



ORIGINATOR: CHIEF CONSTABLE

PAPER NO: AP23/13

SUBMITTED TO: ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL –
17 MARCH 2023

SUBJECT: SUPPORTING VULNERABLE VICTIMS

SUMMARY:

1. This report will bring together the Constabulary's approach to supporting vulnerable victims alongside its compliance with the Victims Code. It will provide a holistic overview of both demand and activity and where appropriate will provide statistical information to support the narrative.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) is asked to consider the progress made by the Constabulary and raise issues with Chief Constable as appropriate to the PCC's role in holding the Chief Constable to account.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The response to victims and witnesses remains a priority area for Suffolk Constabulary. The challenging current position is reflective of regional and national sustained backlogs in the cases progressing through our courts. Victims are still having to wait significant periods before finalisation of court cases, notably in relation to Crown Court trials. This key issue is being actively monitored and challenged by the Local Criminal Justice Board chair through direct contact with HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS). Victim engagement in the criminal justice process and timely justice is at risk if these delays are not addressed.
- 1.2 The Constabulary response to victims is managed through a variety of mechanisms and departments within the Constabulary. The offer to universal victims is managed through the Supporting Victims subgroup, chaired by the Head of the Justice Services Command. This subgroup has responsibility for championing compliance improvements with the Victims Code of Practice and working with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to ensure services are available to support these victims.
- 1.3 Additional work for specific categories of crime is managed through the Crime, Safeguarding and Investigation Management Command. This command deals with victims of Domestic Abuse, Hate Crime, Modern Day Slavery, Human Trafficking, Rape and Serious Sexual Offences and works in partnership with several agencies to resource the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub.
- 1.4 This report will aim to provide an overview of the holistic service provided to all victims.
- 1.5 Data for inclusion in this report is currently under development and is likely to change as the report develops. In all instances, data will reflect the most recent period possible.
- 1.6 This paper supports the Police and Crime Plan commitments stating that the Constabulary will:
 - Keep people informed, and updated, once they have reported a crime;
 - Ensure compliance with the police elements of the Victim Code with a strong focus on how the force supports victims through the investigation. This will include what the force is doing to better understand why victims do not wish to support an investigation, appropriately assess victims' needs and refer them to appropriate victim support services. This is particularly relevant in response to how the force deals with victims of Hate Crime, Domestic Abuse, Modern Slavery and Sexual Offences (including stalking and harassment) and how the police can identify those victims that are subject to repeat victimisation, are persistently targeted or are particularly vulnerable;
 - Maintain a continued focus on tackling the crimes which constitute violence against women and girls.

2. SUPPORTING VICTIMS SUBGROUP

- 2.1 The Supporting Victims Subgroup continues to meet on a regular basis. The group is made up of representatives from various departments and includes colleagues from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk.
- 2.2 The subgroup has now designed and embedded a strategy which is presented as a plan on a page to direct activity. This approach also affords the group the opportunity to record actions and achievements and to ensure direct read across to any reports emanating from Inspecting bodies at both a local and national level. **A copy of this strategy has been included at Appendix A.**

2.3 The Chair of the Supporting Victims Subgroup also co-chairs the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) Victim and Witness Subgroup, thereby facilitating wider engagement in the agenda and ensuring the work of the Constabulary aligns to work also ongoing by other Criminal Justice partners. This affords excellent opportunities to further enhance services available to victims and an increased understanding of how the Constabulary can work together with other service providers to ensure victims are supported.

3. VICTIM CODE OF PRACTICE (VCOP) COMPLIANCE

3.1 The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime places statutory responsibilities on Criminal Justice agencies, several 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.

3.2 Data on all victims' rights is collated into a performance pack which is reviewed at every Supporting Victims Subgroup meeting. This information has been obtained from monthly Inspectors' audits until very recently when a new VCOP dashboard was introduced. This dashboard secures data automatically from the Constabulary Crime and Intelligence system, Athena. The constabulary reviews performance against the victim's code at monthly force performance meetings.

3.3 It is well understood by the Constabulary that information on Athena is not always up to date and accurate owing to data quality issues. On occasion non-mandatory fields on Athena are not completed, resulting in inaccurate data being extracted. To combat this, specific training material is being developed for dissemination across the organisation and to raise awareness of the fields required. Once this is rolled out it is anticipated that data quality will become more accurate, and an improved overview of compliance will be able to be formed.

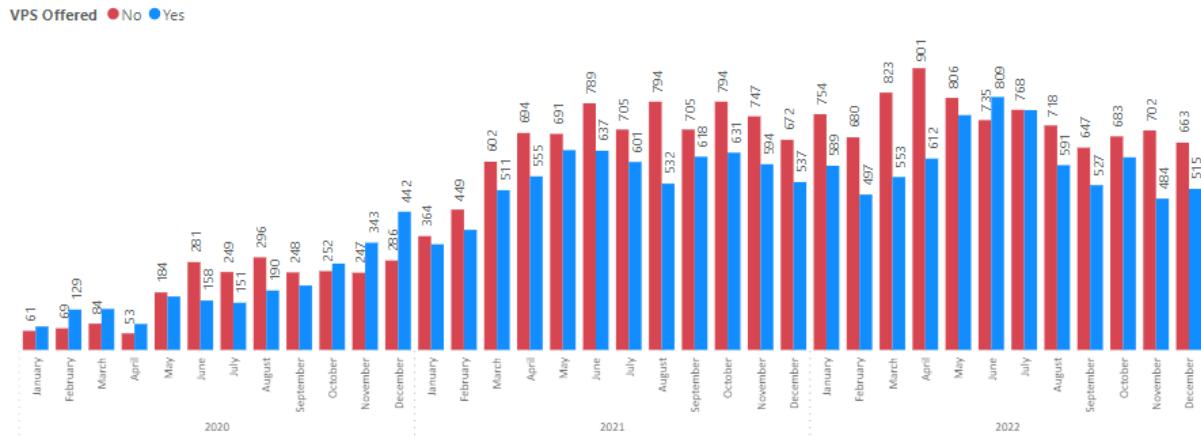
3.4 The monthly audits completed by Inspectors continue, and data on these will be considered alongside the VCOP dashboard information to provide a more holistic understanding of compliance. It should be noted that Suffolk Constabulary is in a strong position nationally in relation to compliance with the Code with a significant number of other forces still unable to provide data on compliance to any level.

3.5 Following the introduction of this dashboard the Supporting Victims Subgroup have identified four areas of priority with a view to improving compliance in these areas specifically. These are the requirement to offer a Victim Personal Statement (VPS), undertake a needs assessment, to secure consent to refer to Norfolk and Suffolk Victim Care (NSVC) for support and to provide written acknowledgements to victims that their crimes have been recorded.

3.6 Access to the compliance dashboard has been rolled out across Suffolk senior officers, including those with the county policing command, to allow supervisors to review their staff's performance as of this month (Feb 2023). This has been timed with individual officer performance being reviewed by a dedicated officer whereupon appropriate guidance and training is delivered focussing on areas of low compliance to ensure a consistent and improved approach to delivering and recording against the Victims' Code.

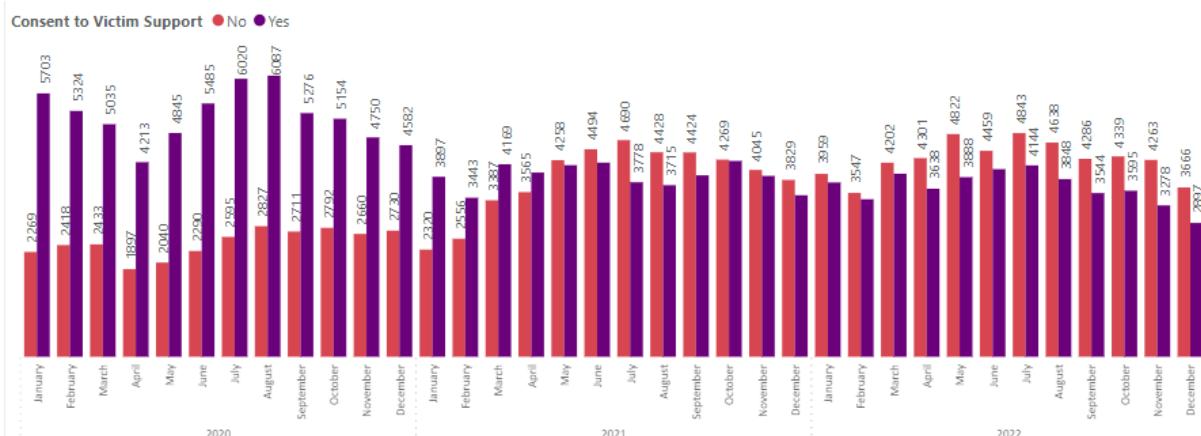
3.7 **Victim Personal Statements** enable a victim to provide their feelings to a court on the impact the offence has had on them. They can be taken at various times during the length of an investigation and more than one may be taken in some cases. Whilst the Police cannot control when these statements are read out in court, the Constabulary do work with colleagues in the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), to ensure that where taken, best use is made of the information provided by victims and witnesses.

3.8 Suffolk Constabulary are working to improve the regularity with which they offer the opportunity to a victim to make a Victim Personal Statement as can be shown in the below table. This remains a priority area and improvement is expected following the targeted compliance review.



3.9 Work has also progressed relating to **referrals to support services**. Victims who provide consent should be referred to support services within 2 days of their crime being recorded. Locally, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner commissions Suffolk and Norfolk Victim Care to provide this service and referrals are automatically generated from the crime system, Athena.

3.10 Whilst the below table may look as though referrals are reducing it does in fact present an improved picture in relation to data quality with previously some victims not being offered the opportunity to decline a referral when offered.



3.11 Whilst manual dip sampling on the completion of **needs assessments** for vulnerable, intimidated, persistently targeted victims and victims of serious offending would suggest compliance is already high across the Constabulary, the below table reflects Athena only data which shows a different position. As mentioned previously, this relates to data quality

challenges and is being addressed through training which is driving steady increases month on month.

Year, Month	IVN Assessment Recorded	IVN Assessment Not Recorded	% IVN Assessment Recorded
2022, October	1792	1663	51.87%
2022, November	1773	1491	54.32%
2022, December	1613	1276	55.83%

3.12 With regard **written acknowledgements**, the automated data suggests a lower compliance rate than that obtained through manual audits (70%). Reminders to officers and staff of the need to accurately update Athena when letters are sent to victims have been shared.

Year	Provided Initial Victim Letter	Not Provided Initial Victim Letter	% Provided with Initial Victim Letter
2022	1005	8470	10.46%
December	347	2495	12.01%
October	329	3090	9.52%
November	329	2885	10.08%
Total	1005	8470	10.46%

3.13 Workload pressures remain high in the Suffolk and Norfolk Constabularies Witness Care Units, however, the additional resources provided through Suffolk precept and Norfolk PCC funding has provided much needed additional support and enabled the team to keep pace while workloads are being held longer due to court backlogs and a slight reduction of personal caseloads for the existing team.

3.14 Home Office funding was granted to employ a Special Measures Advisor (SMA), who works jointly between Norfolk and Suffolk scrutinising and improving the quality of submissions to the courts by police officers/staff to enable victims and witnesses access to the measures which will enable them to deliver their best evidence in court. This role is proving successful anecdotally and data is being collated to evidence the productivity and value of this role.

Figures for December 2022 are as below, and this will be assessed against monthly data moving forward.

Overall- 120 instances have been investigated by the SMA.
 Out of these 120- 95 of these had witness statements (MG2's) completed by the Witness Care Officer (WCO)
 Of the remaining 25- 14 witness statements (MG2's) were completed by the Officer in the Case (OIC) sufficiently and the SMA has contacted a further 11 to chase for amendments to be made to the MG2's.
 There have been 68 instances of SM being chased by the SMA- either for applications to be made or if SM has been granted by the court but the WCO hasn't been made aware. (This is to the Courts/CPS and following the escalation process in place via the CPS and Courts).
 For Special Measures granted- there are only 4 as other cases are waiting for their First Hearing (FH)and 3 cases had guilty pleas at FH for MG2s submitted by the SMA.

3.15 Much of the additional work continues to arise from last minute changes to Court listings with updates needing to be provided to victims. This is not only stressful for the victim but also for

the case worker who must try and explain the reasons for any delay verbally to the victim which is often outside of the control of policing. Prolonged long-term management of victims, especially those who have reported serious sexual offences or domestic abuse remains a concern. The continued welfare of the staff within the Unit remains a priority for the Justice Services Command.

3.16 The current trajectory for the return to pre-pandemic levels in the courts is now estimated not to be achieved until March 2025. As such a review is now underway to assess the resourcing levels within this team as it is likely that the recent increases will need to be sustained until at least this time.

4. SECTION 28

4.1 The Supporting Victims Subgroup will be leading the work in Suffolk Constabulary to implement the expansion to Section 28, Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999.

4.2 Section 28 allows vulnerable or intimidated witnesses (who have had their evidence recorded through provision of a recorded interview) to record on video their cross examination before the trial. From early September 2022, access to this Special Measure was extended to include all victims of modern-day slavery and sexual offending.

4.3 Through the auspices of the Supporting Victims Subgroup and the File Quality and Disclosure Board, an awareness raising package was developed to remind officers of all available Special Measures. This material also includes reference to Section 28 and reminds officers to discuss opportunities regarding this with victims at the earliest opportunity.

4.4 At present we do not have data to show if access to this special measure has increased workload for the Constabulary, however forward planning meant a review of the existing number of officers and staff who are trained to obtain Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) interviews and available equipment for increased demand was considered. There are also concerns across the wider Criminal Justice partnership as to the impact on already challenged court space which remains a concern.

5. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

5.1 There is a well-established partnership and governance process for tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG) within the county, led by a VAWG Steering Group. This Steering Group includes representatives from key agencies and has recently secured the addition of nominated representatives from groups offering support to victims.

5.2 Following consultation between partners and stakeholders a revised VAWG strategy 2022-2025 was signed off by the county's Safer Stronger Communities Board and published in February 2022.

5.3 Work is ongoing with partners, including victim representatives forming part of the Suffolk Violence and Abuse Partnership, to develop an action plan which meets the agreed strategic aims of prevention, supporting victims, pursuing perpetrators, and strengthening the system. An action plan has been developed.

5.4 Internal governance of VAWG within the constabulary has been developed to build on existing structures for Domestic Abuse, Serious Sexual Offences and Serious Violence. A Chief Officer lead has been appointed (Assistant Chief Constable) supported by the Detective Chief Superintendent as strategic lead and identified tactical leads at Superintendent rank.

5.5 The strategic and tactical approach to tackling VAWG as outlined, is heavily dependent on continuing to take a partnership and victim centred approach to delivering improvements and to achieve confidence and satisfaction with the public.

6. DOMESTIC ABUSE

Supporting vulnerable victims	Last 12M	Previous 12M	Diff against Previous 12m	Long-term average	Diff against long-term average
Domestic Abuse					
Crime					
<i>Crime volume</i>	9301	9050	↑2.8%	9306	↓0.1%
<i>Proportion of all crime which is Domestic Abuse</i>	17.8%	No comparison- strategic measure			
<i>Solved number</i>	1042	1101	↓5.4%	1102	↓5.4%
<i>Solved rate</i>	11.2%	12.2%	↓1.0pp	11.9%	↓0.7pp
<i>Charged number</i>	873	834	↑4.7%	838	↑4.2%
<i>Charged rate</i>	9.4%	9.2%	↑0.2pp	9.0%	↑0.4pp
<i>Domestic Abuse related violence</i>	81.5%	80.9%	↑0.6%	81.3%	↑0.2%
<i>Domestic Abuse related stalking and harassment</i>	25.5%	26.6%	↓1.1%	26.4%	↓0.9%
<i>Crimes with High Risk Assessment</i>	1257	1629	↓22.8%	1686	↓25.4%
<i>Crimes with Medium Risk Assessment</i>	2716	2321	↑17.0%	2288	↑18.7%
<i>Crimes with Standard Risk Assessment</i>	2065	1937	↑6.6%	2102	↓1.8%
Incidents					
<i>Incidents with High Risk Assessment</i>	98	150	↓34.7%	153	↓35.9%
<i>Incidents with Medium Risk Assessment</i>	981	967	↑1.4%	897	↑9.4%
<i>Incidents with Standard Risk Assessment</i>	3396	2979	↑14.0%	3019	↑12.5%
Victims					
<i>Number of victims (Unique)</i>	6436	6153	↑4.6%	5399	↑19.2%
<i>Victims per population</i>	8	No comparison- strategic measure			
<i>Proportion of victims who are repeat DA victims</i>	18.5%	No comparison- strategic measure			
<i>Victim not ready to support</i>	50.7%	46.8%	↑3.9pp	49.1%	↑1.6pp
<i>Victim Support Referrals</i>	4428	No comparison- strategic measure			
<i>Victim Personal Statements offered</i>	1092	No comparison- strategic measure			
<i>Victims linked to Adult Protection Investigation</i>	1290	1260	↑2.4%	1317	↓2.1%
Offender management					
<i>Domestic abuse arrest rate</i>	31.6%	30.9%	↑0.7pp	31.5%	↑0.1pp
<i>Domestic Violence Disclosures (Clare's Law)</i>	752	690	↑9.0%	630	↑19.4%
<i>DVPOs</i>	67	40	↑67.5%	Data not available	
<i>DVPNs</i>	71	39	↑82.1%	Data not available	
Satisfaction					
<i>Overall Satisfaction</i>	96.7%	91.5%	↑5.2pp	Data not available	

Supporting vulnerable victims	Last 12M	Previous 12M	Diff against Previous 12m	Long-term average	Diff against long-term average
Stalking and Harassment					
Stalking					
<i>Crime volume</i>	1119	1020	↑9.7%		
<i>Solved rate</i>	11.4%	14.0%	↓2.6p.p		
<i>Solved number</i>	128	143	↓10.5%		
Harassment					
<i>Crime volume</i>	2395	2412	↓0.7%		
<i>Solved rate</i>	7.1%	10.8%	↓3.7p.p		
<i>Solved number</i>	171	260	↓34.2%		

Data up to end of December 2022 (blank fields denote data under development)

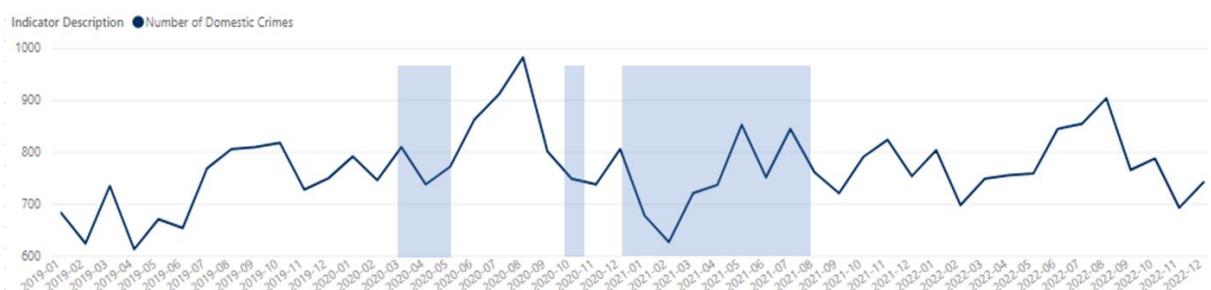
Crimes Recorded

6.1 The below chart displays Domestic abuse (DA) crimes recorded over the last four years, overlaid with periods of social restrictions related to Covid-19. The data specifically relates to the number of crimes recorded and should not be taken as an indicator of the number of victims who have reported DA during the last 12 months. Many victims when reporting abuse will also report previous incidents and more than one type of abuse, for example in many

cases police will receive a report of physical abuse but risk assessment and investigation will highlight other offences such as Coercive and Controlling Behaviour.

6.2 As previously reported, there has been a slight upward trend in DA reported crime in Suffolk since 2018. Monthly volumes peaked in 2020, though the volume of DA in the last 12 months (January 2022 – December 2022) has increased 3.3% compared to the previous 12 months (January 2021 – December 2021). There has been a 0.6% increase in the last 12 months compared to the long-term average.

6.3 The percentage of historical offences (over 12 months between offence from date and offence created date) reported in the last 12 months has increased. In the last 12 months 7.7% of offences were historical offences, compared to 7.3% in the previous 12 months and long-term average of 6.9%.



Victims

6.4 The total number of victims has increased in the last 12 months to 6446 victims (an increase of 291 victims compared to the previous 12 months). In the last 12 months, 25.5% of victims have been repeat victims (more than one offence reported in a 12-month period). This is consistent with the previous reporting period.

6.5 The highest demand is within the policing locality of Ipswich East, Felixstowe and Woodbridge. This is followed by Lowestoft and there is a higher rate of repeat victims in Lowestoft than any other policing locality in the last 12 months.

LPC	Total victims (not unique)		Repeat victims	
	Last 12 months	Previous 12 months	Last 12 months	Previous 12 months
Ipswich East, Felixstowe & Woodbridge	1140	1000	22.3%	22.7%
Lowestoft	1042	1112	25.2%	25.7%
Ipswich West & Hadleigh	1040	984	23.3%	23.6%
Sudbury	810	775	23.6%	23.9%
Mildenhall	634	611	22.2%	23.1%
Bury St Edmunds	545	529	23.1%	24.4%
Stowmarket	483	495	22.8%	20.4%
Ipswich Central	444	387	25.0%	21.7%
Halesworth	412	408	23.1%	25.5%
Suffolk total	6446	6155	25.5%	25.9%

Introduction of new Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment Tool for police

6.6 During November and December 2022 all front-line officers completed mandatory training for our move from DASH to DARA (Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment) to improve how we manage the risk of domestic abuse victims. DARA has been approved nationally by the College of Policing. Evidence suggests the DARA approach better supports victims, is more user-

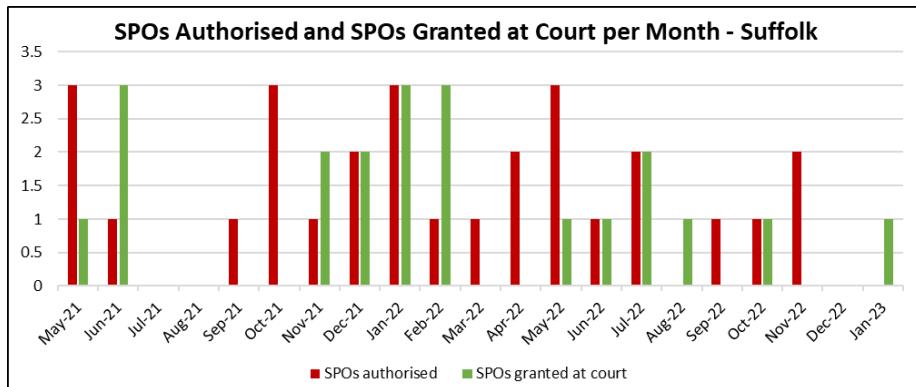
friendly for officers and identifies elements such as coercive control, which is linked closely to domestic homicides.

- 6.7 To further improve our approach at the scene of a report of Domestic Abuse a new Domestic Abuse investigation module on OPTIK has been launched to selective teams for a 4-week pilot, with full roll out in March. Optik is a mobile phone app which allows officers to perform duties away from the police station.
- 6.8 All high-risk DA incidents have to be subject of a Detective Sergeant review within 24 hours. Unless exceptional reasons apply high risk DA cases have to be investigated by officers or staff who are Detectives or Detective equivalents.

Use of Ancillary Orders

- 6.9 Suffolk Constabulary's Local Policing Priorities January 2023 – June 2023 emphasises the Constabulary's commitment to focus and improve on positive outcomes in the areas of domestic abuse and violence against women and girls, and specifically denotes the intention to increase the number of applications for preventative orders.
- 6.10 In November 2021, the Constabulary launched a 3-year continuous improvement plan (2021-2024) to enhance the response to domestic abuse crime. A key part of this continuous improvement plan is to develop a culture focused on prevention and protection, including improved awareness and use of preventative powers. Delivery of this plan is overseen by the Head of Crime reporting to a Chief Officer Lead (Assistant Chief Constable lead for local policing).
- 6.11 A Detective Chief Inspector (DCI) leads the Constabulary's operational use of ancillary orders and protective measures. This DCI also forms part of a newly created joint Norfolk and Suffolk Civil Orders Working Group which feeds into the Managing Offenders Subgroup.
- 6.12 As part of the Civil Orders Working Group, monthly meetings are held to monitor progress in relation to Domestic Violence Prevention Notices (DVPN), Domestic Violence Prevention Orders (DVPO), stalking protection orders and other protective measures to ensure best practise is shared.

Month / Year	DVPN Issued	DVPO Issued
Feb-22	8	9
Mar-22	6	5
Apr-22	5	5
May-22	7	7
Jun-22	1	1
Jul-22	4	4
Aug-22	11	11
Sep-22	6	6
Oct-22	5	5
Nov-22	4	4
Dec-22	7	6
Jan-23	5	4
Total	69	67
Average/Month	5.8	5.6
Conversion Rate	97.1%	



6.13 Throughout February and March 2023 all Sergeants, Inspectors and Police Staff supervisors are attending training events focussing on the operational procedures required to successfully obtain ancillary orders through the courts. This training is led by the CSIM DCI (Operational Lead) and legal practitioners from the law firm Weightmans.

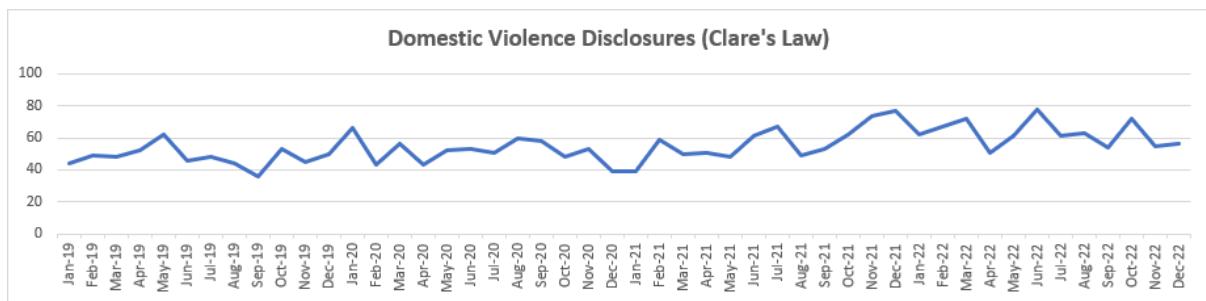
Domestic Violence Disclosures (DVD) - (Clare's Law)

6.14 The scheme allows the public to request information from the police if they believe their partner may be a danger towards them (the right to ask). It also allows police to proactively make a disclosure to a victim (the right to know) any of the information they may have become aware about where the perpetrator has a new partner and a history of domestic violence and violent acts. It helps an individual to make a more informed decision on whether to continue a relationship and provides further help and support to assist them when making that choice.

6.15 Applications can be made via the Constabulary website or by calling 101. There is a process set out to manage applications and this requires both time and resourcing to complete. Future growth in applications will require additional growth in resources to managing the process.

6.16 The application process should take up to 35 days from start to finish. The length of the enquiry is dependent on the complexity of the application. If any immediate risks are identified during this period, immediate action will be taken in order to safeguard the person at risk and any child/children concerned.

6.17 There has been a gradual upward trend in the volume of DVDs recorded in Suffolk since January 2019 as shown below, with figures in 2022 ranging from 50-80.



Op Encompass

6.18 Operation Encompass is a police and education early information safeguarding partnership enabling schools to offer immediate support to children experiencing domestic abuse.

6.19 Operation Encompass ensures that there is a simple telephone call or notification to a school's trained Designated Safeguarding Lead prior to the start of the next school day after an incident of police attended domestic abuse where there are children related to either of the adult parties involved.

6.20 Information is shared with a school's Designated Safeguarding Lead prior to the start of the next school day after officers have attended a domestic abuse incident. This sharing of information enables appropriate support to be given, dependent upon the needs and wishes of the child.

6.21 The Suffolk Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) has ensured all Primary Schools and High Schools are signed up and have also worked to ensure other educational establishments (including Pupil Referral Units, Specialist Provision; Colleges and Independent Schools) are also signed up to sharing agreements under Op Encompass.

6.22 In the last 12 months ending Dec 2022 over 6,000 Op Encompass reports were shared with education settings, enabling schools to offer additional pastoral support to child victims of domestic abuse. This is a 6.2% increase compared to the previous 12 months.

Month	Op Encompass reports
Jan-22	486
Feb-22	460
Mar-22	479
Apr-22	513
May-22	525
Jun-22	580
Jul-22	589
Aug-22	611
Sep-22	548
Oct-22	575
Nov-22	466
Dec-22	484

White Ribbon Support

6.23 During November 2022, the Constabulary supported the White Ribbon Day. This is the United Nations international day for the elimination of violence against women and is followed by 16 days of action to promote and encourage a culture of equality and respect.

6.24 During the month, the Constabulary worked closely with local councils, charities, retailers, bars, pubs and clubs, as well as local football clubs to raise awareness of the campaign. The White Ribbon Youth Advocate scheme was also be rolled out to schools and other educational settings across the county to communicate with young people, particularly boys, that certain behaviours, language, and attitudes are unacceptable.

6.25 The aim was to encourage people to be a positive influence among their friends and communities, challenge and take action against abuse to women and girls in all its forms, whether it be intimidation, manipulation or hands-on violence. Abuse can be physical, sexual, coercive, emotional, and financial.

7. RAPE AND SERIOUS SEXUAL OFFENCES

7.1 The Eastern Region Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) Strategic Governance Board is now the RASSO JOIM. This and the Operational Delivery JOIM are both working to the National Rape Action Plan (NRAP). The local Delivery board has incorporated the same approach.

7.2 The RASSO JOIM meets monthly, and the agenda includes a data pack where all key areas of performance are reported. This assures there is focus on timelines of submissions, and cases moving through the early CJ process. Other performance metrics such as case file failures are also scrutinised, as well as the reasons why.

7.3 In July 2021, two reports were received:

1. Criminal Justice Joint Inspection – A joint thematic inspection of the police and Crown Prosecution Service's response to rape
2. HMICFRS – Evaluation of Rape Survivors' Experience of the Police & other Criminal Justice Agencies

7.4 There are 13 recommendations within the Criminal Justice report. Those recommendations relevant to the Police have been adopted into the Suffolk Serious Sexual Offences (SSO) Delivery Plan and progress is monitored there. The Eastern Region has a strong Police/CPS relationship and there are multiple examples of the two agencies working together with a shared ambition to improve our investigations in terms of charging decisions, timeliness, and overall victim experience.

7.5 The HMICFRS – Evaluation of Rape Survivors' Experience of the Police and other Criminal Justice Agencies report details negative experiences of multiple victims across several different Police forces. Many of the key themes of victim pre-reporting views and perceptions are also experienced in Suffolk. Much work has been completed to ensure that victims receive a timely response from an appropriately trained resource. Investment has been made in ensuring we provide a seamless evidence collection process and that victims devices are returned quickly, and that the process is non-invasive. Regular meetings are held with commissioned services, the local authority and CPS to ensure there is a partnership approach to supporting victims, building, and maintaining trust and confidence.

7.6 The performance position remains stable, in line with our regional counterparts and slightly above the national average. Demand has increased over the past 12 months for both RASSO and child sexual abuse reporting. The workforce has not grown to reflect this, which means the solved rate increase is even more commendable. The number of investigations submitted to CPS has gradually increased, with CPS also being more willing to charge and allow cases to go to trial. This is reflected in the sharp increase of 39.8% more cases charged in the past 12 months.

Supporting vulnerable victims	Last 12M	Previous 12M	Diff against Previous 12m	Long-term average	Diff against long-term average
RASSO					
<i>Crime volume</i>	2246	2073	↑8.3%	2040	↑10.1%
<i>Solved rate</i>	6.3%	5.0%	↑1.3pp	5.8%	↑0.5pp
<i>Solved number</i>	141	104	↑35.6%	117	↑20.5%
<i>Charged rate</i>	5.8%	4.5%	↑1.3pp	5.0%	↑0.8pp
<i>Charged number</i>	130	93	↑39.8%	102	↑27.5%
<i>Investigation not possible</i>	2.2%	2.3%	↓0.1pp	3.0%	↓0.8pp
<i>Victim not ready to support</i>	51.7%	46.5%	↑5.2pp	50.3%	↑1.4pp
<i>Evidential difficulties</i>	56.6%	60.5%	↓3.9pp	62.9%	↓6.3pp
<i>Under investigation</i>	30.8%				
<i>Non recent</i>	24.1%	27.5%	↓3.4pp	25.7%	↓1.6pp
<i>SARC attendance - Under 21 years</i>	84	59	↑42.4%		
<i>SARC attendance - 21 years and over</i>	88	86	↑2.3%		

Data up to end of December 2022

Supporting vulnerable victims	Last 12M	Previous 12M	Diff against Previous 12m	Long-term average	Diff against long-term average
Child Sexual Abuse					
<i>Crime volume</i>	1231	1265	↓2.7%	1286	↓4.3%
<i>Solved rate</i>	10.6%	9.2%	↑1.4pp	9.5%	↑1.1pp
<i>Solved number</i>	130	116	↑12.1%	122	↑6.6%
<i>Charged rate</i>	9.0%	8.5%	↑0.5pp	8.5%	↑0.5pp
<i>Charged number</i>	111	107	↑3.7%	109	↑1.8%
<i>Victim not ready to support</i>	36.0%	33.4%	↑2.6pp	34.4%	↑1.6pp
<i>Investigation not possible</i>	2.6%	2.7%	↓0.1pp	3.3%	↓0.7pp
<i>Non recent CSA</i>	25.3%				
				No comparison- strategic measure	

Data up to end of December 2022

7.7 The Constabulary continues to encourage victim engagement working with the Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) service and often visits victims jointly to deliver important updates. Staff have a strong working relationship with the ISVA service and a victim journey leaflet was developed jointly to provide clear guidance to all victims at the initial stage of reporting. It is acknowledged that the percentage of victims feeling that they are not ready to support an investigation at the time of reporting has slightly increased. Further work will be completed to understand our attrition reasons and whether there are any common themes or opportunities to re-engage.

7.8 In May 2021, Avon and Somerset Police hosted a launch event for their Project BLUESTONE. This was a project aimed at transformational change in the investigation of Rape and Serious Sexual Offences. The project was subsequently rolled out to a small number of other forces under the banner of Op SOTERIA. A gap analysis was completed to review Suffolk Constabulary's current position in relation to the issues identified via Project bluestone, and how we perform against the 6 pillars the project is framed around. Various conferences have been attended and in Suffolk, we have taken the learning from this project and our current position and incorporated relevant actions within our SSO Delivery Plan. The Strategic Business and Operational services (SBOS) department has been liaised with regarding a tweak to Vulnerability – Victim Offender Location (VVOL) data that would assist with implementing the offender centric approach that SOTERIA advocates so that we can be more proactive in tackling repeat RASSO offenders and increase the use of civil orders.

8. USE OF PROTECTIVE POWERS

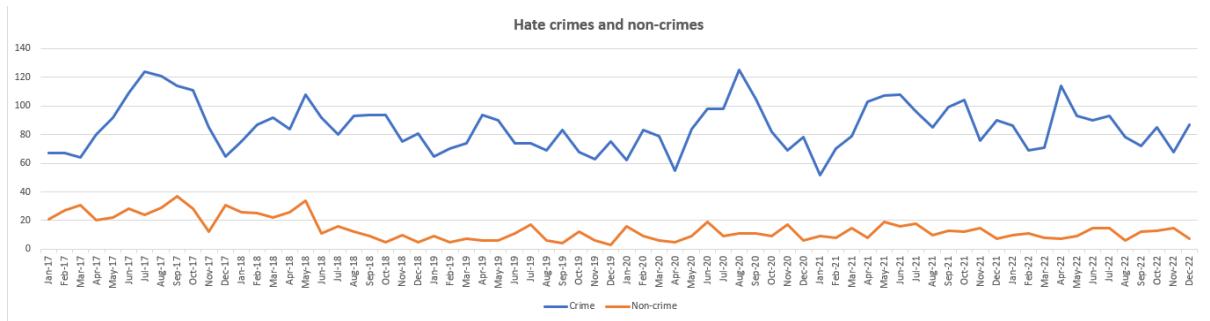
8.1 To ensure we are maximising opportunities to take steps to safeguard victims, a force lead for preventative powers has been appointed. Their use is also monitored and scrutinised in the Managing Offenders subgroup, chaired by the Head of the Justice Services Command.

8.2 Data on the use of these powers is included in the Managing Offenders data pack which is produced monthly.

8.3 As with VCOP compliance, work is underway to ensure the accuracy of the data provided and this is in the early stages of review. All orders should be recorded on Athena and this information is extracted automatically to provide an overview of the number of orders applied for. To improve the accuracy of recording increased messaging has been shared across the County to ensure officers and staff are aware of the required fields on Athena that need completion.

9. HATE CRIME

9.1 Quarterly data is produced in relation to Hate Crime. This data is shared across Localities and Community Safety Partnerships to ensure Crime trends, repeat victims and vulnerable victims are identified and that referrals into relevant support agencies are made and that targeted preventative action considered.



Hate crimes and Incidents in Suffolk up to the end of 2022.

Supporting vulnerable victims		Last 12M	Previous 12M	Diff against Previous 12m	Long-term average	Diff against long-term average
Hate Crime						
	<i>Crime volume</i>	996	1067	↓6.7%	1009	↓1.3%
	<i>Solved rate</i>	13.4%	14.9%	↓1.5pp	15.6%	↓2.2pp
	<i>Solved number</i>	133	159	↓16.4%	157	↓15.3%
	<i>Victim not ready to support</i>	31.7%	24.5%	↑7.2pp	26.0%	↑5.7pp
	<i>Investigation not possible</i>	2.8%	1.9%	↑0.9pp	2.0%	↑0.8pp

Data up to end of December 2022

9.2 Hate Crime scrutiny panels are held on a quarterly basis across the county, chaired by local policing Inspectors, attended by uniform and CID colleagues, an independent panel member, Diverse Communities coordinator and representatives from SCC. These panels offer a level of intrusive supervision and accountability over Hate Crimes. Missed investigative opportunities are explored as well and scrutiny over what support has been offered to victims. Best practice is also identified with learning shared across the organisation.

9.3 The Diverse communities Co-ordinator works closely with colleagues from the Modern Slavery and Vulnerable Communities Team, Safer Neighbourhood officers, SCC and other partners from both local and national charities to ensure that reporting routes are shared, that victims are safeguarded, and their needs are met.

9.4 Hate Crime Delivery Board and Hate Action Plan is owned by the Southern Area Commander with delivery supported by tactical lead in the South Neighbourhood Partnership Team. The Constabulary is currently working with partners to better deliver against joint Hate Crime Priorities through Community Safety Partnerships, rather than a force held plan. Dialogue is ongoing as to how the Hate Crime Delivery Board can better incorporate partner agencies and the third sector in order to expand delivery and accountability.

10. MODERN SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING (MHST)

10.1 Suffolk now has 23 Victim Liaison Officers (VLOs) trained to provide enhanced support when victims are first encountered, this is an additional 13 from the previous year. The spread is across all 3 areas and there have been a number of deployments throughout the year.

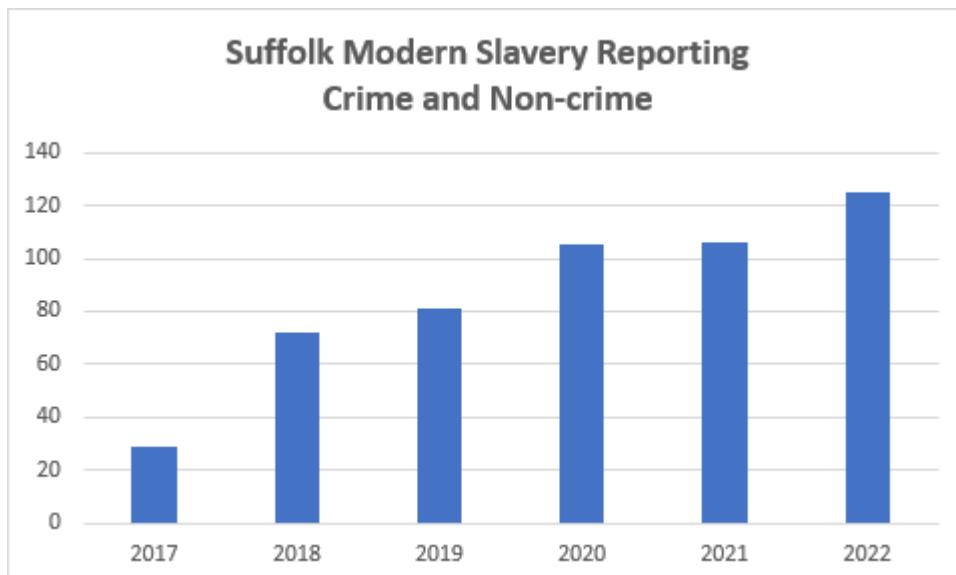
10.2 Modern Slavery and Vulnerable Community Advisors continue to provide support to frontline staff. They work closely with partners to ensure access is facilitated to provide support to victims. The team have visited Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children who have been housed in Suffolk ensuring the right support is in place. The team have also made pro-active visits to businesses and groups around Suffolk to highlight the signs and indicators around Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking.

10.3 Operational staff across Suffolk Police continued to be signposted to briefings and training about the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) process for victims of MSHT. Recent changes to the NRM process have been highlighted to staff where the test for a reasonable grounds decision around identifying is more objective, relying on corroborating evidence for an appropriate decision to be made.

10.4 Investigative mindsets of officers are being challenged to identify suspects who may actually be victims of modern slavery and exploitation. Suffolk has already seen a charge and conviction of someone who was exploiting a young person to carry and supply drugs.

10.5 Crime reporting and charge rate remains consistent with national and regional trends. The leading Barrister for MSHT has been into Suffolk and provided training and advice around securing evidence that would lead to a case being put before a court.

10.6 There has been an increase in the use of civil orders around MSHT. Slavery Trafficking Orders have been issued in Suffolk with the support of the National County Lines Co-ordination Centre.



Supporting vulnerable victims	Last 12M	Previous 12M	Diff against Previous 12m	Long-term average	Diff against long-term average
Modern Slavery					
Crime					
<i>Crime volume</i>	105	101	↑4.0%	96	↑9.4%
<i>Solved rate</i>	2.9%	2.0%	↑0.9pp	1.0%	↑1.9pp
<i>Solved number</i>	3	2	↑50.0%	1	↑200.0%
<i>Charged rate</i>	2.9%	2.0%	↑0.9pp	1.0%	↑1.9pp
<i>Charged number</i>	3	2	↑50.0%	1	↑200.0%
<i>NRMs</i>	172	150	↑14.7%	Data not available	

Data up to end of December 2022

10.7 The intranet page for MSHT has been redesigned making it easier for staff to access support and guidance when dealing with victims.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None.

12. OTHER IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

12.1 None.

13. CHIEF OFFICER CONCLUSION

13.1 The Constabulary has developed strong governance where supporting vulnerable victims is concerned. There are well developed strategic plans in all areas and demonstrable progress has been made where improvement activity has been implemented.

13.2 The response to victims of DA continues to be strong and in particular the introduction of improved risk assessment, support module for frontline officers on the OPTIK system and enhanced detective investigative support for high-risk cases are key developments that are recognised as good practice.

13.3 There remain concerns around the statistical compliance generated around VCOP compliance for investigations recorded on the Athena system. Whilst there are many areas of improvement the levels shown are lower than would be expected and there are notable differences when compared with detailed audit results which show much higher levels of compliance.

13.4 There remains significant pressure in the criminal justice system where victims are concerned, and it predicted that a return to pre pandemic waiting times for trials will not occur until March 2025 at the earliest. This has created increased concern for victims and a lengthier commitment for the Witness Care Unit who attempt to provide support through the journey. These challenges are exacerbated by regular short notice changes to court fixtures. The Constabulary has worked with partners to ensure addition resource availability to meet this additional demand.

13.5 Overall, the Constabulary position where supporting victims is concerned is satisfactory and improving. There is more to be done to achieve the standards aspired towards in some areas and the Constabulary plans will continue to prioritise the service to victims to ensure the public are provided the support they need.

To oversee the delivery of the Victims Code and ensure victims and witnesses are supported through the criminal justice process from first point of contact, ensuring their needs are met and that they receive a consistent, good quality service.

Create confidence**Build the confidence of victims and witnesses to report and remain engaged with the criminal justice process**

- Focus on staff having the right behaviours and attitudes
- Use victims' experiences to shape our service delivery
- Ensure the training and learning available to staff concerning victim care and support is fit for purpose
- Act as a link to the CJB V&W Subgroup to align with partnership approaches

**Provide support****Support vulnerable victims and witnesses through the Criminal Justice System**

- Ensure referrals to specialist support services and signposting to other support where required are made correctly.
- Ensure relevant staff are equipped, trained and skilled to Achieve Best Evidence
- Support the use of registered intermediaries where appropriate

**Deliver a quality service****Deliver a consistent, good quality service to victims and witnesses**

- Lead on training implications relating to the revised Victims' Code of Practice
- Ensure all relevant material is appropriately disseminated across the organisations concentrating on the key rights -
 - Support services
 - Written acknowledgements
 - Providing updates
 - Informing victims about restorative justice
 - Offering a VPS or an impact statement for businesses

**Demonstrate compliance and quality****Continue to manage VCOP obligations to increase compliance and raise victim satisfaction.**

- Use agreed recording process to capture and develop performance data
- Continue to deliver training to communicate VCOP obligations and recording requirements across both forces
- Identify areas of non compliance and support commands to address areas of concern



The group will continue to consist of OPCC leads from each force, analysts, comms, operational lead, reps from county policing, safeguarding and investigations, LCJB performance officer, Sgt leading on RJ, Norfolk YOT and CJS Witness Care lead

Actions – December 2022

Create confidence

- Comms to develop and Improve constabulary victim internet pages. – **ONGOING**
VRR



Provide support

- Data from NSVC to be provided at meetings by OPCC
- Create up to date comms focussing on MG2 and special measures – **SMA PROFILE**
- Data to be shared to identify and consider support for under-represented groups
- Ensure VCOP compliance incorporate part of Stripes course (BC)



Deliver a quality service

- Develop Comms strategy reference personal responsibility to include case studies & auditable decision making (rationale for withdrawal)
.. - **ONGOING**
- Developments on OPTIK regarding VCOP compliance to be clarified and progressed. - **COMPLETED**
- Online VPS to continue to develop - **ONGOING**



Demonstrate compliance and quality

- Utilise VCOP Dashboard to understand repeat victim trends
- Current satisfaction survey data to be included in subgroup data pack. - **ONGOING**
- Revisit VPS compliance in line with available offences
- SBOS exploring removal of record/file crimes (MASH) to achieve more accurate VCOP results - **COMPLETED**



The group will continue to consist of OPCC leads from each force, analysts, comms, operational lead, reps from county policing, safeguarding and investigations, LCJB performance officer, Sgt leading on RJ, Norfolk YOT and CJS Witness Care lead

Achievements – Updated Feb 2023

Create confidence

- Webinars delivered covering the revised Victims' Code of Practice
- VCOP article and VLOG shared across the organisation.
- Plan on a Page circulated across the organisations
- Updated NFA letter created and circulated
- Examples of crown court delays to be shared by WCU

Provide support

- Working with Norfolk & Suffolk Victim Care to develop officer awareness of services and importance of referring victims correctly
- Process in place to monitor any Constabulary referrals made incorrectly to NSVC and address with officers.
- NECVCU level 1 service to fraud victims implemented
- Non-viable referrals no longer being submitted to NSVC as part of ADT
- Use of IVNA on Athena



Deliver a quality service

- Align with partnerships via the CJB & V&W Subgroup
- RJ Training in place to improve use of RJ across both organisations.
- Non mandatory field on ATHENA for VPS amended in order remove blank option. This means only Y or N selection can be made .
- IVNA live on Athena and being implemented during crime recording
- Training and comms focussing on MG2 and special measures launched on LMS Dec '22
- OPTIK updated to include VCOP reminder and IVNA



Demonstrate compliance and quality

- Monthly Inspector audits continue to assess and capture level of compliance in key VCOP areas across both forces.
- SBOS to provide data demonstrating level of compliance for VS and VPS
- VRR data collected & maintained
- CICA data collected & maintained
- Relevant data collected for submission to the NPCC Regional V&W group on quarterly basis
- Force level data pack on VCOP compliance completed bi-monthly
- N&S 30 case compliance review (monthly) completed – themes trends reported to SVS
- Discuss Rights 8&9 regarding responsibility of completion - **COMPLETED**



The group will continue to consist of OPCC leads from each force, analysts, comms, operational lead, reps from county policing, safeguarding and investigations, LCJB performance officer, Sgt leading on RJ, Norfolk YOT and CJS Witness Care lead

HMIC - Areas of Recommendation & Improvement

HMIC REPORT	RECOMMENDATION	IMPROVEMENT/SOLUTION
Norfolk PEEL 2022	The force should make sure that there is an auditable record of the decision of the victim and their reasons for withdrawal of support. The force should make sure it records whether evidence-led prosecutions have been considered in all such cases	
	The force needs to make sure it complies with the Victims' Code	
Suffolk HMIC 2022	The force provides a quality service to victims of crime. The force maintains victim and witness confidence through adherence to the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime/Victims Bill.	

	ACTION	PROGRESS
Create confidence	AA - Comms to develop and Improve constabulary victim internet pages. – ONGONG	
Provide support	AA to create up to date comms focussing on MG2 and special measures – COMPLETED	Completed - Released Dec 2022
Deliver a quality service	AA - Continue to develop Victim Information for use as leaflet or link to web page when providing crime acknowledgement.	Completed – Leaflet linked on external webpage and Optik
	NS – Prepare demo of VPS on line service for next SVS meeting	Completed – online VPS currently utilised in Mags court cases
Demonstrate compliance and quality	AA to utilise VCOP Dashboard to understand repeat victim trends	Being used for extraction for data pack
	AA to continue with N&S 30 case compliance review.	Ongoing
	JD to liaise with PSD regarding monitoring VCOP complaints	Data updated regularly on power Bi dash
	EA to explore current satisfaction surveys to establish what victim related data exists	Ongoing
	AA to continue collating VCOP data for SVS data pack.	Dashboard being used for this.