



THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR NORTH YORKSHIRE AND THE CHIEF CONSTABLE OF NORTH YORKSHIRE

Code of Practice - Victims of Crime

FINAL

Internal Audit Report: 3.17/18

15 November 2017

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Background

This review has considered the revised Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (the Code) which was issued by the Ministry of Justice in October 2015. The Code forms a key part of the wider Government strategy to transform the criminal justice system by putting victims first, making the system more responsive and easier to navigate.

Our review included focus groups to identify staff awareness of the Code, as well as a sample of cases selected to establish whether sufficient controls and processes were in place to ensure compliance with the Code and internal guidelines in relation to Victim Personal Statements (VPSs), Victim Contact Agreements (VCAs) and assessments of victims' needs. The sample was selected across all eight districts in North Yorkshire, as well as the following crime types:

- Anti-social behaviour (ASB)
- Burglary
- Robbery
- Hate crime
- Sexual offences
- Domestic violence (DV)

1.2 Conclusion

Our testing has concluded that systems of control in this area were adequately designed and were being consistently applied.

Internal audit opinion:

Taking account of the issues identified, the **Police and Crime Commissioner for North Yorkshire and the Chief Constable of North Yorkshire** can take **reasonable assurance** that the controls in place to manage this risk are suitably designed and consistently applied.

However, we have identified issues that need to be addressed in order to ensure that the control framework is effective in managing the identified risk.



1.3 Key findings

The key findings from this review are as follows:

- Sample testing identified instances where VCAs and an assessment of the victim’s needs had not been retained on Niche. Additionally, we were unable to confirm in several instances whether victims had been informed of VPSs or a VPS leaflet had been given, due to a MG11 form not being present on Niche. Furthermore, sample testing also identified inconsistencies in the way in which information was being recorded. This finding was supported by officers’ responses in the focus group.
- Focus group discussions identified that police officers were aware of and had a general understanding of the Victims’ Code as well as VCAs, needs assessments / and VPSs. Officers raised the helpfulness of guidance, the ‘Information for Victims of Crime’ booklet as their main reference point. However, focus groups also identified the need for further training to establish and communicate set processes in regards to the Victims’ Code ensuring officers are meeting their requirements. Furthermore, training is required to ensure a consistent approach is taken, as responses identified inconsistencies in how districts and teams record information. It was also found that further clarity is required surrounding when to complete a VPS, as at the initial point of contact may be an inappropriate time to ask the victim.

1.4 Additional information to support our conclusion

The following table highlights the number and categories of management actions made. The action plan at section two details the specific actions agreed with management to implement.

Risk	Control design not effective*	Non Compliance with controls*	Agreed actions		
			Low	Medium	High
Comprised ability to effectively deliver justice to victims of crime as a result of case file quality issues	0 (11)	6 (11)	3	3	0
Total			3	3	0

* Shows the number of controls not adequately designed or not complied with. The number in brackets represents the total number of controls reviewed in this area.

2 DETAILED FINDINGS

Categorisation of internal audit findings

Priority	Definition
Low	There is scope for enhancing control or improving efficiency and quality.
Medium	Timely management attention is necessary. This is an internal control risk management issue that could lead to: Financial losses which could affect the effective function of a department, loss of controls or process being audited or possible reputational damage, negative publicity in local or regional media.
High	Immediate management attention is necessary. This is a serious internal control or risk management issue that may lead to: Substantial losses, violation of corporate strategies, policies or values, reputational damage, negative publicity in national or international media or adverse regulatory impact, such as loss of operating licences or material fines.

This report has been prepared by exception. Therefore, we have included in this section, only those areas of weakness in control or examples of lapses in control identified from our testing and not the outcome of all internal audit testing undertaken.

Ref	Control	Adequate control design (yes/no)	Controls complied with (yes/no)	Audit findings and implications	Priority	Action for management
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Risk: Comprised ability to effectively deliver justice to victims of crime as a result of case file quality issues

1	<p>Victim Contact Agreements (VCAs)</p> <p>Victim Contact Agreements are completed by the police officer at the time of the occurrence or initial contact.</p> <p>These must identify the victim's preferred means of contact.</p>	Yes	No	<p>A sample of 101 cases (three which had other cases attached to them), consisting of six crime types across eight districts within North Yorkshire Police, was selected and reviewed to ascertain whether a VCA had been completed and scanned onto the Niche system.</p> <p>It was found that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 47 instances, a VCA has not been scanned onto the relevant occurrence on Niche and the preferred contact details were not provided elsewhere. In 11 separate instances contact details were recorded elsewhere other than a form 150 or VCA. Four had notes confirming contact being made or who to contact recorded in the Office Enquiry Log (OEL). Six had contact details recorded on other forms such as MG11s and form 174s. 	Medium	<p>North Yorkshire Police will ensure that there is a consistent approach to recording victim's contact details and their preferred means of contact.</p> <p>A communication will be issued, or inclusion within relevant training, to this effect which also stipulates the retention of contact agreements on Niche.</p>
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Ref	Control	Adequate control design (yes/no)	Controls complied with (yes/no)	Audit findings and implications	Priority	Action for management																								
	VCAs are scanned onto Niche and attached to the relevant occurrence.			<p>The remaining case had a note on the OEL stating the victim did not want contacted as they were not pursuing prosecution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 10 instances of ASB and sexual offence crime types, we recorded the completion of a VCA as not applicable due to some of the following reasons: victim's refusal to cooperate; other occurrences attached to the occurrence; seriousness / level of incident; anonymous report; and out of force incident which was handed over. One of these incidents had been recorded as ASB, however it was a wanted person incident. Additionally, the one incident which was recorded as out of force due to the location, it has been noted on the OEL that officers had been in contact with the victim frequently regarding safeguarding. <p>In the instances where a VCA was present on Niche, only two of these did not state preferred means of contact.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3">Risk Exposure</th> <th colspan="3">Root cause (s)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td colspan="3">Failure to record victim contact details may result in the victim not being contacted, leading to victim dissatisfaction and reputational damage to the organisation.</td> <td colspan="3">Lack of VCA completion.</td> </tr> <tr> <th>Probability</th> <th>Financial</th> <th>Reputational</th> <th>Operational</th> <th>Legal</th> <th>Rating</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Probable</td> <td>Negligible</td> <td>Significant</td> <td>Negligible</td> <td>Negligible</td> <td>3:13</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Risk Exposure			Root cause (s)			Failure to record victim contact details may result in the victim not being contacted, leading to victim dissatisfaction and reputational damage to the organisation.			Lack of VCA completion.			Probability	Financial	Reputational	Operational	Legal	Rating	Probable	Negligible	Significant	Negligible	Negligible	3:13		<p>The implementation of this management will be directly linked to the roll out of mobile working.</p> <p>Please also see management action three.</p> <p>Responsible owner: Head of Criminal Justice</p> <p>Implementation date: 31st March 2018</p>
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2	Assessment of victims' needs An assessment of the victim's needs is carried out to determine if the victim falls in a priority category.	Yes	No	<p>For the same sample of 101 cases (three having separate cases attached), we reviewed whether an assessment of the victim's needs requirements had been carried out. It was found that a total of 48 did not have documentation outlining the victim's needs or required safeguards on Niche. These findings have been further broken down by crime type.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only one ASB case reviewed did not have evidence of an assessment of the victim's needs. In this instance, the OEL recorded that the victim 	Low	Where there is no standard needs assessment in place for a type of crime, North Yorkshire Police will consider one standard victim needs assessment form to be																								

Ref	Control	Adequate control design (yes/no)	Controls complied with (yes/no)	Audit findings and implications	Priority	Action for management
	<p>The police officer must document this on the MG11 form and / or where necessary MG2 form.</p> <p>Forms 253 and 174 are in place to identify the victim's needs in regards to domestic abuse and hate crime respectively.</p> <p><u>Control weakness</u></p> <p>Where a standard form for documenting a victim's needs assessment is not in place for crime types, there is a lack of consistent approach or common awareness to assessing the needs of a victim.</p> <p>Assessments of victims' needs are not documented on MG11s or MG2 forms as per guidance, but in the format of a safeguarding referral or comments on the OEL.</p>			<p>was a previous victim of ASB in 2015 indicating that some form of assessment may have been undertaken on another case.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All 14 domestic violence cases we reviewed had a document 253 completed indicating an assessment of the victim's needs had been completed. All seven hate crime cases reviewed had an assessment of the victim's needs retained on Niche (form 174). 14 out of the 15 robbery cases reviewed evidence of an assessment of the victim's needs had not been retained on Niche. In the occurrence where we recorded an assessment as present, this was in the form of a safeguarding referral form. Of the 19 sexual offences reviewed in our sample, five did not have evidence of review of the victim's needs attached to the occurrence on Niche. In one of these cases the OEL mentioned counselling and support from agencies, however indication of referral by the officer could not be established. Where we recorded a victim needs assessment as present, one evidenced a risk assessment in the OEL and the remaining all indicated a safeguarding referral had been made. An assessment of the victim's needs had not been completed for any of the 27 burglary cases reviewed; 10 of which an individual was charged, seven of these went to court and one still ongoing. <p>Furthermore, our findings indicate a lack of consistency in the recording of a victim's needs across crime type where standard forms such as the 253 or 174 were not in place. This was also a prominent finding in the focus groups undertaken (please see finding four).</p>		<p>used as a guideline and a universal approach.</p> <p>This victim needs assessment form should contain all relevant areas of current specific forms such as the form 253 and the form 174 to capture all requirements.</p> <p>Please also see management action three.</p> <p>Responsible officer:</p> <p>Head of Criminal Justice</p> <p>Implementation date:</p> <p>31st August 2018</p>

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3	Victim Personal Statements (VPSs) Victims are entitled to be offered the opportunity to make a VPS at the same time as giving a witness statement. A witness statement is recorded on an MG11 form which is separate from a VPS. The victim does not need to make a VPS at the time of giving their witness statement. In such cases this must be recorded in the MG11 form. The victim is free to make a VPS later if the	Yes	No	<p>A sample of 101 cases, consisting of six crime types across eight districts within North Yorkshire Police was selected and reviewed to establish whether victims had been informed of VPSs. Our findings are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eight of the cases reviewed were found to have a VPS scanned onto Niche. For a further six more cases, we were unable to establish whether a VPS had been taken as a video statement was made at the time of the incident which may include this but we were unable to confirm this at the time of testing/audit. Additionally, we could not confirm that these victims had been informed about VPS as no MG11 was present. All video statements were for sexual offences. In one case, a victim had recorded in the MG11 "<i>this has shocked me</i>" as an addition, following that the officer had explained the VPS. This indicates that VPS may not always be completed separately, and the victim may not be exerting the full affects the incident has had on them, possibly impacting the case if taken to court. In 33 instances, there was no MG11 form present on Niche so we could not ascertain whether the victim had been told about VPS or a 	Medium	<p>North Yorkshire Police will conduct a training day(s) for all officers to ensure awareness of the Code, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VCA's; VRAs; and and VPSs. <p>The police will consider incorporating a Q & A session into the training day(s) as well as test or quiz at the end to highlight any areas where officers may</p>																								

Ref	Control	Adequate control design (yes/no)	Controls complied with (yes/no)	Audit findings and implications	Priority	Action for management
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case has not gone to court or before the offender is sentenced.

The police officer must inform all victims of VPS and their entitlements, as well as providing them with a VPS leaflet detailing these. The victim can then record whether they have been informed of VPS and a leaflet has been received by ticking applicable boxes on the back of the MG11 form.

These are scanned on the Niche system and assigned to the relevant occurrence.

leaflet given. Further to this, in three instances the back page of the MG11 was not visible so we could not confirm whether the victim had been informed about the VPS.

- In one instance, the victim had not ticked the box on the back of the MG11 indicating that the VPS had not been explained. Another instance the victim indicated they had not received the VPS leaflet, and on this occasion the case went to court, however the VPS was explained. In a further instance, the victim indicated they had neither received an explanation nor leaflet in regards to VPS.

Risk Exposure			Root cause (s)		
If victims are not informed of their entitlement to VPSs in line with the Code there is a risk the organisation are not compliant with guidelines leading to reputational damage and possible impact on a victim's case in court.			Lack of recording on VPS entitlement.		
Probability	Financial	Reputational	Operational	Legal	Rating
Probable	Negligible	Significant	Negligible	Negligible	3:13

require further information or clarification.

The training day(s) will be in detail and walk through the step by step processes which answer the following questions in relation to the areas mentioned above:

- What is it;
- When is it completed;
- Why is it completed;
- Who completes it; and
- How is this recorded and stored.

The training will clearly outline processes and the requirement to maintain Niche with all case documents.

The implementation of the management action will be dependent on the available training budget.

Responsible officer:

Head of Criminal Justice

Implementation date:

Ref	Control	Adequate control design (yes/no)	Controls complied with (yes/no)	Audit findings and implications	Priority	Action for management
						31 st December 2018
4	<p>Focus Groups</p> <p>The following guidelines and documents are available to staff to ensure they are aware of the Victims' Code:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information for victims of crime booklet; NYP VPS guidance; and VPS leaflet guidance for police officers. <p>In addition to these there have been the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Code of practice for victims of crime training presentation; and Victim code officer briefing. 	Yes	No	<p>We have highlighted below the key findings from the focus groups. Detailed notes from the focus groups held at the time of audit can be found in Appendix A.</p> <p>Victims' Code</p> <p>Overall officers knew where the Code was available and the general requirements of them in terms of contacting and updating victims. The groups did not know the specific requirements of them outlined in the Code, and could not recall training in regards to this. Furthermore, all focus groups stated that they did not know who their single point of contact was (SPOC) if they had a question regarding the Code.</p> <p>VCAs</p> <p>Overall all individuals were aware of what VCA is and where they can find one. Officers did not recall any specific training in relation to VCAs, however all were generally aware of when this should be completed and why.</p> <p>Assessment of the victims' needs</p> <p>Overall responses from all focus groups indicate a lack of clarity in regards to when a needs assessment form should be completed. Furthermore, the different needs assessment forms can be completed depending on the crime type may cause confusion.</p> <p>VPSs</p> <p>All focus groups could not recall specific training in regards to VPSs. Only one individual from York recalled having had VPS training.</p> <p>The consensus was that officers felt asking victims whether they would like a VPS at the scene was inappropriate as the impact of the incident had not</p>	<p>Low</p> <p>Low</p> <p>Medium</p>	<p>Please also refer to management action three.</p> <p>a) North Yorkshire Police will ensure refresher training on the Victims' Code is undertaken annually either as a course or as a minimum pass test.</p> <p>b) Management will ensure that for each district a SPOC for anything regarding the Victims' Code is communicated to all officers as well as available on the intranet.</p> <p>c) A clear process will be put in place for when officers should ask a victim for a VPS or remind them of their entitlement to a VPS as well as the recording communication and responses.</p> <p>Training in relation to VPS as referred to in management action</p>

Ref	Control	Adequate control design (yes/no)	Controls complied with (yes/no)	Audit findings and implications	Priority	Action for management
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sunk in and the victim may be in a state of shock. Further to this, officers stated that they may only ask a victim whether they want to do a VPS when they receive a request from the CPS. There is thus a lack of clarity as to when a victim can complete or should complete a VPS.

All focus groups did not know specifically where to record the fact that a victim did not want to complete a VPS, and that if this was to be completed on the MG11 this may impact the outcome if cross-examined.

Further clarity over what goes into a VPS is also required. One individual stated they use to receive a "Making a VPS" booklet to show to the victim. It was raised that sometimes the victim was unsure what goes into or why they were being asked for a VPS. There was also a concern raised that initial response officers may not be aware of how to complete a VPS or what should be included in this. One response officer advised that they only knew what goes into a VPS based on what experienced officers have told them, as they have had no specific training on what should be included.

three above, should focus on this process.

Furthermore, the training should include the completion of a VPS to ensure every officer has had an experience of completing one.

Management will also consider introducing a guideline or briefing note which specifies to officers and victims what is to be included in a VPS.

Responsible officer:

Head of Criminal Justice

Implementation date:

31st December 2018

Risk Exposure			Root cause (s)		
The is a risk key documentation is not consistently completed across the organisation.			Lack of training received by officers or awareness of training received.		
			Inconsistent approach across the districts.		
Probability	Financial	Reputational	Operational	Legal	Rating
Probable	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	6:4

APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUPS

Victims' Code

Q: Have you heard of Victims' Code?

The focus groups had all heard of the Victims' Code but did not know the contents of it specifically. They understood what is in it and what they need from it generally, with separate individuals from two focus groups describing it as a code of practice outlining how to treat victims properly and what they should expect. Another individual stated that it outlines the police's responsibility in how they interact with victims, the service which they provide, including updating the victim throughout the case.

Q: Has there been any training on Victims' Code?

Only one individual recalled having some sort of training in relation to the Victims' Code; also adding that there are posters up around police stations.

All other individuals advised they did not remember having any training specifically on the Victims' Code. All individuals understood the requirement to contact the victim and provide updates.

Focus groups confirmed that there are many training courses, and that there are quite a lot of subjects in these courses, so it is difficult to remember specifically anything on the Victims' Code. Further to this, one individual stated that the Code is more guidance to victims for them to understand what should get from the police, to give them more control over contact with the police and what they want.

The need to understand the ins and outs of the Code was more prominently associated with the Response Teams (RT) or those with initial contact with the victim, rather than Investigation Hub (IH). One focus group stated that Response Teams are the ones instigating first initial contact which includes reference to the Code and VCAs; the case is then handed over to IH.

This focus group further raised the importance of communication between officers in RT and IH to ensure a proper handover, as the onus is passed to IH officer to contact the victim and update them.

One focus group raised that there should be refresher training undertaken, even if this is just a short course to ensure officers are aware of their responsibilities.

Finally, one individual stated that there is a difference between victim's expectations of what they expect from the police and a difference between the information they are given at the start. Most victims want updated following arrest or on finalisation, however in reality a victim wants more regular updates. Therefore, whatever is completed on the form (VCA) initially is not always what the victim wants or needs.

Q: What are your responsibilities under the Code?

In general, focus groups did not know specific responsibilities per say other than show compassion, listen to what the victims say and put the agreement in place with how they want to be contacted and updated.

Q: Are you aware of the difference between priority and standard victims?

A RT officer and Serious Crime Team (SCT) officer had not heard of the difference but could make an educated guess.

Another individual from a different focus group stated they did not know.

One individual from SCT-Protecting Vulnerable People (PVP) stated that the new categories were on the back of the MG11 e.g. victim of more serious crime, which helps identify. Additionally, they stated that their team are normally contacted by Victim Support to identify whether the victim requires additional support as a priority victim. However, the officer was not clear on what extras a priority victim is provided with in terms of help etc.

Another individual from Safe Neighbourhood Team advised they would expect to look on the Niche system at previous information and any surrounding the current investigation. They further added that if they thought the individual was vulnerable they would refer to safeguarding.

Q: Are there processes and policies available to staff?

One focus group stated they are only aware of the 'Information for Victims of Crime' booklet published by North Yorkshire Police. An individual from this group confirmed they only found the Code on 31st July 2017 as they could not find what an acronym meant, so went to look it up.

Another focus group stated that the 'Information for Victims of Crime' booklet is also available online to staff.

Another focus group advised they had not seen any literature but that there is probably information available to staff via the intranet, or a guide on where to find specific documents.

Q: Who do you contact if you have a question in relation to the Code?

All focus groups were unaware of a single point of contact (SPOC) in relation to the Code.

Harrogate stated that apparently, they do have a SPOC but they don't know who this is.

Q: Is there literature on the Code available?

All individuals in all focus groups referenced the 'Information for Victims of Crime' booklet published by North Yorkshire Police.

Everyone stated that this booklet is available on all sites (York, Harrogate and Scarborough).

All groups said this book was useful as a reference point, as there is a lot in the Code, and that depending on what unit you are part of, you may refer to different parts of it.

Victim Contact Agreements (VCAs)

Q: Are you aware of what a VCA is?

All individuals across the focus groups had heard of a VCA and know what this was.

One individual explained that for the first officer attending a scene, they will fill out this agreement with the victim to identify how they would like to be updated with the investigation and that this question always needs to be asked.

One individual also stated that the VCA form goes into more detail setting out specific timeframes, however the victim may want something different. Further to this they added that it was always important to offer to pop round to the victim as it is more personal.

The RT officers in the focus groups stated that they complete these often.

One officer stated that initial contact is done through the agreement and that this should be scanned onto Niche so it can be used by the next officer during handover.

Q: Has there been any training in relation to VCAs?

None of the focus group remembered training in relation to VCAs.

One individual advised that they are just given the VCA with no specific training on how it should be completed.

Q: Is there a template form available?

All officers were aware of the one page VCA in the 'Information for Victims of Crime' booklet. They stated that this is completed and scanned onto the occurrence.

Q: Who completes a VCA and when?

The consensus across the focus groups was that RT and any attending officer is to complete a VCA, as they are with the victim immediately.

Another individual added it was the RT who do this to record details to pass on to IH.

An individual from Harrogate stated they are seeing these more and more, as they generally come with the handover and already scanned onto Niche with the reports.

Further to this, one individual added that a VCA needs to be completed and scanned onto Niche as the officer with get chased if they have not as part of the case review.

Q: When would you refer to a VCA?

An individual from SCT-PVP advised that the VCA gets scanned onto the case anyway and that there used to be compliance checks to ensure these had been done, however they were not sure as to whether this was still being done, as in either people are doing it or people are not checking it's being done.

An officer from Safe Neighbourhood Team (SNT) stated they would check what's happened in the last 24 hours, and they may do a follow-up visit so would refer to the VCA to contact the victim.

An individual from SCT advised they would always start from scratch, and contact the individual in the first instance and introduce them self. They advised they would glance over the VCA.

Victim Personal Statements (VPSs)

Q: Are you aware of what a VPS is?

All officers across the focus groups were aware of what VPSs are.

One officer from RT stated they had completed a couple for sexual assault and domestic violence. They added these were not taken at the time but were sent back to the victim as these were requested through the CPS.

Another officer from RT had not completed one, but understood that it was to be completed to convey the impact the occurrence is having on the victim's life and their experiences following the incident.

An officer from SCT stated they used to always complete them and that VPSs are now more important as the court has started asking for them. They added that VPSs may have been covered in their CID course but were unsure.

Another officer from SCT-PVP confirmed they complete VPSs a lot, in nearly every case however they tend to do this over video recording. They further added that there is disparity with VPSs, as there is an expectation for it to be on a separate form but it is on video to capture everything. The officer stated that they do the VPS on video to protect the integrity of the statement as you can view the victim's expression and it has a bigger impact in court.

Final points raised were surround the appropriateness of VPSs at the scene, and VPSs are more appropriate a week or month after the incident so that the victim can reflect on it.

Q: Has there been any training on VPSs?

An individual from York advised they have had training on VPSs and that they personally happy with their understanding on the VPSs and what should be included.

An individual from SCT-PVP stated they could not think if they've had any specific training of what should go into a VPS. They added that a VPS is personal for each person, so no blanket approach should be taken and it differs depending on the individual.

One focus group said there was a need for officers to understand the impact VPSs have in court and more training is required on this.

Overall most individuals in the focus groups could not recall if they had any specific training on VPSs, but were aware of the leaflets they are to give to victims.

Q: Who completes this and when?

One focus group stated that the victim does not need to make a VPS at the scene, and this should be made clear to them, as well as what a VPS involves. They added that this will include certain things which you need to cover such as how it is read out in court.

A couple of officers confirmed that they may do the VPS with the victim, as in help them complete it. This is due to the officer building a strong rapport with the victim over the period of the case. An individual added that this should be the victim's main point of contact.

One focus group stated that VPSs are completed following a request from the CPS, or at least further down the line of the case due to the impact it has had on the victim. An officer from this group advised that they would rather wait down the line when the impact is realised by the victim and will go back to see if there have been any further affects.

Q: Do you see officers being sent back out to complete VPS?

One focus group advised that they personally do not see this. If they conduct a follow-up visit, and state someone has been asking about a VPS, and they want one, then they would take one there and then at the follow-up.

They further added that it is rare for an officer from SNT to go and see a victim, but if they do go they make the victim aware that if they do not want a VPS now, they can do one at a later point in time. The officer also raised that the log may not always be updated to reflect this despite it being communicated.

Q: What is included in VPS?

One officer stated that the victim sometimes assumes it is a written statement, and it doesn't mean they cannot stand in the box later to provide this statement.

Another officer stated that they use to receive a "Making a VPS" booklet which they would show to the victim which indicates what goes into the VPS as a guide, and has prompt questions for the victim.

One officer from York stated that it is important to manage what the VPS is about as sometimes the victim does not fully understand why they are being asked to make one. It is important to give the judge an understanding of how this has affected the victim.

One RT officer stated the significance of VPSs in the court room and if these can be taken when there has been an impact, then these will be effective in sentencing when in court.

One focus group raised the issue that VPSs need to be carefully managed as they may result in doubling workload if each victim completes a MG11 and a VPS then this is two forms.

One officer from Harrogate raised the concern of RT officers' understanding of VPSs and what needs to go into this as most do not take these. Further to this they added that from their experience most RT officers were in their first or second year of service and may not have ever completed one, as it is likely to be passed through to IH. The officer advised that more training on what VPSs are about should be undertaken with RT officers.

A RT officer also stated that they only know what goes into a VPS based on experienced officers have told them as they have had no specific training on what should be included.

One officer stated that there should not be anything evidential in the VPS, as it is to convey the impact the incident has had on the victim.

Q: Where is a template VPS available?

Everyone stated there is a copy available in the 'Information for Victims of Crime' booklet.

Q: Where would you record that someone did not want to do a VPS?

None of the individuals in the focus groups were aware of where to record this. They stated the OEL or their diaries would be the most appropriate place rather than the MG11.

One individual stated that recording that an individual did not want to make a VPS on the MG11 does not make sense as they will not know at that point whether they want to make a VPS or not.

Further to this another officer said that if it is recorded on the MG11, for cross-examination purposes, this may affect the outcome. Further to this, another officer added that the victim's initial concern is not evidence.

The consensus from all officers was that the victim may not want to make a VPS at the scene, and it may be that they may want to make one later.

One individual referred to burglary, as an example, where the damage has not yet sunk in and it may be days or weeks later for the effect to be clear to the victim.

Another officer added that the victim is not in the right state of mind at the scene of the crime.

Additionally, one focus group stated that if a request for a VPS comes through from the CPS, it would be recorded on the memo that the victim did not want a VPS.

One officer from IH advised the impact that VPSs have in court and the power of them. They stated that sometimes VPSs are something which are not read out in court all the time and that this is something which needs to change especially if officers are communicating how this can help the victim.

Q: Do you tell the victim their right to read this out in court?

One focus group stated they always tell the victim this.

The consensus was that this was present in the 'Information for Victims of Crime' booklet and on the VPS form.

Assessment of victims' needs

Only officers from the Response Team, Safeguarding Neighbourhood Team and Serious Crime Team confirmed they were aware or had completed an assessment of the victim's needs.

Response Team officers advised they had only completed a needs assessment for ASB personal, domestic violence (DV) or hate crime. The main consensus for this was that with these crimes there is an element of the individual being a repeat victim or a targeted victim.

The focus group members stated various types of needs assessment for different crime types, such as 253 form for DV, form 174 for hate crime and a specific safeguarding assessment. One group stated the safeguarding assessment as a good document as the officer can indicate why certain things have and have not been carried out. The group advised that this was a good guideline as when it comes to looking after the victims, officers need to have an input in assessing their situation.

One individual asked whether there was a specific risk assessment form they should be aware of.

An officer from Harrogate stated that they try to get their team to use vulnerability risk assessments (VRAs) for most things and that this should be used as a yard stick.

Following on from our sample findings we asked this focus groups why certain crimes types, DV and burglaries, did not have a needs assessment. The focus groups stated that for DVs a form 253 would be completed which contains a needs assessment. This was supported by our findings where all the DV cases originally reviewed were rechecked and all had a form 253 present on Niche.

The consensus from focus groups was that a needs assessment for burglaries is unlikely unless looking at repeat victims. Furthermore, one focus group containing an officer from the Response Team and one from Serious Crime Team stated that burglaries are not a crime type that they have been asked to complete assessments for. Additionally, a focus group consisting of four staff from the Investigations Hub and one response officer stated that burglaries are not up there as a priority as it is an offence against property, and that there is general debate as to whether this should be classified differently.

A response officer, from the Safeguard Neighbourhood Team, also stated that the team would conduct a security site survey as a follow-up and this would normally be documented on the OEL, and not necessarily recorded as a needs assessment. However, this in turn is not assessing the victim's needs following the occurrence but the likelihood of the property being burgled again.

APPENDIX C: SCOPE

Scope of the review

The scope was planned to provide assurance on the controls and mitigations in place relating to the following risk:

Objective of the area under review	Risks relevant to the scope of the review	Risk source
To ensure the organisation is compliant with the Victims' Code and appropriate evidence is in place to support compliance.	Risk – 6641: Comprised ability to effectively deliver justice to victims of crime as a result of case file quality issues	Risk Register

When planning the audit, the following areas for consideration and limitations were agreed:

Areas for consideration:

Our review has covered the following areas:

Victim Personal Statements (VPSs)

We have reviewed the completion of VPSs in accordance with the Victims' Code and Victim Personal Statements – A Guide for Police Officers, Investigators and Criminal Justice Practitioners to ensure all necessary information had been recorded and this was consistent across the organisation

In addition, we have considered the National Protocols for Reading Victims Personal Statements in court and how the organisation informed victims.

Focus Groups

We held focus group meetings with operational staff including staff from the Investigations Hub and Serious Crime Team to establish their knowledge and understanding of the Victims' Code.

Victims Contact Agreements (VCAs)

We have reviewed the completion of VCAs in accordance with the Victims' Code. Our testing was dip sampled across various crime types.

Limitations to the scope of the audit assignment:

- Our review has only considered the above areas and we have not confirmed compliance with any other element of the Victims' Code.
- We have not commented on the training received by staff but confirmed their understanding of the Victims' Code to determine if refresher training is required.
- We have not reviewed the support services commissioned by the PCC, commented on their performance or the quality of the service provided.

- Testing has been completed on a sample basis, so we have not commented on the consistency or quality of all VPSs or VCAs.
- We have not considered the responsibilities of the Witness Care Unit or other criminal justice service providers.
- We have not commented on the future roles of the Witness Care Unit or Supporting Victims Team.
- Our work does not provide absolute assurance that material errors, loss or fraud do not exist.

APPENDIX D: FURTHER INFORMATION

Documentation reviewed during the audit:

- Information for victims of crime booklet published by NYP
- NYP VPS guidance
- VPS leaflet guidance for police officers
- Information on NYP's operational mobile working and how it supports and improves the support to victims
- Code of Practice for Victims of Crime training presentation
- Victim Code Officer briefing

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