

Scrutiny findings

The new Victims' Code of Practice (VCoP), which came into force in April 2021 is a charter of rights that dictate the minimum level of service victims can expect at every stage of the justice process. The Code, enshrined within 12 rights, sets out the services that must be provided to victims of crime by organisations.

Victims Code of Practice – Child Victims Scrutiny Panel 14th May 2025

It is the Police and Crime Commissioners legal responsibility to hold the Chief Constable to account on behalf of the residents of Devon, Cornwall, and the Isles of Scilly for delivering a police force that works well and meets the needs of its communities. To do this the LCJB 'scrutinises' certain issues and activities including the compliance of the Victims Code of Practice. The scrutiny of VCoP is about reviewing cases and working practices, to recognise and promote good practice, identify any areas for development and support the police as an organisation to learn and improve.

By giving the public this information openly as part of good governance, they can form their own informed views about whether or not they have confidence in the criminal justice system.

It is important that the Criminal Justice partnership continues to focus on the needs of victims and by reviewing cases we can identify:

- Good practice
- Any gaps in service
- Lessons which we could learn
- Where we can influence positive changes in policy and working practices
- Opportunities for improved engagement across the criminal justice system
- Demands on services and how services are performing
- How public money is spent
- Where feedback can be provided.



What are the 12 victim rights?

1. To be able to understand and to be understood.
2. To have the details of the crime recorded without unjustified delay.
3. To be provided with information when reporting the crime.
4. To be referred to services that support victims.
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.

How the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) scrutinises the rights of victims and compliance to the Victims Code of Practice?

The LCJB has a scrutiny panel which is made up of representatives from the Courts, Youth Justice Service, the Police, Probation, and the Crown Prosecution Service. The panel 'dip-samples' criminal cases that have been finalised through the criminal justice system. The panel scrutinises 6 - 8 cases which are selected at random and any personal information of individuals are removed.

The panel review the cases at each panel meeting using anonymised data retrieved from each agency, which provides information on the progression of a case through to its conclusion. They can then identify the services offered to the victim and discuss the 12 victim rights in order to explore whether or not the rights have been fulfilled and a good service given to the victim in the case.

Based on the information that the panel members have available to them; they will then place each case into one of seven categories:

1.	Fully compliant
2.	Partially compliant
3.	Non-compliant
4.	Victim did not engage
5.	Panel failed to reach a decision
6.	Information not recorded
7.	Not applicable

The Panel Meeting

The panel met on 14th May 2025 and scrutinised 6 cases relating to child victims. The cases reviewed involved crimes recorded as; sexual and violent offences.

Statistics

The panel were provided with statistical information relating to victims aged under 18. In 2024 there were 10,381 young victims of crime identified by Devon and Cornwall police, this is up by +513 when compared to the previous year where 9,868 victims were identified.

Children's Commissioners report 2024



Research conducted by the Children's Commissioner's Office around child experiences in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) concluded with the following findings:

- Children are often not aware of their rights as victims
- Adults can minimise a child's experience (particularly when harmed by another child)
- Inappropriate or incorrect language used within the CJS
- Harm- minimising and victim-blaming language used within the CJS
- Children are often re-traumatised during the CJS process
- CJS professionals not meaningfully consulting with children
- Not being offered the opportunity of an advocate (especially when not wanting parents to hear details of crime)
- Lack of mental health support
- Lack of support for these children who harm (could have prevented harm from occurring)

The full report can be found [HERE](#).

The findings from the panel's meeting

The panel reviewed 6 cases, related to child victims.

The panel deemed that 4 cases were found to be overall compliant with the 12 Victims Rights and included good practice such as:



- Information about the trial process were fully explained and victims notified about key decisions throughout the criminal justice process.
- Special measures were explained and considered on all cases, with the option of pretrial visits.
- In one case not all the victims wanted their Victim Personal Statements read out in court, however the Judge had sight and read the statement prior to sentencing. The panel felt this showed good evidence as to the understanding of this right under VCoP.
- The police completed Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) interviews by specialist officers, due to the vulnerability of the victims and their age.
- In some cases, the Victims Needs Assessments (VNAs) were completed promptly, regularly reviewed and refreshed to provide tailored and timely support.
- One case was identified as a Major Incident by the police and a specialist Victim Care Advocate was assigned and worked with school safeguarding staff and other agencies. Extensive work with the victims and family were evidenced, including multi-agency meetings and pre-trial meetings. The police provided regular and ongoing updates to the victims throughout the case. Additional court rooms were set up for the victims and their family. There was good liaison with all agencies including the Youth Justice Service.

The panel deemed **1 case to be Partially compliant with** the 12 Victims Rights. Observations included the following:

- In this case the panel concluded that the case had taken 18 months from the date the offence was reported to a charging decision. This meant a gap in contact and insufficient updates given to the victim.

The panel **Failed to Reach a Decision** in relation to **1 case**. Observations included the following:

- The panel heard how a '[Child First Approach](#)' had been taken by the police as the crime was a conspiracy to rape a very young child, therefore not all of the victims' rights could be applied as the child was oblivious to the offences made against them. Due to the harrowing and sensitive circumstances of the case, all representatives at panel agreed this was the most appropriate action for the victim.
- Under the circumstances the panel felt they could not score the majority of the victims rights and therefore could not reach a decision.

Good practice and learning from the panel

- The panel noted the problems experienced by the police IT system at the time some of these cases were reported, which proved difficult to present a full record of all information to the panel. They also noted problems with the migration of information recorded from an old system to a new system.
- The panel discussed at length a high-profile case which required specialist officers, and a multitude of agencies supporting the victims. The panel discussed who should engage with the victims and at which point in the process and how, to avoid duplication and re-traumatisation. The panel asked if a bespoke piece of work could be undertaken to avoid duplication and re-traumatising the victim.
- The panel highlighting the challenges when dealing with victims who are under 18, to ensure they have their rights under VCoP and their voices are heard, especially in identifying an advocate when children are under the care of social services or in care, with foster placements.

Using the panel's findings to make a difference:

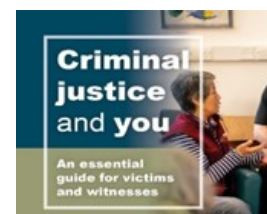
The panel highlighted the challenges when dealing with victims who are under 18, ensuring they have their rights under VCoP and their voices are heard. the panel discussed which agency is best placed to engage with the victims and at which point in the process. The panel asked if a bespoke piece of work could be undertaken to avoid duplication of services and to reduce any re-traumatising for the victim.

The panel report their findings to the agencies who contributed to the panel and those who have statutory responsibilities as detailed within the Victims Code of Practice. Devon and Cornwall Local Criminal Justice Board review findings and agree themes for future panels.

Panel findings may be raised with individual officers, staff and relevant departments across the Criminal Justice partnership and may also cascade learning from the panel throughout their respective agencies.

Support for Victims and Witnesses:

[Criminal Justice and You](#) is a new product which aims to transform the experience of victims and witnesses in the criminal justice system and is a multimedia resource developed by victims for victims, it brings all aspects of the criminal justice system into one place, helping to demystify every step of the process.





Information for victims and the support services which are available locally can be found on the Police and Crime Commissioners website: [Home - Victim Care Devon & Cornwall \(victimcare-dc.org\)](http://victimcare-dc.org)

Restitute is a charity supporting 3rd party survivors of crimes relating to sexual or violent offences, whether parents, carers, partners or close friends who step in to care. To find out more please visit their website at: [We are Restitute - Restitute](http://www.restitute.org.uk)

Find out more about our scrutiny at www.devonandcornwall-pcc.gov.uk/about-us/scrutiny.

If you need this information in a different language or format please contact the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner by email

opcc@dc-pcc.gov.uk

or telephone 01392 497700