

VICTIMS' COMMISSIONER FOR ENGLAND AND WALES STRATEGIC PLAN

October 2024 – December 2025

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to set out the Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales (VC) strategy for her 15-month term, October 2024 to December 2025. The Victims' Commissioner is Baroness Newlove. It follows on from her previous 12-month term, October 2023 – October 2024.

This plan sets out high level strategic priorities for the VC.

THE VC'S STATUTORY REMIT

Pursuant to Section 49 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004, the VC must:

- (a) promote the interests of victims and witnesses;
- (b) take such steps as he considers appropriate with a view to encouraging good practice in the treatment of victims and witnesses;
- (c) keep under review the operation of the Code of Practice issued under section 32.
- (d) Lay an annual report before Parliament.

The Commissioner may:

- (a) make proposals to the Secretary of State for amending the Code;
- (b) make a report to the Secretary of State;
- (c) make recommendations to an authority within his remit and require a response within 56 days;
- (d) undertake or arrange for or support (financially or otherwise) the carrying out of research;
- (e) consult any person he thinks appropriate.

STRATEGIC AIMS 2024 - 2025

The Victims' Commissioner has five key strategic aims:

Supporting victims in coping and recovering (A) Work with criminal justice agencies to ensure victims are supported in coping and recovering from the impact of crime and are empowered to play a full part in the criminal justice system, including Crown and Magistrates Courts, Coroners inquests, Parole Board hearings, Mental Health Review Tribunals and ASB Case Reviews. This includes being able to access victim services tailored to their needs and being treated with respect and decency.

Monitoring and enhancing compliance (B) Monitor and report on criminal justice agencies' compliance with the requirements of the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime and the Witness Charter; identify areas that are deficient and make recommendations for change based on evidence of best practice; and improve public awareness of entitlements.

Act as the voice of victims (C) Ensure the interests of victims and witnesses are fully considered at all stages in any proposals for development and/or change to the criminal justice system.

Amplify the victim's voice. (D) Through regular contact with victims and practitioners of victims' services, articulate a view of the criminal justice system from the perspective of victims lived experiences; contribute to, review and challenge decisions taken by policy makers and those responsible for developing practice.

Promoting best practice and excellence (E) Through gaining first-hand knowledge and understanding of victims' services, identify and actively promote examples of good practice and excellence.

ETHICS AND BEHAVIOURS

The Victims' Commissioner will work in accordance with the Nolan principles. She and her team will aspire to demonstrate positive and ethical standards of behaviour at all times:

- **Human rights:** She will ensure all victims and witnesses enjoy full respect and support for all of their human rights throughout the criminal justice process.
- **Independent:** Taking into account with equal measure the views of all victims and stakeholders, she will make independent and impartial assessments of policy and practice and offer a perspective independent of government.
- **Public Interest:** In all external relations, she will endeavour to deal fairly, openly and supportively, with the intention of serving the public interest in every interaction
- **Equality:** Her work will be targeted on all communities, mindful of the nine protected strands within the Equality Act 2010.
- **Analytical:** She will employ a rigorous analytical approach to all aspects of her remit.
- **Collegiate:** She will adopt a collaborative, open and friendly working relationship with all stakeholders.
- **Transparent:** She will make a presumption of full openness and disclosure in all aspects of her work.
- **Reflective:** She will adopt a reflective approach to her work and that of her office, and how it can be improved. She will be open to different approaches and empathetic to the experience of victims.
- **Fairness:** She will deal with all individuals fairly and with sensitivity.

OBJECTIVES

Enhance Victims' Rights

Support the implementation and expansion of victim rights under the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024. Identify and pursue other legislative opportunities further to enhance victim rights and entitlements. Advocate for policy changes to improve protections for victims, with particular focus on anti-social behaviour cases, sexual violence, and support for bereaved families. (Strategic Aim (SA): A, B, C)

Promote a Victim-Centric Justice System

Work toward a justice system that prioritizes victim participation, safety, and support at every stage—from prosecution and court proceedings to parole hearings and compensation claims. Focus on addressing court backlogs, vulnerable victims having access to justice through special measures, and promoting procedural justice. (SA: A, B and C)

Strengthen Oversight and Accountability for Victim Support

Establish strong accountability frameworks for criminal justice agencies, including compliance with the Victims' Code and robust quality assurance in victim support. Develop surveys, joint inspections, and public awareness initiatives to ensure victim feedback shapes criminal justice practices. (SA: B, C and D)

Ensure Quality, Accessible Support Services for All Victims

Advocate for consistent, high-quality victim support services across all regions and crime types. Collaborate with policymakers, law enforcement, and service providers to share best practices, develop victim support champions, and define standards for effective victim care across the UK. (SA: A, D, E)

MEASURES

The key measures we will need to monitor these aims and objectives are:

Progress: The number of reviews completed and published and the quality of evidence they present

Progress: A programme of engagement with victims.

Progress: Increased press and social media coverage of Victims' Commissioner activity

Outcomes: Victims' Commissioner recommendations accepted and implemented

Outcomes: Policy makers and practitioners taking on board changes advocated by the VC

Outcomes: Greater awareness of the Victims' Commissioner's work, as evidenced by high levels of contact with victims through correspondence, more invitations to meet with victims' groups and practitioners, increased number of Twitter followers, etc.

Outcomes: Examples of good practice being implemented more widely.

RISKS

The Victims' Commissioner's key strategic risks include:

Budget: Insufficient funds to deliver the strategy.

Staff recruitment: Unable to recruit the staff she requires, with the necessary skill set, in timely way, therefore having a detrimental impact on OVC team's output; time lags between staff recruitment delaying the work programme.

IT failures: MoJ IT failing to provide adequate support to deliver the business.

Reputational Damage: Inaccurate information published in reviews and statements that cause reputational damage.

Strategy: The VC is unable to obtain sufficient support for the strategy from internal and external stakeholders.

IMPLEMENTATION

It is important the VC receives buy-in to the strategy from those internal and external stakeholders who will be involved in implementing it. This delivery of this 15-month strategy will be supported by a business plan, a stakeholder engagement plan, and a communication plan, all of which will be reviewed on a regular basis. Progress in delivering the strategy will be clearly documented in the VC's annual report and website.