

London Victims' Board December 2023

Friday 1st December 2023, 11:30–13:30 (In Person meeting and via Teams link)

Attendees:

London Victim's Commissioner – Independent Chair
Bar Council
Citizens Advice
Crown Prosecution Service
London Councils
Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime
Metropolitan Police Service
Ministry of Justice
Parole Board
Probation Service London
Victims Reference Group
Victim Support

Agenda items:

Welcome, introductions, and apologies

The Chair welcomed all members to the meeting.

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

Minutes from the last meeting held in September 2023 were accepted and the actions updated.

2. Hate Crime

MOPAC presented on their hate crime work in light of recent spikes in reports of Antisemitism and Islamophobia. The Mayor has made tackling hate crime a priority and has investment of over £11 million in this area. MOPAC's work on hate crime focuses on four areas; raising awareness, prevention, supporting victims and disrupting perpetrators.. Groups affected by hate crime were recognised as not being one homogenous group and merits of broad engagement across multiple groups accepted.

3. Victims Bill Update

The MoJ provided an update on the Victims Bill and amendments tabled by The Government. These include a legislative requirement to duty to collaborate, renaming Domestic Homicide Reviews, and clarifying that victims who do not report a crime are still covered by the definition of a victim and legislation pertaining to this.

Other amendments tabled by MPs were also noted as of interest to this board including calls around the number and remit of IDVA/ ISVAs, call for Crown Court transcripts to be free for victims, assessment of services for victims with no recourse to public funds, and improving the accessibility of the victims code.

4. End to End Victim Care Programme

The MPS provided an update on the End-to-End review since previous update at a last board meeting. Victim Focus Desks are now in operation. Recruitment to build capacity has now closed

and work is underway to ensure trauma informed training will be delivered as part of the induction and upskilling process for these positions. My Met Service is in a pilot phase with plans to roll it out pan London in the near future. The Victim Focus forum has now met three times with a positive response to these meetings. MPS have now finished their End-to-End journey review looking into pain points in victim journeys and will shortly begin looking at how to bridge those gaps and address recognised pain points.

5. Section 28, Justice Committee Call for Evidence

The Chair noted that the Justice Committee has recently launched a short new inquiry to examine the use of pre-recorded cross-examination, under Section 28 (s.28) of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act. The committee is looking for evidence into a number of practical applications of s.28.

6. Portfolio update from London's Victim Commissioner and partners

Chair's Update: The London's Victims Commissioner chaired a roundtable in parliament on family courts and use of unregulated experts involved in DA/CSA. They participated in the Mayor's first London policing board recently which was set up as a result of the Casey review to help scrutinise the Met and will attend the second meeting shortly. Launched the Open Justice for All campaign, which is working to improve access to court transcripts for victims and bereaved families. Appeared at the London Assembly's Police and Crime Committee, the Women and Equalities Committee in the House of Commons, a Stand-Up Education Against Discrimination session at a school in North London for Hate Crime Awareness Week, and various events as part of 16 days of activism including an MoJ roundtable on upcoming legislation relating to violence against women and girls. Visited BTP's criminal justice unit to see good practice of merging and streamlining pre and post charge support for victims. Also attended the Met's stalking awareness training.

CPS update: The CPS are holding a series of staff events for 16 days of activism covering a range of topics such as honour based violence, forced marriage, and FGM. Westminster DA initiative seeking to address wait times between report and charge now been rolled out. Expecting first few cases to come through shortly. Have rolled out weekly surgeries in Charing Cross station with experienced DA staff present to speak to officers about specific cases. Reviewing VCL letters with victim reference groups and hoping to launch in the new year

Victim Support update: VS have been successful in receiving funding from Lloyds bank to fund 2 new case workers for London. VS are looking to create module on retail crime on my support space online support system as they recognise a gap in support for victims of this crime.

Probation: Victim notification scheme going well however take up for London is lower than in other pilot regions and will be exploring why this is the case. Anticipate a pause in ECSL release of people 18 days early before Christmas. As cells fill up again more anticipation that this will then restart and is a cause for anxiety among victims.

Victim Reference Group: VRG have been working with frontline leadership within MPS to deliver training on experiences of criminal trials, compounded trauma, and victim needs. Feedback has been positive, and officers have put forward recommendations that training continue and expand to mid-level officers.

7. Any Other Business (AOB)

None

Close of meeting