, I published a comprehensive review into Registered Intermediaries. The report was titled *A Voice for the Voiceless* because Registered Intermediaries provide just that. My report found many shortcomings in the governance of the scheme and I hope that the Government acts to remedy them.

In January 2018, the Secretary of State for Justice (MoJ) announced a review of parole processes. I was pleased to undertake a national engagement exercise with victims of crime as part of this review;

more than 300 victims took part. Victims told me they want to be more involved in the parole process.

I've taken a close interest in the entitlements given to victims of mentally disordered offenders and been deeply moved by their stories and difficulties being heard. My report will be published in the new business year.

I continue to take close interest in modern-day slavery, and spoke in support of the Private Member's Bill which seeks to enhance the support given to its victims.

I've also joined forces with Karma Nirvana in calling on the Government to raise awareness in schools and colleges of honour-based abuse and forced marriage.

In 2017/18, more survivors of child sexual abuse came forward. It's important that all statutory agencies have the capacity to provide survivors with the support they need to rebuild their lives. Many were let down in the past by those meant to protect them. It is important we don't let them down again.

Looking ahead, we have the Cross-Government National Victim Strategy which is due to be published this summer. With so much happening across the victim arena, I believe that this timely Strategy has potential to deliver lasting change.

BOLD APPROACH

I'm calling on the Government to rise to the challenge and be bold in its approach. As recent events have highlighted, too many victims are let down by our criminal justice system. Government strategies cannot turn the clock back and undo what has happened in the past. But I hope the long awaited Victim National Strategy can provide the foundation for building a criminal justice system of the future with victims truly at its heart.

For victims deserve nothing less.

Helen

Baroness Newlove of Warrington

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Year in Review 2017/18

From domestic abuse through to acid attacks, forced marriage, modern-day slavery and child sexual exploitation, here's a roundup of just some issues that dominated my workload in 2017/18



April

I know only too well that the inquests investigating the cause of unexpected death can be a time of severe stress for bereaved loved ones. When I met new Chief Coroner Judge Mark Lucaft QC to discuss supporting victims through the inquest process, I was impressed by his interest from the victim perspective.



May

I visited Refuge's HQ to learn more about their amazing work supporting women in abusive relationships. It was humbling to hear about the strength and heroism that victims show in rebuilding their lives. A year down the line, I've used the stories about the victims' journeys to inform my response to the Government Consultation on Domestic Abuse.



June

2017 saw a horrific increase in corrosive liquid attacks that leaves innocent victims mentally and physically scarred. To find out more, I visited the Katie Piper Foundation to hear first-hand about the support given to burns survivors through their recovery. Katie's a real inspiration, but nothing prepared me for her sheer determination to help others rebuild their lives and self-esteem.

July

Child sex exploitation has been the centre of so many news stories this past year as the Rotherham and Telford scandals unfolded. Many abused child victims still suffer anguish years later, and I'm passionate about doing more to protect victims. I attended a seminar organised by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse to talk about supporting victims. It was an opportunity to feedback the views and stories of the survivors I have met when travelling around the country.

September

Few of us can believe that Slavery wasn't consigned to the history books 200 years ago. I spoke in the Lords in support of a private members bill to give victims of modern-day slavery the support they need to cope and recover. In Wales, I dropped into a safe house, to meet young mothers and babies, who'd escaped domestic abuse. They bravely shared their stories, and I was touched by their fortitude and dedicated support teams.



October

I've long campaigned for a Victims' Law, with statutory rights for victims, independent victim advocates, and victim service inspections. If victims are to be at the heart of the criminal justice system they need statutory rights, in the same way that offenders get. These need to underpin their right to be heard, to be informed and to challenge.

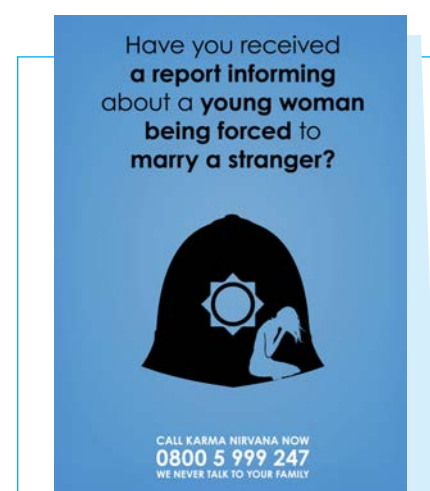


January

Registered Intermediaries (RIs) are unsung heroes who help give a voice in court to young crime victims or adults with learning difficulties. My review on RIs – Voice for the Voiceless – called for a radical shakeup of the service, so victims can receive improved support. It's gratifying to know that improvements are already being made to the service, including; recruitment of more RIs, determination to pay fees on time and a review of induction training.

February

Nobody should be left in any doubt that parole is a time of anxiety for crime victims, often raking up traumatic memories. When announcing his review into the parole process, the Justice Secretary asked me to undertake a National Victim Engagement Exercise, seeking victim views. This was a good opportunity to listen to victim experiences and make sure that their voice was heard.



November

Forced marriage is a taboo issue that devastates lives. I signed a joint letter with Karma Nirvana, lobbying Ministers to step up the fight against honour-based abuse and forced marriage by raising awareness in schools and improving safeguarding. Hopefully spreading the word will encourage young victims to speak out and seek help.

March

I made detailed submissions to the Justice Secretary on improving the parole process and Victim Contact Scheme.



December

As Victims' Commissioner, I don't possess any legal powers, but I do have my voice, and I'm determined to use it to speak up for victims. Child Sexual Exploitation is a thorny issue of our time, which is why I attended the Centre for Social Justice's seminar to discuss the issue and how we protect victims and survivors. It was sobering to know that 2017 had seen an alarming series of terror plots and deadly attacks on British soil in Westminster, Manchester, London Bridge, Finsbury Park and Parsons Green.



My appearance on BBC's *The One Show* in March, meeting a bereaved mother and daughter to discuss criminal injury compensation, provoked my biggest postbag over a single issue. It's partly inspired my upcoming Review on the topic due out this autumn.

The Role of the Victims' Commissioner

I was appointed Victims' Commissioner on 21 December 2012 and took up my post on 4 March 2013.
I was reappointed for a second term in March 2016 and this expires in March 2019

The role of the Victims' Commissioner is set out in section 49 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004, as amended by the Coroners and Justice Act 2009:

- (1) The Commissioner must –
 - (a) promote the interests of victims and witnesses;
 - (b) take such steps as he considers appropriate with a view to encouraging good practice in the treatment of victims and witnesses;
 - (c) keep under review the operation of the code of practice issued under section 32.
- (2) The Commissioner may, for any purpose connected with the performance of his duties under subsection (1) –
 - (a) make proposals to the Secretary of State for amending the code (at the request of the Secretary of State or on his own initiative);
 - (b) make a report to the Secretary of State;
 - (c) make recommendations to an authority within his remit;
 - (e) consult any person he thinks appropriate.
- (3) If the Commissioner makes a report to the Secretary of State under subsection (2)(b) –
 - (a) the Commissioner must send a copy of the report to the Attorney General and the Secretary of State for the Home Department;
- (4) The Commissioner must prepare in respect of each calendar year a report on the carrying out of the functions of the Commissioner during the year.
- (5) The Commissioner must send a copy of each report prepared under subsection (4) to –
 - (a) the Secretary of State for Justice,
 - (b) the Attorney General, and
 - (c) the Secretary of State for the Home Department.
- (6) Reports under subsection (2)(b) or (4) must be published by the Commissioner.
- (7) If section 48 comes into force after the beginning of a calendar year, the first report under subsection
- (4) may relate to a period beginning with the day on which that section comes into force and ending with the end of the next calendar year.

The Office of the Victim's Commissioner:
Dr Elaine Wedlock,
CEO Russell A'Court and
Rachel Hersey

My Team

I am fortunate to have the support of my small but dedicated team in enabling me to carry out my duties. I have three full time members of staff and four who are part-time. They are: Russell A'Court (CEO), Dr Elaine Wedlock (Head of Analysis and Review), Rachel Hersey (Head of Policy and Stakeholders), Lorraine McBride (Communications Manager), Katharine Porter (Research Officer), Joss Mistry (Correspondence Manager) and Sarah Ali (Diary Manager).

The team's work is broadly divided into two areas: (i) policy and stakeholders and (ii) reviews and analysis. The work is managed and overseen by Russell, Elaine and Rachel:



Russell A'Court was appointed Chief Executive in October 2016. Prior to this he has worked across government, including a frontline benefit office for the homeless in central London, to presenting at immigration appeals to working in the House of Lords. He has a keen interest in criminal justice and has worked in sentencing policy, as well as running a large public protection casework operation.



Rachel Hersey is the Head of Policy and Stakeholder Engagement at the Office of the Victims' Commissioner. She develops the commissioner's position on areas of policy which affect victims and witnesses of crime, to make sure that they are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve. Rachel has a wide range of experience from within government having worked for the Department for Transport; Department of Health; and the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government. She however started her career as a local radio journalist at the BBC.



Dr Elaine Wedlock is Head of Reviews and Analysis. She leads on a series of reviews into ensuring that victims and witnesses of crime in England and Wales receive their entitlements under the Victims' Code and with the compassion and dignity that they deserve. Elaine was a Senior Research Officer in the Home Office and the Department of Communities and Local Government, carrying out extensive quantitative and qualitative research, impact and process evaluations of government policy, and systemic reviews.



Victims' Commissioner's Advisory Group

As well as my office, I also have the able support of my Advisory Group which meets four times a year to discuss current victim related issues, and advise me on how I should handle them. The members come from a range of backgrounds with diverse skills and experiences and you can read more on page 38-39.

Definition of victims

As was acknowledged in my joint report with the University of Portsmouth, some victims dislike the negative connotations occasionally associated with the term 'victim'. Some victims and many non-statutory agencies prefer to use the word 'survivor' and I respect their view. For the purposes of this report however, I've again generally used the term 'victim' because it's the term most agencies use and understand when referring to someone who has experienced victimisation.

I accept the definition given in the Victims' Code when considering relevant policy areas. But the legislation which underpins my role as Victims' Commissioner, makes clear my remit includes all victims, regardless of the type of crime committed against them or whether they report it to the police.

Second Term Strategic Plan

Following my reappointment in 2016, I published my Second Term Strategic Plan which sets out the broad outline of my strategy for the remainder of my second term, which expires in March 2019.

It builds on my work in my first term of office, set out in previous Annual Reports.

Looking ahead, my focus is to ensure that victims of crime are supported as they cope and recover from the impact of crime. I want to see all victims receiving their entitlements set out in the Victims' Code, and that they're treated as individuals, with recognition given to their individual needs.

I am committed to championing the cause of victims in all appropriate forums across the criminal justice systems, as well as other agencies which have a statutory duty to provide support to victims.

Successful implementation of this strategy is dependent on the cooperation of those responsible for supporting victims, providing services and developing policy and practice.

My Strategic Plan sets out five overarching strategic aims:

A. Work with all criminal justice agencies to ensure that victims of crime and witnesses are treated with humanity and decency at all times, to aid their ability to cope and recover from the impact of crime;

B. Monitor and report on criminal justice agencies' compliance with the requirements of the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime and the Witness Charter; identifying areas that are deficient and making recommendations based on evidence of best practice;

C. Review the provision of victim services on the basis of the four principles identified in "What Works", namely: communication, procedural justice, inter-agency cooperation and professionalisation, and make recommendations on how services should develop and improve;

D. Through regular contact with victims and practitioners of victims' services, articulate a view of the criminal justice system from the perspective of victims; review and challenge decisions taken by policy makers and those responsible for developing practice;

E. Through gaining first-hand knowledge and understanding of victims' services, identify and actively promote examples of best practice and excellence.

Victim's Services and the Victim's Code

My overriding priority as Victims' Commissioner is to ensure that all victims receive the high-quality services that they deserve, so that they can be supported through the criminal justice system and helped to cope and recover



I REMAIN concerned by statistical and anecdotal evidence suggesting that victims are not always receiving their entitlements, as set out in the Victims' Code. This is not acceptable. Victims deserve better.

Monitoring compliance with the Victims' Code of Practice is difficult as the data is inconsistent or non-existent. My office initiated discussions with the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners about the possibility of

developing a compliance dashboard. This work was subsequently overtaken by the MoJ who are looking at how to monitor compliance effectively. I understand work will be rolled out in the coming year and I'll be taking a close interest.

Collating and monitoring information, both locally and nationally, is absolutely vital. There needs to be a clear structure and those analysing the data need to be able to offer an independent assessment of performance. I've made no secret of the fact that I believe that this national role should fall to future victims' commissioners, with a requirement that they produce an independent assessment and report that is submitted to Parliament.

In the meantime, and with the small resources available to me, I'm determined to make things better for victims, by undertaking reviews of victims' services, raising issues of concern with Ministers and criminal justice agencies and highlighting victims' concerns through the media, speaking events and through my role in Parliament.

All my work is based upon regular meetings with victims across the country, as well as practitioners of frontline services and those responsible for policy making.

During the year, I've published three reviews and have started work on two new reviews, which will be covered in my next Annual Report. I've also undertaken one national victim engagement exercise.

Victim Satisfaction

My "What Works" (2016) review highlights the importance of procedural justice, as well as a professionalised approach in the delivery of effective victim services. I believe that service providers cannot achieve either unless they are constantly listening to service users and using their feedback to evaluate and enhance service delivery.

In August 2017, I published my scoping review into how victims' satisfaction with the police is monitored and measured. It examined how data is used to develop and improve services for victims. Since April 2017, the Home Office no longer requires police forces to collect victim satisfaction

data as part of the mandatory Annual Data Requirement. My review examined how police forces plan to measure victim satisfaction following this decision.

I've found good practice across the country in how victims' satisfaction is measured and in how that data is used to improve services for victims. All of the 24 forces responding to my scoping review plan to continue collecting victims' views in line with their policing priorities.

I am in the process of finalising a scoping review of how Police and Crime Commissioners measure and monitor victim satisfaction which will be published in the summer of 2018.

Victim Personal Statements

In November 2017, I published my third annual analysis of data regarding Victim Personal Statements from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW).

Victim Personal Statements offer victims their voice in the court room and at Parole Board hearings. The opportunity to make a statement is the only time the victim can be heard. These statements are essential if we are to offer victims a sense of procedural justice.

The review found that few victims are offered the opportunity to make a VPS, with little change over the last four years. Most victims who make a VPS, feel that it's been taken into account by the criminal justice system. There also remains variation in terms of the offer of VPS across demographic groups and by offence characteristics.

I was concerned when I heard that the Government was considering whether to drop this data requirement from the CSEW in future years to save money. I along with others, made representations against such a move and I am delighted that the offer of a VPS will remain in future surveys.



Registered Intermediaries

In February 2018, I published A Voice for the Voiceless: The Victims' Commissioner's review into the provision of Registered Intermediaries for children and vulnerable victims and witnesses. Registered Intermediaries (RIs) are specialists in communication provided to children and vulnerable victims to enable them to have a voice in the criminal justice system.

My review considered the whole operation of the Witness Intermediary Scheme, which is responsible for the provision of RIs, as set out in the entitlements under the Victims' Code. I found that not all eligible vulnerable victims and witnesses are offered a RI and take-up



of RIs across England and Wales is patchy. There is also limited understanding of the role in the justice system and variation in how vulnerability and eligibility for RIs are assessed.

Many RIs who took part in the review identified widespread deficiencies in the operation of the Witness Intermediary Scheme.

Their concerns covered managerial

support, training, mentoring, continuing professional development, supervision and late payments.

In the review I put forward a number of recommendations to improve the provision of RIs. Recommendations include the development of a centralised national RI service with a national lead RI to feed into the policy and practice in the provision of RIs, and to represent RIs' interests across the justice system, as well as a fast track service for the youngest and most vulnerable of victims. These recommendations were well received by RIs and other service professionals, as offering a basis for establishing a fully professionalised service that is recognised across the criminal justice system.

I have recently published the response to my recommendations from the Ministry of Justice and I will be meeting ministers to discuss how the provision of RIs can be improved for vulnerable victims and witnesses. I will report back in my next Annual Report.

National Victim Engagement Exercise

In April 2018, the Ministry of Justice published findings from the Secretary of State's review of parole processes. The review sought to look at the law, policy and procedure relating to Parole Board decisions. I was asked to undertake an engagement exercise with victims of crime which would feed into this review. This engagement exercise took place in February and March 2018.

I had a good response to my victim survey, with 321 victims taking part. In addition, my researchers carried out in-depth qualitative interviews with 29 victims of violent or sexual crimes.

My victim engagement exercise provided clear evidence that victims want to know how and why decisions are taken. I believe that transparency will eventually enhance victim confidence in the parole process and this must be a positive development.

Victims told me they would welcome some mechanism to reconsider Parole Board decisions and I am pleased to see that Government has decided to provide this as a means of challenge other than a full judicial review.

Many victims told me that they have not been told the reasons when the Parole Board rejects or amends requests by victims for licence conditions. I welcome the Government's plans to ensure that such reasons are provided to victims.

My researchers spoke to some victims who were not eligible to join the Victim Contact Scheme, but felt that they would benefit from the contact and information that the Scheme provides. I am pleased to see that changes will be made to the Victim Contact Scheme to ensure that discretionary access can be applied more widely.

Many of the victims who took part in the engagement said that they often have to chase their Victim Liaison Officers for information and some only found out about an offender's release through the media.

I will continue to work with the Government when developing its "National Victims Strategy" to ensure that the changes in the Victim Contact Scheme address this, and effectively deliver much needed information, support and care to victims.



“Victims aren't always receiving their entitlements. This is not acceptable.”

Police and Crime Commissioner Visits

I remain committed to regularly visiting local victim services across the country, meeting with practitioners, victims and Police and Crime Commissioners.

These visits are essential in helping to inform my thinking on how best to support victims and witnesses. They also feed into the representations I make to Ministers and policy makers. When visiting local practitioners, I am keen to see examples of innovative services that provide victims with support and care. I am also interested in looking at the quality of the interaction between the service providers and victims they serve. I visited 11 areas over the year, and below, I offer a snapshot of my findings.

South Yorkshire

It was useful to hear from the PCC about the support and collaboration between PCC areas following the Manchester Arena bombing. The Chief Constable assured me that his force was committed to restoring neighbourhood policing. He recognised that community contact has a

major part to play in identifying radicalisation and improving security.

It was encouraging to hear about the good work building relations with victims of the Rotherham child sexual exploitation scandal. There's a survivors' panel which gives advice and feedback to police. Consideration is being given on how to support the victims' families, many of whom have been traumatised by the scandal. Another concern is how child sexual exploitation (CSE) and child sexual abuse (CSA) impacts upon police officers assigned to cases.

Much of the emphasis of South Yorkshire is on sexual violence and the laudable aspiration is for victims to go through their criminal justice journey without ever visiting a police station or court. A cross-county Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) service has been set up to help victims of all ages, genders and sexualities. Service providers have noticed a positive change in attitudes towards ISVAs in local courts.

Surrey

The PCC and his team told me how they were reviewing the provision of local victim services. They'd noticed a recent drop in victim satisfaction and steps were being taken with the police force to remedy this, with a victim awareness campaign and revising the induction training package to include an emphasis on victim support.

The team expressed concern about court closures in Surrey, specifically that the remaining crown court was inaccessible for much of the county. They were also concerned about CPS cuts to the Witness Care Unit and anecdotal evidence that this was having a detrimental impact on delays and deferrals.

We had a useful discussion on support given

to male victims of sexual crime. All services directly commissioned by Surrey were required to support victims of both genders. More men were contacting the ISVA service. Most men would rather deal with a female worker.

I heard about the good work undertaken by the Alliance of Surrey Mediators, who supported victims of anti-social behaviour.

I met practitioners and victims from the East Surrey Domestic Abuse service and heard about their inspiring work. They worked collaboratively with other services and provided a local helpline for victims. There was a useful discussion about coercive control and the extent to which it was fully understood by police and prosecutors.

Warwickshire

I was pleased to see a focus on identifying vulnerable victims, with police officers trained with help from a local theatre company. Officers have been told to "look beyond the obvious" when meeting victims, looking for evidence of domestic abuse etc. Warwickshire is also working with the College of Policing on developing training programmes on vulnerability.

Warwickshire had seen an increase in victim satisfaction for a range of crimes, including burglary, violence and hate crime. They wanted more national guidance on how to best measure satisfaction, plus a gage to help identify weaker areas across the whole of the criminal justice system.

The PCC was focussing on issues around mental health and housing needs for victims and he was concerned how long it was taking for victims to access CAMHS services.

Lancashire

The PCC in Lancashire was keen to talk to me about their exciting work on Restorative Justice.

They were keen for RJ to be seen as an option of first resort and not as last. RJ panels of trained practitioners have been set up across the county and they were looking at identifying RJ champions to promote the service.

In Lancashire there was concern about the level of cyber fraud and the devastating consequences it had on its victims, many of who are elderly. Small and Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs) have started asking about cyber security checks.

Lancashire has recently done some research on modern-day slavery and had run a continuous professional development (CPD) event to raise awareness of the crime amongst frontline staff.



Northumbria

The PCC updated me on the Northumbria bid for funding to run a project whereby victims of sexual violence have access to a legal advocate who could represent their interests. The advocate would deal with issues such as disclosure of medical reports and applications to cross-examine the victim on previous sexual history. Northumbria had also been successful in bidding for funding for pilot schemes that aimed to divert women who were victims of sexual abuse or exploitation from custody. The Chief Constable told me about their work in Newcastle supporting businesses within the night time economy. There are street pastors to help people reach safe places. Local businesses were engaged to communicate with the police and share information. Police officers who worked in this area have received specialist training.

I heard from the Sunderland Domestic Abuse Service who operate a nightly mobile service between 10.00pm and 04.00am and in the past year, they've helped 745 people.

Humberside

The PCC was keen to ensure his police force was "match fit". He was committed to building capacity around neighbourhood policing, and eager to see more partnership working across agencies.

He had commissioned a piece of work studying how vulnerability was linked to victimhood and identifying the right support mechanisms for vulnerable victims. I am interested in seeing this piece of work.

I was inspired to hear about the work of Victim Support in Humberside developing the concept of Independent Victim Advocates, who would eventually be co-located with ISVAs and IDVAs. They talked about delivering professional accreditation for IVAs. This mirrors the work my office is doing on developing the concept of IVAs.

It was helpful to meet the Head of Sexual Support Services who told me about the excellent work carried out by ISVAs in supporting victims of all ages. They had experienced conflict with local courts as some judges and court staff didn't recognise or understand the ISVA role. Some ISVAs had been attacked by defence counsel, yet it was proven that ISVA input had reduced the rate of attrition in cases going to court.

Hertfordshire

My visit to Hertfordshire focused on three areas.

The first was the work undertaken by the PCC and his team on honour-based violence and forced marriage. Their research identified gaps in support services and an absence of clear pathways of support. The PCC is considering commissioning new, enhanced specialist services for these victims.

Hertfordshire has set up a Steering Group to look at bespoke services for victims of modern-day slavery, with the aim of preventing them from returning to an exploitation lifestyle. The

focus is on empowering victims and giving them a choice.

I was pleased to hear that Hertfordshire has recruited four vulnerable victim case managers who are responsible for co-ordinating wrap around support services. Many of those supported by this team are victims of domestic abuse.

Bedfordshire

The PCC informed me that they were training police to gain better understanding of sexual violence. By summer 2017, 300 officers will have been trained. I was pleased to hear that victims got involved in delivering the training.

The PCC's office invited victims for feedback in the design of a new SARC centre. There is concerns that many SARCs look and feel like a hospital, and this needs to be addressed in the



Police have been told to look 'beyond the obvious' when meeting victims, looking for evidence of domestic abuse...

revamp. They particularly want to hear from young victims.

There is a large BAME community in Bedfordshire and over 100 different languages are spoken. The PCC told me about her commitment to work with diverse communities and build confidence in the police.

I welcomed the opportunity to meet with the charity Unseen, which provides direct support for victims of modern-day slavery and human trafficking. They provide victims with counselling, training and help in securing housing. Their helpline also helps victims of honour-based violence.

Devon and Cornwall

Devon and Cornwall cover the largest geographic area of any PCC and police force in England and Wales. Their issues reflect the needs of rural communities and recognise the potential for social isolation. To tackle this, the Devon and Cornwall PCC has developed a network of 83 service providers, dealing with a range of specialisms and specific geographic areas. This is an attempt to capture the breadth of expertise that already existed and to harness it for the benefit of victims.

Services must also reflect the needs of tourists. The local population grows from 2 million to 11 million in peak summer months. Tourists who become victims of crime are given an initial assessment and then referred to their home areas. However, the PCC raised concerns about how different PCC areas deal with data transfer. Some are very collaborative but others prove more difficult. This needs to be addressed nationally.

I was interested to meet a small charity that supports children where one parent has murdered the other. These cases raise hugely complex issues, including split loyalties and trauma.

Devon and Cornwall are carrying out interesting work in supporting commercial victims tackling cyber fraud. They also have a volunteer service that helps elderly victims of fraud. I'm keen to see this type of service delivered more widely across the country.

Cleveland

In Cleveland I heard about the police work to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB). They're placing "neighbourhood watchmen" into local communities to help victims of ASB and encourage them to come forward.



It was satisfying to hear that victims approached by local victim services are allocated a named care worker and direct phone number. I was interested to hear about the efforts made to reach out to unrepresented groups across the county. The use of community champions for outreach work was an interesting initiative.

Victims of modern slavery have rightly been identified as one such group. Victims are directed to the Salvation Army who can assist with issues such as short-term housing needs. Cleveland is also focused on tackling hate crime



and holds "Everyone Matters" sessions to increase awareness of the impact this crime has on individuals.

Another initiative to catch my eye was the "Home Instead" initiative, which works with the elderly and vulnerable to make them aware of fraud and how to prevent it.

Dyfed Powys

When I visited Dyfed Powys, I was delighted to launch their Victim Engagement Forum, a new initiative to ensure victims are listened to when the PCC is shaping victim services. As well as the forum, victims can go online and leave anonymous feedback if they prefer. Early indicators are that victims want to attend the forum and given their views in person.

The PCC was rightly proud of the Goleudy service, which provides a smooth end-to-end service for victims. This concept is consistent with my view that victims should be provided with an advocate to guide them through their criminal justice journey. Before setting up the service, the PCC and his team had undertaken a "mapping and gapping" review which concluded that victim care was patchy.

I was interested in the work Dyfed Powys were doing to support victims with mental health problems and encouraged that they're looking to recruit a mental health caseworker.

VC's View

Parole and the Victim

The decision of the Parole Board to direct the release of the prolific sex offender, John Worboys, caused a strong public and political backlash. In response, the Secretary of State for Justice announced to Parliament on 19 January that he planned to undertake a review of law, policy and procedure relating to parole decisions.

In support of this review, I agreed to a request by the Secretary of State to seek the views of victims by undertaking a nation victim engagement exercise



I'd already spoken publicly about the need to have a more transparent parole process, which shared with victims, the reasoning behind parole decisions. I was also concerned about the handling of licence condition requests made by or on behalf of victims.

I was particularly exercised by the fact that in this case, victims were having to crowd fund to challenge the Parole Board decision. Therefore, I considered that this review provided an opportunity to address all these issues and more.

I wrote to the Secretary of State, making detailed submissions on what I believed the review should look to achieve. In summary, I made the following points:

- There needs to be greater transparency in Parole Board decision-making. At the same time, transparency must be constrained by the need to protect victim anonymity and prevent them from being retraumatised.
- Victims who opt to present their Victim Personal Statement to Parole Board panels need more practical and emotional support, particularly in the period directly following the hearing.
- Victims should be offered reassurance on how the offender will be managed in the community, particularly victims who express fear and anxiety at the prospect of release.
- In cases where Parole Board panels reject or amend victims' requests for licence conditions, the Board should write to victims explaining the reasons why. Victims should also be given a right of review in these cases, with their requests considered by a new panel.

- Any mechanism to seek a reconsideration of Parole Board decisions must be accessible to victims. The mechanism should not require victims to crowdfund in order to use it.
- Such a mechanism must be robust and independent if it is to be credible.
- The likelihood is that the mechanism will be widely used by offenders unhappy with their parole decision. In practical terms, this means that for many victims, the uncertainty of the parole process will be extended. A speedy review mechanism is therefore essential.
- Staff involved in supporting victims as part of the Victim Contact Scheme (VCS) should be accredited and receive continuous professional development.
- The National Probation Service (NPS) and Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) should forge closer integration of their victim services aiming to provide victims with a seamless package of support.
- Longer term, the Government should consider whether to devolve the statutory responsibilities to PCCs.
- The NPS should widen the criteria for discretionary access to the VCS.
- Any development of victim access to the parole process should be applicable to victims whose offenders are detained under the Mental Health Act.

The Government published its response on 28 April and accepted many points. I plan to work closely with officials in the implementation of the changes in the coming year.

Giving Victims a Voice

Media opportunities give me the opportunity to speak up for victims, highlighting where services can be improved and reflecting victims' experience to the wider public. I see this as an important part of my role, speaking for those who feel they don't have a voice

Media Milestones

- **TV/Radio/Online:** 2017/18 was the year we pursued new opportunities to reach new audiences in TV/radio. Appearances included; *Good Morning Britain*, *Radio 4's Today*, *BBC Breakfast*, *The One Show*, *Victoria Derbyshire*, *Sky News*, *C4 News*, *Nick Ferrari on LBC*, *BBC local radio*, regional TV and *Review the Papers* on Sky and *BBC News 24*. Whilst print interviews included; *BBC Online*, *The Guardian*, *Daily Mail*, *Mirror* and regional press.
- **Digital Platforms:** We grew our support (@VictimsComm) adding new Twitter followers daily. Over the year, they rose from 2,100 to 3,450. In August 2017, I launched my profile on LinkedIn, posting regular updates about my visits and work.
- **Newsletter:** I launched my new, thrice-yearly newsletter, *VC News* in December 2017.
- **Website:** Investment in planning our digital website was a strong focus over the year, combining text, graphics, video and social media. Our long-awaited revamp will go live in summer 2018.

TV campaign Success

During 2017/18, TV news stations and media increasingly took interest in my work to champion the needs of victims and witnesses. My high-profile reviews shone a light on both good practice and what needs to be done to nail gaps in the justice system.



Exclusive BBC Coverage of Registered Intermediary Review

The power of a BBC TV and radio exclusive was best illustrated in January 2018 when I launched my Review into Registered Intermediaries (RIs).

I made a series of appearances on; *Radio 4 Today*, *BBC Breakfast*, *BBC local radio* and gave interviews to *BBC Online* and the *Guardian*. It was thrilling when specialists Nicola Lewis and Esther Walker were invited on *BBC Breakfast* and captivated presenters Dan Walker and Louise Minchin, talking first-hand about their work. They described how they engage with victims by building a rapport and helping police frame questions clearly. Their genius use of props - drawing, play, objects and figures - showed how they could communicate even with toddlers, to secure evidence and give them their best chance of achieving justice.



Parole Board Review

When the parole of black cab rapist John Worboys hit the headlines, it provoked an instant public backlash. From the outset, I was determined to use my voice and influence in the media, to change the parole process for the better. I gave TV interviews, knowing my campaign would benefit from high-profile exposure.



Baroness Newlove calls for reform of the parole process.



Social Media

As our Twitter army of supporters continues to grow daily, it drove new supporters to our work by raising awareness. In September 2017, I also joined LinkedIn and I'm increasingly using the platform to publicise my campaigns. Visit [LinkedIn.com/17/baroness-newlove](https://www.linkedin.com/company/victims-commissioner-for-england-and-wales)

The One Show

In March 2018, bereaved mother and daughter Andrea and Grace Dollery wrote to BBC's *The One Show* to highlight their difficult journey claiming criminal injuries compensation following the murder of husband and father, Ian in June 2015. I invited the family for a personal meeting to share their story, and the film provoked huge interest and correspondence to the office.

Below: Baroness Newlove filming *The One Show* with Anita Rani to debate criminal injuries compensation with Andrea and Grace Dollery.

Website

Work continues on revamping my new-look website, but the results will be well worth it when it launches in summer 2018, as I value the support and interest of everyone. Packed with views, campaigns, monthly blog and events, visit victimscommissioner.org.uk. Mobile-friendly, you'll be able to read up about my work whether you're using your phone, tablet or laptop.

Newsletter – VC News

I relaunched my newsletter as *VC News* for stakeholders, victims, frontline practitioners and victims' organisations in December 2017. Featuring a mix of in-depth interviews with charity CEOs, opinion pieces and news that highlights good practice, early feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.



Meeting Victims and Practitioners

AS WELL as working with criminal justice agencies, I’m determined to build links with the charities and third sector groups, who support victims 365 days of the year. I’ve met some amazing people whose commitment and dedication to their work has truly inspired me. These people work on shoestring budgets, using ingenuity and sheer determination to keep their projects going.

In the table shown right, I set out groups I’ve met with or spoken to over the year. They include organisations who support victims of modern slavery, enabling them to build networks of friends for support, move into independent accommodation and in some cases, helped them into paid employment. I’ve spoken to charities who help bereaved families following fatal road collisions, supporting them through the maze of coroners and criminal courts. I was deeply moved by the charities who support victims of child sexual abuse, as well as those who’ve helped victims of domestic abuse rebuild their lives. Some charities go beyond supporting victims of crime, for example, providing care and help to families and children facing bereavement.

Stakeholder Engagement

I am conscious that covering such a wide geographic area, and with so many organisations involved in supporting victims, I am only able to touch the surface. To maximise my time and resources to best effect, my office has put in place a comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Name of Organisation	Date of Contact
Refuge (Domestic abuse)	4 May
Human Trafficking Foundation (Modern-day Slavery)	8 May
Embrace	17 May
Katie Piper Foundation (Victims of acid attacks)	9 June
Karma Nirvana Survivor Ambassador Panel Launch	19 June
Child Bereavement	20 June
Karma Nirvana (Forced marriage and honour-based abuse)	16 August
Child Bereavement	17 August
Brake (victims of road traffic fatalities)	5 September
Tell Mama (Hate crime)	5 September
Safe Passage	6 September
British Red Cross (Victims of terrorism)	18 September
Voicing CSA (Child Sexual Abuse)	27 September
City Hearts (Modern Day Slavery)	24 October
Refuge (Domestic Abuse)	31 October
Snowdrop (Modern Day Slavery)	31 October
Anti-bullying Alliance	15 November
Hundredfamilies (Victims of mentally disordered offenders)	19 December
Trafficked Women (Modern Day Slavery)	23 January

plan. In future, this plan will be adapted to enable me to spend more time visiting and talking to more third sector charities and support groups. My new revamped website and newsletters will also be vehicles for me to highlight their work.

The table above is a list of the organisations with which I have had either face to face meetings or conference calls.



Event	Date	Speech
National Victims Association Conference	17 June	Victim rights and support
Humberside Police Senior Leadership Conference	1 Aug	Communicating with and supporting victims of crime
Human Trafficking Foundation Forum	18 Sept	Supporting victims of modern-day slavery to cope and recover
Public Policy Event	26 Sept	Victims services and Compliance with the Victims' Code
Lime Culture	28 Sept	Presenting Limelight awards to Independent Sexual Violence Advisors
Westminster Briefing	11 Oct	Speech on Victims' Rights and Victims Law
Human Trafficking Foundation – Anti-Slavery Day Awards	18 Oct	Presenting an award for raising awareness of modern-day slavery
Surrey Police ASB Victim Award Ceremony	26 Oct	Supporting victims of ASB
Parole Board 50th Anniversary Event	6 Nov	The need for parole transparency
Policy UK	8 Nov	Ending gang violence
Association of Police Communicators Conference	22 Nov	Police communications with victims in high-profile crimes
West Midlands Victims Summit	28 Nov	What works in providing victim support services
Centre for Social Justice Seminar	12 Dec	Child Sexual Exploitation in Britain today
Kent launch of Putting Victims First Service	18 Jan	Supporting victims of crime
Lime Culture and the Male Survivors Partnership	31 Jan	Supporting male survivors of sexual abuse
CIBC International Women's day	8 March	Role of women in public life

Events

I’ve been honoured to have been invited to visit groups across the country and speak at their events. As ever, it hasn’t been possible to accept every invitation but I have tried to maintain a geographical spread.



INDIVIDUAL CASES

Although I am prevented by law from taking up individual cases, I believe it's a key part of my role to meet victims, listen to their concerns and, where possible, signpost them to the agencies and organisations which might be able to help them.

Many victims understand that I cannot take up their cases, but they do want someone to listen. And if I am able to share these experiences with service providers and policy makers, they can illustrate the points I make to government. In some cases, their views have led to improvements in practice. It's so touching when victims say how much

they valued the letters from my office. My frustration all too often, is that I am unable to do more to help. I only hope victims draw some comfort from knowing that, in using their accounts of their experiences, I'm able to make an impact in helping to secure a positive change for other victims.

The volume of letters and emails has again increased over the year. To deal with this extra work, my office recruited a part-time correspondence manager, Joss Mistry who does an amazing job.

Joss handles correspondence from victims across England and Wales.

I’ve tried to attend the launch of new services as well as visit new, innovative practices. I’m particularly keen to visit groups who support vulnerable groups of victims and survivors. Often these events are a great opportunity to celebrate success and achievement.



Treating Victims with Dignity and Respect

ON THE basis of my own experience as a victim within the criminal justice system, I understand that what matters most is not what you're entitled to, but how you're treated.

Many practitioners treat victims with respect and empathy, but I still hear stories of victims who feel poorly treated. In most cases, I am sure this isn't the intention of the practitioner, but nevertheless, the impact this treatment has on victims, who are often already traumatised and anxious, can be profound.



Attitudes and approach cannot be changed by policy or legislation. Instead softer skills are required, including raising awareness and understanding and, in some cases, challenging long-held views.

Students

Building on this theme of making sure that victims are treated with sensitivity, I've been keen to engage the next generation of practitioners, lawyers and service providers in thinking about where victims sit within the criminal justice system and how they should be treated.

I continue to seek opportunities to speak to students, including law students, those studying criminology and those studying to become community and social workers with a view to changing the culture of future criminal justice professionals.

VC's View

Victims Law

We know politicians are committed to "putting victims at the heart of the criminal justice system." So why do victims complain that the justice system leaves them feeling like bystanders?

I'VE REACHED the conclusion that no number of "initiatives," can change the ethos of a system which, for nearly 1000 years, has been solely about the Crown and offenders.

The time has come for Government to undertake a strategic review of victim support, defining the status of victims within the criminal justice system, identifying their rights and ensuring compliance.

I am calling for a "Victims Law" to make the rights of victims central to the delivery of justice. The Victims Law should be a vehicle, guiding victims on their seamless journey through the criminal justice system with easy access to the support they need.

I want to see the Victim Law guarantee a package of core legal 'rights' to protect victims. Offenders have human rights enshrined in the European Convention for Human Rights. Victims, on the other hand, have entitlements set out in a Code that lawyers tactfully describe as "persuasive guidance."

I'm not advocating offenders shouldn't have rights. Neither do I accept that giving rights to victims can only be at the expense of offenders. True justice requires both offenders and victims to be given rights that guarantee both are treated fairly.

A Victims Law should reflect a core set of values, based on the premise that all victims deserve procedural justice. In short, victims' rights should cover three key areas: a right to be heard, a right to be informed and a right to challenge.

I also want to see statutory provision for an independent advocacy service, to support and represent vulnerable victims and victims of the worst crimes, throughout the criminal justice process.

Too often, victims are forced to navigate a maze of agencies which can be difficult at best, but utterly bewildering when you're consumed with trauma and grief.

An "independent advocate" would provide a single point of contact throughout the whole process. They'll



take the lead drawing up a support package to meet the victim's needs and represent the victim dealing with agencies, as well as support them every step of the trial.

A Victims Law should also introduce a legal requirement that agencies cooperate in providing support for victims. Many victims tell me that criminal justice can feel like a conveyor belt, being passed from pillar to post and endlessly repeating their story. ➤

This Law should be a vehicle, guiding victims on their seamless journey through the criminal justice system with easy access to the support they need.

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I want 100% of court ordered compensation to be paid by the court to the victim straightaway, with the court recouping this from the offender, so the victim isn't out-of-pocket and doesn't feel cheated



Many agencies work well together, sharing information and joining forces to deliver seamless support packages. Often cooperation draws upon strong personal relationships between practitioners. Worryingly, there are stories of agencies who don't see the bigger picture or zealously defend their turf and reluctant to link up with external partners.

With offenders, there's a legal duty for agencies to cooperate in providing effective supervision. But the support needed for vulnerable victims can be every bit as complex. A Victims Law should introduce a legal duty for agencies to cooperate when devising support packages, particularly for vulnerable victims.

A Victims Law must also deliver transparency in providing victim support services. Independent inspections are staples with other criminal justice agencies. They are taken seriously and a driver for improved delivery.

A Victim Law should extend the remit of the Victims' Commissioner to include an independent inspectorate for victim services, with powers to make recommendations for improvements. A formal inspection of victim

services also sends a clear message that the Government intends to inject steel behind victim rights.

Finally, I want to see victims receiving compensation ordered by the courts, up front following a conviction, rather than waiting for recovery from defendants directly. Currently, compensation can be paid in derisory amounts over a lengthy period, leaving victims feeling frustrated.

I want 100% of court ordered compensation to be paid by the court to the victim straightaway, with the court recouping this from the offender, so the victim isn't out-of-pocket and doesn't feel cheated.

A Victims' Law offers a huge opportunity to deliver seismic change for victims. We must make the most of it.

My proposals are ambitious. Critics will quibble about costs at a time when the public sector purse is under enormous pressure. Achieving the ambition of placing victims' rights at the heart of our criminal justice system can never be achieved without cost.

But to the victims, it's a right that is priceless.

Speaking Up for Victims

MY ROLE as Victims' Commissioner is independent from Government, but I meet regularly with senior officials from a range of criminal justice agencies to try to secure a better deal for victims. I place great importance on these meetings, as an opportunity to influence operational policies and practice, based on feedback I receive from meeting victims.

From January 2017, and in line with my commitment to greater transparency, notes of these meetings have been placed on my website so that victims and practitioners can see the issues I am raising and the response of the agency concerned. The table left, sets out the meetings I have held with agencies, policy makers and Ministers since April 2017.

Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)

It has been a pleasure to meet with the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) to discuss a number of topical areas of mutual interest and concern.

I've been concerned by the number of rape trials that collapsed following a failure to make full disclosures to the defence team, which often appears to relate to mobile phone data. There are a number of issues arising from this, including defendants and victims undergoing the trauma of waiting months to go to trial, only to find the prosecution case is withdrawn at the last minute. Too often, full and early disclosure might have prevented this. I fear these high-profile failures will erode confidence that juries entrust in police and prosecutors when deliberating on sexual violence cases. ➤



Name	Date
Health and Safety Executive	3 April
Insolvency Service	4 April
Chief Coroner	25 April
Mayor's Office for Police and Crime (London)	11 May
Parole Board	22 May
Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority	12 June
Director of Public Prosecutions	13 June
Whitehall Prosecutors' Group	14 June
Environment Agency	21 June
National Crime Agency	26 June
Association of Police and Crime Commissioners	28 June
Minister for Vulnerability, Safeguarding and Counter Extremism	29 June
Independent Inquiry into Child sexual Abuse (seminar)	5 July
Meeting with Victims Advisor to the New Zealand Government	27 July
Restorative Justice Council	19 Sept
Meeting with Victims Minister	9 Oct
Parole Board	10 Oct
Minister for Policing and Fire Services	10 Oct
National Probation Service	23 Oct
Director of Public Prosecutions	8 Nov 2017
Secretary of State for Justice	14 Nov
Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (seminar)	21 Nov
National Police Chiefs Council – Victims lead	16 Jan
Association of Police and Crime Commissioners	24 Jan
Minister for Vulnerability, Safeguarding and Counter Extremism	30 Jan
Meeting with Victims Minister	31 Jan
Justice Select Committee	7 Feb
Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority	21 Feb
Secretary of State for Justice	22 Feb
National Probation Service	13 March
HM Inspectorate of Probation	22 March

I’ve expressed my concern that some prosecutors and police lacked full understanding of the impact of these crimes. Or they weren’t confident in using the new legislative powers available to pursue perpetrators.

Like all victims, I want the criminal justice system to deliver justice, and that in turn, requires full and open disclosure. The explosion of social media and cyber communication has meant that prosecutors and police must now deal with vastly increased volumes of evidence and data. It is important that they’re given the tools and the resources to meet this challenge.

Throughout the year, the DPP and I have discussed the disappointingly low prosecution and conviction rates for specific crimes such as stalking, honour-based violence and coercive control. I’ve expressed my concern that some prosecutors and police lacked full understanding of the impact of these crimes. Or they weren’t confident in using the new legislative powers available to pursue perpetrators.

I was pleased to hear that the CPS is doing a lot of work to raise awareness and understanding of crimes such as stalking and that the DPP was monitoring the number of convictions for coercive control – over 300 to date. I was also pleased to hear of recent CPS initiatives such as the CPS Honour-Based Violence Action Plan, which sets out to work better with police and third sector partners. The DPP advised there was a working group of CPS stakeholders looking at how better to better understand issues affecting victims. In addition, the CPS is revising its guidance on Honour-Based Violence and Forced Marriage.

I was intrigued to hear how video evidence from body worn cameras was used. I recognise these offer the possibility of improving conviction rates, particularly in domestic abuse cases, and having more prosecutions where the victim is not required to give evidence. The DPP confirmed that improved methods of gathering video evidence was proving helpful.

There were regional differences in the police’s use of this evidence which needed to be addressed.

The DPP and I continued to discuss the issue of section 41 applications made by the defence for the right to cross examine victims on their sexual history. A recent CPS’ analysis suggested the number of applications and cases where defence counsel tried to cross-examine without making a prior application may be lower than suspected.

The DPP however, advised me that the CPS would introduce refreshed training for all rape and sexual assault specialist lawyers, including instructed agents. The revised training would include how to deal with s.41 applications made by defence counsel.

Parole Board

My discussions with the Parole Board have been productive. Even before the Worboys case hit the headlines, the then Chairman of the Board, Nick Hardwick, and I held discussions on how to make the process more transparent.

I’ve also raised the issue on how the Parole Board deal with cases where a panel rejects or varies a request made by a victim, for licence conditions, such as an exclusion zone or no contact. I’ve been concerned by cases where a victim has no idea why their request was turned down, or what they can do to get the Board’s decision reviewed. My view is that victims should receive a full written explanation and right of review before a fresh panel.

Another focus of our discussions is how to improve the victim experience when attending Parole Board hearings. I’m concerned that there is sometimes little engagement between victims and the panel once the statement has been read out. The exit of the victim from the hearing can feel quite abrupt. The then Chairman agreed to reflect upon how this might change.

It’s good to hear the CEO and Chairman continue writing handwritten cards to every victim attending an oral hearing to read out their statement. I am pleased the Board took the decision to continue to offer victims assistance with their travel costs to and from hearings.

Police

Police have an important role to play in a victim’s journey through the criminal justice process, and I welcome the opportunity to meet them to discuss how they support victims.

I remain concerned that the police are looking to change their stance on how they handle victims of sexual abuse or violence following the report by a retired judge, Sir Richard Henriques on the handling of Operation Midland, in particular, his recommendations that the police start any investigation of a sexual crime from a neutral position and that they treat victims as a ‘complainant’ until there’s a conviction.

I don’t support either recommendation and am concerned this will be a backward step, discouraging victims from coming forward.

I’ve also taken a close interest in the vexed issue of statutory changes to police bail that came into effect last year. I’ve heard stories, albeit often third-hand, of cases where alleged perpetrators were released without conditions, whilst police undertake further investigations. In cases where there are vulnerable victims in the community, this can be an alarming development. I understand that

the impact of the changes is being closely monitored by the Home Office and I will continue to meet with Home Office officials to receive updates.

My meetings with police officers and chief constables across the country, suggest a renewed commitment to neighbourhood policing. I welcome this move, because visible local policing increases public confidence and enables communities to tackle problems arising from persistent anti-social behaviour.

Again, I’ve discussed the issue of disclosure of evidence with police leads. The pressures on police are huge but the issue needs to be addressed. Since my last meeting with police leads, there has been the publication of the NPCC and CPS National Disclosure Improvement Plan and I’m keen to understand what impact this has had.

81%

NUMBER OF
CRIMINAL INJURIES
COMPENSATION
CLAIMS RESOLVED
IN 12 MONTHS
OR LESS



Her Majesty’s Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS)

I have met with the Chief Executive of the HMCTS during this year.

Last year I reported that there had been a concerted move by HMCTS to ensure that victims’ needs are identified and better recognised and I looked forward to seeing how this will develop. With this in mind, I was delighted to visit the Manchester Crown Court Building to see the new facilities for victims and witnesses. I was impressed, and I’m keen to see similar facilities available in all court buildings across the UK.

I’ve received feedback from practitioners about the impact of court closures and new listing arrangements. The impact of change varies across the country. For example, I am aware of concerns about court closures in Surrey and that the new court centre, based in Staines, is inaccessible for victims and witnesses living in other parts of the county.

In Nottinghamshire there were concerns that multiple listings resulted in vulnerable victims being placed in court rooms without special measures, or the prospect of their cases being further delayed.

The court transformation project is radical and ambitious, and I am keen to monitor its impact on both witnesses and victims.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA)

I’ve raised with CICA the difficulties victims have in providing evidence of psychological damage following their crimes. They’ve now employed a team of five clinical psychologists to assess the available medical records of treatment to evidence a victim has suffered mental injury, without the need to refer for a face-to-face specialist medical. The information then provided by the Clinical Psychologist is used by the CICA decision maker in assessing the overall claim on which an offer of compensation is based. If victims were content with the assessment they could settle without having to attend a further medical assessment. I welcome this initiative.

I am pleased to hear that the time taken to process CICA applications is falling. In April 2017 only 52% of cases were resolved in 12 months or less. By March 2018 this had risen to 81%. This is a positive development, as is the CICA internal review of how its processes might be simplified to improve victim access. I understand that they’ve worked with the MOJ User Research Team to develop new simplified application forms and the new secure online service to provide feedback. The purpose of this review was to make it easier for victims to claim.

I remain concerned by certain aspects of the scheme, for example, the two year cut-off point in making a claim, and accessibility for survivors of historic child sex abuse, particularly those affected by the “under the same roof rule”. I’ve taken these issues up with Ministers.

In the forthcoming year, I’m undertaking a review of the ➤



accessibility of criminal injuries compensation to victims, particularly the most vulnerable, and will report back in my next Annual Report.

National Probation Service (NPS)

In my last Annual Report, I advised that the NPS had agreed to offer victims whose cases go to the Parole Board a free copy of the judge’s sentencing remarks (at present, some victims must pay) as a pilot. I was heartened to hear all new members of the victim contact scheme will be offered a copy of their sentencing remarks, and this has now been extended to existing members.

I was approached by Nadine Marshall, a bereaved victim, who losted her son, Conner, in a brutal attack by a stranger. She was concerned that victims should be given access to serious further offence reports, to gain better understanding of the events leading to the offence taking place. I took the matter up with HMPPS and was delighted with the response. Officials have now put in place a revised model for SFO reports. These new reports are fully disclosable to victims, and the new system is currently being rolled out across the country. I very much appreciate this move to offer greater transparency to victims, and I’m grateful to Nadine for bringing it to my attention.

I welcomed an initiative from within the NPS to develop an app for victims on the Victim Contact Scheme, which would enable them to be kept up to date with developments in their case.

I’ve also raised the issue of victims being offered more information about resettlement plans to offer them reassurance. Following the recent changes in the parole process, I am keen to see the extent to which this can be achieved.

Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC)

When meeting smaller prosecuting agencies listed under the Victims Code, it was clear that many were unclear how to refer their victims to local victim services. There appeared to be no clear route. I raised this with the APCC, and am delighted to be able to report that it’s engaged with the “Whitehall Prosecutors Group” to put in place a formal referral mechanism. This should result in victims identified by

these agencies receiving the support they require to cope and recover from their crimes.

In my last report I mentioned my support for a bid made by the Northumbria PCC for funding from the Violence Against Women and Girls fund. This would pilot a small scheme offering support of a “victims advocate” to women who are victims of violent or sexual crimes. I’m pleased to be able to report that this bid was successful.

Inspectorates and Judiciary

I continue to liaise with the inspectorates, where their work crosses over into victim services. I feed into thematic reviews and take a close interest in inspection reports, particularly those produced by HMIC and HMCPs.

Chief Coroner

I take a keen interest in the remit of the coroner in the event of a suspicious death. I know only too well from personal experience, how the coronial process can affect bereaved families in cases where a criminal act has led to the death of a loved one. It’s exactly why I’m keen to ensure other families going through this, are treated with sensitivity.

I was approached by two victims who lost close family members in fatal road collisions. Both families were further traumatised by delays caused by the perpetrators seeking their own independent post-mortems. The decision whether to grant an independent post-mortem falls to the coroner, and it would seem that practice varies across the country. I am meeting with policy officials and the Chief Coroner to discuss this practice.

The Queen’s Speech set out the Government’s intention to provide an Independent Public Advocate is to keep the bereaved and surviving victims of disasters informed of progress in any relevant investigation and make them fully aware how they can contribute to that investigation.

The Public Advocate would ensure that, in the event of disasters involving multiple fatalities involving numerous victims, no individuals or families are sidelined in large and



complex proceedings to determine the facts and causes of the events affecting them.

I’ve welcomed this development but am calling on the Government to go further and extend the role of the advocate beyond victims of a public disaster to families suffering bereavement following homicide, who face these complex proceedings and inquest hearings without such support. In particular, I’m thinking of those who face what are termed as “Article 2” inquests, where they’ve lost loved ones and where it is alleged that the state or a statutory agency has some culpability.

This might include cases where domestic homicide reviews identify failings from agencies, or alleged perpetrators who were, for example, subject to probation or medical supervision. Many cases attract little political or media interest. However, bereaved families are not legally represented at inquest hearings unless they’re able to fund representation themselves. The statutory agencies on the other hand, may well have public funded representation, or may be able to afford the best representation to fight their corner. This is neither fair nor right.

Feeding into Consultations, Policies and Procedures

I’ve contributed to consultations, policies and guidance documents, which impact upon victims. Some of the work I have contributed to in 2017- 18 includes:

- National Police Chief’s Council Draft Strategy on Out of Court Disposals
- Government Review of law, policy and procedure relating to Parole Board decisions
- Sentencing Guidelines Council (Guidelines on Child Cruelty Offences)
- National Police Chiefs Council Anti-Social Behaviour Effective Practice Guide
- Office of National Statistics Changes to the Crime Survey for England and Wales
- Ministry of Justice National Victims Strategy
- Home Office National Strategy on Violence and Gangs
- Changes to complaints and appeals procedures undertaken by the Independent Office for Police Conduct regarding.

Speaking events

As set out above, many of my speaking engagements are at regional events arranged by criminal justice agencies, police and crime commissioners. However, I welcome the opportunity to speak more widely about victims’ policy and practice. This gives me the chance to raise more strategic issues as well as challenge the status quo.

In September I spoke at the Public Policy Exchange Seminar on the Victims’ Code. This was an opportunity for me to call for improved partnership working between criminal justice

agencies, and the imperative that victims have a sense that their criminal justice journey has provided them with procedural justice, whatever the outcome of their case.

My speech at the Westminster Briefing Seminar in October was when I talked about the need for a Victims Law and what this law should seek to achieve. It was well received in the press, and gave me a platform to explain why it was essential to give victims a set of statutory rights.

Also in November, I spoke at a seminar on ending gang and youth violence, a subject close to my heart. I highlighted the need for early intervention with young people and their families, to increase protective factors, build resilience and in doing so, significantly improving life chances.

In November, I spoke at an event marking the 50th anniversary of the Parole Board. This gave me a platform to call for greater transparency in decision-making and to share with victims some of the detail of offenders’ resettlement plans. At the time, I had little idea just how much focus would fall on this particular topic.

Parliamentary Debates

As a member of the House of Lords, I also get the opportunity to speak in the chamber on issues that directly and indirectly affect victims.

Over the past year, I’ve used this opportunity on several occasions to speak on victim related issues. These include the need for a Victims Law, need to provide greater support for victims of domestic abuse, supporting a private member bill to enhance support for victims of modern slavery and calling for the role of the Independent Public Advocate to go beyond national disasters. I’ve also raised points in the debates following the Worboys case.

As well as Parliamentary debates, I’ve met and worked with Parliamentarians across the political spectrum who share my passion for supporting victims. I’ve been encouraged by the growing political consensus to do more and go further in supporting victims, giving them statutory rights within our criminal justice system.

Justice Select Committee

As well as my speaking opportunities in the chamber of the House of Lords, I was delighted to have the opportunity to give evidence at the House of Commons Justice Select Committee evidence gathering session on Parole Board decision-making.

I used this opportunity to provide both written and oral evidence, calling for greater transparency in decisions, a right for victims to seek reconsideration of parole decisions without resorting to crowd-funding, an extension of the victim contact scheme to include more discretionary victims and for the scheme to move away from a simple information exchange to becoming a victim support service.

VC's View

Surviving Child Sexual Abuse

I remain concerned about the levels of support available in the community for victims and survivors of CSA. These include counselling and therapy to help survivors cope and recover from their ordeal

MOST SEXUAL abuse isn't reported, detected or prosecuted. It's a crime that's usually only witnessed by the abuser and the victim. In England and Wales:

- 9% of adults experienced psychological abuse during childhood.
- 7% suffered physical abuse in childhood
- 7% suffered sexual assault in childhood
- 8% witnessed domestic violence or abuse in the home during childhood.
- One in three children sexually abused by an adult did not tell anyone.

The National Association of People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC) operates a national helpline for victims and survivors of childhood abuse. In one year alone, it answered 8,449 calls and emails on their support line and support email service. Yet there were nearly 90,000 call attempts to NAPAC's support line during this period (89,680 in 2016/17), compared to 55,000 in 2014/15.

The NSPCC state that grooming offences against children have risen 64pc in the last year.

Service providers tell me that they're struggling to cope with rising demand. There is no audit of facilities available, how long victims are waiting, or whether there are enough trained people in place to meet the needs.

CSA victims and survivors have already suffer hugely, often as a result of negligence from those in authority. It takes huge courage to come forward and disclose. I fear that we're in danger of letting them down again with insufficient support in place to help them rebuild their lives.

As well as providing properly resourced support services to help victims and survivors to cope and recover from the trauma of their abuse, I believe we need to look at how they're treated by our justice system.

I reiterate my view that it's essential the victim feels their account is believed, as it is a fear of being disbelieved that deters so many victims from coming forward.

Once they come forward, there needs to be regular police communication from the point of reporting. When victims go long periods without hearing from the police, they grow anxious. Some decide they no longer wish to pursue the matter. A practice of only contacting the victim following a development isn't good enough.

I am also concerned that CSA victims with communication needs can face a long wait to get access to a registered intermediary in order to help them give evidence in their Achieving Best Evidence interview with the police, and for giving evidence at court. These delays are flagged up in my review on Registered Intermediaries.

My discussions with victims and survivors highlight the ordeal of giving evidence in court.

Some judges are not aware of the professional status and role of Independent Sexual Violence Advisors. I am dismayed that some routinely turn down requests to accompany the victim in the witness box, or sit with them when giving evidence remotely. One professional advised me, that in cases where ISVAs had been precluded



from supporting victims, they were so badly traumatised by the trial, they required ongoing support post-trial to help them recover.

The conduct of advocates in the adversarial system can sometimes lead to attempts to discredit a victim or diminish their innocence. This is not acceptable. One young sexual abuse victim I met was asked to remove her school blazer and tie in court by the defence barrister, presumably to make her look more adult. I want to see judges insisting on practices aimed at minimising aggressive or unfair cross-examination of victims and the use of stereotypes by the defence.

7%

PERCENTAGE OF ADULTS THAT SUFFERED PHYSICAL ABUSE IN CHILDHOOD

8%

PERCENTAGE OF ADULTS THAT WITNESSED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OR ABUSE IN THE HOME

9%

PERCENTAGE OF ADULTS THAT SUFFERED PHYSICAL ABUSE IN CHILDHOOD

It's essential that prosecutors meet with victims before the trial. New CPS guidance 'Speaking to Witnesses at Court 2016' requires much more than a brief introduction immediately before trial. It acknowledges that the court process can retraumatise a victim. To minimise this, prosecution counsel should explain the whole trial and make the victim feel valued and involved. Ideally, there ought to be a pre-arranged meeting ahead of the

trial date will give better reassurance to the victims.

Victims and Survivors need to be informed about all the special measures open to them. It's important that they're given a say in how they're applied rather than having justice 'done to them'. Some may prefer to give evidence behind a screen or have their evidence pre-recorded or via live link, some prefer to clear the court and give

evidence directly. The important point is that they have the opportunity to choose.

Special measures also need to be applied with the reason behind them in mind. For example, the victim doesn't want to be not seen by the defendant not just when they're speaking but throughout the whole court experience, so need protection around the court building and when approaching the witness box.



Creating a Centre of Excellence

In my last two Annual Reports, I revealed my ambition to turn my office into a “Centre of Excellence”, sharing examples of good practice and innovation. I remain committed to this goal and it’s one of my five strategic objectives for my second term

THE REDESIGN of my website is now under development and there will be a section dedicated to promoting good practice and innovation. The plan is for this area of the website to be continually updated with recent examples.

I’m often asked what constitutes an example of good practice. Another of my strategic objectives is to apply the learning from my review ‘What Works’. This review identified four key principles which underpinned effective victim services, namely communication, procedural justice, inter-agency cooperation and professionalisation.

These principles have influenced our approach to reviewing victim services and recommending improvements. Examples of good practice must therefore demonstrate the application of one or more of these principles. My team and I have also started to frame my reviews, speeches and presentations around these principles.

However, developing a centre of excellence is not just about promoting innovative work on the ground. I’ve listed below just some of the day-to-day work we have undertaken to help improve victim services:



- We are regularly approached by agencies and consulted about the drafting of standard letters and forms.
- My Head of Analysis and Review, Dr Elaine Wedlock, (*pictured, below left*) sits on Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services Effectiveness Reference Group. This groups monitors the effectiveness of inspection methodologies and Elaine provides the victim’s perspective on these inspections. It gives my office the opportunity to contribute from a victim perspective.
- Members of my team attended two MoJ workshops with practitioners and commissioners of victim services from Police and Crime Commissioners’ Offices, to help develop the MoJ Victim Outcome Framework. The framework will be used by PCCs to measure and monitor success of the victims’ services they commission.
- We met representatives from The London Mayor’s Office for Police and Crime (MOPAC) to discuss how they can best measure and monitor compliance with the Victims’ Code and victim satisfaction with victim services.
- Elaine Wedlock represented the OVC in a MOJ Government Social Research seminar panel discussion about the work of ALB’s. Elaine described the work of the OVC and the current and planned research the Office is carrying out to improve the experience of victims of crime in the criminal justice system.
- Elaine Wedlock sat on a MoJ Government Social Research working group on Behavioural Insights. Behavioural Insights is an approach to policy making that combines insights from psychology, cognitive science, and social science with empirically-tested results to discover how humans make choices. It can be used to encourage positive behaviour and choices. The group identified effective examples of policy making through behavioural insights and investigated its application in the field of criminal justice.
- Elaine Wedlock attended a workshop at the College of Policing, feeding the victims viewpoint into changes in how police assess vulnerability of victims and offenders.

VC’s View

Honour Based Abuse and Forced Marriage

I have taken a close interest in the work undertaken to support and protect victims of honour-based violence and forced marriage. Despite introducing legislation making forced marriage a crime, 10 years down the line, I’m concerned many victims slip under the radar and agencies are failing in their duty to protect those most at risk

HUNDREDS OF school children ‘go missing’ every year, particularly during school holidays. There’s compelling evidence to suggest that some children may have been forced into marriages abroad. Others may have been subjected to honour-based violence by family members for acting or behaving in ways their families or communities disapprove of.

Yielded success

I’ve taken a close interest in the work of the charity Karma Nirvana, who run a national helpline for victims of honour-based abuse and forced marriage and campaign to raise awareness. The charity has, for the second year, embarked on a ‘school’s education programme’ to raise awareness of honour-based violence and forced marriage to students, across the country. The programme has yielded some success as, on average, every school refers three students of concern. This highlights the difference made to children at risk who otherwise fail to understand how these abuses do not form part of culture, religion and tradition.

Once awareness has been raised, other young people, potentially victims, have contacted the helpline requesting support and help to remove them from the situation they face or to safeguard them whilst they live with their families. Contacting the helpline has enabled them to receive the specialist support, and in some cases, this enabled them to continue their education.

Every child has the right to an education, but sadly, honour-based abuse can often involve removing this fundamental right.

I understand some schools are reluctant to raise awareness of honour-based abuse and forced marriage, prompted by a desire not to be insensitive or intervene in students’ cultural issues. In practice, the opposite is true. Raising awareness of these issues has allowed schools to be seen in a much more culturally sensitive light, and able to support students where such issues arise.

Young people need to understand that forced marriages and abuse are not only wrong, but also break UK law.

Karma Nirvana’s most recent figures show that in 2016, over 7,000 victims contacted the national helpline for help, with a marked increase in calls from children and young people, as a direct result of school engagement. This equates to almost 650 callers a month from young people in desperate situations.

Concern

More than 1200 of those who contacted the national helpline during the year were under 24. A Home Affairs Select Committee Report in 2012 highlighted areas of concern and identified 2,000 children and young people at risk. Since that time, the Government’s own statistics, collected by the Forced Marriage Unit, show that in 2016 there were reports of 1,428 cases of forced marriage compared to 400 cases a year four years earlier.

These figures suggest more victims have the confidence to come forward and report. Whilst this is good news, I am concerned that they’re the tip of the iceberg. It’s possible many more victims are suffering in silence, unaware of support organisations able to provide them with the help they need. Testimonies from survivors of honour-based abuse show that had they had access to information at school, they may have sought help at a younger age. And in doing so the may avoid the abuse, violence and in some cases, rape and sexual assault that has blighted their lives.

I want to see schools do more to identify, assist and support victims. Together with Karma Nirvana, I’ve called on the Government to include honour-based violence and forced marriage issues as part of the school curriculum and the healthy relationships agenda.

Shame

I want to see Ofsted inspectors raising the issue of forced marriages as part of their inspections. There are national guidelines in place for schools on forced marriage but evidence suggests many head teachers are either not aware of the guidance or making use of it. This is a shame because the guidance includes a tool kit for teachers who are aware of pupils at risk, but are unsure about what to do to put adequate safeguards in place.

Only by raising awareness of this abuse, both within teaching staff and pupils, can we be confident that the necessary safeguards are in place to support victims and protect potential victims from harm.

Looking Ahead

Victims' Commissioner's plans for 2018/19

My Second Term Strategic Plan sets out the framework for my activities through to March 2019, when my term ends. All my efforts will be focused on delivering my five strategic objectives



My overriding priority is to ensure victims receive their entitlements and treated with decency and respect. I'll do this by meeting service providers and criminal justice agencies and reviewing their performance against the Victims' Code. I'll also be working with the Ministry of Justice to study how compliance can be monitored more effectively. I will continue to meet victims and listen to their testimonies and learn from their experiences. This feedback will inform my reviews and campaigns.

The key areas of activity for my team and I are:

On the basis of my Strategic Plan, I have published my detailed work plan for 2018/19, available at <http://victimscommissioner.org.uk>.

- Undertaking further reviews into compliance with the Victims' Code, with emphasis on vulnerable victims. I will undertake a review into the accessibility of criminal injuries compensation.
- I'll also work with Government in seeking to get support for my recommendations in my review of Registered Intermediaries.
- I will follow up on my first review how victim satisfaction is captured and used to improve services by publishing my review on the capture of victim satisfaction by local PCC victim services.
- I'm committed to undertaking a rapid evidence gathering into the extent to which independent victim advocates can support and assist victims.
- I remain concerned about the support given to victims of anti-social behaviour. I will publish a scoping report looking at practice on the ground.
- I will complete my consultation with victims of domestic abuse and practitioners before submitting a detailed response to the Government consultation exercise on domestic abuse.
- I will seek to raise awareness of the impact of cyber-crime and fraud on vulnerable victims, such as the elderly and young.
- I'll continue to work with third sector charities to seek firm Government proposals for raising awareness of so-called honour-based violence and forced marriage.



- I will continue to work with Ministry of Justice to find ways of reducing distress for bereaved victims by defendants who seek multiple post mortems.
- I will continue to support the Private Member Bills which seeks to provide victims of Modern Day Slavery with adequate packages of support to rebuild their lives. I'll continue to be in contact with groups supporting victims of modern slavery and human trafficking. I want to focus on how identified victims are supported through to recovery.
- I will support the Private Members' Bill which seeks to introduce stalking protection orders.
- I will publish my report on the entitlements of victims of mentally disordered offenders under the Victims' Code.
- I will work with the Ministry of Justice to consider how to improve the monitoring of compliance with the Victims Code.
- I will continue to work with victims and survivors of child sexual abuse to highlight the need for more support in the community to help recovery from the trauma of this pernicious crime.
- I will work closely with the Ministry of Justice when it amends the operation of the Victim Contact Scheme, specifically with the view to seeing greater flexibility in allowing discretionary access to the scheme. I will also encourage steps that will see the scheme move from being a standalone transactional service to becoming a part of victim support services.
- I'll scrutinise the changes to the parole scheme to ensure that there is greater transparency and effective means to challenge. I will continue to work with the Parole Board to ensure that victims whose licence condition requests are refused have a reasonable opportunity to challenge.
- I will continue to campaign for a Victims Law which includes victim rights.
- I will complete work on the redesign of the Victims' Commissioners' website so it's more accessible and a useful support for both victims and practitioners.
- I'm committed to reaching out to victims and practitioners through building my profile on social media and getting opportunities to promote the needs of victims in the media.
- I will work closely with HMCTS in monitoring court reforms and digitalisation, and how these impact upon victims.
- I will continue to travel around the country meeting police and crime commissioners, finding out how they deliver victims' services, talking to local practitioners and meeting local victims.

VC's View

Victims of Modern Day Slavery

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 was a huge step forward in tackling this pernicious crime. It sent a clear message that in the UK modern slavery, human trafficking and exploitation in all forms will not be tolerated. But I believe it doesn't go far enough. Whilst it strengthens the criminal justice response to the criminality that underlies modern slavery, it falls short in protecting victims and supporting them as they recover from their ordeal.

10,000 13,000

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN LIVING IN SLAVERY IN THE UK

THE GOVERNMENT estimates there are 10,000 – 13,000 men, women and children living in slavery in the UK, working long hours amid the most appalling conditions. The independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, suggests that these estimates may be the tip of the iceberg. The head of the Metropolitan Police's anti-slavery unit has said the number of suspected victims in London alone is expected to leap by 60% this year.

These estimates give us an idea of the scale of the challenge facing us. These are not just numbers, they are human beings. People who've suffered a terrible injustice, forced to live and work under appalling conditions often, in perpetual fear.

In September I spoke in the House Lords in support of Lord McColl's Private Members Bill – Modern Slavery (Victim Support) Bill. This Bill guarantees all victims of modern slavery a minimum recovery period and proper support. I believe that these provisions are absolutely necessary, not only for moral and ethical reasons, but also for many practical reasons.

Victims of trafficking and slavery often have no family or friends in the UK. They're destitute and after their terrible suffering at the hands of their captors, many will be suffering extreme trauma.

When they're found by the authorities, they're required to go through the National Referral Mechanism, which identifies them and considers whether they should be formally recognised as "trafficked". The victim has just 45 days in which they're entitled to support, housing, counselling and any medical help.

Once they are formally recognised as "trafficked" they have just two weeks before they must leave their safehouse and fend for themselves. I understand that this is described as a "cliff edge" by one safe house, and I can well understand why.

On an emotional level, victims who are traumatised by the abuse that they have endured make little if any progress in such a short time frame. I often hear it said that this 45 day period can be used as a period of "recovery and reflection".

But the stark reality is that the victims will often be grappling with shock, anxiety and uncertainty about what happens next.

Many will be unable to disclose much of what has happened to them. They may speak little English or be worried about the ramifications of disclosing how they ended up in this situation. Most require time to establish trust in those helping them before they're able to offer disclosure.

These victims will need ongoing counselling and emotional support if they're to be able to start the process of recovery. And emotional recovery is necessary to be able to move on and lead fulfilling, rewarding lives.

On a practical level, many have no home or source of income. For me, the most alarming feedback is the accounts of victims of modern slavery suffering destitution, following their liberation.

Even worse are reports of some who feel compelled to return to their enslavers as they have nowhere else to turn. One report produced by the Human Trafficking Foundation Report found that one quarter of victims of trafficking in London went missing,

often in ominous circumstances. This is deeply depressing.

Anecdotally, we know some safehouses repeatedly see the same victims entering the system again and again, having been liberated once more by the authorities.

Inevitably, the disappearance of so many victims inhibits police investigations. It must be a key factor in the low level of prosecutions and convictions.

For me, these are the reasons why Lord McColl's Bill is so important. It builds upon the valuable work started by the Modern Slavery Act, because it will enable victims to make the transition from victim to survivor. It will also ensure that victims will in future be entitled to access to specialised support and assistance during the recovery and reflection period.

This is not only doing the right thing by existing victims of this terrible crime. I believe that by bringing these victims in from the cold, it helps police and the CPS to secure more convictions. In turn, this deters other potential abusers, thereby hopefully reducing the number of future victims.

Conclusion

2018/19 will be my final year in office. It falls at an exciting time, with changes in the pipeline in respect of parole, victim contact scheme, support for victims of domestic abuse, stalking and child sexual abuse



My priority is securing a commitment for victim rights and independent victim advocates



The Government’s National Victim Strategy, due to be published later this year offers a huge opportunity to make long-called form reforms to victim services and their legal entitlements. As Victim’s Commissioner, I’m committed to working with the Government and challenging it, to make sure we make the most of this opportunity. My priority is securing a commitment for victim rights and independent victim advocates.

I am determined to keep a focus on the needs of the most vulnerable victims in the criminal justice system, and to campaign to ensure that they receive the support and protection that they deserve.

At the same time as meeting these challenges, it’s important that we don’t lose sight of the importance of treating all victims with respect and sensitivity. Each victim is an individual, with their own individual needs and anxieties. Many are suffering from trauma and loss. This human dimension must never be overlooked in the drive for efficiencies and attempts to quell demand.

Glossary

Change That Lasts: Is a new strengths-based, needs-led approach that supports domestic abuse survivors and their children to build resilience, and leads to independence.

Claire’s Law: The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme - known as Clare’s Law - is intended to provide information that could protect someone from becoming a victim of attack. The initiative is named after Clare Wood, 36, who was murdered by her ex-boyfriend in 2009.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme (CICA): Is a Government-funded organisation created to provide compensation for blameless victims of violent crime.

Criminal Justice System (CJS): The CJS comprises numerous agencies each responsible to a Government department. The Ministry of Justice oversees the work of HM Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS), covering prison and probation services; and HM Courts Service. The services which HMPPS are accountable for include; HM Prison Service and National Probation Service. The Home Office has responsibility for the 43 police forces in England and Wales and the Attorney General has responsibility for the Crown Prosecution Service.

Domestic Abuse Consultation: This sets out the Government’s approach to dealing with domestic abuse. It seeks to address it at every stage from prevention through to rehabilitation.

Frontline Practitioners: Professionals employed across the public and charity sector to support victims of abuse. They can comprise police, social workers, health workers and victim organisations.

Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVAs): The main purpose of independent domestic violence advisors is to address the safety of victims at high risk of harm from partners, ex-partners or family members to secure their safety, and the safety of their children. Serving as a victim’s main point of contact, IDVAs normally work with their clients from the point of crisis to assess the scale of risk.

Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs): An ISVA is trained to look after a victim’s

needs, and ensure they receive care and understanding. They’ll help you understand how the justice process works, and explain what happens if you report to the police, and the importance and process of forensic DNA retrieval. By contacting them, you’re not expected to report any offence to the police.

Justice Select Committee (JSC): The JSC of the UK is a select committee of the House of Commons which scrutinises the policy, administration, and spending of the Ministry of Justice.

MacKenzie Friend: Helps a litigant in person in a court of law in England and Wales. They don’t need to be legally qualified. The crucial point is that unless there are exceptional circumstances, your McKenzie Friend can sit with you in Court and offer advice and support as well as taking notes to help you.

National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC): Offers support to adult survivors of all types of childhood abuse, including physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect.

Parole Board (PB): Is an independent body that carries out risk assessments on prisoners to determine whether they can be safely released into the community.

Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC): Every force area is represented by a PCC, except Greater Manchester and London, where PCC responsibilities lie with the Mayor. The PCCs role is to be the voice of people and hold police to account. PCCs aim to cut crime and deliver an effective, efficient police service within their local area.

Registered Intermediaries (RIs): Are used in criminal proceedings to help vulnerable witnesses communicate clear evidence to the police and courts. They ensure that witnesses can understand questions and communicate their answers.

Restorative Justice: Brings those harmed by crime or conflict, and those responsible for the harm together, enabling everyone affected by a

particular incident to play a part in repairing the harm and finding a positive way forward.

Stalking Prevention Orders (SPOs): Will improve the safety of all stalking victims by giving police the authority to address the danger that perpetrators pose while they gather more evidence.

Stalking Protection Bill: This Bill currently going through Parliament, will introduce Stalking Protection Orders (SPOs) to improve the safety of stalking victims.

Victim Contact Scheme (VCS): The scheme is run by the National Probation Service. You’ll be invited to join the Victim Contact Scheme if the offender has committed a violent or sexual crime and been sentenced to 12 months or more in prison. This could include receiving a hospital order under the Mental Health Act.

Victim Hubs: Victim hubs offer emotional support, information and practical help to victims and witnesses of crime to help them cope and recover from their experience.

Victims’ Advocate: These are professionals trained to support crime victims. Advocates offer victims information, emotional support, and help finding resources and filling out paperwork. Sometimes, advocates go to court with victims.

Victims’ Law: Victim’s Commissioner, Baroness Newlove, has long fought for a Victims’ Law that guarantees victims legally enforceable rights within the justice system. They include a right to be informed about court dates and decisions, a right to make a personal statement at trial and a right to be consulted on conditions of the offender’s release or discharge.

Victim Personal Statement: A VPS gives you the opportunity to explain in your own words the impact that the crime has had on you and your family. It will be taken into account by all criminal justice agencies involved in the case, including a judge. It can also play a key part in sentencing.



Office of the Victims' Commissioner

Budget Report

	Budget	Out turn £
17/18 total	496	475
Pay	467	466
Non-Pay Breakdown		
IT and Telecommunications	7	3
Travel and Other	14	6
Printing, Postage and Office Expenditure	2	0
Other Expenditure	6	0

	Budget	Out turn £
16/17 total	492	491
Pay	470	477
Non-Pay	22	14
Non-Pay Breakdown		
IT and Telecommunications	8	2
Travel and Other	14	12
Printing, Postage and Office Expenditure	0	0

Members of the Victims' Commissioner's

Advisory Group

2017/18

Lucy Jaffé is Director of Why me? Victims for Restorative Justice, the charity established by a victim of crime to increase access to restorative justice (RJ) for other victims. Since her involvement, Why me? has increased in size and reach and expanded its focus from campaigning and communications to include service delivery.

Lucy previously worked in marketing and communications and was Sales & Marketing Director of a software company. She was a National Coordinator of Reunite, the National Council for Abducted Children. She is an active member of Forest School Camps, which takes children on educational holidays. She is currently trustee on the Criminal Justice Alliance, and a former trustee of the Women's Resource Centre.



Rory Geoghegan is Head of Criminal Justice at the Centre for Social Justice. Rory has previously worked in strategy at PwC and started working on criminal justice while at the Institute for Government. His criminal justice policy experience is blended with frontline practice, spending five years as a police officer working across response, neighbourhoods and gangs in the Metropolitan Police.

Julian Hendy is an award-winning documentary filmmaker. In 2007 his father

was murdered for no reason by a psychotic man he had never met before, who was well known to local mental health services. Julian is the founder of the Hundred Families charity, which supports and advocates for similarly bereaved families across the UK, and works with the NHS and others to prevent further avoidable tragedies.



Gabrielle Shaw has led NAPAC as Chief Executive Officer since April 2015. She is a senior INGO executive with over 12 years' leadership, policy, programme development and strategic decision-making achievements across charity, government and statutory sectors. Gabrielle's experience includes heading up the external affairs and research work of the global charity World Animal Protection to strengthen its campaigning on issues such as disease control and leading on international relations and external affairs for CEOP, the agency focused on combatting child exploitation and abuse.

Jan Berry is a former Chair of the Police Federation of England & Wales. She joined Kent as a Cadet and retired 37 years later as a Chief Inspector. Jan introduced Juvenile Liaison Bureaux and Rape Victim Suites in Kent and launched the Crime

Prevention initiative "Secured by Design". Awarded the QPM in 2006. Following retirement Jan was appointed by the Home Secretary to cut bureaucracy across government and policing and continues to advise on reducing bureaucracy in the criminal justice system. Jan is Chair of Care of Police Survivors and Trustee for a Domestic Abuse Charity.



Rachel Griffin joined Suzy Lamplugh Trust from Victim Support where she managed projects and policy relating to domestic violence, police and crime commissioners and partnership working. Previously she was at Voice for the Child in Care, where she established the Alliance for Child-centred Care.

Before going into policy and development, Rachel was a fundraiser, first at the National Deaf Children's Society and then at The Prince's Trust. She is a former trustee of Prisoners' Education Trust.

Kim Doyle is the Joint Chief Executive of LimeCulture CIC, a national sexual violence organisation based in the UK. For the last 30 years she has worked extensively in the field of sexual violence and child protection. Kim qualified as a barrister and joined the Crown Prosecution Service in 1986. She has worked with the police, health, lawyers

and other third sector agencies working to improve the standard of rape and child abuse investigations and prosecutions. She was instrumental in the development of the children's service at St Mary's SARC in Manchester and played a key role in developing the response to sexual violence by the Crown Prosecution Service.



Fiona McKay is an international human rights lawyer with a specialization in the role of victims in criminal proceedings for war crimes and crimes against humanity. After 11 years at the International Criminal Court in The Hague, operationalising the Court's innovative provisions on victim participation and reparation, she is now at the Open Society Justice Initiative in London.



Dame Vera Baird is currently the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria having been first elected in 2012. She serves in several voluntary roles as an Honorary Doctor of Civil Law at Northumbria University, Visiting Professor of Legal Practice at Newcastle University, Visiting Law Professor at London South Bank University, Visiting Law Lecturer at Teesside University and as an Honorary Fellow of St Hilda's College, Oxford and Durham University Law School.

Dame Vera was Labour MP for Redcar from 2001 - 2010, a Government Minister from 2006 - 2010. As Solicitor General for England and Wales from 2007 to 2010 she was involved in criminal justice policy and legislation, especially on gender and equality policies.

In 2017 she was appointed Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire (DBE) for services to women and equality. She is a Patron of the charities RESPECT and Operation Encompass.



Dr Jacki Tapley is a Principal Lecturer in Victimology and Criminology at the Institute of Criminal Justice Studies, University of Portsmouth. Prior to this, Jacki worked as a Probation Officer. Her teaching and research focuses on victims of crime, vulnerable victims, and professional cultures in criminal justice, specialising in victims of sexual violence, domestic abuse and fraud, and the implementation and evaluation of victim-centred policies and legislation. Jacki is the Independent Facilitator for the Wessex CPS VAWG Scrutiny Panel. She is a member of the Hampshire LCJB Victim and Witness Working Group and a Trustee for Aurora New Dawn.

Andrew Bridges career in the Probation Service from 1973 onwards, including prison secondments, took him to Leicestershire, Wiltshire, Gwent, and Berkshire, where he was Chief Probation Officer from 1998-2001. He moved on to the Inspectorate, where he was HM Chief Inspector from 2004-11. Since then, he has undertaken work for other organisations such as, G4S and Ingeus. Andrew was known as a national authority on increasing offender employment from 1995-2001, on Probation's public protection role since 2004, and generally on how to "make Probation work" effectively in practice now.

Stephen Wooler CB retired in 2010 after a career spent in the criminal justice system. Posts included Assistant DPP, Chief Crown Prosecutor and Deputy Legal Secretary to the law Officers. His last position was as HM Chief Inspector of the Crown Prosecution Service where he led joint CJS Inspectorate work on the treatment of victims. Now in 'active retirement' his roles have included serving as an Assistant Parliamentary Boundary

Commissioner and consultancy work. He currently serves on the Lord Chancellor's Advisory Committee for Thames Valley, and independent board member for the Legal Services Agency in Northern Ireland.



Jasvinder Sanghera is a survivor of a forced marriage and founder of Karma Nirvana. She is an international speaker and an expert advisor to the courts. Her memoir *Shame* was a Times Top 10 Bestseller. David Cameron stated that her work 'turned my head on the issue of forced marriage'. Her work was pivotal to the creation Forced Marriage Act 2014. Awards include Woman of the Year 2007, Honorary Doctor of the University of Derby in 2008 and Pride of Britain award 2009. She was also listed in the Guardian's top 100 Most Inspirational Women in the World 2011, appointed Commander of the British Empire in 2013 and in 2014, was awarded Legal Campaigner of the Year.

Maggie Hughes In 2008, Maggie Hughes' son Robert became a victim of serious crime abroad, an event that changed her family's life forever. Trying to get any support, advice or justice in the aftermath proved an uphill battle.

The tragedy kickstarted Maggie's campaign to highlight the pitfalls and loopholes families face when caught in the justice maze. After seven years pursuing justice, the four men who attacked her son leaving him disabled received a three-year suspended sentence in 2015.

While the guilty were freed to return home, Maggie's family had a life sentence of coping with daily aftercare for Rob who was now disabled. Maggie's family felt let down by a justice system meant to protect victims. The family received no counselling or rehabilitation. However, the attack also inspired Maggie's campaign for a better service and fully funded system for all crime victims.

2017/18 Annual Report

Victims' Commissioner
for England and Wales

