

Baroness Newlove of Warrington
Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales

18 October 2024

Dear Baroness Newlove,

We write to you collectively in our capacity as His Majesty's Chief Inspectors of the criminal justice system.

We welcome your important findings in the '[Annual Victims' Survey 2023](#)'. The report highlights the challenges facing our criminal justice system and the need for change to improve [victims](#)' experiences.

Our four inspectorates work together to address issues that involve more than one criminal justice agency and that directly affect the public who use the justice system. The victim and witness experience is one of these issues.

Lately, our focus on outcomes and the user experience has increased.

Our response to your recommendation

The [Victims and Prisoners Act 2024](#) sets the inspectorates' duty to respond to relevant recommendations from the Victims' Commissioner. This makes sure actions taken to improve victims' experiences are examined more closely.

In your report, you made the following recommendation:

"We recommend that the criminal justice inspectorates (of constabulary, Crown Prosecution Service, prisons, and probation) incorporate the provision of communications to victims with accessibility needs into their thematic inspections of victims' services. This should be assessed against the benchmark set out in Right 1 of the Victims' Code: All service providers must communicate in simple and accessible language and all translation or interpretation services must be offered free of charge to the victim."

The experience of victims is an important area of our joint work. We accept your recommendation.

Action we've already taken

The duty to respond to the Victims' Commissioner's recommendations includes action already taken. In March 2023, we published our '[Criminal Justice Joint Inspection Business Plan 2023–25](#)'. This sets out our criminal justice inspection programme, in which two or more of our inspectorates will work together. It doesn't cover the inspection programmes of individual criminal justice system inspectorates.

In December 2023, we published our report '[Meeting the needs of victims in the criminal justice system](#)'. We assessed how well the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Probation Service meet the needs of victims, from when a victim reports an offence to after the offender has been convicted. In this report, we made six recommendations:

Recommendation 1

By 31 December 2024, the Ministry of Justice, Home Office and Attorney General's Office should work together to use this inspection as the basis for a broader and fundamental review of the experience of victims of crime, involving other Government departments and agencies as necessary.

Such a review could draw on evidence from this inspection, and look more broadly at how best to include information on all services available to victims of crime, seeking to improve the availability of access for victims and the consistency of the service they receive. It could also seek to promote better sharing of information about positive practice and initiatives aimed at improving the victim experience.

Recommendation 2

By 30 September 2024, the Ministry of Justice should develop Victims' Code performance metrics and reporting systems. These should include how criminal justice bodies engage with victims and the quality of the engagement. Performance metrics should also include measures of how well criminal justice bodies obtain feedback from victims and how well they use this to assess the quality of engagement and improve the quality of services.

By 31 March 2025, the Ministry of Justice should implement these performance metrics and reporting systems across criminal justice bodies.

Recommendation 3

By 31 December 2024, the [College of Policing](#) should work with the [National Police Chiefs' Council](#) and chief constables to develop minimum standards for the completion of victim needs assessments. These should include standards for timeliness of completion and clarity on the information to be recorded.

Recommendation 4

The National Police Chiefs' Council and the Crown Prosecution Service should agree minimum standards and consistent processes for how witness care units or functions communicate with the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and victims to help effective, agile and timely information-sharing so that victims' needs are met.

Recommendation 5

By 31 December 2024, the National Police Chiefs' Council should work with His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service to make sure all eligible victims are referred to the Victim Contact Scheme.

Recommendation 6

By 30 September 2024, the Probation Service should provide training on the work of the Victim Contact Scheme to all probation practitioners and those in training.

The learning should include:

- what is involved in the Victim Contact Scheme; and
- how probation practitioners work with victim liaison officers to keep victims safe.

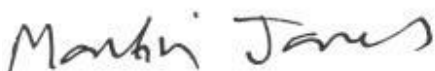
The Criminal Justice Joint Inspection Business Plan 2025–27

In our forthcoming business planning, we will make sure any victim-focused inspections, including any commissioned in accordance with the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024, consider the provision of communications to victims with accessibility needs. We will continue to work with the Victims' Commissioner during our 2025–27 business plan development process.

Yours sincerely,



Andy Cooke
HM Chief Inspector
HM Inspectorate of Constabulary
and Fire & Rescue Services



Martin Jones CBE
HM Chief Inspector
HM Inspectorate of Probation



Anthony Rogers
HM Chief Inspector
HM Crown Prosecution Service
Inspectorate



Charlie Taylor
HM Chief Inspector
HM Inspectorate of Prisons