



Stakeholder Bulletin

October 2023

Coordinating and improving the
policing response to vulnerability

Welcome to your October edition of The Stakeholder Bulletin from the Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP) - designed to keep you updated with our work.

Voice of the Victim project

“Trust and confidence begins and ends with how policing engages with the victim, how we really listen and respond to support and safeguard that person.” Ian Critchley QPM – National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC) lead for Child Protection Abuse and Investigation.

After two years of dedicated work, The VKPP has launched two ground-breaking reports that explore how policing understands the ‘voice of the victim’.

This is the first known research project to hear directly from those working in policing, both strategically and frontline, to know what helps or hinders them in prioritising, hearing and responding to it.

What is meant by voice of the victim?

- We use the term ‘voice of the victim’ to include a broader understanding of victims’ and witnesses’ experience of policing. So, not just the ‘voice’ of victims/ witnesses but their wider experience of engagement with police and the care they receive.

Why does voice of the victim matter?

- The voice and experience of victims is central to the work of policing. Understanding how police listen and respond to the ‘voice of the victim’ is key to improving services; a foundation stone in building trust and confidence more broadly.
- In policing we know that we need to do more to meet expectations, especially when supporting vulnerable victims.
- Understanding and improving voice of the victim can both inform and support ongoing work in policing to reduce attrition rates in vulnerability cases, especially in relation to victim withdrawal from investigations and cases.
- Our findings provide key insights into how outcomes and victim satisfaction can be improved.

Recommendations have been informed by the findings from the national survey, interviews and focus group, and consultations. They include:

- **Policing needs to define and prioritise the ‘voice of the victim’ within overarching force priorities alongside policies, strategic planning, and performance measurement.**
- **Personnel need ongoing support to develop the appropriate skills, and critically the relational skills and confidence to successfully engage with a diverse range of victims.**
- **Forces should adopt a trauma-informed lens on their engagement with victims.**
- **Forces should foster a culture of support to manage thresholds of acceptability when they are engaging with complex cases so they can still respond appropriately to vulnerability.**



Ongoing work driven by the VKPP and the Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Taskforce will also support how the recommendations can be addressed.

NPCC Lead for Child Protection, Ian Critchley QPM, said: "Victims and survivors are at the centre of everything we do. This work supports policing to make positive change in how it understands and responds to the voice and experience of victims. While we can never take that abuse away from victims, what we can do is give them hope in terms of the path forward by treating them with care, with respect, through showing belief, and by truly listening to the victim voice."

VKPP Head of Research and Review, Dr Debbie Allnock said: "This research, which hears directly from police officers and staff, gives us insight into some of the challenges policing face. But importantly it offers some real opportunities to support the police service to take concrete and meaningful steps towards improving victim-survivors' experiences through what is a traumatising time for them."

Voice of the Victim I – 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

This first study examines policing perspectives on their direct engagement with

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

Dr Kevleigh Dwyer, Research Fellow, Heleni Mital, Research Assistant, Steve Brown, Research Assistant, Miriam Fernandez Aguilera, Research Assistant, and Dr Debra Allnock, Head of Research form part of the VKPP Research and Review Team and have worked in collaboration to produce this report.

victims in both response and investigation. It considers how capability, opportunity and motivational factors can impact on police approaches to voice of the victim.

Voice of the Victim II – The Voice of the Victim in Police Service Design

The second study maps a more strategic view of how some forces engage with victim-survivors to improve overall design of services, better meeting the needs of victims.

The research takes an evidence-led approach to explore where and how improvements can be made across forces.

To learn more about this project, the key findings and to read the reports in full visit www.vkpp.org.uk/vkpp-work/primary-research/voice-of-the-victim

You will also be able to view a number of videos from the voice of the victim team, as well as from Ian Critchley QPM, NPCC lead for Child Protection, Abuse and Investigation, setting out why this work can have a significant impact in improving trust and confidence in policing.

The Voice of the Victim in Police Service Design

Fachal Kizilcivan, Research Fellow, Research Assistants Adam Sadiqullah, Hannah Davis, Corinne Bell, Helena Mital and Kevleigh Dwyer, and Dr Debra Allnock, Head of Research form part of the VKPP Research and Review Team and have worked in collaboration to produce this report.

Read - Ian Critchley's Blog on the importance of Belief

NPCC lead for Child Protection, Abuse and Investigation Ian Critchley's blog on why belief matters and the commitment police chiefs gave to the 6000 victims who courageously gave evidence to the Truth Project. www.hydrantprogramme.co.uk/latest-news

Here is Ian Critchley in front of the camera, filming for the Voice of the Victim project. To see all videos visit www.vkpp.org.uk/vkpp-work or direct on our YouTube channel @vkpp-vulnerability [here](#).



Vulnerability and Exploitation Conference 2024



The National Vulnerability and Exploitation Conference will take place on Thursday 7 and Friday 8 March 2024, hosted by the Hydrant Programme, Tackling Organised Exploitation (TOEX) Programme and Vulnerability, Knowledge, and Practice Programme (VKPP). Do watch out for registration details, coming soon.

The Totality of Police Recorded Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Report

Our CSAE regional analysts are busy working on the annual Totality report which aims to provide a more comprehensive picture of trends and reports in respect of child sexual abuse and exploitation, helping to inform and drive the policing and partner response to protect victims, pursue offenders, and prevent harm.

The report is due for publication in November 2023 for our internal audiences and for the first time a public facing summary version will also be published annually.

Government responds to consultations on the strategy within Stable Homes, Built on Love and Childrens Social Care National Framework and Dashboard

The Government response to Phase 1 "Stable Homes Built on Love", the reforms to children social care and strengthening multi agency child protection has been published.

Phase 2, the response to the consultation about Working Together 2018 and non-statutory information sharing will be published by December 2023

Phase 1 deals with;

1. the strategy itself, Stable Homes, Built on Love – [Children's Social Care: Stable Homes, Built on Love consultation response \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](http://publishing.service.gov.uk)
2. the Framework and Dashboard for children's social care [Children's social care national framework and dashboard: consultation response \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](http://publishing.service.gov.uk)

New statutory guidance for our colleagues in children's social care will be published by December 2023. It takes the form of a National Framework (NF) which brings together the purpose of children's social care, principles for practice and the outcomes that should be achieved for children and young people. Alongside it will be a Dashboard containing national indicators of which there will be a public version. There are plans for Practice Guides. The intention is the NF is instrumental in building a system that is driven by evidence informed practice.

Policing has a voice in its development through the VKPP at the National Practice Group chaired by Isabelle Trowler, who is government's first Chief Social Worker for Children and Families.

Working Together was mentioned frequently in the consultation related to these matters when respondents were sharing feedback related to multi-agency working. Often this was related to the question of what safeguarding partners and relevant agencies can do to support better outcomes for children, young people, and families, with many recognising that Working Together is the multi-agency guidance for everyone with safeguarding responsibilities. In the consultation there were calls to provide a clearer description of the relationship between Working Together, and the National Framework, with clear references, and that there would be benefit of reflecting the National Framework in Working Together too.

Going forward:

Responding to consultation feedback, a new chapter on how multi-agency working enables positive outcomes for children and families will be added to the NF.

No additional burdens on safeguarding partners and relevant agencies and will instead draw content from Working Together to highlight how the system should work to improve outcomes for children and families. The DfE will ensure the National Framework signposts to and aligns with the revised Working Together guidance.