

NCVPP

National Centre for
Violence Against
Women & Girls and
Public Protection

Using the Experience of Victim/Survivors to Improve Police Practice

Strategic Overview

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Context

In 2023, the Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP) published a report on [‘The Voice of the Victim in Police Service Design’](#). This research investigated how the voices of vulnerable victim/survivors are integrated into policing by exploring each phase of designing and implementing ‘victim/survivor voice’ practices—from planning and engagement to outcomes and impact—whilst mapping these practices across different police forces. This work highlighted the lack of available resources for forces to utilise when developing engagement practices to incorporate the voice of the victim/survivor in service design.

This resource has been created in partnership with the [CSE Taskforce](#), led by the Hydrant Programme. The resource has been designed to assist with capturing the voice of victim/survivors post investigation and using this insight to implement effective change in policing practice for the benefit of victim/survivors.

This work has adopted the voice of the victim/survivor definition, which builds on the evidence base published in, [‘Victims’ Voices and Experiences in Response and Investigation: A Study of Police Personnel in England and Wales in Responding to Vulnerability-Related Risk and Harm’](#). Throughout this work, the terminology ‘victim/survivor’ has replaced the use of ‘victim’. The definition has been developed with the broadest perspective for policing and partners so therefore includes children and young people. Further considerations for capturing the voice of children and young people can be found in the [Voice of the Child Briefing](#).

This work also supports the [National Vulnerability and Public Protection Strategy](#) - detailed below in the [strategic overview](#).



Using the Experience of Victim/Survivors to Improve Police Practice

Strategic Overview

Policing often listens to the voice of the victim/survivor but does not always effectively use it to embed change into police practice. This resource is about making sure survivors' experiences lead to real changes in how policing works.

Who?

'Voice of the victim/survivor' refers to the perspective of individuals (adults and children) who have been impacted by crime or harm: either through lived experience, as a witness, family member, friend, or colleague.

What?

The purpose of engaging with victim/survivors is to listen to their experiences and perspectives in order to embed their voices into future practice.

Why?

Incorporating the perspective and experiences of victim/survivors leads to:

- Better outcomes for victim/survivors
- Increased trust and confidence, particularly with marginalised communities
- Ease of service and contact with police
- Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) focus – ensuring services are purposeful, inclusive and collaborative
- Improved wellbeing and job satisfaction for officers/staff
- Increased legitimacy
- Victim/survivor centred culture

In practice, survivor voice might shape how officers make first contact, how updates are given, or how local priorities are set.

Capturing survivor voice is not only about improving policing; it is also about giving survivors the dignity of being heard, believed and acknowledged.

Contents

- Engagement Practice Framework – a summary of the guidance aimed at strategic leaders and decision-makers.
- Guidance for Engagement Practices – provides a detailed overview of how to carry out victim/survivor engagement practices and embed change at both a local and national level within public protection.
- Voice of the Victim/Survivor Definition – outlines the work undertaken by the VKPP in collaboration with the CSE Taskforce to develop a national definition for the voice of the victim/survivor.

Strategic Alignment

The toolkit aligns with the following key strategic documents:

- [National Vulnerability and Public Protection Strategy](#) – particularly the overarching Governance principle and Protect pillar.
 - [Governance](#): The governance and oversight process should ensure accountability for the strategy at a strategic level to ensure there is clear capacity, capability and competence across policing to respond, identify and reduce vulnerability.
 - [Protect](#): Assure procedural justice for all victims & suspects. A victim-centred, trauma-informed approach is taken, where victims are listened to with informed and open belief, and the Victims Code is applied.
- [HMICFRS PEEL Assessment Framework 2025-2027](#)
- [Victims' Code](#)

Voice of the Victim/Survivor Definition

In 2024, the VKPP developed an evidence-based definition in partnership with the [CSE Taskforce](#), led by the Hydrant Programme. The definition aims to improve the way in which victim/survivors' voices are heard across policing and builds on the evidence base published in the 2023 VKPP work, ['Victims' Voices and Experiences in Response and Investigation: A Study of Police Personnel in England and Wales in Responding to Vulnerability-Related Risk and Harm'](#). The definition includes 'what', 'how' and 'why' sections to explain and contextualise victim/survivor voice and applies equally to those who disclose harm in childhood many years later, as well as those experiencing recent or ongoing harm.

What?

'Voice of the victim/survivor' refers to the perspective of individuals (adults and children) who have been impacted by crime or harm: either through lived experience, as a witness, family member, friend or colleague.

How?

The perspectives, opinions, rights and non-verbal cues of victim/survivors and their advocates must be heard, respected, prioritised and actively sought during investigations, enquiries and interactions. They must also be embedded within policy, practice, and support provision.

Why?

In turn, this will aid in strengthening investigations, shaping and developing current and future policy, practice, response and support of policing and wider agencies to victim/survivors, for those who need support.

Stages of Developing Engagement Practices

The process of designing and implementing engagement practices has been separated into seven stages. Organised in a clear, stage-by-stage format, the [framework](#) provides instructions for each phase of the engagement process. Further information can be found in the guidance documents .

The diagram shows the cycle of improving engagement and policing practice by using the seven stages to embed impact and to help inform future planning.

To achieve long-lasting impact, it is imperative that policing consistently engages with victim/survivors and embeds the learning into everyday practice.



Using the Voice of Victim/Survivors to Improve Police Practice

Engagement Practice Framework

The Framework identifies key considerations mapped across the seven stages of service design.

Stage 1 Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify training requirements for staff involved. Ensure succession planning and continuity in relevant roles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and evaluate the effectiveness of existing practices. Ensure practices are purposeful, inclusive, and collaborative. Adapt existing models. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish strong governance. Secure executive ownership from creation to implementation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define purpose and scope. Identify resources and funding required. Ensure stakeholder involvement.
Stage 2 Inviting Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilise specialist organisations to address gaps in relevant staff knowledge. Ensure staff involved are trained in trauma-informed practices and safeguarding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a range of methods to capture diverse voices. Review the suitability of the cohort in relation to the aims. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate the purpose and intention of the engagement. Ensure a trauma-informed approach. Build trust and transparency through informed consent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure safeguarding measures are in place. Use accessible and culturally sensitive approaches to include minoritised groups.
Stage 3 Gathering Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure data collectors are trained in handling sensitive information. Provide wellbeing support for staff involved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapt methods for individual needs. Ensure the chosen method achieves the original aim. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider who is best placed to collect the voice of the victim/survivor. Partner agencies may provide skilled cultural competence and impartiality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the most appropriate method for the area of focus. Ensure participants understand their rights throughout the process.
Stage 4 Managing Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure officers/staff are aware of how to accurately record information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remind participants of their right to retract data. Identify and understand reasons for retraction. Implement learning into practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enforce robust data storage policies. Ensure secure handling of sensitive feedback. Tailor data retention periods to the nature and purpose before secure deletion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose an appropriate recording method, considering the sensitivity of information. Ensure data storage complies with legal standards, including anonymisation, and retraction policies.
Stage 5 Analysing Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit or develop specialists to strengthen analytical teams. Provide training for existing staff in analysis techniques and software. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage reliability and validity during analysis by utilising multiple sources of data. Improve insights by breaking data into subcategories. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify who is best skilled to analyse data. This could be internal or external. Develop internal feedback loops to share analysis outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider what type of analysis would provide the best insight. Standardise the process. Present findings in a clear, engaging, and audience-appropriate manner.
Stage 6 Creating Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure learning is fed back into the organisation. Communicate the benefits of changes to training and responsibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain trust and transparency through consistent communication. Manage feedback that cannot be actioned. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain strong governance for agreeing, recording, and monitoring actions. Ensure findings inform force strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote transparency by improving feedback loops. Offer flexible solutions to accommodate varying needs or expectations.
Stage 7 Measuring Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure relevant staff are aware of available evaluation methods and tools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request victim/survivor feedback on their experience of the engagement practice. Emphasise the impact of applying learning from feedback to staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate the impact of changes. Feedback to executive leadership the impact achieved. Share learning with all involved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish an evaluation and learning process. Develop processes to improve future engagement practices.

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About the National Centre for Violence Against Women and Girls and Public Protection

We're a collaboration between the
College of Policing and the National
Police Chiefs' Council.

We work across law enforcement,
the third sector and government to
professionalise public protection and
strive for a whole systems approach to
prevent harm, give confidence to victims,
survivors and witnesses to come forward
and bring more offenders to justice.

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**Vulnerability Knowledge
& Practice Programme**



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