

ORIGINATOR: CHIEF CONSTABLE

PAPER NO: AP17/60

**SUBMITTED TO: ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL –
20 OCTOBER 2017**

SUBJECT: VICTIMS' CODE OF PRACTICE (VCOP) COMPLIANCE

SUMMARY:

1. The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime places statutory responsibilities on Criminal Justice agencies, a number of which fall to the police. These include completing a needs assessment to highlight any support needs; inviting the victim to make a Victim Personal Statement; providing information about what to expect from the criminal justice process; referring the victim to appropriate support services; getting explicit consent from victims before passing details of any support services; providing information regarding Restorative Justice; to advise how to make a complaint if a victim feels any entitlements have not been received; provide information about the police investigation, such as to whether the suspect has been charged or bailed and whether the suspect is going to be prosecuted or not, or if the crime is going to be dealt with outside of court proceedings. The list is not exhaustive and will be based on individual needs of the victim.
2. This paper will provide an overview of how Suffolk Constabulary is complying with the code and what work is being undertaken to ensure compliance and rectify any issues identified.
3. The Constabulary Joint Performance and Analysis Department (JPAD) recently completed a strategic profile to measure compliance of Norfolk and Suffolk with the Victims' Code of Practice (VCOP). The results of this are covered in this report, together with updates on work being implemented to ensure compliance and continuous improvement.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. The Accountability and Performance Panel is asked to consider the contents of this report, and note the work to comply with the Victims' Code.

1. STRATEGIC PROFILE: VICTIMS' CODE OF PRACTICE – COMPLIANCE IN SUFFOLK

- 1.1 Chief Officers commissioned a strategic profile to assess compliance and current practices in respect of the Victims Code of Practice (VCOP), and information was taken from the Athena crime recording system during December 2016. The Joint Performance and Analysis Department (JPAD) completed the profile in June 2017 and this is attached at Appendix A. It should be noted that information was taken from a sample of crimes, and due to the timescales it was not possible to consult and take into account the views of victims.
- 1.2 Initial indications from the profile demonstrated that Suffolk Constabulary is complying with the Victims Code of Practice. However, due to inconsistencies in recording on Athena it was difficult for the Joint Performance and Analysis Department to make an accurate assessment.
- 1.3 The profile highlighted a number of key findings and made some recommendations that Suffolk Constabulary has adopted.

Key Findings from the Strategic Profile

- 1.4 The findings relate to both Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies who are experiencing the same issues, and this paper will focus on the Suffolk response.
- 1.5 The key findings from profile are as follows:-
 - Suffolk Constabulary is not recording compliance effectively at present;
 - There are currently a number of barriers to effective recording of compliance (e.g. systems, recording practices, procedural differences);
 - Anecdotal evidence is that there is general compliance across the organisations;
 - Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies have adopted significantly different recording and monitoring processes;
 - Victims' opinions about the Victims' Code of Practice, and how effectively it meets their needs, are currently unknown;
 - A co-ordinated strategy is required for recording and measuring compliance;
 - Extensive training will be required in order to successfully deliver a Victims' Code of Practice compliance strategy.

Recommendations from the Strategic Profile

- 1.6 The recommendations from the profile are as follows:
 - Agree and adopt a defined recording process in order to develop performance data in respect of the Victim's Code of Practice to drive continuous improvement and monitor through Constabulary performance;
 - Develop a training and audit strategy that will communicate Victims' Code of Practice recording requirements to the workforce;
 - Appoint a single working group to manage the organisational obligations in respect of Victims' Code of Practice which will increase compliance and potentially raise victim satisfaction.

Delivery of the Key Findings and Recommendations

- 1.7 A Joint Working Group has been established to address the key findings and recommendations. The group comprises of key stakeholders from County Policing

Commands (CPC), Joint Justice Command, Joint Performance Analytical Department (JPAD), Training, Restorative Justice, Integrated Offender Management (IOM), and Corporate Communications. Taking the recommendations in order, the group can report the following:

Agree and adopt a defined recording process in order to develop performance data in respect of VCOP to drive continuous improvement, and monitor through Constabulary performance

- 1.8 There is not currently a mandatory field on the Athena system to note VCOP compliance. Systems are in place to ensure letters are sent to all victims, but at present this can be recorded in a variety of places. A change request was submitted in July 2015 seeking enhancements to the Athena system in order to support VCOP requirements. The Athena fix is scheduled for late 2017 which it is hoped will address this issue. The Constabulary is awaiting the Athena release notes to understand if this will include the mandatory field and address this area for improvement. The Athena lead, together with the Working Group will review the fix and undertake a gap analysis. If all areas are not addressed, the Group will seek to design a template to capture the information on the contact log.
- 1.9 The Corporate Communications Department will ensure that messaging and communications around the fix is clear to all Athena users.
- 1.10 Once implemented the Joint Performance and Analysis Department JPAD will undertake a further dip sample and audit compliance.

Develop a training and audit strategy that will communicate VCOP recording requirements to the workforce

Training

- 1.11 Training on the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime has been completed across Suffolk Constabulary. Extensive Athena refresher training to supervisors has begun across and includes enhanced inputs on VCOP compliance.

Audit

- 1.12 In Suffolk all teams or departments that deal with crime investigations are included in the Athena investigation audit process. The responsibility for audits sits with Inspectors and Chief Inspectors. Inspectors currently dip sample 10 investigations per month in order to monitor compliance with the code. Audit review forms are completed and made available to reference for compliance auditing purposes. Superintendents ensure compliance with the process via checking the audit records.
- 1.13 If there are any specific areas identified for action or amendment, the Inspector or Chief Inspector discusses this with the Officer and their Sergeant.
- 1.14 The Working Group is seeking a consistent audit process across both forces, and has agreed to progress this once the Athena fix is in place and the results of the further work from JPAD is understood.

Appoint a single working group to manage the organisational obligations in respect of VCOP which will increase compliance and potentially raise victim satisfaction

- 1.15 The work undertaken by the Working Group is shared through the Norfolk and Suffolk Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) Victim and Witness Sub Group, which is independently chaired by the LCJB Business Manager. Statutory and voluntary

agencies, including the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, are represented on this Sub Group.

Next Steps

- 1.16 The Working Group will remain in place until all areas of the strategic profile have been addressed. This will include work to understand victim's opinions about VCOP, and how effectively it meets their needs as this is currently unknown. The Constabulary will continue to monitor compliance with the Code and drive forward continuous improvement.

2. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 There are no financial implications in respect of this report.

3. OTHER IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

- 3.1 The Victims' Code of Practice (VCOP) is a statutory document which places obligations on the police and other criminal justice agencies to provide services to victims of crime, setting out the minimum standards they can expect.

ORIGINATOR CHECKLIST (MUST BE COMPLETED)	PLEASE STATE 'YES' OR 'NO'
Has legal advice been sought on this submission?	No
Has the PCC's Chief Finance Officer been consulted?	No
Have equality, diversity and human rights implications been considered including equality analysis, as appropriate?	Yes
Have human resource implications been considered?	Yes
Is the recommendation consistent with the objectives in the Police and Crime Plan?	Yes
Has consultation been undertaken with people or agencies likely to be affected by the recommendation?	Yes
Has communications advice been sought on areas of likely media interest and how they might be managed?	Yes
Have all relevant ethical factors been taken into consideration in developing this submission?	Yes