

London Victims' Board September 2024

Thursday 12 September 2024, 2-4pm (Online meeting via Teams link)

Attendees:

London Victims' Commissioner – Independent Chair
Bar Council
Citizens Advice
Crown Prosecution Service
His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service
Judiciary
London Heads of Community Safety
Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime
Metropolitan Police Service
Ministry of Justice
National Health Service
Parole Board
Probation Service London
Victim Reference Group
Victim Support

Agenda items:

1. Welcome, introductions, and apologies

The Chair welcomed all members to the meeting. Minutes from the last meeting held in May 2024 were accepted and the actions updated.

2. London Victim and Witness Service

The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime ('MOPAC') updated on the recommissioning of the London Victim and Witness Service ('LVWS'). The new services are:

- an Adult Service for adult victims of crime and all witnesses along with some capabilities on behalf of the whole ecosystem. This will be delivered by Victim Support.
- The Children and Young People's (CYP) service will be delivered by Catch 22 and partners.
- The Restorative Justice (RJ) service will be delivered by Calm Mediation in an interim arrangement.

The existing arrangements for domestic abuse victims, the support delivered by LVWS, will be continuing for a twelve-month period while this service is re-commissioned.

The LVWS website will be updated on 1 October with information about all the different support services. MOPAC is sharing information with London Heads of Community Safety and arranging briefing sessions for partners.

3. Public Voice Data, MOPAC's Evidence & Insight Team's London Stalking Review, Child Sexual Abuse Research and Victim Attrition Research

MOPAC's Evidence and Insight Team presented on the Public Voice Data and London Stalking Review.

The Chair highlighted:

- legislation is a big barrier to understanding;
- downgrading of offences by the Crown Prosecution Service from stalking to harassment;
- victim attrition levels are at 45% and often withdraw in the first week;
- 41% No Further Actions are a concern particularly as they are attributed to lack of evidence;
- the need to increase the number of victim personal statements;
- the need for improvement in National Health Service staff response to stalking victims; and
- difficulty in identifying repeat and high harm offenders.

Child Sexual Abuse Research:

The Chair updated that MOPAC has undertaken a significant piece of research into child sexual abuse, including better understanding the profile of victims and offenders, looking at attrition levels and justice outcomes, and understanding regional variations across London. MOPAC will be producing a policy report and the Chair will be contributing the foreword to this work. This work is expected to be ready for publication in October and MOPAC will brief Victims' Board members ahead of publication.

Victim Attrition Research:

The Chair updated that for the past couple of years, the Evidence & Insight Team at MOPAC has undertaken a major piece of work looking at victim attrition. The aim is to understand at what points victims are withdrawing from the system, why they are withdrawing, and how we can keep them more engaged in the justice process. The work breaks all this down by different offence types and demographics.

The London Victims' Commissioner's team will be leading some victim engagement to complement this work, with the aim of being able to publish the research and a report by November.

4. End to end victim care programme

The Metropolitan Police Service ('MPS') provided an update on their ongoing work to improve engagement with and experience of victims. Updates focused on remote witness statements, My Met Service, post charge witness care and victim focus desks and the planned expansion of the Victim Voice Forum.

5. SDS40 Early Release Scheme

Probation provided an update on the SDS40 Early Release Scheme. It does not apply to life sentences; serious violence offences (sentences over four years); sexual offences and some domestic abuse offences. Gaps identified include breaches of Stalking Protection Orders and some manslaughter cases.

Victim Contact Scheme and Victim Notification Scheme: only 16% were engaged with the scheme. Not all would be eligible for the scheme. There are victims that have not been notified outside of these schemes. Some letters (outside London) were pretty poorly written, with no

signpost to support and not trauma informed. Probation confirmed that they have added signposting to LVWS in the letters.

The reach of Victim Contact Scheme and Victim Notification Scheme is limited. The Ministry of Justice acknowledged this and confirmed they are working with partners to get clear comms out.

6. Portfolio updates from London's Victims' Commissioner and partners

Probation– there is a 12 month Ministry of Justice pilot to offer victims of rape and serious sexual offences a copy of the sentencing remarks in their cases.

Crown Prosecution Service ('CPS'): National Transformation Programme – pretrial meetings to be rolled out nationally over the course of October.

The CPS have published easy read versions of their victims' guide:

[Easy Read Victims' Guides | The Crown Prosecution Service \(cps.gov.uk\)](https://www.cps.gov.uk/easy-read-victims-guides)

CPS pilots in London:

- A pan London Domestic Abuse ('DA') pilot that focuses on how victim attrition is impacted by timeliness, bringing cases which do not qualify for Early Advice ('EA') into EA panels. This is to reduce the referral time and charge time in DA cases.
- A MOPAC initiative about robbery with knife crime, concentrating on children who commit those offences. The aim is to reduce the use of knives and to get those cases in with EA. This starts in October.
- Stalking: The CPS are working with officers to make sure they have the right level of charge. Victim familiarisation meetings are being piloted as part of Operation Soteria.

CPS victim transformation programme to be added to the agenda for the next Victims Board.

7. AOB

None

Close of meeting.