

02 January 2024

Ref: PCC/KW

To: The Home Secretary  
His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary  
and Fire and Rescue Services

Dear Home Secretary and HMICFRS

**Response from Dr Alan Billings, Police and Crime Commissioner for South Yorkshire to the Criminal Justice Joint Inspection Report: Meeting the needs of victims in the criminal justice system. An inspection of how well the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Probation Service support victims of crime.**

I very much welcome this report and am pleased to see that the various inspectorates have come together to look at support for victims through the criminal justice system.

Being a victim of crime is, in itself, a stressful and traumatic experience. Someone who is a victim of crime must have their needs put first and foremost when they have to navigate a complex and at times a seemingly dysfunctional criminal justice system, indeed victims may be confused by the fact that it is referenced as a system at all. This is why my latest Police and Crime Plan has "Put Victims First" as one of four fundamental principles that underpin everything that I do.

The issues raised in the report, mirror almost exactly those that I come across in South Yorkshire. As a result, we have been focussing locally on addressing these for some time and so I have some confidence that partners in South Yorkshire are alive to these issues and are working hard to resolve them.

Whilst I do not have the same holding to account role as I do with the Police, I am able to bring wider criminal justice partners to the table through the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) which I Chair. The Board has four sub-groups, one of which is the Victim Focussed Efficiency Group. This group has a particular focus on victims' experiences throughout the criminal justice journey and improving those experiences through effective joint working.

It is because of the good work of this group that we are aware of these issues already in South Yorkshire and, during 2023, I set up a task and finish group to help address them. This work culminated in a full day partnership event which took place in October 2023. The event brought together more than 25 criminal justice partners and other organisations providing services to victims from across South Yorkshire to agree specific activity to improve the support to victims locally. The event was key to ensuring partners fully

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understood and worked together to address victims' needs at different stages of their criminal justice journey.

I also commission a range of victim support services, some of these are for victims of a specific crime type such as sexual violence. Whilst these services were not necessarily part of this inspection; they are important in supporting and guiding victims through a complex criminal justice process. I will continue to commission these important services taking account of victims' specific needs. This joint inspectorate report is another way in which I can understand those needs.

The issues of data availability to LCJBs raised in the report is an important one and something which we have worked hard to improve in South Yorkshire. There is still work to do though, particularly around measuring victim satisfaction outside of policing.

Whilst the recommendations in the report are aimed at national bodies rather than Chief Constables and others locally, I do welcome them as they will be another way in helping me work with all criminal justice partners in putting victims first in South Yorkshire.

All good wishes



Dr Alan Billings  
South Yorkshire Police & Crime Commissioner