



Victim Support Consultation Report

Police, partner organisations and stakeholders

During the consultation period, a separate survey was conducted with the police and partner organisations and stakeholders. This survey was promoted and circulated via OPCC mailing list, and social media platform via LinkedIn receiving 62 responses.

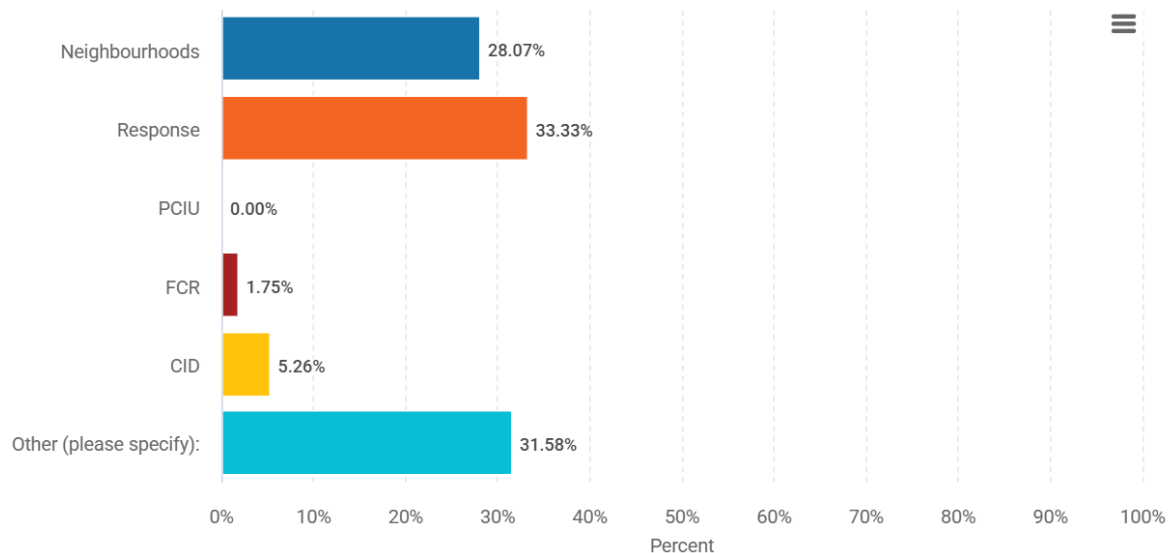
Views on Victim Care Advice Service (VCAS)

The survey was designed to gather insight into partners' and stakeholders' understanding of the Victim Care and Advice Service (VCAS), the referral pathways they had used, and their experiences of the process.

Cleveland Police insights

The 57 respondents from the police officers, staff and volunteers:

Please indicate which area of policing you work in?



Responses were received from a range of departments, including the Witness Care Unit, Historic Investigation Unit, Protecting Vulnerable People, and Specialist Crime and Justice. Overall, 84.21% of respondents knew how to refer victims to VCAS, while 15.79% did not. 73.68% had previously made a referral, compared with

26.32% who had not; most of those who had never referred indicated that referrals were not relevant to their role.

The referral process was viewed positively, with 95.24% reporting it was easy to complete, often citing the intranet and referral forms as straightforward. A small proportion (4.76%) disagreed, with one respondent noting duplication of information already recorded on Niche or Storm.

Most respondents (78.57%) felt that victims benefitted from being referred to VCAS, while 21.43% did not feel able to comment, often due to not knowing the outcome once the referral had been made.

When asked about gaps in the current VCAS support offer, the majority reported none. A small number of respondents provided additional comments under 'Other'.

“None that I have identified. I have had the pleasure to speak to a few members of staff from VCAS and all were professional, helpful and it is clear that the victims benefit from the service.”

“There are not enough support workers within this field.”

“The feedback we get most from Victims is that they have a phone call from each support service in the early days but (when it is a protracted investigation) they then don't hear back from anybody again.”

“Yes - more clarification to officers regarding what VCAS can offer and provide victims so it can be explained in more detail when engaging with victims.”

“If it takes a while for the defendant to be charged by CPS sometimes the victims feel as though no one has been in touch in this space of time.”

Partner organisations and stakeholders insights

Five respondents were from the local authority and one from the Youth Offending Service. All were aware of how to refer to VCAS, and 80.00% had made a referral, while one respondent (20.00%) had not, noting this was because they already had a victim support worker in place. All respondents reported that the referral process was easy, explaining that referrals were made either by email or through the online form. They also agreed that victims benefitted from being referred to VCAS, with further comments highlighting positive outcomes.

“A dedicated service for victims of crime to receive support. I always offer a victim the opportunity of a referral and have made links with the manager and staff.”

“Most referrals are for emotional support and without exception, victims have reported feeling better after receiving this service. I/we have also referred for assistance with security measures and historically for assistance with claims for criminal injuries compensation (this service no longer available). I have also referred for assistance with Victim Personal Statements and found that VCAS were already working with the victim and providing this service.”

Using the free-text box, respondents highlighted whether they felt there were any gaps in the victim support service, with a small number of comments provided.

“Perhaps not offering support for DV/SV victims. I am aware that there are dedicated services for this, but perhaps VCAS could offer support to such victims for lower level offences and then refer onto more specialist services if needed.”

“Assistance with criminal injuries compensation, not necessarily to be the contact for the claim as I am aware this might take a number of years to complete, but some victims require help with completing on-line forms. Internet search is likely to flag up companies who charge for this service and victims potentially fall in to this trap. VCAS are very good at advising best service to use when they do not provide the particular service e.g. domestic or sexual violence cases.”

Views on Restorative Justice

Finally the survey we invited partners and stakeholders to share their experiences with the referral process and the service offer. The survey explored whether individuals had previously made a referral, the ease of doing so, perceived benefits for those referred, and any gaps within the current provision.

Cleveland Police insights

Of the 57 respondents, 40.35% were aware of how to refer victims or offenders to the Restorative Justice (RJ) service, while 59.65% were not. Only 17.54% had made a referral, compared with 82.46% who had not. Among the 47 respondents who had never referred, the most common reasons were that RJ was not relevant to their role, they were unaware of the service, or they did not know the referral process.

Of the 11 respondents who had referred someone, 90.91% found the process easy, with most describing it as straightforward. 80.00% felt the person they worked with

benefitted from the referral, while 20.00% did not feel able to comment, often due to not receiving updates or feedback.

Most respondents did not identify any gaps in the RJ offer, though a small number provided additional comments.

“Further information for officers on restorative justice and how they can utilise this useful disposal when dealing with their day to day work.”

“More clear referral process”

“Unsure”

Partner organisations and stakeholders insights

The five respondents 60% do not know how to refer victims or offenders to restorative Cleveland service and 40% do not. One respondent (20%) have referred someone to restorative Cleveland and 80% had not. Respondents explained why not, being unaware of the service or not relating their role.

The one respondent found the process easy to refer to restorative Cleveland and the person had benefitted the referral. Recognising the staff are Restorative Cleveland are experts in their field and have co-worked with them historically, as well as making referrals to their service. Also noting if they feel there are any gaps that there in the current Restorative Cleveland Service:

“Not that I am aware of. I do believe that the victim service and restorative justice service should be kept separate, as I know from my own experience that support for the victim service can often take priority in instances of high volume of referrals that leads to restorative justice being placed second, which should not be the case. Having dedicated services for victim support and restorative justice that are separate allows both areas to be fully focused”.

Summary

Victim Support Advice Service

The following section summarises the key themes and insights gathered from their responses, highlighting both strengths and opportunities for development.

Awareness and use of the VCAS referral process were generally strong across police departments and partner organisations. Among police respondents, 84.21% knew how to refer and 73.68% had done so, with non-referrers mainly stating that referrals were not relevant to their role. The referral process was viewed very

positively, with 95.24% describing it as easy, though one respondent noted duplication of information.

Most respondents (78.57%) felt victims benefitted from VCAS support, while others could not comment due to limited feedback on outcomes. Only a small number identified potential gaps, raised individually through free-text comments.

Partner organisations reported similar experiences. All five respondents knew how to refer, and 80.00% had made referrals. All found the process easy and believed victims benefitted, with only minor comments about possible gaps.

Recommendations

Improve visibility of referral outcomes: Some respondents could not comment on victim benefit due to limited feedback. Introducing a light-touch update mechanism could help practitioners understand the impact of referrals.

Continue promoting existing referral routes: High satisfaction with the intranet and online forms suggests these channels are effective. Maintaining clear, accessible referral pathways will support continued engagement.

Restorative Justice

Awareness and use of the Restorative Justice (RJ) service were low across Cleveland Police. Only 40.35% knew how to refer, and just 17.54% had ever made a referral. Non-referrers mainly reported that RJ was not relevant to their role, they were unaware of the service, or they did not know the referral process. Among those who had referred, 90.91% found the process easy and 80.00% felt the person benefitted, though some could not comment due to limited feedback. Only a few respondents identified gaps in the service.

Partner organisations showed similarly limited engagement. 60% did not know how to refer, and 80% had never made a referral, largely due to lack of awareness or perceived role relevance. The one respondent who had referred found the process easy and believed the individual benefitted. Only a small number of comments suggested possible gaps in the current offer.

Recommendations

Increase awareness and visibility of the RJ service: Low awareness across both police and partner organisations indicates a need for clearer communication, role-specific guidance, and regular reminders about when RJ is appropriate.

Provide simple, accessible referral guidance: Given that many non-referrers did not know the process, a short, easy-to-find referral guide or intranet prompt could support wider use.

Strengthen engagement with partner organisations: Targeted outreach—such as short briefings or refresher sessions—could help address the high proportion of partners unaware of the service.