



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 – Stalking or Harassment Scrutiny Panel 17th September 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?

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| 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 17th September 2025 and scrutinised 6 cases relating to stalking or harassment cases. Stalking and harassment is when someone repeatedly behaves in a way that makes you feel scared, distressed or threatened. Both stalking and harassment are offences under the [Protection from Harassment Act 1997](#).

Stalking

Stalking is a pattern of fixated and obsessive behaviour which is repeated, persistent, intrusive and causes fear of violence or alarm and distress in the victim.

Stalking may include:

- following someone
- sending unwanted gifts
- making unwanted communications with someone
- damaging property
- going uninvited to their home
- hanging around somewhere they know the person often visits
- watching or spying on someone
- identity theft (signing-up to services, buying things in someone's name)

Stalking often has a huge emotional impact on those it affects. It can lead to feelings of depression, anxiety and even post-traumatic stress disorder. It can be a psychological as well as a physical crime.

Harassment

Harassment is behaviour linked to a specific issue and may include:

- sending abusive text messages or images
- posting abusive messages on social media
- neighbour disputes that involve abusive behaviour or damage to property
- repeated antisocial behaviour
- making unwanted or offensive phone calls

It is harassment if unwanted behaviour has happened two times or more and made you feel distressed or threatened.



Statistics

In the year ending March 2025, an estimated 1.5 million people experienced stalking and 4.2 million experienced harassment in England and Wales, based on the Crime Survey for England and Wales and police-recorded data. There can be a significant gap between the number of people who experience stalking and harassment and the number of offences recorded by the police.

- 678,746 stalking & harassment offences recorded by the police in the year ending September 2023
- 129,076 stalking offences recorded by the police in the year ending March 2024
- 1 in 7 people aged 16 years and over have been a victim of stalking
- 1 in 5 women and around 1 in 11 men has been a victim of stalking
- 1 in 10 people aged 16 years and over have experienced harassment
- 13% of women and 7% of men having experienced some form of harassment.

Since their introduction in 2019, Stalking Protection Orders have been used to allow early police intervention. From February 2021 to December 2021, 434 application for Orders were made and 232 were issued, according to [the latest data from His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service](#).

[Office for National Statistics- Stalking](#)

[Office for National Statistics - Harassment](#)

The findings from the panel's meeting

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.
- promptly, regularly reviewed and refreshed to provide tailored and timely support.

The panel deemed **2 case to be Partially compliant with** the 12 Victims Rights. Observations included the following:

- In one case the panel could not be assured that the victim received all updates after key decisions had been made.



- In both cases it could not be determined if a victim's booklet was provided, which would provide the victim with relevant information covering some of the Codes of Practice.

Good practice and learning from the panel

- The panel noted the police have stalking champions in force who provide guidance and best practice to officers and staff for identifying and responding to cases of stalking.
- The panel were provided with information on the police staking clinic introduced in the force in July 2025 and designed to help the police response to stalking cases by providing specialist investigative support to officers, review complex and high-risk cases and facilitate access to support services for victims.
- The panel noted that the recording of whether a '[victims of crime' leaflet](#) had been given to victims are not always updated on the police NICHE system, and therefore could not be assured that all the victims rights under the Code of Practice had been fully complied with.

Further Information:

The impact of stalking and harassment

Unwanted, repeated attention can have a serious impact on the victims' physical or mental health, as well as day-to-day life. Some people who have been stalked or harassed have had to make changes to their daily lives; some have changed jobs or moved house.
It's important that victims get the support they need.

Support services for stalking and harassment

The National Stalking Helpline

The [National Stalking Helpline](#) provides confidential, free advice and support. You can:

- call the helpline on [0808 802 0300](tel:0808 802 0300)
- email the National Stalking Helpline team: advice@stalkinghelpline.org
- fill in a [contact form](#)

Using the panel's findings to make a difference:

The panel highlighted the challenges when dealing with victims who are under 18,

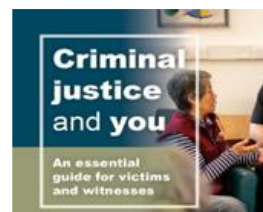
ensuring they have their rights under VCoP and their voices are heard. the panel discussed which agency is best placed to engage with the victims and at which point in the process. The panel asked if a bespoke piece of work could be undertaken to avoid duplication of services and to reduce any re-traumatising 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 \(victimcare-dc.org\)](#)

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