

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 – Knife Crime Scrutiny Panel 15th of April 2026

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 15th April and scrutinised 6 cases relating to knife crime.

The College of Policing defines Knife crime as relating to crimes involving knives or other bladed or pointed articles. The carrying and use of a bladed weapon is prohibited in a variety of contexts and there are specific knives that are illegal to own, sell and/or carrying in public. In addition, the use of a weapon in a violent incident may be an aggravating factor in sentencing. The Crown Prosecution Service has a detailed description of legislation relating to knife crime: [Knife and other weapons offences](#)

Statistics

The panel were provided statistical data relating to knife crime with the most recent data for the year ending 2025 from the Office of National Statistics.

- Knife-enabled crime recorded by the police decreased by 9% in year ending (YE) September 2025 (to 50,430 offences), compared with YE September 2024 (55,149 offences). This was also 9% lower than YE March 2020 (55,170 offences).
- Most knife-enabled crimes were categorised as assault with injury and assault with intent to cause serious harm (43%) and robbery (41%) offences. Fewer than 1% of knife-enabled crimes were homicide offences (0.3%). Knife-enabled homicide fell by 23% (to 174 offences) compared with the previous year (227 offences).
- The latest provisional admissions data for NHS hospitals in England and Wales showed a 10% decrease in the number of admissions for assault by a sharp object in YE September 2025 (to 3,427 admissions) compared with YE September 2024 (3,800 admissions).

Devon and Cornwall Statistics:

- Over the past 12 months knife related crime has had a small rise to 3,039 offences occurring in the 12 months leading to 09/04/2026.
- This is an overall +3.3% for all knife crime over the past 12 months.
- Violence with injury is the most common offence group at 619 offences but a downwards trend of -8.2% over the past 12 months.
- Possession offences second most common with 611 offences which over the past 12 months has had an upwards trend of +11.3%.

The findings from the panel's meeting

The panel deemed 4 cases **to be Partially compliant** with the 12 Victims Rights. Observations included the following:

- The panel could not be assured all rights had been complied with under the code of practice as not all information was recorded.
- In one case a Victims Personal Statement (VPS) was not completed, and whilst the panel appreciated the victim did not engage with police, the victim may have changed their mind at a later stage and could have been offered a VPS again at a later stage.
- In one case a Victim Needs Assessment was not completed and the panel could not be assured right 5, to be provided with information about compensation, had been given to the victim.
- In one case the panel could not be assured that support referrals had been considered for the victim.

The panel **failed to reach a decision** on 2 cases;

- In one case the panel did not have access to all the information as the case was investigated by the Major Crime Investigation Team and the case papers held on HOLMES, the panel have no access to the system.
- In one case the panel were provided with information of a linked offence of assault and not the offence of knife crime.

Learning from the panel:

- In cases where there has been a fatality, it would be beneficial to have a nominated person (family member) as a point of contact recorded on NICHE, to ensure updates and victim rights (when applicable) can be expedited quickly.
- The police and HMCTS representatives at panel questioned whether student officers are being provided with sufficient information around the Victims Code of Practice.
- In some cases, not all witnesses are being treated as victims, i.e. in one case a young person witnessed the stabbing of a parent. This young person could have been treated as a victim and offered support services.



Updates provided to the panel:

Update from the Police Knife Crime Lead

- The Force now have a Knife Crime Governance Structure and this includes nominated Inspectors in all geographical areas responsible for knife crime, a proactive knife crime officer and a dedicated Single Point Of Contact (SPOC) in Corporate Communications.
- There are now 4 knife arches in force.
- Proactive test purchasing is operating throughout the force, whereby the police use cadets to check if retailers are complying with the law banning sales of knives to under 18s.

Not the One

The [#NotTheOne website](#) gets its name from the statistic around people who carry a knife. In Devon & Cornwall just one in 1000 people carry a knife. The police are urging people, in particular young people, to make sure they are 'not the one' as carrying a knife will not make them safer. The reverse is actually true. People are more in danger of being injured if they choose to carry a knife.

The website is supported by MIKES Trust, a charity founded by the family of Michael Riddiough-Allen who died following a knife attack outside of a Bodmin nightclub in 2023.

Victim Portal

A new Victims Portal is being trialled in various forces throughout the Country. The portal enables victims to access key information in one place such as their crime report, victim rights and the support services that are available to them. Victims will also be able to check the status of an investigation, get updates as their case progresses, and message the officer in charge of their case, all through a two-way messaging service accessed via a link on their phone or computer.

CPS victims Guide

The CPS provided the panel with the Victims' Guide which explains what happens to a case when sent to CPS.

[Victims' Guide – what happens when a case comes to the CPS | The Crown Prosecution Service](#)



VCoP Consultation

The Chair advised the panel of The Victims' Code of Practice consultation which is a UK government initiative gathering feedback on a revised Code to better deliver victims' rights, including a new child-specific version. It focuses on improved support, communication, and participation for victims of crime within the criminal justice system.

Link to access the consultation : [Consultation on a new Victims Code of Practice.](#)

Knife Angel

A 27ft high national monument against violence and aggression made of 100,000 knives which had been surrendered or seized by police arrived in Plymouth during March. The installation was funded by the Office of Police & Crime Commissioner and supported by partners such as Plymouth City Council and Devon and Cornwall police.

The Knife Angel was situated between the Civic Centre and Guildhall and served as a powerful reminder of the impact that violence can have on individuals, families and communities.

Partners from across the city delivered school workshops, held community conversations and sessions focused on violence against women and girls, youth activities and opportunities for pledges and reflections. The aim was to build understanding, challenge myths, encourage safe choices and promote early access to help where needed.

Using the panel's findings to make a difference:

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://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