



A new Victims Code Consultation

(Ministry of Justice)

April 2026

About MWN UK

MWN UK has been advancing equality, and social justice for Muslims women and girls since 2003 and is a registered charity (no.1155092) with a national membership. We provide direct support through our Muslim Women's Network Helpline (www.mwnhelpline.co.uk) which focuses on gender-based violence, (primarily domestic abuse and related issues) and Muslim Safety Net Helpline (www.muslimsafetynet.org.uk) which focuses on anti-Muslim abuse, hostility and discrimination. We also conduct research and use lived experiences to identify policy and practice gaps which informs our advocacy, campaign and resource production work to empower women. Further information about our work can be found on our main organisational website (www.mwnuk.co.uk) .

We have responded to the most relevant questions to us.

3A. What information would be most valuable for victims going through the criminal justice process, including during the investigation and pre-trial, to access on a digital service?

One of the most valuable forms of information for victims is regular communication and updates throughout the criminal justice process. Long periods without contact can be particularly distressing and may leave victims feeling forgotten or uncertain about what is happening in their case.

Good practice involves agreeing with the victim at the outset of how and when updates will be provided. For example, where there are no developments, victims could receive a text message or email every two months simply confirming that there are currently no updates but that their case remains active and they will continue to be informed. Managing expectations is critical, and communication should acknowledge that uncertainty can be frustrating for victims.

Information should be accessible and provided in the victim's preferred language and communication format. Where language barriers exist, information should be communicated

verbally and followed up in writing. Victims should also be able to choose their preferred method of communication, whether by telephone, email, text, face-to-face contact, or video call.

A digital service should provide clear information about:

- The stage their case has reached.
- What happens next in the criminal justice process.
- Expected timescales where possible.
- Reasons for delays.
- Available support services and referral pathways.
- Victims' rights under the Victims Code.
- Contact details for relevant professionals involved in their case.

During waiting periods, regular check-ins are essential to reassure victims that they have not been forgotten. Information and support should be available for victims of all crimes, not solely those who meet the threshold for specialist services.

While specialist domestic abuse and sexual violence services often demonstrate strong trauma-informed practice, support prior to referral can be inconsistent across police forces. Victims may therefore receive varying levels of information and support depending on their location and the individual officer handling their case.

There should also be greater recognition of victims' individual circumstances throughout the process. For example, decisions made by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) are often based solely on case files and may not adequately reflect factors such as a victim's mental health needs, neurodiversity, disability, or communication requirements. Digital services should therefore provide clear information about reasonable adjustments and how victims can request them.

1A. Does the new information, in the blue box in Right 1 entitled 'When and how your needs will be assessed', help victims to understand how their needs will be assessed?

The inclusion of information explaining that a "needs assessment" will take place is helpful because it clearly identifies that there is a formal process designed to assess and respond to a victim's needs. However, while the process may occur in practice, victims are not always aware that what they are experiencing is formally referred to as a needs assessment.

Any information about the assessment should be provided both verbally and in writing. Victims often receive large amounts of information at a stressful and overwhelming time, making it difficult to absorb and retain details. Written information allows victims to revisit and understand the process at their own pace.

The three stages currently outlined are useful, but consideration should be given to including a fourth stage that clearly explains how the process concludes and how victims will be informed of the outcome of the assessment.

Victims should also be directed to the Victims Code and provided with a link or accessible summary explaining their rights.

Communication throughout the assessment process should be trauma-informed and use clear, plain language rather than technical or legal terminology. Information should reflect the victim's level of understanding and individual circumstances.

Although guidance suggests that assessments should be completed within 10 working days of reporting a crime, this timeframe is often unrealistic in practice due to delays in officer allocation or the appointment of a Family Liaison Officer (FLO). As a result, victims' expectations may not be met.

There is also a need for greater clarity regarding who should undertake the needs assessment. The responsibility should sit with a named and appropriately trained individual, such as an FLO or another designated professional with specialist knowledge of trauma-informed practice.

Where interpretation services are required, interpreters should be professionally accredited and have an understanding of police and criminal justice terminology. Poor interpretation can significantly affect communication and outcomes. For example, one of our service users disclosed child sexual abuse to family members through an interpreter, but the interpreter used culturally taboo language that resulted in inaccurate and incomplete communication of the disclosure.

The outcome of the needs assessment should be delivered sensitively and in sufficient time to allow victims to process the information, consider their options, and make informed decisions.

4A. Do you think that the opportunity to make a Victim Impact Statement should be offered to victims once a suspect has been charged and again when a trial is scheduled?

Yes. Victims should be given multiple opportunities to make or update a Victim Impact Statement throughout the criminal justice process, including after charge and again when a trial date has been set.

Victims' circumstances, wellbeing, and understanding of the impact of the crime may change over time. Allowing additional opportunities to update their statement ensures that their experiences and views are accurately reflected.

This process should be accompanied by clear information and support delivered in line with trauma-informed practice. Victims should be signposted to appropriate services, including

Victim Support, Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs), Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs), and Family Liaison Officers where appropriate.

Consideration should also be given to how information is communicated. Current approaches can sometimes be overly standardised. For example, the Victim Contact Scheme is often offered through blanket communications regardless of the nature of the offence or the victim's circumstances.

One service user who was an adult survivor of childhood sexual abuse received information about the Victim Contact Scheme following the conclusion of the trial. The communication outlined the benefits of ongoing contact regarding the offender but was experienced as highly distressing and insensitive. Similar concerns may arise in cases involving domestic abuse, sexual violence, and offences against children. Communications should therefore be tailored to the individual circumstances of victims rather than relying solely on standardised messaging.

Victims should also be informed that during future parole hearings they may submit a new Victim Impact Statement or rely on a previous statement. They should be given options regarding how their views are presented, including the use of summarised or "gist" versions where appropriate.

4K. Do you think that a way for victims to express their views about an offender release should be introduced, recognising that this cannot have an impact on the Parole Board's release decision?

Yes.

Victims should be given a formal opportunity to express their views regarding an offender's release, even where those views do not influence the Parole Board's final decision. Providing this opportunity can help victims feel heard, recognised, and included within the process.

One option would be to include a dedicated section within the Victim Impact Statement that allows victims to express their views about release arrangements, licence conditions, safety concerns, and any ongoing impact they believe release may have on them or their family.

While these views should not determine the Parole Board's decision-making, they could provide valuable context and assist in identifying safeguarding concerns, communication needs, and victim support requirements throughout the parole process.

On behalf of Muslim Women's Network UK,

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(Advocacy Officer)

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