

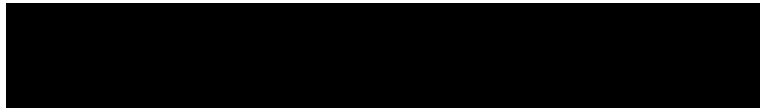
Public Document Pack



05 March 2024

To: Members of the Public Accountability Board

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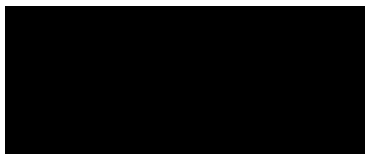


Dear Colleague

Public Accountability Board

Please find enclosed a Supplemental Agenda Pack for the Public Accountability Board on **Thursday 7th March 2024 at 10.15 am** via Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, 5 Carbrook Hall Road, Carbrook, Sheffield, S9 2EH and via MS Teams.

Yours sincerely



Erika Redfearn
Head of Governance

Enc.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD

THURSDAY 7TH MARCH 2024

SUPPLEMENTAL AGENDA

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PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD

DATE 07 MARCH 2024

SOUTH YORKSHIRE POLICE PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE POLICE AND CRIME PLAN PRIORITIES

THEME: CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (CSE)

REPORT OF THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report has been produced following a request from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to provide information around how South Yorkshire Police (SYP) responds to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

This report aims to provide re-assurance that the ongoing response by SYP supports the OPCC Safer Streets Plan 2022 – 2025 and the PCC’s overarching aim of South Yorkshire being a safe place in which to live, learn and work.

2 RECOMMENDATION(S) AND / OR DECISION(S) REQUIRED

- 2.1 The force recommends that the PCC considers the contents of this report.

3 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 3.1 Tackling child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a top priority for South Yorkshire Police. CSE is an abhorrent form of child abuse, which has a life-changing impact on the children involved and their families.

3.1.1 Crimes of this nature cannot and will not be tolerated whether they take place at home, online or in a contextual setting within the community. The drive to tackle CSE cannot be solved in isolation and strong partnership responses are required to ensure the very best opportunities are taken to protect victims and survivors, prevent offences occurring and pursue those responsible. In order to do this, each agency has to be prepared by having the right structures in place and ensuring all staff have the right tools, information, and direction.

3.1.2 South Yorkshire Police has invested significantly in its safeguarding capabilities, matched by its local authority partners. Each of the force’s four policing districts now has its own dedicated inter-disciplinary child exploitation team, working alongside contextual safeguarding teams, including health, childrens social care, charities, and schools.

3.1.3 Tackling child sexual exploitation requires a genuine multi-agency approach. Partners need to work collaboratively to ensure that progress at the strategic

level filters down to the front line. Identifying and protecting children and young people is everyone's responsibility. Professionals, parents, and young people all have a role to play in grasping the nature of sexual exploitation – and ensuring an effective response.

- 3.1.4 This year South Yorkshire Police launched its new child exploitation awareness campaign, created based on our intelligence picture and the problem profiles associated with child exploitation. We worked closely with subject matter experts across the force, local partners, and Rotherham CSE survivors throughout its development. The campaign encourages and supports people to look for the early warning signs of child exploitation, report any suspicions to us and seek support from partner agencies and charities who can help.
- 3.1.5 In partnership with local authorities and other organisations, SYP has developed a great deal of experience in investigating CSE and has brought a number of successful and highly publicised prosecutions in recent years, however the true focus remains on preventing the abuse from occurring to begin with, through early intervention and community awareness.

3.2 GOVERNANCE

- 3.2.1 South Yorkshire Police continues to prioritise the safeguarding of all children across the subregion with performance and governance measures in place ensuring clear lines of responsibility and accountability.
- 3.2.2 SYP has appointed leads for CSE:
- Executive Lead – ACC Sarah Poolman
 - Strategic Lead – Chief Supt Laura Kosciwicz
 - Thematic Lead – T/DCI Gary Magnay
- 3.2.3 South Yorkshire Police continue to produce an annual CSE problem profile to assist in developing the organisation's understanding of the current threat, risk and harm posed by CSE within our communities. To ensure greater transparency, a public facing version of this report is produced, with the most recent version being made available via the SYP homepage. This has recently been highlighted as national best practice in the 2023 National HMICFRS Group Based CSE report.
- 3.2.4 The 2023-2025 South Yorkshire Police Child Abuse and Exploitation strategy is used to set the direction of the organisational response to Child Abuse in all its forms with the aim of working collaboratively to protect every child and seize opportunities to identify, disrupt and wherever possible prosecute offenders.
- 3.2.5 A CSE monthly tactical report is produced by the force Intelligence and Analytics team to provide insights to SYP's threat and performance compared with regional and national performance data.
- 3.2.6 SYP continue to engage with regional and national partners to ensure we are informed and sighted on best practice, innovation and share collective learning. The collaborative approach increases SYP's ability to be dynamic and to evolve

to accommodate changing victim needs and offending behaviour. This includes:

- National Group Based CSE Offending Group
- National Child Sexual Abuse Prevent/Pursue Boards
- Regional CSEA Threat Reduction Group
- Regional Joint Vulnerability and Children & Young Persons Meeting

3.3 OVERVIEW

Crimes

3.3.1 SYP have recently conducted analysis of CSE-related crime data and flagging procedure, which has raised concern regarding the potential over use of the CSE flag. Having invested significantly in the professional development of our workforce, equipping them to spot the signs and symptoms of CSE, but without a formalised national CSE definition, there is potential that crimes have been wrongly flagged as CSE. In some cases that have been flagged as CSE, there is no clear exploitative behaviour.

There is an increased prevalence of peer-on-peer sharing of indecent images with no coercion or exploitation which, according to counting rules, have to be recorded as two crimes, with both children documented as a victim. As an example, two fifteen-year-old children in a consensual relationship share indecent images of themselves with each other, with no exploitative element. Our response would be child-centred, rightly offering education rather than unnecessarily criminalising these children; however, this would result in two flagged CSE crimes being recorded.

A 2023 audit conducted by SYP's PVP Performance and Governance Unit identified numerous examples of over flagging or duplicate flagging, which clearly impacts on the overinflation of crime data. No similar examples were identified regarding missed flagging opportunities. Further similar audits are scheduled for the coming months to ensure the organisation is consistently reflecting on our performance in this area. South Yorkshire Police, via attendance at the regional Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Threat Reduction Group, have submitted a request for further guidance from the National Police Chief Council (NPCC) CSE lead regarding the CSE definition, CSE crime flagging, with SYP keen to lead on the development of new national policy in this area.

3.3.2 538 CSE crimes were recorded in 2023; 366 related to offences committed in 2023. Of these 366 crimes, just under 65% (236 crimes) had an online element. This is an increase on 2022 of 87 crimes, which is in line with national crime recording.

3.4 Outcomes

- 3.4.1 The promotion of positive outcomes continues to be a key focus for SYP through successful prosecutions and convictions. Through clear and transparent communication of this success we endeavour to provide greater confidence to the public to report their own abuse or CSE concerns. SYP continue to conduct regular victim surveys and receive national updates about how they can improve engagement with victims/survivors.
- 3.4.2 Positive outcomes within 2023 remain consistent in comparison with 2022 with 14 individual charges from rape and other sexual offences. The use of outcome 21 (Further investigation that could provide sufficient evidence to support formal action is not in public interest) was the most frequently applied within 2023. This can be attributed to the increase in crime recording linked to peer-on-peer indecent image incidents, which overwhelmingly result in this finalisation, due to the lack of any exploitative behaviour (as explained above). This aligns with SYP's child-centred approach to ensure children receive education rather than unnecessary criminalisation.

3.5 Recording Ethnicity

- 3.5.1 SYP has continued to maintain robust mechanisms for recording ethnicities for both victims and suspects named on CSE investigations to ensure compliance with recommendations identified in the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) report. All crimes with identified inaccuracies have been updated, leaving only a small number where it is not possible to know the ethnicity, for example in online cases where there is no identified suspect. To ensure continual improvement in this area, SYP now conducts monthly audits to specifically review ethnicities for both suspects and victims in CSE keyworded offences. Any identified deficiencies are returned to districts for prompt remedy and informs ongoing training plans to ensure we continually learn and improve. The continuous assessment of both organisation and district performance in this area is also part of the monthly PVP performance meetings.

3.6 Intelligence

- 3.6.1 In 2023, there were a total of 591 intelligence reports submitted that related to CSE. This is an increase of approximately 12% from those submitted in 2022. The identified intelligence gaps are highlighted within the CSE Strategic Intelligence Profile with a dedicated intelligence collection plan driving activity across the organisation to fill those gaps. The increase, specifically seen towards the last quarter of 2023, appears to correlate directly with the reintroduction of dedicated Child Exploitation teams in Barnsley and Doncaster

districts, who have driven intelligence gathering opportunities in line with the collection plans. The dedicated child exploitation awareness campaign has also yielded positive results following its launch in 2023, educating both the public and professionals regarding the signs of exploitation and driving their engagement through the submission of intelligence.

- 3.6.2 Each district has in place a partnership third party reporting form so that partners can submit CSE intelligence directly into the respective Local Intelligence Cell (LIC). The submission of intelligence by this route is actively encouraged during partnership meetings. Via the South Yorkshire Child Exploitation Partnership forum, the importance of timely submission of intelligence has been highlighted and training material provided to all partners with regards to the process to do this.

To date **1059** staff members from the local authority, probation service, education and the voluntary sector have been provided bespoke training regarding our intelligence requirements and how to submit them to SYP. The Rotherham district specifically have committed to train over 800 professionals within 2023.

- 3.6.3 Each District LIC has an appointed CSE SPOC. They are responsible for monitoring all CSE intelligence and bringing this to the Child Exploitation Tasking Group (CETG), or district THRIVE, where intelligence is discussed and actioned for development. The CSE SPOC is also responsible for ensuring the district CSE briefing page is maintained and updated as appropriate.

- 3.6.4 SYP has an online reporting portal on its CSE webpage. This has a knowledge bank attached to it containing information about CSE and allows members of the public to report incidents and pass information directly to the police. Crimestoppers and the NSPCC are also organisations which allow for the reporting of CSE information. Both organisations work closely with police and other law enforcement agencies and share information on a regular basis. Again, this was an area of strength identified by HMIC during the group based CSE thematic inspection.

- 3.6.5 SYP currently has no mapped Organised Crime Groups (OCG) with an identified primary or secondary assessed offending risk of CSE. Organised criminality with regards to CSE has been identified as an intelligence priority and is highlighted on the CSE Strategic Intelligence Profile. The Force Intelligence requirement and dedicated CSE intelligence collection plan seeks to fill this intelligence gap.

3.7 Victim Care

- 3.7.1 SYP continues to adopt a victim-focused approach with the victim being placed at the centre of everything we do. The trauma-informed approach that is being developed should further improve the victim experience and provide victims with additional compassion that supports them through the investigation and subsequent criminal justice system. Bespoke trauma-informed training has been delivered to staff in PVP and other key roles throughout 2023 and will continue to be a focal point in line with Violence Against Women and Girls agenda.
- 3.7.2 To ensure child victims receive the correct professional care and support, SYP has access to ISVA and CHISVA provision ensuring a consistent victim-led approach is applied across all four districts.
- 3.7.3 Cognisant of the recently published 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023', SYP has worked with the four South Yorkshire local authorities to ensure that our processes to identify children who are being subjected to or at risk of exploitation remain aligned to national best practice. This can take the form of a multi-agency Section 47 (child at risk of significant harm) strategy meeting, Child Protection Conference or referral to MACE – Multi-Agency Child Exploitation meeting.

3.8 Multi Agency Child Exploitation process (MACE)

- 3.8.1 MACE is the primary mechanism for multi-agency oversight on cases involving Child Exploitation. MACE is a recognised national best practice framework, which is consistently delivered across all four South Yorkshire Districts. All districts hold a weekly MACE which is well attended by multi-agency professionals, including education, health, social care, police, probation, youth crime prevention, youth offending services and psychological services.
- 3.8.2 Children most at risk of exploitation are referred into the MACE process, which includes children subjected to both CSE and/or CCE. Through the use of the embedded Vulnerability Assessment Tracker (VAT) risk assessment tool, professionals are able to identify early concerns of exploitation, to ensure a collaborative strategy to mitigate risk and safeguard the child can be developed.

3.9 Missing Children

- 3.9.1 The intrinsic links between missing children and sexual/criminal exploitation are now well known. It is essential that we fully understand the reason a child goes missing and if that is linked to or increases susceptibility to exploitation. Within SYP we have continued to develop our response to missing children to

incorporate both a proactive and reactive service. The return interview process (both SYP and independent) is an essential element, that helps professionals collaboratively understand and reason for the missing episode and proactively plan to reduce its potential reoccurrence in the future. Through consultation with the College of Policing, SYP have recently utilised the new COP return home interview guidance to ensure local processes and procedures are in line with national best practice.

- 3.9.2 SYP continues to ensure all new officers/staff have received additional training for the Compact missing persons system; this includes inputs on recognising and assessing risk, conducting quality reviews, and utilising trigger plans and return to home interviews effectively.
- 3.9.3 Through the use of trigger and problem solving plans across the organisation, SYP is ensuring we deliver a consistent response to children at greater risk of going missing. An effective trigger plan can provide responding officers with information and a directed approach to increase the prospect of locating the missing child promptly.

3.10 Child Abduction Warning Notices (CAWN)

- 3.10.1 CAWNs or Child Abduction Warning Notices are intended as a disruption tool to prevent inappropriate contact by adults with children who may be at risk of harm because of their relationship. When used appropriately they have been proven to be an effective measure to prevent further contact. The use of CAWNs has been highlighted in the Home Office enhanced exploitation disruption toolkit as a tactical option for all applicable exploitation concerns.
- 3.10.2 During the course of 2023 a total of 106 CAWNs were recorded as being issued. This is an increase from 79 (34%) on 2022 figures, demonstrating the organisation's determination to disrupt those who pose risk to children across South Yorkshire.

3.11 SYP RESPONSE

District Structures

- 3.11.1 Following an intensive self-assessment of organisational capability and analysis of our demand and intelligence gaps in 2023, SYP senior command team supported the creation of dedicated child exploitation teams in both Barnsley and Doncaster, replicating the existing provision in both Rotherham and Sheffield. This growth provides parity across the organisation ensuring a consistent level of service can be provided to all children, irrespective of which area they reside in.

HMICFRS highlighted the Rotherham model as national best practice during their group-based CSE thematic inspection; as a result, terms of reference have been produced to allow us to replicate the Rotherham partnership approach across all four districts.

3.12 Child Exploitation Tactical Group (CETG)

3.12.1 To ensure consistency of approach, all four districts have replicated the CETG model. The CETG is an intelligence-led meeting where police and partners review new and ongoing intelligence submissions, with a view to identifying and understanding the risks and concerns, along with any safeguarding, evidential or disruption opportunities. Information is shared and actions are identified to mitigate risks or create further intelligence development avenues. Missing children deemed to be at risk of exploitation are also considered during this process. Partners who attend the CETG include police, children's social care, health, youth offending services, Barnardo's (Rotherham only), local authority CSE teams, housing, licensing and anti-social behaviour (ASB) officers. The CETG process was identified as an area of strength during the recent HMIC thematic CSE inspection.

3.12.2 All four districts have a monthly Child Exploitation Subgroup Meeting, which falls out of the local safeguarding children partnerships. Here, strategic decisions are taken with regards to tackling child exploitation across the partnership, which are reported back to the Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership Board (LSCPB) for sign off.

3.13 Training

3.13.1 SYP places the continuous professional development of our workforce as a key priority to ensure that officers and staff are equipped with the knowledge and skillsets required to be effective at safeguarding children from exploitation. In addition to our commitment to develop student officers through initial training programs, officers across the organisation in key roles will now take part in intensive two-day Hydra training, which provides an immersive scenario-based exercise to test decision making ability and situation awareness. This opportunity has also been made available to partners across South Yorkshire. SYP continue to utilise national training opportunities through dedicated development inputs for frontline officers and senior investigators from Operation Hydrant.

3.14 Op Makesafe

- 3.14.1 Op Makesafe is the national response to raising awareness of child sexual and criminal exploitation to the hotel and leisure industry. It focuses on ensuring that people working within these sectors are aware of the warning signs of CSE/CCE and know how and when to report concerns to the police. SYP has an Op Makesafe SPOC and is a prominent member of the Op Makesafe National Working Group.
- 3.14.2 SYP's approach is to think wider than hotels, in the knowledge that offenders may no longer use budget hotels as frequently as before. We are therefore looking to continue to engage with taxi firms, fast food/dessert restaurants and other locally identified hotspots. Once the new training package has been delivered, visits will take place to test understanding and build relationships to increase reporting.
- 3.14.3 2024 will see the launch of the College of Policing national guidance on Operation Makesafe. This will further assist in developing consistent national best practice across South Yorkshire.

3.15 Community Awareness Campaign

- 3.15.1 In 2023 we launched the new SYP child exploitation awareness campaign. The campaign was developed collaboratively with survivors of exploitation, utilising their experiences to inform the campaign and therefore maximising the opportunity to highlight the signs of both sexual and criminal exploitation. The primary aim of the campaign was to provide the public and professionals with the right information for them to become more confident in identifying and reporting concerns or incidents to the police/partnership.

Stage two of the campaign will see the launch and signposting to dedicated guides for parents and professionals to help keep children safe online. With the increase in use of the internet in CSE offending and the continued increase in tech enabled activity in young people, steps need to be taken to address the generational knowledge gap which exists across South Yorkshire.

3.16 CHALLENGES

- 3.16.1 As outlined earlier within the document, Peer on peer and child self-generated indecent images continue to pose a challenge within South Yorkshire, with an increase in demand consistent with the regional and national recording over the previous year. The identification and separation of predatory, exploitative action from inappropriate adolescent behaviour is essential to ensure vulnerable children are safeguarded from abuse. This will allow SYP to better understand the current CSE risk and in doing so, strengthen our response to it.

3.16.2 Emerging technologies present a clear and current risk to children within South Yorkshire from potential of exploitation from anywhere in the world. There are already examples within national policing of the use of artificial intelligence and virtual reality technology in the grooming of children online, which is likely to become more prevalent over the next five years. SYP, in collaboration with its safeguarding partners, will strive to utilise all available means to expand our knowledge and experience to ensure we can effectively tackle this threat.

4 EXCEPTION REPORTING

NONE

Chief Officer Lead: Assistant Chief Constable Sarah Poolman

Report Author: T/Det Chief Inspector Gary Magnay

END

PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD

OF THE SOUTH YORKSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

7TH MARCH 2024

REPORT OF THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

VICTIM REPORT

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

The fundamental principle of 'Putting Victims First' underpins each of the Police and Crime Plan Priorities.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) of work which is being undertaken in relation to how we 'Put Victims First'.

2 SUMMARY OF OPTIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND DECISION REQUIRED

It is recommended that the PCC considers and discusses the contents of this report and considers whether further assurance is required in relation to the progress made to meet the police and crime plan priority.

3 BACKGROUND

The updated Victims Code came into effect on 1st April 2021. This introduced twelve over-arching rights and along with new legislation aimed to build back confidence in the justice system.

This will be developed further in the Victims and Prisoners Bill which will come into effect in 2025 and will give further powers to Police Crime Commissioners to scrutinise forces compliance with the Victims Code. This will enshrine the Victims Code into Primary Legislation, meaning all relevant organisations covered under the code must comply with it legally. The code sets out the minimum standards Victim's should expect from these organisations.

In 2018 SYP launched the 'Complete Victim Care' campaign to improve the service we provide to victims of crime. The campaign aimed to ensure that an excellent victim led service is provided consistently, on each and every occasion, by prioritising victim care. This is also the foundation of the force's Plan on a Page and laid the foundations for the launch of the Victims Code.

This focusses on South Yorkshire Police getting better at the basics including ensuring Victims of crime receive the right support from the right agencies including Victim Support, as well as improving the communication and updates Victim's receive from the Criminal Justice partnership.

In the last HMICFRS PEEL Inspection the force received an area for improvement which stated:

The force should improve its consideration of enhanced services to vulnerable victims and how it records the victim needs assessments in investigations.

This relates specifically to Right 4 of the Code which is the right for all victims have a needs assessment and referred to specialist support services where appropriate.

We can anticipate that victim needs assessments will be an area of focus in our next PEEL inspection. Our future performance reporting therefore must assess our performance in relation to:

- Whether victims were entitled to an enhanced service
- Whether appropriate referrals were made
- If a Victim Personal Statement was obtained
- Whether overall a good service was provided in line with the victims' Code of Practice

Performance reporting going forward will reflect the above areas rather than on victim satisfaction survey results. Victim Surveys will continue, and will be used to measure our compliance with the Victim's Code. They are also important to capture victims views and will continue to give them an opportunity offer their feedback on the service they've received, both good as well as areas that could be improved.

The recent 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*', has also recommended that the College of Policing works with the NPCC and Chief Constables to develop minimum standards for the completion of a victim needs assessment. In the interim we will look to develop our own minimum standards.

The report also highlights that improvements are needed across the Criminal Justice System to meet the needs of victims.

4 The Victim's Code

South Yorkshire Police are committed to ensuring that all victims receive access to the 12 rights that they are entitled to. The force is currently in the process in refreshing it's offering as well as enhancing our understanding of our compliance with the code.

VICTIMS' CODE

All victims of crime in England and Wales have rights:

- 1  To be able to understand and to be understood
- 2  To have the details of the crime recorded without unjust delay
- 3  To be provided with information when reporting the crime
- 4  To be referred to services that support victims and have services and support tailored to your needs
- 5  To be provided with information about compensation
- 6  To be provided with information about the investigation and prosecution
- 7  To make a Victim Personal Statement
- 8  To be given information about the trial, trial process and your role as a witness
- 9  To be given information about the outcome of the case and any appeals
- 10  To be paid expenses and have property returned
- 11  To be given information about the offender following a conviction
- 12  To make a complaint about your rights not being met

Find out more at college.police.uk/guidance/victims-code

Single Online Home is a new national portal for members of the public to interact with their local Police Force. Within this, Victim's will be able to access a variety of information regarding their entitlements under the code. This will include direct links to the PCC support services, guidance and assistance with claiming compensation as well as other information relating to the criminal justice journey and the Victims Handbook. This is due to go live on 20th March 2024.

Every victim of crime that is visited by a Police Officer should receive a Victims Handbook, this details a whole host of information that relates to rights under the Victim's code. This includes details on court proceedings, what it means to give a statement to the Police, how Victims and witnesses can access support as well as guidance on what happens next.

There are currently challenges with us being able to demonstrate our compliance with providing a handbook to each victim. We currently rely on data from quality assurance reviews and the victim satisfaction survey. Both of these methods are not wholly reliable. We are currently exploring automation opportunities and the accurate recording of data to support this. These changes will hopefully be delivered by Autumn 2024. Additional training has been planned for officers which will begin in February 2024.

For those victims who do not see a Police officer as their report is handled by the Force Crime Bureau and Force Crime Hub, they receive email or text information about how to access Victim Support as well as an electronic version of the Victim's Handbook.

The Victims booklet is currently being reviewed to ensure the content is up to date and to also include information around Restorative Justice and what that means for the Victim.

We publicise the Victim's rights in the fifteen most commonly spoken languages in England and Wales on our external Website, on our force social media channels and they are also made available internally to our staff to distribute where necessary.

As part of the review of the Victim Handbook, we are exploring ways to expand its availability to include additional languages , as well as catering for people with other needs so that all communities within South Yorkshire can be provided with the relevant information to fulfil our obligation under the Victims code. As part of the review process, partners, victim service providers as well as Victims themselves will be consulted to ensure it meets their needs.

Victims and Prisoners Bill

The Victims and Prisoners bill is currently progressing through Parliament and is likely to gain Royal ascent at the end of 2024 beginning of 2025. The bill introduces a number of changes to how Victims are treated by Criminal Justice bodies, how their rights are protected under primary legislation and new powers for HMICFRS, PCCs and how other bodies scrutinise adherence and performance. Key points introduced by the bill are below. Further detail can be accessed by visiting [Victims Code Fact Sheet](#)

Victims' measures

- Enshrines the overarching principles of the Victims Code in primary legislation – to ensure the criminal justice system consistently delivers the entitlements in the Victims Code
- Place a duty on criminal justice bodies and non-territorial police forces to review their compliance with the Victims Code and collect compliance data which is intended to include information from victims on how they are supported
- Give PCCs a greater role in overseeing local compliance monitoring of the Victims Code with the Victims Commissioner retaining national oversight

Key to the measures is the ability for South Yorkshire Police to understand their performance and submit data to relevant interested parties. South Yorkshire Police are on track to supply the relevant metrics to interested parties and to also harness them internally to continually improve the service we give to victims and our adherence to the Victims Code.

Criminal Justice and Witness Care

The Criminal Justice Unit (CJU) Witness Care Officers provide support, case updates and information to victims and witnesses post charge on all Domestic Abuse (DA) cases and those cases where a not guilty plea has been entered from first hearing. Additionally, they notify DA victims of the court hearing if the case is progressed via Postal Requisition¹.

Effective communication and collaboration is undertaken with victim support services including Victim Support, Citizen Advice Witness Service, Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy Service, Independent Sexual Violence Advocacy Service, Probation, to ensure care and support to victims and witnesses, to support their journey through the criminal justice system and support effective trial management to bring offenders to justice.

meetings are held with Citizen Advice as well as regional meetings with the Crown Prosecution Service where problems are shared, and best practice is identified and implemented. These are all designed to ensure that Victims receive the right support and to minimise the amount of victim attrition within the Criminal Justice System.

Magistrates and Crown Court

Delays in the court system due to the Covid-19 pandemic are still present and are being worked through but are reducing. These delays can have a detrimental effect on the victim, who may face a significant delay in seeing their case brought to trial. Witness Care Units are working hard with the courts to maximise court room usage, as well as ensuring that ongoing care and support is provided for victims and to minimise the risk of them disengaging from the process.

Victim attrition:

In order to ensure effective trial management and reduce victim attrition, we have reintroduced the weekly trial management review with CPS, CJU Witness Care and Sheffield Crown Court Listing to sign off on the trial readiness certificate, ensuring matters such as special measures, evidential content and matters pertaining to victim and witness support are in place.

Victim Transformation Programme

In June 2022, the CPS announced that it would be [transforming the service it provides to victims of crime](#) through a long-term Victim Transformation Programme (VTP).

The CPS will introduce a new Universal Service offer to all victims of crime. The aim of this is to improve the victims understanding of the role of the CPS, to ensure they understand their entitlements and signpost them to relevant support. CPS are taking a “test and learn” approach to developing this service, starting with small scale live testing and then scaling up delivery as they learn from the initial delivery..

¹ This is where a person is not charged but is brought to court via summons they receive in the post.

In November, CPS began testing the Universal Service in South Yorkshire. Working closely with the national team, we are testing direct communication by the CPS of their decision to authorise charge. This communication is happening once the CPS has been notified by South Yorkshire's CJU that the case will be proceeding to first hearing and is in addition to the officer informing the victim that the case has been charged. Initial feedback from victims is that they valued hearing directly from CPS. In the CJU we are monitoring the impact on the progression of the case. Testing will expand to further forces in the New Year and will include the communication of pre-charge 'No Further Action' decisions.

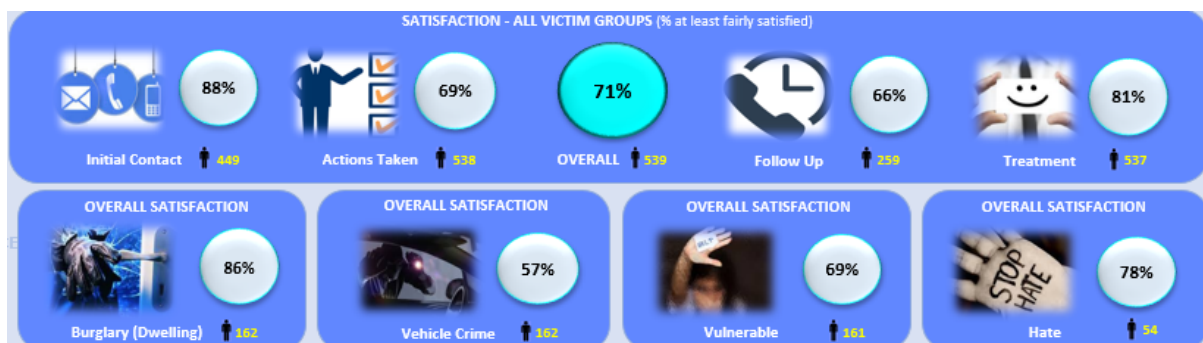
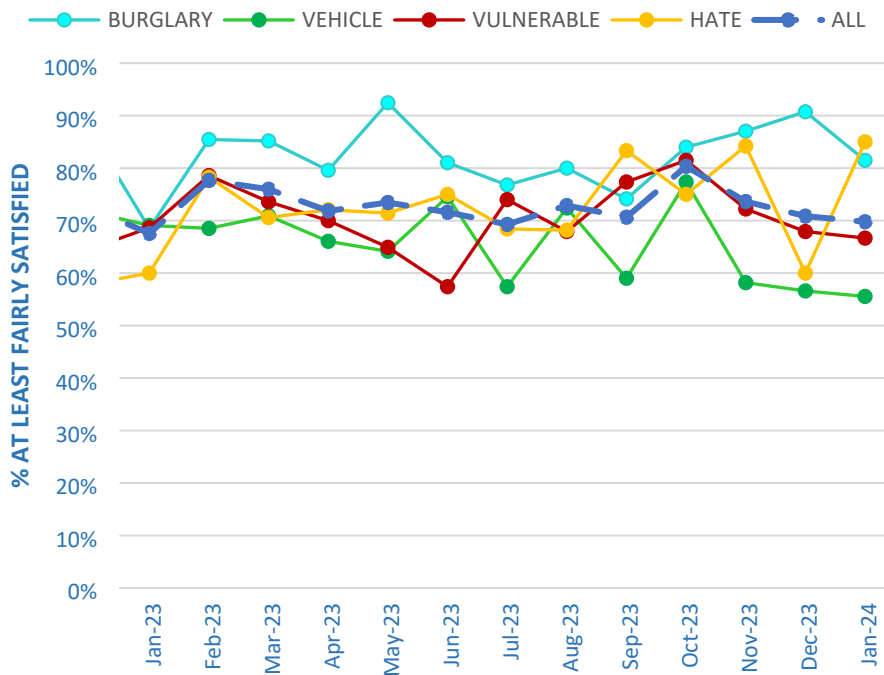
Domestic Abuse (DA) Courts

South Yorkshire operate a number of dedicated Domestic Abuse Courts, these here trials specifically for allegations of Domestic Abuse. The judge and magistrates have had enhanced training around Domestic Abuse, the impact upon the victim and due to their dedicated time slot, seek to minimise cancellations. Feedback from meetings, with all agencies involved is that the DA Court in Sheffield is working well resulting in less adjournments and more DA cases being dealt with at first hearing. Due to available slots not being filled, with the agreement of HMCTS staff we have added 3 additional NGAP cases into the DA Court to increase the type of cases that can be heard, during the months of December and January.

Victim satisfaction

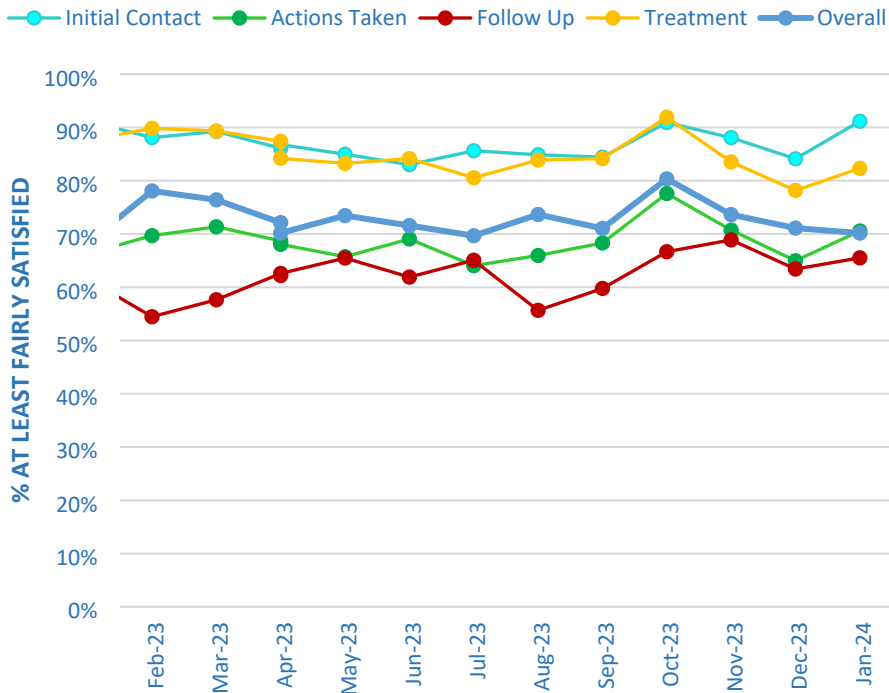
Victim satisfaction is viewed as a measure of our adherence to the Victim's Code. Satisfaction is measured by a survey of victims that is broken up into a number of different crime types. SYP currently conducts victim satisfaction surveys with victims of burglary residential (home), hate crime, DA, stalking and harassment (DA and non-DA), vehicle crime and victims recorded as vulnerable – this latter category can include victims from any crime type other than those assessed to be inappropriate due to the risk of re-traumatisation (including sexual offences, human trafficking, attempted murder). Members of the public who are given the opportunity to participate in SYP's local Public Confidence survey (Your Voice Counts – YVC) are also asked to rate their satisfaction with police contact if they have been a victim of crime.

FORCE - OVERALL SATISFACTION - ALL



Victim Satisfaction for the last three months is at 71% overall. We see that satisfaction in relation to initial contact is good at 88% and that we treat people well. Burglary Victim satisfaction in particular is good and has improved since the introduction of dedicated Neighbourhood Crime teams within Districts. There has also been renewed focus on every victim of Burglary (Home) receiving a visit by a Police Officer.

FORCE - ALL SATISFACTION - ALL



The two areas where we continue to seek improvements are in the ongoing contact with victims, keeping them informed of progress of an investigation and the final outcome. Although there has been a slight improvement over the previous 12 months, we are developing new ways in which victims can receive automated updates and self-service. These technological developments are in the early stages but we hope to be in a position to provide some positive news later in the year.

Special Measures

Special measures can be put in place to help vulnerable and intimidated witnesses give their best possible evidence in court, for example; giving evidence from behind a screen, in private or via a live link so that victims do not have to face the accused. In 2023 South Yorkshire Police took part in a national project whereby a Special Measure Advisor was placed into the force to identify how we could best utilise such measures, reducing victim attrition and ultimately offer a better service to victims of crime. Funding has been provided to extend this project by a further twelve months until November 2024. This pilot has identified occasions where they are not always offered to victims in appropriate cases. As a result the Special Measures advisor is in the process of developing new training materials to address this issue and upskill officers knowledge in this area.

This role has demonstrated the value of having a single point of contact for victims up to the trial date to ensure they are updated at each stage of an investigation. Training inputs have already been delivered in collaboration with the Investigation Training Team at all districts to support this work and develop officers skills.

Safeguarding

The safeguarding of victims is paramount, this is particularly acute when the case against the alleged perpetrator does not progress to a charge.

Officers offer safeguarding options in several guises, in the most extreme this can be offering temporary accommodation, working with partners to secure permanent moves, but can also lead to safeguarding victims homes through the deployment of Smart Water devices and window alarms etc.

During the investigation phase, bail and conditions are utilised where appropriate to protect the victim. When the threshold for a charge is not reached but risk is still identified then other orders to protect the victim are explored. This includes orders such as Domestic Violence Prevention Orders, Stalking Protection Orders, Sexual Risk Order and Abduction notices. Further training is currently being rolled out across the force to improve officers knowledge.

Voice of the Child

We continue to ensure we have a child centred approach when considering Child Exploitation. Through our multi-agency meetings we use the all information available and the voice of the child to make sure children and young people are identified as victims. This is to ensure that exploitation is a consideration when children are involved in criminality. The child always comes first comes first. And where victims are identified we make a referral through the National Referral Mechanism which is a national framework for identifying and referring potential victims.

All SYP staff have received Child Matters Training and staff working in the CE portfolio have attended national county lines Hydra training where the investigation process is discussed and the NRM is explained in detail. Officers are also supported with a specialist CE Investigation Plan guide and specialist advice if required.

We continue to work with other agencies to understand Child Criminal Exploitation, to introduce diversionary measures to prevent children being coerced in this manner as well as targeting those that prey on the young and vulnerable to carry out their criminal means. There are regular intensification weeks where there is national focus on CCE.

Officers understanding of CCE also continues to improve and is interwoven in all areas of policing, for example when considering teenage missing persons where CCE considerations are now considered within the risk assessment for the person.

Future Focus

As briefly mentioned above, there is work underway within the force to raise the profile and the knowledge of the Victim's code and South Yorkshire Polices' obligation within this. All response officers are currently receiving CPD around the Victim's code and the needs assessment that must be completed. There is also

extensive work being undertaken to understand our performance and compliance. A new performance dashboard is being assembled which will enable both the force to report on their compliance with the code, but also help to understand where we can improve. Going forward this data will be available to inform the public of our compliance rates.

The use of Rapid Video Response has been trialled within our force control room over the previous 12 months. This allows officers to speak to members of the public who are reporting crime over a video link, resulting often in a faster response. This is expected to be rolled out wider and leveraged to improve our timeliness to incidents and improve the victim experience.

In the medium and long term there are projects underway to help improve the accessibility and the level of information that we offer to members of the public. Money has been approved to tender for further IT systems that will compliment those already in use to automate a number of elements of the victim's journey and also allow victims, where appropriate, an element of self service for updates and information.

This will result in the automation of the Victim's Handbook being sent to people, increase the number and ease of referrals to Victim support and finally allow victims to access updates themselves as to the progress of the investigation. It is hoped that this will improve satisfaction levels, particularly around follow up, where we regularly score poorly and ensure greater compliance overall with the Victim's Code.

During the design phase of this future system we will look at harnessing members of the public with lived experience to help inform and shape the service and offering. Once we are in a position to share the progress of the project more widely, this will be publicised through both our internet site and also our social media channels.