

London Victims' Board October 2022

Record of Meeting

Attendees

London Victims Commissioner - Independent Chair
Crown Prosecution Service - CPS
Judiciary - J
Victim Support - VS
Metropolitan Police Service - MPS
Her Majesty's Court and Tribunals Service - HMCTS
Probation Service - London - PSL
Ministry of Justice - MoJ
National Health Service (England) - NHS
Bar Council - BC
London Councils - LC
Magistrates Association - MA
Victims Reference Group - VRG
London Heads of Community Safety - LHOCS
Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime - MOPAC

Agenda Items

1. Welcome, introductions, and apologies

The Chair welcomed all board members.

2. Review of minutes and update on actions arising from the last meeting

Minutes from the last meeting held in July 2022 were accepted and the actions updated.

3. Terms of Reference (ToR) for Victims Board

MOPACs Head of Partnerships presented the latest update on governance arrangements including terms of reference for the victims board and encouraged all the board members to have a look at the outcomes framework and provide feedback. The Deputy Mayor for Police and Crime and the Chair of the Disproportionality Board have asked that all the sub-boards under the LCJB have disproportionality outcomes. Leapwise Consultancy are helping with these initial outcome frameworks and are keen for input from the board in finalising the disproportionality element of the outcome's framework. The main London Criminal Justice Board structure has five sub boards below it which comprises of; the Victims Board, the CJS Effectiveness Board (operational and police-led), the Disproportionality Board, the VAWG Board and the Reducing Reoffending Board. To ensure that there is no duplication and that all the boards are working together, a forum has been developed for all the secretariats of the boards.

4. Restorative Justice in the MPS.

The MPS presented a slide deck on the findings of report into RJ within the MPS and the findings. The Restorative Justice Council definition is that 'Restorative Justice brings those harmed by crime or conflict and those responsible for the harm into communication, enabling everyone affected by a particular incident to play a part in repairing the harm and finding a positive way forward'. It is one of several different definitions, which is implemented nationally because there are many different strands to the wider field of work called restorative practice. RJ also covers a whole range of issues, including issues which are not crime related necessarily such as anti-social behaviour and dealing with issues between neighbours and in schools for example.

The MPS carried out research into RJ and its application funded through the Home Office Violent Crime GRIP Funding. The funding allowed for a Rapid Evidence Assessment & Policy Consultation with the University of Gloucestershire including the development of awareness videos which will be shown internally and externally to raise awareness and inform people around the use of RJ. There will also be an online access point for anyone to apply for RJ through the MPS website. Finally, the discovery report by Emerald Consulting is an external review of our current processes and what MPS could do in the future to improve them.

5. CPS Victims Guide

CPS presented the Victims Guide which is one of the commitments that was made as part of the Rape and Serious Sexual Offence (RASSO) 2025, which is the CPS five-year strategy which was then reiterated as part of the end-to-end rape review. For more information, please visit <https://www.cps.gov.uk/publication/rape-and-serious-sexual-offences-rasso-2025>

The CPS had four commitments to deliver; firstly, one place that victims can go to find out what to expect at each stage of the CJS journey, link to specialist content, providing information in an accessible format (examples such as explaining jargon and acronyms that people use within the system which victims will hear when going through the system) and finally gather more detailed feedback from the victims to continue to improve the guide through consulting external VAWG, VCS, third sector partners.

There are also videos of CPS Prosecutors explaining elements of the process including short animations featured on social media that explain the role of the CPS and support available to victims. There is scope to develop other products and create a pocket-sized guide in the future.

The Victims Guide and the RASSO Guide is also available in PDF format. For more information, please visit <https://www.cps.gov.uk/information-and-support-victims-witnesses>
<https://www.cps.gov.uk/victims-guide>
<https://www.cps.gov.uk/rape-victims-guide>

6. Portfolio Update from London's Victim Commissioner and Partners including MPS update on VAWG strategy and Baroness Casey Review

London Victims Commissioner - Chairs Update

There were two Baroness Casey roundtable reviews that took place with victims this week. The findings will be taken back to the MPS and inform the Casey Review.

The Barristers' strike lifted this week and there will be recovery ahead to tackle some of the backlogs that have arisen as a result. A recovery group has been established, headed up by HMCTS including MOPAC, CPS, and the

MPS who acts as the CJS lead. There was a lot of press work from the Victims' Commissioner's Office on what's happening in London, especially the impact on victims.

A letter has been sent to the new Justice Secretary around the court backlogs, including underinvestment, issues around the family courts, concerns around the Victims Bill and the lack of a National Victims' Commissioner.

A meeting has been held with the newly appointed MPS Commissioner, Sir Mark Rowley who shared his 100-day plan and rebuilding trust and confidence issues within the MPS.

MOPAC Evidence and Insight (E&I) are undertaking a piece of work on victim attrition, looking at why victims are withdrawing from the process, which is important for the MPS and CPS and others to understand. There is also a deep dive into stalking cases, specifically attrition levels and what charges are being made and how stalking victims are getting responses through the process

The Chair attended St Paul's Cathedral for the launch of National Hate Crime Awareness Week, however there are several events being held by MPS and partners.

MPS Witness Care Unit (WCU) Review Work

The Chair has been made aware of issues regarding the WCU from victims' feedback; the level of service that victims are receiving, the quality of the communication, the time in which victims were given updates and the amount of information they were being given in advance of going to court.

The Victims Commissioner, MOPAC and MPS colleagues have been working closely together on the review with the Joint Task and Finish Group. The review covers a variety of issues such as a Terms of Reference (ToR) feedback and template letter rebranding, volume and demand issues, and the Witness Management System (WMS)

MPS Update

MPS reported on the significant increase of over 17,000 cases in the backlog when he presented at the LCJB and Gold multi-agency group.

HMCTS Update

The HMCTS recovery group will hold their first workshop meeting to look ahead at what initiatives that have been on the back burner that can now be brought forward. The direction is also to work with the LIST officers to work with the resident judges to go back to a standard listing approach. There are challenges ahead given the limited judicial resource, staff capacity and barrister numbers and these will be discussed at the workshop.

CPS Update

CPS discussed the challenges of securing Counsel is becoming very difficult as there is a finite number of people, which is also affect the prosecution side as well, as a lot of people have left the bar and it's becoming very difficult in competing against SE Thames and Chiltern in order to get the same Counsel. The recovery group will be looking into this further.

Judiciary Update

There is concern as to what is going to happen with Section 28, because of the shortage of advocates, and the fee structure for Defence work, and finally that the HMCTS provide London Crown courts with enough clerks and ushers to open the courts. The example of Courts in Maidstone was discussed where there was difficulty in finding either Defence or Prosecution Counsel for five out of the six cases. especially where sensitive trials are listed and there is no one to advocate.

Bar Council Update

The Bar Council raised the 15% increase in Graduated Fees Scheme fees and if it will be reflected in the CPS fees with the Attorney General and Director of Public Prosecutions, and this is being looked at.

Victims Reference Group (VRG) Update:

The Chair introduced Tracy Hanson, who founded the Josh Hanson Trust following the murder of her son in 2015. Tracey is the Co-Chair of the VRG. The Chair thanked Tracy for the work she is leading through the Trust, tackling violence and educating in schools about knife crime. TH also thanked the Chair, ML, MPS and partners for attending that have impacted their work.

Any other business (AOB)

None recorded

Close of meeting.