

## London Victims' Board September 2023

Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023, 14:00–16:00 (In Person meeting and via Teams link)

### Record of Meeting

#### Attendees

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

#### 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 October 2022 were accepted and the actions updated.

##### **3. Update on the Victims' Commissioner's visit to Quebec**

The Office for the Victims' Commissioner (VC) shared highlights from the VC's visit to Quebec. The VC was introduced to Crime Victim Assistance Centres (CAVAC) which are non-profit organisations governed by local legislation which aim to provide a single point of contact for victims who work in partnership with police, CPS, courts, and other relevant agencies. Learnings were taken from these regarding the progress of the Victim Care Hub in London. Quebec's Victims Compensation (IVAC) scheme was explored with positive aspects of this feeding into the consultation on the Criminal Injuries Compensation scheme. The VC is currently seeking more information on the Witness Programme in Quebec which was developed with the prosecution to allow victims the opportunity to take part in a mock trial as part of their pre-trial preparation. In Quebec sexual assault and domestic abuse victims are entitled to 4 hours free legal advice covering areas that often act

as a barrier to reporting, such as immigration and housing. This is working well and in huge demand. There is a similar but narrower pilot in London for rape victims.

#### **4. Update and discussion on 'Open Justice'**

The Victims' Commissioner lead a discussion on her engagement with a working group established to develop a campaign on open justice for victims. A number of key concerns were raised including misleading information from police and prosecutors that victims should not attend sentencing hearings, lack of awareness around access to video link service for victims, and the high cost and long wait times associated with obtaining a transcript and other court paperwork.

#### **5. New Met for London End to End Victims Care Programme**

MPS provided an update on the End to End review of victims of crime. The first Victims Voice Forum was successfully held with external facilitators used to support victims challenge and inform decision making, policy, and practice within the MPS. This will be held on an ongoing basis. Victim Focus Desks are also live with plans in place to increase capacity in line with increased demand. MPS are exploring new ways to share information with victims on their rights through the Victim Focus Desks and technology. MPS are further exploring the use of technology in gathering feedback as part of My Met Service. Survey responses gathered by officers will not be completely unanimous and wording to ensure this is clear to victims will be drafted.

#### **6. London Policing Board**

The Chair highlighted the creation of the new London Policing Board in response to the Casey report. Date of the first meeting was shared.

#### **7. Portfolio update from London's Victim Commissioner and partners**

**Chair's Update:** The Victim's Commissioner is sharing feedback from victims' reference groups around trust in police and preparation for trial. She has also responded to the Criminal Injuries Compensation final consultation urging the government to respond quickly and would like to see a model similar to that in Quebec implemented. The Victim's Commissioner visited HMP Bronzefield last week and was impressed with the facilities on offer, including video link suits which should enable defendants to appear in court virtually and support the court backlog. The Victims' Commissioner chaired a roundtable on family courts. Discussion focused on the use of unregulated experts being appointed in family courts and abuse of claims of parental alienation.

**MoJ update on Victims Bill:** There will not be any more calls for evidence as the Bill progresses but can approach ministers at any point in the process.

**MOPAC update:** LVWS continuing as planned. The Victims team have launched the pin and will publish the tender in the coming weeks.

**CPS update:** Work on the Victim Transformation Programme is continuing with the CPS seeking an enhanced service for adult RASSO victims. CPS are launching an initiative on domestic abuse charges in October in Westminster BCU. They are

adopting a test and learn approach for this and will consider the effect the short timeframe will have on Pre-trial Outreach Support service.

**Victim Support update:** Victim Support are mobilising a 2 year DRIVE project where they work with victims of high risk, high harm perpetrators. They have also launched a pilot service with their fraud cohort of victims to enable victims the opportunity to book an time slot appointment rather than receiving a call with no notice. This is working well and take up of service is increasing.

## **8. Any other business**

None recorded.

## **Close of meeting**