

# Safer and Stronger Communities Board

Agenda

Thursday, 20 January 2022  
11.00 am

Virtual via Microsoft Teams

**To:** Members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board  
**cc:** Named officers for briefing purposes

[www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk)

This meeting is



Safer & Stronger Communities Board  
20 January 2022

---

There will be a meeting of the Safer & Stronger Communities Board at **11.00 am on Thursday, 20 January 2022** via Microsoft Teams.

**Political Group meetings:**

The group meetings will take place in advance of the meeting. Please contact your political group as outlined below for further details.

**Apologies:**

Please notify your political group office (see contact telephone numbers below) if you are unable to attend this meeting.

<b>Conservative:</b>	Group Office: 020 7664 3223	email: <a href="mailto:lgaconservatives@local.gov.uk">lgaconservatives@local.gov.uk</a>
<b>Labour:</b>	Group Office: 020 7664 3263	email: <a href="mailto:LABGP@lga.gov.uk">LABGP@lga.gov.uk</a>
<b>Liberal Democrat:</b>	Group Office: 020 7664 3235	email: <a href="mailto:libdem@local.gov.uk">libdem@local.gov.uk</a>
<b>Independent:</b>	Group Office: 020 7664 3224	email: <a href="mailto:independent.grouplga@local.gov.uk">independent.grouplga@local.gov.uk</a>

**LGA Contact:**

Tahmina Akther  
tahmina.akther@local.gov.uk | 0207 072 7444

**Carers' Allowance**

As part of the LGA Members' Allowances Scheme a Carer's Allowance of £9.00 per hour or £10.55 if receiving London living wage is available to cover the cost of dependants (i.e. children, elderly people or people with disabilities) incurred as a result of attending this meeting.

**Social Media**

The LGA is committed to using social media in a co-ordinated and sensible way, as part of a strategic approach to communications, to help enhance the reputation of local government, improvement engagement with different elements of the community and drive efficiency. Please feel free to use social media during this meeting. **However, you are requested not to use social media during any confidential items.**

The twitter hashtag for this meeting is #lgassc

## Safer & Stronger Communities Board – Membership 2021/2022

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Authority</b>
<b>Conservative ( 7 )</b>	
Cllr Mohan Iyengar (Vice Chairman)	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council
Cllr Eric Allen	Sutton London Borough Council
Cllr Bill Borrett	Norfolk County Council
Cllr Lewis Cocking	Broxbourne Borough Council
Cllr Julia Lepoidevin	Coventry City Council
Cllr Lois Samuel	West Devon Borough Council
Cllr Arnold Saunders	Salford City Council
<b>Substitutes</b>	
Cllr Graeme Coombes	Bedford Borough Council
Cllr Paul Findlow	Cheshire East Council
Cllr James Gartside	Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council
<b>Labour ( 7 )</b>	
Cllr Nesil Caliskan (Chair)	Enfield Council
Cllr Asher Craig	Bristol City Council
Cllr Alan Rhodes	Bassetlaw District Council
Mayor Damien Egan	Lewisham London Borough Council
Cllr Jeanie Bell	St Helens Council
Cllr James Beckles	Newham London Borough Council
Cllr James Dawson	Erewash Borough Council
<b>Substitutes</b>	
Cllr Kaya Comer-Schwartz	Islington London Borough Council
Cllr Margaret Mullane	Barking and Dagenham London Borough
Cllr Clive Johnson	Medway Council
<b>Liberal Democrat ( 2 )</b>	
Cllr Heather Kidd (Deputy Chair)	Shropshire Council
Cllr Jon Ball	Ealing Council
<b>Substitutes</b>	
Cllr Kris Brown	Liverpool City Council
<b>Independent ( 2 )</b>	
Cllr Clive Woodbridge (Deputy Chair)	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
Cllr Philip Evans JP	Conwy County Borough Council
<b>Substitutes</b>	
Cllr Nicola Dillon Jones	North Kesteven District Council
Cllr Karen Lucioni	Isle of Wight Council
Cllr Paul Hilliard	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council

## Agenda

---

### **Safer & Stronger Communities Board**

Thursday 20 January 2022

11.00 am

Virtual via Microsoft Teams

---

<b>Item</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>4. Victim's Bill Consultation</b>	<b>1 - 6</b>
a) Draft LGA response to Victim's Bill consultation	7 - 22

**Date of Next Meeting:** Thursday, 24 March 2022, 11.00 am, TBC

20 January 2021

## **Improving victims' experiences of the justice system**

### **Purpose of report**

For direction.

### **Summary**

The Ministry of Justice has [published](#) a consultation on improving victims' experiences of the justice system. This report outlines the key proposals in the consultation and requests the Board's views on the LGA's consultation response.

### **Recommendation/s**

Board members have been asked to provide direction on the LGA's response to the consultation on improving the victims' experience of the justice system.

### **Action/s**

Officers to amend the LGA consultation response based on feedback from Safer and Stronger Community board members and take forward this piece of work, as directed.

**Contact officer:** Rachel Phelps  
**Position:** Policy Adviser  
**Phone no:** 0207 664 3119  
**Email:** Rachel.Phelps@local.gov.uk

## **Improving victims' experiences of the justice system**

### **Background**

1. The Ministry of Justice has [published](#) a consultation on improving victims' experiences of the justice system. This consultation is the first step towards a 'Victims' Law' – a forthcoming Bill which is expected to build on the foundations provided by the [Victims' Code](#) to better support victims through and beyond the criminal justice process.
2. The Government have outlined five principles of the proposed Victims' Law Bill:
  - 2.1. To amplify victims' voices in the criminal justice process;
  - 2.2. To increase the transparency of the performance of our criminal justice agencies;
  - 2.3. To make sure that there are clear lines of accountability for when victims do not receive the right level of service;
  - 2.4. To support victims to rebuild their lives through accessible and professional services, and ensure that criminals pay more to support these services; and
  - 2.5. To ensure there are better tools to protect victims and prosecute culprits.
3. The first part of the consultation focuses on how to enshrine the Victims' Code in law and considers whether to strengthen what victims should expect in key areas – in particular how the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), police and other agencies communicate with victims, how victims might engage with the parole process and how to mainstream the use of Community Impact Statements in appropriate cases.
4. The Government also proposes a bolstered oversight framework so that agencies can be better held to account for delivering a quality service to victims and asks how victims' feedback could be better used to drive improvements. There are also questions about the Victims' Surcharge (which ensures that offenders are making adequate financial reparation towards the cost of support for victims) and the role of the Victims' Commissioner in monitoring compliance with the Victims' Code.
5. The final part of the consultation focuses on support for victims of some crimes, looking at community-based support for domestic abuse, serious violence and sexual violence services. In particular, the consultation focuses on how national and local government could improve current commissioning practices, and whether a new legislative duty on multiple agencies to deliver victims services would be beneficial.
6. The consultation also considers improving support from independent advocates for victims of traumatic and often hidden crimes (such as Independent Domestic Violence Advisers

20 January 2021

(IDVAs)/ and Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs)), to help them recover and stay engaged in the criminal justice system.

7. Following the consultation closing on 3 February 2022, the Government will publish its consultation response and lay a copy of the Draft Victims' Bill before Parliament for pre-legislative scrutiny. A joint select committee is expected to be convened to consider the provisions in the Bill and make recommendations to the Government about how it can be improved. The Government will respond to these recommendations and identify which changes (if any) it intends to make to the Bill, before introducing the legislation to Parliament to be debated by both Houses. The LGA will continue to engage with Parliamentarians as the Bill proceeds through the Houses of Parliament and will update Board members on the Bill's progress.

### **LGA response**

8. A draft copy of the LGA's response to the Government consultation is attached in **Annex A**. Our response focuses primarily on the provision for community-based support, (for domestic abuse, sexual violence and serious violence services), and whether there should be a legislative duty on multiple agencies to deliver these services: it also comments on the role of the Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales, the advocacy role of IDVAs and ISVAs, and the importance of amplifying the victims' voice in the criminal justice process. Our response does not comment on police procedure or certain court proceedings where there are no immediate implications for councils. **However, the Board may wish to flag any additional areas in the consultation where they feel the LGA should take a position.**
9. The following paragraphs set out some of our key points in responding to the consultation.
10. **Consultation's principles:** We welcome the consultation's emphasis on putting victims at the heart of the criminal justice system, ensuring they are supported so they can participate properly at every step, and not feel peripheral to the process. The Government has said it is determined to improve the service and support that victims receive – from the moment a crime is committed right the way through to their experience in the courtroom.
11. **Prevention of crime:** It is also important to recognise our ultimate ambition should be to prevent these crimes from occurring in the first place. Our response, therefore, highlights that the introduction of a Victims' Law should also be accompanied by a wider commitment to prevent crime and invest in early intervention and prevention services. This must be a cross-Government approach, rather than a solely criminal justice-led issue.

20 January 2021

12. **Align with wider legislation and strategies:** Our response emphasises the need for the Government’s various strategies, guidance, and forthcoming legislation to work cohesively with the forthcoming Victims’ Law Bill. This consultation focuses on particular victim support services (domestic abuse, serious violence and sexual violence), all of which are also being addressed through the recent Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the Policing, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy, and the forthcoming Domestic Abuse strategy: it is therefore important that these overlapping approaches are aligned and joined up across Government.
13. **Victim support:** We emphasise that it is important that victims of all crimes are supported effectively and treated with respect, dignity, sensitivity, compassion and courtesy. The consultation sets out proposed support for a small number of very serious crimes; however, we highlight that victims of anti-social behaviour, who often feel their case is treated as “low-level” or less important than serious violent crime or wider criminal offences, also need to be supported; modern slavery is another area where there are often gaps in support for victims. **The Board’s view on the differential approach proposed to victims of different types of serious crime would be helpful.**
14. **Legislative duty for community-based support:** On the questions relating to a statutory duty to deliver community-based support services, our draft response recognises the importance of these. Community-based support services play a significant role in preventing domestic abuse, for example; for victims and survivors of domestic abuse accessing support, 70 per cent of them will do so via community-based services, with the vast majority never spending time in refuge accommodation.
15. However, the draft response argues that adding a legislative duty doesn’t automatically improve collaboration or partnership-working or lead to the increased provision of community based support, and that if duties are not adequately funded, they will not be effective. We would argue that a sector-led approach backed up by funding, which provides local areas with the flexibility and resources to identify local priorities and take action, is one of the best ways to improve collaboration and therefore support to individuals.
16. Currently, funding for support services is often made available to commissioning organisations such as councils and PCCs through short-term, one-off funds from various Government departments. It can often be challenging for local organisations to navigate the various funds that are available, with little time to submit a bid or spend the funding in a short timeframe. This leads to uncertainty within the support sector, with many organisations encountering difficulties with recruitment of staff and provision of service due to uncertainty of long-term funding. This is especially true of smaller support organisations, particularly those providing “by and for” services which offer specialist and bespoke support, which are so desperately needed.



20 January 2021

17. Additionally, the [Domestic Abuse Commissioner's office has outlined](#), that the scale and prevalence of domestic abuse, as well as the impact of the pandemic means that the demand for services still far outstrips provision of the most tailored, holistic forms of support to victims and survivors. A failure to invest in these services can lead to further long-term costs for the Government. When finalised in Spring 2022, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's mapping work will help to provide a more accurate sense of the total amount required to fund community-based services. The draft response sets out that it will be important for the Government to consider this evidence on the need for greater investment in community-based support. **Does the Board support a call for a more consistent approach to victims of different types of crime, supported by appropriate long-term funding?**
18. Finally, separate to the question of whether what is most needed is better resourcing and increased capacity in the agencies a duty would be binding on, there is also a question of whether the legislative duties proposed already exist for example through the PCC's role in funding victim's services. There is a danger that by creating additional legislative duties which direct agencies to prioritise victims of specific crime types, this could risk unintended consequences that sees victims of other crimes deprioritised, when what is needed is to address a broad range of issues based on local needs. **The Board's view on a new legislative duty to provide community-based support services would be helpful.**
19. **Domestic abuse and VAWG:** As we have said in all of our work on Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) and domestic abuse, the draft response is clear that there needs to be an equal focus on and funding for prevention and early intervention measures that aim to prevent abuse from happening in the first place, starting from the earliest level with a focus on relationships and sex education. Community level initiatives, and perpetrator interventions, are also critical.
20. **Partnership landscape:** In addition to the Victim's Bill, there is a need for clarity on how Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) and Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) are expected to work together, given the overlapping, but diverse range of community safety issues they cover and the varied funding streams available to different partners.

### **Implications for Wales**

21. The areas examined within the Government's consultation document broadly apply to England or England and Wales only, including some relating to health and care, education and local authorities that are devolved matters in Wales.
22. The Government has confirmed it will continue to discuss the package of legislative and non-legislative proposals with the Welsh Government, as the agenda moves forward.

20 January 2021

23. During the consultation period, the Government has said it intends to engage with Welsh victims, criminal justice partners and third sector organisations to make sure their voices are heard, and their views are understood on how this legislation will distinctly affect Wales.
24. The LGA will continue to liaise with the WLGA and councils, as the consultation and legislation progresses.

### **Financial Implications**

25. There may be additional financial burdens for councils identified through the course of the Victims' Law, should a new statutory duty be proposed for local authorities to deliver community-based support services. LGA officers will liaise with the relevant Government departments and councils on any new burdens funding requirements.

### **Next steps**

26. Officers to include any agreed feedback as part of the LGA's response to the Government's consultation on improving victims' experiences of the criminal justice system. The consultation closes on 3 February 2022. A final copy of the LGA's consultation response will be shared with Board members, as part of the update paper, at the next meeting.

**LGA response to the Government's consultation: Delivering justice for victims - A consultation on improving victims' experiences of the justice system**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1039431/delivering-justice-fo-victims-consultation.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1039431/delivering-justice-fo-victims-consultation.pdf)

**About the Local Government Association (LGA)**

The Local Government Association (LGA) is the national voice of local government, and our members include councils and fire and rescue authorities, including Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners. We work with our members to support, promote and improve local government.

We are a politically-led, cross party organisation which works on behalf of councils to ensure local government has a strong, credible voice with national government. We aim to influence and set the political agenda on the issues that matter to councils, so they are able to deliver local solutions to national problems.

**Local Government Association response:**

The Local Government Association welcomes the opportunity to provide a response to the Government's consultation on improving victims' experiences of the criminal justice system. The following submission outlines our key points on behalf of our LGA membership, although local authorities may also look to respond directly to this consultation.

**Question 1:** Do you agree that the key principles set out in the consultation are the right ones? If not, do you have any other suggestions?

The Government's consultation on improving victims' experiences of the criminal justice system outlines that too many victims feel that the system does not deliver justice for them and many feel they are let down by the system, which can compound the pain and suffering from the original crime.

We, therefore, welcome the Government's commitment to improve the service and support that victims receive – from the moment a crime is committed right the way through to their experience in the courtroom.

It is certainly right, that more is done to amplify victims' voices in the criminal justice process and ensure the victims are supported to rebuild their lives through accessible and professional services.

Whilst these are integral principles, our ultimate ambition should be to prevent these crimes from occurring in the first place. So, it is important, that the introduction of a Victims' Law is also accompanied by a wider commitment to prevent crime and invest in early intervention and prevention services. This must be a cross-Government approach, rather than a solely criminal justice-led issue.

The consultation outlines the Government is making progress on a number of issues and plans, which include: targeted and improved support for victims of a range of different crime types and experiences – for example, through a new strategy for domestic abuse to build on the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, a new strategy for tackling hate crime, a new strategy for tackling modern slavery and consideration of ways to better tackle antisocial behaviour through Beating Crime Plan commitments.

We would stress the importance of ensuring the Government's various strategies, guidance, and forthcoming legislation work cohesively with the forthcoming Victims' Law Bill. Whilst this

consultation focuses on particular victim support services (domestic abuse, serious violence and sexual violence) – it is important that victims of all crimes are supported effectively.

### **Code of Practice for Victims of Crime**

The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales (Victim's Code) outlines that a victim is: a person who has suffered harm, including physical, mental or emotional harm or economic loss which was directly caused by a criminal offence or a close relative (or a nominated family spokesperson) of a person whose death was directly caused by a criminal offence.

It is helpful to have a Victim's Code which sets out the services and a minimum standard for these services that must be provided to victims of crime by organisations. However, it is important to acknowledge that many victims of crime will have suffered violence or abuse for a prolonged period of time before they seek help. [On average high-risk victims live with domestic abuse for 2.3 years and domestic abuse victims will experience approximately 50 incidents of abuse before getting effective help.](#) Many victims of domestic abuse or sexual offences, will feel unable to report the crime and may not have the confidence in agencies to help them.

There will also be victims of anti-social behaviour, who feel like their case is treated as “low-level” or less important than serious violent crime or wider criminal offences. It is important to state that all victims should be treated with respect, dignity, sensitivity, compassion and courtesy. Again, this reinforces the need to invest in early intervention and community-based support, which begins upstream and seeks to prevent the crime from occurring, or escalating in the first place.

### **Community-based support services**

It is positive the Government has committed to consult on the provision of community-based support for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence to better understand how we can improve the commissioning and co-ordination of community-based services.

It is important to state that adding a legislative duty doesn't automatically improve collaboration or partnership-working, and if it's not adequately funded – it will not be effective. We would argue that a sector-led approach, which provides local areas with the flexibility and resources to identify local priorities and take action, is one of the best ways to improve collaboration.

The commissioning landscape for domestic abuse community-based support services can be complex. Support services are often commissioned by a variety of organisations, including national commissioning by Government departments, or locally commissioned by Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) and local authorities. Violence Reduction Units and Community Safety Partnerships will also be involved in commissioning decisions. As a result, there may be duplication or gaps in services identified and it can be challenging co-ordinate service provision across local areas.

Government funding for support services is often made available through short-term, one-off funds from various Government departments. It can often be challenging for local organisations to navigate the various funds that are available, with little time to submit a bid or spend the funding in a short timeframe. This leads to uncertainty within the support sector, with many organisations encountering difficulties with recruitment of staff and provision of service. This is especially true of smaller support organisations, particularly those providing

“by and for” services which offer specialist and bespoke support, which are so desperately needed.

Longer term funding commitments would facilitate producing three-year strategies for issues such as domestic abuse, providing much needed stability particularly regarding staffing and commissioning arrangements. The Government should consider how its own funding opportunities could support a longer-term approach to developing these services.

When finalised in Spring 2022, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner’s mapping work will help to provide a more accurate sense of the total amount required to fund community-based services. We will continue to work with the Commissioner’s office to support the call for greater investment in community-based support.

During the passage of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the LGA consistently highlighted the importance of domestic abuse community-based support and called on the Government to provide long-term funding to these vital services. Whilst funding was made available to local authorities for the new statutory duty to provide accommodation-based support services for domestic abuse victims and children (Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act), it was explicitly stated that this funding could not be used for community-based support services, nor could it be used for perpetrator interventions.

In all of our work on VAWG and domestic abuse we have been clear that there needs to be an equal focus on, and funding for, prevention and early intervention measures that aim to prevent abuse from happening in the first place.

This needs to start at the earliest level, with a focus on relationships and sex education actively tackling harmful gender stereotypes and addressing subjects such as domestic and gender-based violence. There is a need to ensure that schools are properly resourced to teach relationships and sex education effectively, including through supporting specialist training. Awareness raising and developing understanding of what are, and what are not acceptable behaviours, should also be promoted through non-academic settings and other youth services and interventions.

There is also a need to invest in community level initiatives and communications campaigns that seek to raise awareness about violence against women and girls, and help women and girls feel empowered. Initiatives should also focus on prompting perpetrators to recognise their own abusive behaviour and seek help to stop it or prevent it escalating, with a focus on sharing evidence and information about the interventions that are most effective.

### **Trading standards prosecutions**

It should be recognised that councils also bring prosecutions for criminal offences, predominantly under trading standards legislation. The Government took the decision not to include councils within the scope of the Code at the time, but instead agreed to work with them to understand how the Code would impact on councils, and the resource implications of this. We are seeking reassurance that the proposals here do not apply to council prosecutions because in some instances the numbers of victims can be considerable.

### **Community safety landscape**

In this complex and sometimes crowded landscape, there is a need for clarity on how PCCs, CSPs and VRUs are expected to work together, given the overlapping, but diverse range of community safety issues they cover and the varied funding streams available to different partners. The need for guidance on this to support better alignment by VRUs with existing

statutory functions and partnerships was also highlighted in the Home Office's recent evaluation of VRUs.

**Question 2:** What more can government and agencies listed in the Code do to ensure that frontline professionals are aware of what is required of them under the Code?

**LGA response:** The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (Victims' Code) sets out the services and a minimum standard for these services that must be provided to victims of crime by organisations in England and Wales. Enhanced training and the dissemination of best practice could help to publicise the Victims' Code with both frontline professionals and the public, to raise awareness of it.

**Question 3:** What more can government and agencies listed in the Code do to ensure every victim is made aware of the Code and the service they should expect to receive under it?

**LGA response:** As above.

**Question 4:** Do the current procedures around timing and method of communication between the police/CPS and victims about key decisions work for victims? Are there any changes that could be beneficial?

**LGA response:** We welcome any scoping work to assess the challenges related to securing Third Party material for rape and serious sexual offences, as part of the Government's overall commitment to tackling declining rape convictions.

**Question 6:**

a) What are the benefits and costs to greater or different use of Community Impact Statements?

**LGA response:** Liaising with LGA Children's and Young People's Board on response.

b) Can you provide an example of where one has been used effectively?

**LGA response:** Liaising with LGA Children's and Young People's Board on response.

**Question 10:** What should the role of PCCs be in relation to the delivery of a quality service and commissioning victims' support services, and what levers could be given to PCCs to deliver this role and enhance victims' experiences of the criminal justice system at a local level?

The Police and Crime Commissioner has a valuable role as the local victims' champion, providing grant funding to key areas of crime and disorder reduction. To do this effectively, it is important that PCCs and their offices work closely with local community safety partners to agree shared priorities, collaborative ways of working, and ensure that funding is routed to address local crime issues in a way that builds resilience across local services and partners.

We have some concern that in areas such as domestic abuse, there is a mismatch between the statutory responsibilities which are placed on councils and the fact that funding to support domestic abuse victim support services is typically routed through Police and Crime Commissioners. The level of partnership input to PCC bids for funding is variable, and the Government should ensure that funding opportunities are aligned with where new responsibilities are being created.

The introduction of Violence Reduction Units has created an additional vehicle for commissioning services, that (in some areas) sits wholly separate to the Community Safety

Partnerships work. It would be useful for all commissioning / de-commissioning of relevant community safety services to be discussed between partners. Consideration could be given to a requirement for PCCs to undertake a needs assessment to help frame the approach to commissioning / decommissioning and grant decisions across their term of office. This would help support consistent and transparent commissioning processes and procedures and provide clarity for local partners.

It would be helpful if there was a more consistent commitment to the provision of longer-term funding of specialist services, embedded across PCCs, rather than short term 'quick win' style funding of 12 months. While some PCCs are very open to providing two to three years of funding, others continue to fund for six-twelve months.

This can be problematic because short term funding can undermine the resilience and effectiveness of services which need to build trust and relationships with those who are vulnerable and make sustained changes to support a victim's journey and to build partnership working. Longer term funding commitments would facilitate producing three-year strategies for issues such as domestic abuse, providing much needed stability particularly regarding staffing and commissioning arrangements. The Government should also consider how its own funding opportunities can support a longer-term approach to developing services.

In this complex and sometimes crowded landscape, there is a need for clarity on how PCCs, CSPs and VRUs are expected to work together, given the overlapping, but diverse range of community safety issues they cover and the varied funding streams available to different partners. The need for guidance on this to support better alignment by VRUs with existing statutory functions and partnerships was also highlighted in the Home Office's recent evaluation of VRUs.

With current and forthcoming legislation expected to amend the role and remit of Community Safety Partnerships in the future, it will be important for PCCs and relevant partnerships to have clearly defined roles and ways of working. There should be an emphasis on strong partnership working and joint decision-making as the default position, including in relation to funding bids.

**Question 13:** What are the most critical functions to enable an effective Victims' Commissioner?

The Victims' Commissioner role provides important leadership on issues affecting victims of crime. As outlined in the Victims' [Commissioner's 2021 – 2022 strategy](#), the Commissioner is committed to ensuring victims are supported in coping and recovering from the impact of crime and they are empowered to play a full part in the criminal justice system of England and Wales.

The Victims' Commissioner has an important role to play in facilitating learning and the sharing of information across different agencies to help implement changes at a national level. Dame Vera Baird QC has outlined the importance of gaining first-hand knowledge and understanding of victims' services, to identify and actively promote examples of good practice and excellence. The LGA supports this approach, and we will continue to work closely with the Victims' Commissioner, to help share best practice across local government and with partners. This works particularly well because there is a supportive and collaborative relationship between councils and the Commissioner's office.

The Victims' Commissioner has also identified the importance of regular contact with victims and practitioners of victims' services, to help articulate a view of the criminal justice system from the perspective of victims; contribute to, review and challenge decisions taken by policy



makers and those responsible for developing practice. If we want to see effective change, it is important we listen to the people who have lived these experiences and learn from them about what more can be done to prevent these incidents from happening again. This is a critical function of the Commissioner's role.

The Commissioner should be able to make independent and impartial assessments of policy and practice and offer a perspective independent of government. The previous Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Kevin Hyland OBE, [highlighted](#) the importance of Commissioners having independence from Government as a key measure of success in the role.

The Victims' Commissioner has recommended their Annual Report is submitted to Parliament to review the operation of the Victims' Code. We would welcome greater Parliamentary time being allocated to consider the progress and implementation of the victims' code and support the Commissioner in submitting an Annual Report on this important issue. It may also be beneficial for the Victims' Commissioner's report to be considered by a select committee, to ensure it receives parliamentary attention.

It is positive to see that the Victims' Commissioner and the Domestic Abuse Commissioner work so collaboratively, helping to address important issues throughout passage of the Domestic Abuse Act and wider forms of legislation and guidance. Both Commissioners provide invaluable contributions on behalf of victims of crime, and are careful not to duplicate but to enhance one another's roles.

**Question 19:** How might victims provide immediate feedback on the service they receive and its quality (such as text message, online surveys etc.)?

**LGA response:** It is important to ensure that victims can provide feedback on the services they received, in an accessible, inclusive, and safe way. We would recommend the Government liaises with the Victims Commissioner, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, the voluntary and community sector, and victims directly for their input. In particular, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's office has undertaken extensive work to ensure their recent surveys and mapping exercises are designed with victims, so that the questions and feedback mechanisms are sensitive to those providing feedback. Some consideration also needs to be given to two-way engagement, and ensuring victims are made aware of how their feedback will make a difference and what actions will be taken.

**Question 20:** How do you think we could simplify the existing complaints processes to make them more transparent and easier for victims to use? How could we secure a swifter resolution while allowing for a more consistent approach?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

**Question 21:** What more can be done to improve oversight of complaints handling, including where victims are dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint process?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

**Question 22:** What more might agencies do to embed complaints relating to the Victims' Code into their operational and performance management processes?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

**Question 23:**



- a) What legislative duties placed on local bodies to improve collaboration where multiple groups are involved (such as those set out above) have worked well, and why?

**LGA response:** The consultation identifies the statutory duty outlined in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, which requires the community safety partnership and PCC to collaborate and implement a strategy to reduce local crime and disorder. It also identifies the statutory duty placed on local authorities to provide domestic abuse accommodation-based support and services for domestic abuse victims and children, as outlined in Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

It is important to state that adding a legislative duty doesn't automatically improve collaboration or partnership-working, and if it's not adequately funded – it will not be effective. We would argue that a sector-led approach, which provides local areas with the flexibility and resources to identify local priorities and take action, is one of the best ways to improve collaboration.

For example, we have supported the voluntary approach of Violence Reduction Units, which brings together different organisations, including the police, local government, health, community leaders and other key partners to tackle violent crime by understanding its root causes. Whilst the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill seeks to introduce a serious violence duty – we have instead called for the VRU model to be extended to all police force areas and provided with long-term funding.

There is also a question of whether the legislative duties required already exist, and instead what is needed is better resourcing from central Government and increased capacity in the relevant agencies to ensure the duty is working as it should. There is a danger that by creating additional legislative duties which direct agencies to prioritise specific crime types, this could risk agencies taking a narrow and siloed approach rather than assessing the broad range of community safety issues and identifying local needs and priorities.

- b) What are the risks or potential downsides of such duties?

**LGA response:** Addressed above.

**Question 24:** What works in terms of the current commissioning landscape, both nationally and locally, for support services for victims of:

- a) domestic abuse
- b) sexual violence (including child sexual abuse)
- c) other serious violence?

**LGA response:** The National Statement of Expectations (NSE) 2016 for VAWG commissioning outlines a set of principles, which work well for all victim support services that are commissioned nationally and locally:

1. Put the victim at the centre of service delivery;
2. Have a clear focus on perpetrators in order to keep victims safe;
3. Take a strategic, system-wide approach to commissioning;
4. Are locally-led and safeguard individuals at every point;

5. Raise local awareness of the issues and involve, engage and empower communities to seek, design and deliver solutions to prevent VAWG/ the crime.

As the NSE states, every victim, whether adult or child, is an individual with different experiences, reactions and needs. Local areas should ensure that services are flexible and responsive to the victim's experience and voice.

It is helpful that where commissioning frameworks are established by central Government, that they are consistent across all Government departments, and work with the agencies involved in commissioning and victims directly – to ensure they are fit for purpose.

If we want to ensure these commissioning principles are implemented in practice, this requires long-term sustainable funding. Short-term one-off Government grants, with varying bidding criteria, from multiple Government departments contributes to the varied and sporadic nature of local commissioning.

The [Domestic Abuse Commissioner's office has outlined](#), that the scale and prevalence of domestic abuse, as well as the impact of the pandemic means that the demand for services still far outstrips provision of the most tailored, holistic forms of support to victims and survivors. A failure to invest in these services can lead to further long-term costs for the Government. When finalised in Spring 2022, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's mapping work will help to provide a more accurate sense of the total amount required to fund community-based services.

Whilst this consultation has identified domestic abuse, sexual violence and serious violence as the three main areas of focus for victim support services, councils and their partners may commission services that work across all these crime types and more. For many councils, the most pertinent form of serious violence locally will be domestic abuse. So it is difficult to categorise one support service as "serious violent crime", as that definition will vary from area to area.

With regards to commissioning, we have called for greater investment in community-based support, including early intervention and prevention services, as well as investment and research into perpetrator programmes. We've also called for the Violence Reduction Unit model to be expanded to all police forces areas, and to receive long-term adequate funding.

According to the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's findings, seventy per cent of victims of domestic abuse who access support do so via community-based services, many of whom will never need to access higher cost refuge accommodation if the interventions are successful. Community-based services can include specialist advocacy support, welfare and immigration advice and mental health support – and there is often a high level of overlap between these two services.

**Question 25:** How could the commissioning landscape be better brought together to encourage and improve partnership working and holistic delivery of victim services for:

- a) all victims of domestic abuse
- b) all victims of sexual violence
- c) all victims of other serious violence
- d) children and young people who are victims of these crimes?

**LGA response:** Answered above.

**Question 26:**

- a) What can the Government do to ensure that commissioners are adequately responding and implementing the expertise of smaller, 'by and for' organisations in line with local need?

**LGA response:** It will be helpful to capture the learning and best practice, from local authorities implementing Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 – which specifically highlights the importance of including “by and for” support organisations.

- b) Should national commissioning play a role in the commissioning framework for smaller, 'by and for' organisations?

- Yes – please explain why
- No – please explain why

**Question 27:** What can local commissioners (local authorities and PCCs) do to improve the commissioning of specialist 'by and for' services for their area?

**LGA response:** Specialist by and for services provide highly tailored support for groups of people with protected characteristics and those who experience the highest levels of exclusion from mainstream services. This includes LGBT+, Deaf, disabled and Black and minoritised victims and survivors of domestic abuse as well as migrant women. As the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's Office highlights: “It is well established that victims and survivors with protected characteristics, are best served by specialist “by and for” services”.

It would be helpful for any good practice or learning to be shared, following the implementation of the new statutory duty on local authorities to provide domestic abuse accommodation-based support, which has a specific focus on investing in “by and for” services locally.

**Question 31:** How do IDVAs fit into the wider network of support services available for victims of domestic abuse?

**LGA response:** The LGA has consistently called for the Government to provide funding for community-based domestic abuse support to accompany the new statutory duty for local authorities to deliver domestic abuse accommodation-based support services, as outlined in Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act. The Domestic Abuse Commissioner's [Spending Review submission](#) also outlines the importance of funding community-based support and wider advocacy provision.

As part of the wider provision for domestic abuse victims, Independent Domestic Abuse Advisers (IDVAs) provide integral support services which are vitally needed. IDVAs can help [a victim with everything they need to become safe and rebuild their life, and represent their voice at a Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference \(Marac\), as well as helping them to navigate the criminal justice process and working with the different statutory agencies to provide wraparound support.](#)

Following support from an IDVA service, at the closure of their cases, Safe Live [reported](#) that the majority of survivors reported cessation of each type of domestic abuse (86 per cent physical abuse; 91 per cent sexual abuse; 81 per cent harassment and stalking; 81 per cent jealousy and controlling behaviour). Out of 100 cases, Safe Lives found 84 per cent of survivors reported feeling safer and 73 per cent of survivors felt their quality of life had improved.

The [Safe Lives IDVA dataset](#) identifies that if an IDVA service were to support 100 people across a year, 72 of those victims would be at high risk of serious injury or death. They will have experienced, on average, 2.5 years of domestic abuse. Support from an IDVA would have included explaining criminal justice proceedings in 76 per cent of cases, supporting the client through criminal justice processes in 50 per cent of cases, and providing updates about the court in 49 per cent of cases.

In our [written evidence submission](#) to the Home Affairs Committee inquiry on Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG), we called on the Government to provide a commitment to extend the supply of Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs) and Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs) for at least three years.

**Question 32:** How might defining the IDVA role impact services, other sector workers and IDVAs themselves?

**LGA response:** The Commissioner's office has found that despite overwhelming endorsement from victims, the courts and criminal justice system agencies "frequently seem to have a poor understanding of the role or the value of the support of professional independent advisors". For example, the Commissioner's office has received reports that advisors are not being allowed into a court room or the video-link room. Therefore, we support the [Victims' Commissioner's recommendation](#) for new, clear and widely disseminated guidance about the role of advisors which is based upon a statutory recognition of the role of victim advisors.

**Question 33:** How do ISVAs fit into the wider network of support services available for victims of sexual violence?

**LGA response:** Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs) provide invaluable emotional support and guidance for anyone reporting current or historical sexual offences through the criminal justice system.

As the [Home Office 2017 review](#) identifies, the ISVA role has been supported by a range of agencies, organisations, and victim and survivor groups, all of whom have highlighted the value of the role. A number of independent reviews have also highlighted and reinforced the importance of the ISVA role in supporting victims and survivors.

In our [written evidence submission](#) to the Home Affairs Committee inquiry on Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG), we called on the Government to provide a commitment to extend the supply of Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs) and Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs) for at least three years.

**Question 34:** How might defining the ISVA role impact services, other sector workers and ISVAs themselves?

**LGA response:** as outlined in response to Question 32.

**Question 35:** What are the challenges in accessing advocate services, and how can the Government support advocates to reach victims in all communities?

**LGA response: Transport/ Awareness**

We support the [Victims' Commissioner's recommendation](#), outlined in the Policy Paper on Victims Law, for a statutory entitlement for all victims of serious sexual or violent crime or victims who have been bereaved as a result of a crime to be allocated a victim advisor to support them through their criminal justice journey.

**Question 36:** What other advocacy roles exist that support victims of hidden crimes, such as forms of other serious violence? Please outline the functions these roles perform. To what extent are the challenges faced similar to those experienced by ISVAs and IDVAs? Are there specific barriers?

Youth services and diversionary schemes

**Question 37:** How useful is existing guidance, and how can this guidance be strengthened?

We support the [Victims' Commissioner's recommendation](#) for new, clear and widely disseminated guidance about the role of advisors which is based upon a statutory recognition of the role of victim advisors.

**Question 45:** Please comment on the training required to support advocates for children and young people. How do these differ to adult advocate training, and are there barriers that exist to accessing this?

**LGA response:** Supporting and advocating for children and young people is different to advocating for adults. For example, children and young people will be at differing stages of development, requiring advocates to recognise and respond to different levels of understanding of the situations that they may have experienced and the processes they are now involved in. Children and young people may also be particularly vulnerable to external pressure and coercion by offenders, particularly where these are family members or friends (including perceived friends, such as gang members), requiring advocates to display particular sensitivity and nuance in their support of that individual.

**Question 46:** What are the barriers to effective work with children and young people in this area, and what action could the Government take to address these?

**LGA response:** Support for children and young people may be best delivered, depending on individual circumstances, by representatives of that young person's community. There can be a lack of trust of perceived 'authority' figures, and community representatives can help to overcome this barrier and deliver advocacy support that recognises the context in which children and young people are living.

However, this support can be challenging to identify; funding for community and voluntary sector support has suffered cuts in recent years while much available funding is limited in scope, duration and quantity.

Long-term, sustainable funding is required for the services that support children and young people, including community-based advocacy services, both to train individuals and ensure they are supported long-term. We must also recognise the importance of building relationships with children and young people; we know that children and young people respond better to services where they have an opportunity to build a relationship with an individual, therefore ensuring services have the time they need to build trust with a young person is vital but not always possible where services are rationed due to funding constraints.

## **Wider questions the LGA will not be commenting on:**

**Question 5:**

A) Should the police and CPS do more to take victims' views into account in the course of their duties, particularly around decisions to proceed with cases?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

b) Should there be an explicit requirement for the relevant prosecutor in a case or types of cases to have met with the victim before the charging decision, and before a case proceeds to trial?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

c) What changes, if any, could be made to the Code in relation to information about the Victims' Right to Review Scheme?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

**Question 7:**

a) What changes, if any, could we make to allow victims to be more engaged in the parole process?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

b) What do you think would be the advantages and any risks of implementing those changes?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

**Question 8:** Should victims of mentally disordered offenders be allowed to make and submit a Victim Personal Statement when the offender's detention is being reviewed by the Mental Health Tribunal? Please explain your answer.

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

**Question 9:**

a) Local-level partnership working is vital to ensuring the delivery of a quality service to victims. How can agencies better collaborate locally to deliver and monitor compliance with the Code?

**LGA response:** Seeking Safer and Stronger Communities Board members view

b) How could agencies be encouraged to consistently share data at local and national levels to support monitoring of Code compliance and drive improvements?

**LGA response:** Seeking Safer and Stronger Communities Board members view

**Question 11:**

a) Do you think the current inspectorate frameworks and programmes adequately focus on and prioritise victims' issues and experiences and collaborate effectively across the criminal justice system to do so?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

b) Could inspectorates be reinforced further in relation to victims?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

**Question 12:** Do you think that the current inspectorate arrangements allow sufficient collation of, and reporting on, victims' data and issues across the criminal justice system? Could they be utilised further for this?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

**Question 14:** Are there any oversight mechanisms, measures or powers used in other sectors (for example by the CQC, Ofsted, and FCA) which would be beneficial and appropriate to be used within the criminal justice system to ensure that victims receive a high-quality service?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

**Question 15:** Would a more standardised and consistent approach to oversight, and to incentivising and supporting agencies in relation to delivery of a quality service for victims across the criminal justice system, be beneficial?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

**Question 16:** What should the consequences be for significant failures in relation to delivering a quality service for victims, including complaints relating to the Victims' Code? Should those consequences be directed at criminal justice agencies as a whole and/or individuals responsible for the failure(s)?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

**Question 17:** What do you consider to be the best ways for ensuring that victims' voices, including those of children and young people, are heard by criminal justice agencies?

**LGA response:** Seeking Safer and Stronger Communities Board members view

**Question 18:**

a) What data should criminal justice agencies collect about victims' experiences, and at what key points in the process?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

b) Can you provide any examples – in the UK or elsewhere – of this being done effectively?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

**Question 28:**

a) What challenges exist for victims in accessing integrated support across third sector and health service provisions?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

b) What and how could practical measures or referral mechanisms be put in place to address these?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

**Question 29:**

a) Do you agree that we should explore increasing the surcharge?

• Yes – please explain why

• No – please explain why

• Don't know / no answer



**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

- c) Should we consider an overall percentage increase (for example, increasing the surcharge rate by 20%)? If so, do you have any views on what the percentage increase should be?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

- d) Should we increase the minimum rate (for example, to £100)? If so, do you have any views on what the minimum rate should be?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

**Question 30:** The surcharge for fines differs to the other surcharge impositions, as it is paid by both individuals and organisations and is calculated as a percentage amount of the fine with minimum and maximum caps.

- a) Do you agree that we should review the surcharge paid for fines?

- Yes – please explain why
- No – please explain why

• Don't know / no answer

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

- b) we review the cap rates for surcharge amounts for fines? If so, do you have any views on what the minimum / maximum caps should be?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

- c) Should we review the percentage amount? If so, do you have any views on what the percentage amount should be?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

**Question 38:** Is more action needed to define standards for ISVAs and to ensure they are met? If yes, who is best placed to take this action?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

**Question 39:** Is more action needed to define standards for IDVAs and to ensure they are met? If yes, who is best placed to take this action?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

**Question 40:** What are the advantages and disadvantages of the current qualifications and accreditation structures? Are there any changes that could improve it?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

**Question 41:** How can we ensure that all non-criminal justice agencies (such as schools, doctors, emergency services) are victim aware, and what support do these agencies need in order to interact effectively with IDVAs, ISVAs or other support services?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.



**Question 42:** What are the barriers faced by ISVAs preventing effective cross-agency working, and what steps could the Government take to address these?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

**Question 43:** What are the barriers faced by IDVAs preventing effective cross-agency working, and what steps could the Government take to address these?

**LGA response:** The LGA is not best placed to respond to this question.

**Question 44:** What are the barriers facing specialist or 'by and for' services preventing cross-agency working, and what steps could the Government take to address these?

**LGA response:** Liaising with LGA Children's and Young People's Board on response.

**Question 47:** What best practice is there on referral pathways for children and young people who are victims of crime looking for advocacy support, including interaction with statutory services? Are there barriers to these pathways?

**LGA response:** Liaising with LGA Children's and Young People's Board on response.

**Question 48:** Would providing clarity on the roles and functions of children and young people's advocates be helpful? In your experience, are these roles broad or do they focus on specific harms and crime types that children and young people have experienced?

**LGA response:** Liaising with LGA Children's and Young People's Board on response.

**Question 49:** Have we correctly identified the range and extent of the equalities impacts under this consultation in the equality statement? Please give reasons and supply evidence of further equalities impacts that are not covered as appropriate.

**LGA response:** Still to be answered.

