



Police Scotland Contact and Control Review

Victim Support Scotland's comment on the C3 Integration and Remodeling Project - extract in relation to Police Scotland Contact and Control

For ease of reading I have referred to the review document as "SOP".

1.

In terms of "accessibility", at **s.4.2.2** of SOP, where the paragraph ends "*Equality Act 2010*", it would be suitable to explicitly state "*and those who fall within the Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Act 2014*".

2.

The Victims' Rights (Scotland) Regulations 2015 amended the 2014 Act to ensure victims' rights so the obligations of competent authorities are full enshrined in Scots Law.

3.

There are additional rights in relation to **The Victims' Code for Scotland** which sets out victims' rights in a succinct and clear way. We would commend the code is read and utilised as part of your review process. The document can be viewed here:

<https://www.mygov.scot/victims-code-for-scotland/victims-code-for-scotland.pdf?inline=true>

4.

S.8 of SOP, "*Assessment of Risk and Vulnerability*" relates to the General Principles of the 2014 Act (**s.1** and **1.1A**), which states that Criminal justice agencies **must** have regard to the following general principles when carrying out functions in relation to victims:

- That victims and witnesses should be **supported**

- That victims should be **treated in a respectful, sensitive, tailored, professional and non-discriminatory manner**
- That victims should, as far as is reasonably practicable, **be able to understand information they are given and be understood** in any information they provide
- That victims should have their **needs taken into consideration**
- That, when dealing with victims who are children, **the best interests of the child** should be considered, taking into account the child's age, maturity, views, needs and concerns.

Some explicit language in this section we believe would bolster the extract from a victim/equalities perspective.

1. Further, **Victims should be protected** from:

- secondary and repeat victimisation
- intimidation, and
- retaliation

Therefore, specific questions should be measured around this need and relates to **Training for Call Handling Staff (s.8.11 of SOP)**.

5.

The EU Directive 2012/12/EU informs us that we must “*train officials to level appropriate with their contact with victims*”. **S.61 of the EU Directive** could be used in part or in full at **s.8.3** of SOP - see below:

(61) Any officials involved in criminal proceedings who are likely to come into personal contact with victims should be able to **access and receive appropriate initial and on-going training**, to a level appropriate to their contact with victims, so that they are able to **identify victims and their needs and deal with them in a respectful, sensitive, professional and non-discriminatory manner**. **Persons who are likely to be involved in the individual assessment to identify victims' specific protection needs and to determine their need for special protection measures should receive specific training on how to carry out such an assessment.**

6.

Our Victim Support Scotland training team has delivered impact of crime training to the Parole Board, Local Councils, Scottish Prison Service, frontline staff within the Scottish Court Service and is currently arranging training with the Scottish

Sentencing Council and have received enquiries from the Victims and Witnesses Unit at the Scottish Government.

7.

Training should be promoted as a priority for Police call handling staff. This requirement should include training on the specific support services to which victims should be referred or specialist training where their work focuses on victims with specific needs and specific psychological training. To that effect, we believe your call handlers would benefit enormously from our training – particularly in relation to various communication needs of victims. **S.8.11** of SOP states “*all service advisors and ACR Controllers will receive training in assessing vulnerability and will have access to a workbook reference document*”. As Victim Support Scotland is the largest charity supporting people affected by crime across Scotland through the provision of practical help, emotional support and essential information we would encourage your service advisors and ACR Controllers to take part in our training and it would also provide us an opportunity to assist with the content of the workbook reference document. For enquiries, our training team can be contacted on vsstraining@victimssupportsco.org.uk.

8.

Victim Support Scotland should also be listed in a prominent position within SOP as a contact organisation and within the context of victim and witness needs.

9.

Victim Support Scotland campaigned long and hard to help bring the Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Act 2014 to life. The assistance required in this section of SOP speaks directly to that Act, so we are supportive and grateful to provide feedback on your review. There are a lot of good general comments within SOP. For example, whether the incident is isolated or the person is a repeat victim, or if the issue is personal or targeted, mental health is covered, as is disability, incident type, and assessment of appropriate questioning. However, **s.8.3.1** of **SOP** in relation to hate crime could be developed capturing all the protected characteristics in The Equality Act along the lines of:

*“Research consistently shows that some social groups are more often victims of harassment and crime and that much of this is motivated by prejudice against those groups. **The Equality Act (2010)** sets out nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Of these characteristics, five relate specifically to hate crime legislation in Scotland as follows:*

- *Race*
- *Religion*

- *Sexual orientation*
- *Transgender identity*
- *Disability*

ENDS