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SURREY POLICE - PAPER FOR PCC MANAGEMENT MEETING

The New Victims' Code of Practice

The new Victims' Code of Practice came into effect in December 2013. The PCC has asked for this paper to show how Surrey Police are implementing the Code and any areas of risk or difficulty in implementation

Introduction

On 10th December 2013, the revised Code of Practice for Victims of Crime was launched. It applies to all National Crime Recording Standard offences and sets out the minimum standards for Criminal Justice agencies through the course of the whole criminal justice process, from the point of reporting to post sentence. The obligations under the Code are statutory not discretionary, therefore they are legally binding.

This paper will concentrate solely on how the Police are implementing the sections relevant to them and will highlight any new obligations that are challenging to implement.

Key Changes for the Police

1. Under the 2006 Victims' Code, enhanced services were for vulnerable or intimidated victims only, however the revised 2013 version has been extended to also include;
 - Victims of the most serious crime - domestic violence, hate crime, terrorism, sexual offences, human trafficking, attempted murder, kidnap, false imprisonment, arson with intent, wounding or causing GBH with intent (section 18 offences only)
 - Persistently targeted victims - those who have been targeted repeatedly as a direct victim of crime over a period of time, particularly if they have been deliberately targeted or are a victim of a sustained campaign of harassment or stalking

A needs assessment will be conducted by officers and/or staff to determine if the victim is in a priority category. This is to be recorded on the MG6 and on Niche. Enhanced services include;

- reduced timescales from 3 working days to 1 working day to update the victim when a prime event occurs, e.g. arrest, charge, bail, finalise, etc.
- the offer of pre-trial therapy
- special measures for the court process

Guidance has been sought from ACC Cann, the ACPO lead for victims and witnesses, on pre-trial therapy. The Ministry of Justice has confirmed that there

is no national provision for pre-trial therapy and it is to be delivered locally through existing agencies and charities such as Victim Support, Outreach, etc.

2. Victims must be provided with information on the Victims' Code and given the Ministry of Justice's 'Information for Victims of Crime' leaflet within 5 days of reporting the crime. This information is available on our website and victims will be signposted to it; for those without internet access the information can be delivered face-to-face when there is Police attendance, or be posted to them in hard-format. The next Victim Care Board on 23rd January will discuss how the Force can maximise the use of new technology in meeting the requirements.
3. Victim Personal Statements can be provided any time before sentencing. Also under the new Code, businesses are now classified as victims and are entitled to make a Business Impact Assessment. These are both to be recorded on the MG3 and MG6.
4. Currently, Surrey Police abide by the 'Leicestershire Model', automatically referring all victims to Victim Support and then Victim Support decide to contact certain victims based on the crime type; the call is made on behalf of the Chief Constable. The revised Victims' Code states that victims should be told that their details are being passed to Victim Support so they have the opportunity to opt out prior to the automatic referral process. Clarity has been sought from the Area Manager at Victim Support who has confirmed that the 'Leicestershire Model' is compliant with the Victims' Code.
5. Previously, a victim was to be contacted at least every 28 days; the revised Code states that a contact agreement is to be reached between the officer in charge and the victim. There is no change required for Surrey Police as the 'contact contract' procedure was introduced in force in 2007/8.

Implementation

Supt Alison Barlow is leading a working group to implement the revised Victims' Code; members include a cross-section of managers from key departments. The working group reports into the monthly Victim Care Board, chaired by C/Supt Helen Collins. A gap analysis for each of the obligations outlined in the Code has been completed to inform the action plan, which is being driven by the working group.

To inform staff and officers of the changes and their statutory obligations, communications play a large part in the action plan. A news story was on the front page on Connect on 9th December, the revised Victims' Code featured in the December/January Offbeat publication and an overview briefing document has been produced and circulated. The victim care procedure has also been updated to reflect the changes. Going forward in the new year, additional communication channels are planned such as; using the Connect Forum, targeted briefings for specific teams, posters and screensavers.

PCC Support

Much of the work described will be discussed at the Victim Care Board. As highlighted, we have made progress, although there are some issues that need to be resolved before we can be confident that we are undertaking every obligation set out in the Code. We do see a significant role for the PCC to help in this area, and will seek his assistance following discussions and updates at the next Board.