Cumbria Office of Police Fire and Crime Commissioner

**Cumbria Police Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) response to inspections of Cumbria Constabulary published by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)**

*Section 33 of the Police Act 1996 (as amended by section 37 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017) requires local policing bodies to respond to recommendations in inspectors reports within 56 days.*

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| **Inspection Title:** | #30073 – Meeting the needs of victims in the criminal justice system |
| **Date Published:** | 19/12/23 |
| **Type of Inspection:** | Joint Inspection |
| **Key Findings** | |
| This inspection aimed to assess how well the criminal justice system meets the needs of victims, from when a victim reports an offence to after the offender has been convicted.  It was a joint inspection by HMICFRS, His Majesty’s Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate and His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation. In this inspection, HMICFRS assessed whether the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Probation Service understand what victims need, whether they meet those needs and whether they provide a good quality service.  HMICFRS found that for many victims this wasn’t the case.  This report sets out HMICFRS’ findings. | |
| **Recommendations:** | |
| Recommendation - By 31 December 2024, the College of Policing should work with the National Police Chiefs’ Council and chief constables to develop minimum standards for the completion of victim needs assessments. These should include standards for timeliness of completion and clarity on the information to be recorded. | |
| **PFCC & Constabulary Response to Report and Recommendation:** | |
| The Constabulary and I welcome the joint inspection by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS) relating to meeting the needs of victims in the criminal justice system (CJS).  We recognise that the recommendation will provide consistency across the country as to the standards that should be achieved within the Victim Needs Assessment. Whilst Cumbria Constabulary continually audit the compliance of the Victims Code (which includes the Victim Needs Assessment) to inform performance and improve its service to victims of crime, the development of ‘minimum standards’ will provide comparability and enable the identification and dissemination of learning and peer support from the highest performing forces. The Constabulary are awaiting contact from the College of Policing to assist in the development of these minimum standards, upon doing so, I am assured that the Constabulary will engage and contribute to the development of the standards. I will request regular updates on the progression of this recommendation via my accountability framework.  Currently, Cumbria utilises the Safer Cumbria Partnership to ensure partners are compliant with victim’s code of practice. One of the ways that this is achieved is via Cumbria’s Criminal Justice Board which sits underneath the Safer Cumbria Partnership. In this Board, the minimum standards that will be released in December 2024, will be discussed in a multi-agency forum with the view to a develop a Victim Needs Assessment.  Cumbria’s Victim’s Quality Champion, who sits within the OPFCC and attends the Criminal Justice Board, is responsible in producing the Quality Assessment Framework. In this report, victim cases that have gone through the CJS, are randomly dip sampled. Scrutiny is then applied against each case to review compliance of the Victims Code against agencies who have a statutory responsibility. The report also includes relevant observations on cases from a victim-focussed perspective, to improve the experience of victims going through the CJS.  The Constabulary are currently developing a new crime system, which the Victim’s Quality Champion is working closely alongside Constabulary colleagues and IT staff to seek assurance that victims care is considered in the new system. The work will enable OPFCC and Constabulary to have a greater understanding of what portion of victims are not receiving an enhanced service and will allow us to monitor compliance of victim’s code of practice and inform future needs assessments.  I will continue to monitor the Force’s progress in completing this recommendation and work alongside my colleagues to ensure that victims of crime in Cumbria are supported throughout their criminal justice journey. | |