

Victims and witnesses: Providing better support

A self-assessment tool for policymakers and practitioners

What is the tool for?

This tool is for policymakers and practitioners to assess their performance in relation to a range of victim/witness service delivery issues, and to identify where improvement activity needs to be focused. It accompanies the national report *Victims and witnesses: Providing better support*, which tracks the pathway of victims and witnesses from incident through to court and afterwards, identifying where failures and weaknesses in services are occurring, and making recommendations to address these.

The aims of the tool are to:

- inform the planning process;
- develop a shared view on objectives and priorities;
- identify local strengths and weaknesses; and
- build a stronger sense of partnership working.

Who is the tool for?

- Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJBs)
- Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs)
- Local authorities
- Police forces/authorities
- CPS
- Courts
- Defence services
- Probation services
- Prisons
- Victim Support
- Local voluntary sector organisations/community groups

How should it be used?

The tool is designed to be used at a CJS area level. How areas decide it is best used is a matter of local choice, but for maximum impact it needs buy-in from all the agencies and partnerships involved, and someone must take responsibility for leading and co-ordinating the work.

The tool can be used chronologically or thematically – by following four key stages of the victim/witness pathway, or by following the six improvement themes identified in the national

report and represented by colour codes in the tool. These themes are:

- agencies must understand the **demand** for services from victims and witnesses in order to respond appropriately and effectively;
- there must be **cultural** change to recognise that meeting people's individual needs is key to improving victim and witness satisfaction;
- clear **accountability** for performance and service quality is essential to drive improvement;
- better use and communication of **information** is critical to keeping victims and witnesses engaged;
- appropriate and timely **support** is critical to ensuring that victims and witnesses stay engaged; and
- agencies can achieve significant change by using local **resources** in a more co-ordinated way.

For every key area to address we have marked with ticks the partnerships and/or agencies that *we suggest* might take responsibility for action. However, this is for guidance only and local discretion is recommended.

A scoring system is provided to encourage careful consideration of the extent to which the key areas have been addressed and to identify those areas most in need of improvement. It is not intended to result in an overall score of performance, or comparisons with other agencies or areas. Areas to address marked with an asterisk are in support of the Victims and Witnesses checklist in the Home Office document *Improving Public Satisfaction and Confidence in the CJS*.

What should be done with the results?

The results should be used to understand what is currently being done well and could be built upon, what is in need of improvement and what has yet to be addressed. This should allow the identification and prioritisation of actions, which must be owned and have clear timescales and outcomes. The person leading the work should take responsibility for bringing together results, co-ordinating action and monitoring progress.