

**London Victims' Board January 2022****Record of Meeting**

<b>Attendees</b>	
London Victims Commissioner	Independent Chair
Crown Prosecution Service	CPS
Judiciary	J
Victim Support	VS
Metropolitan Police Service	MPS
Her Majesty's Court and Tribunals Service	HMCTS
National Probation Service	NPS
Ministry of Justice	MoJ
National Health Service (England)	NHS
Citizens Advice	CA
Parole Board	PB
Bar Council	BC
London Councils	LC
Magistrates Association	MA
Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime	MOPAC

**Agenda Items****1. Welcome, introductions, and apologies**

The Chair welcomed all board members and noted apology from London Heads of Community Safety (LHOCs).

**2. Review of minutes and update on actions arising from the last meeting**

Minutes from the last meeting held October 2021 were accepted and the actions updated.

**3. Victims Law Consultation**

MoJ provided an overview of the consultation process, timeframes and the 14 engagement events consisting of workshops, roundtables and interviews with victims and survivors. The Victims Law is an ambitious bill to support the rights of victims and put the Victims Code of Practice (VCOP) into law. There are issues relating to the Victims Surcharge and the consultation paper sets out plans to increase this and the money going into victim support services. This will enable greater accountability and be a boost to support services. The board discussed VCOP compliance and the benefits of using Community Impact Statements (CIS) at court hearings.

#### **4. London Rape Review 2021**

The Chair presented the findings of the Rape Review. The review looked at 450 rape allegations over a 3-year period for the years 2017, 2018 and 2019. The findings are that victims' confidence is low, with 65% of rape survivors withdrawing from the justice process with 64% withdrawing in the first 30 days. 38% are withdrawing within seven days with only 1% reaching court during the three-year period.

The Rape Review involved speaking with ISVAs, IDVAs and rape survivors to understand more about their concerns and to drive improvement. There needs to be further research to understand why victims/survivors are still deterred from pursuing a justice process despite lots of informal conversations taking place with Police Officers. We need to manage expectations of the victims in this process.

The Chair highlighted that there are more requests by the MPS to see the victims phone in stranger rape cases. Rape victims are being failed, they need to be given access to legal advice, understand their rights to privacy and need a legal advocate to help them through the process.

The Chair expressed the need for a shift focus to the offender. The Chair was concerned about the backlogs and what can be done to tackle this as it is taking too long and victims are dropping out, which in turn is impacting on lower prosecution and conviction rates. MPS stated that they are receptive to the rape review and looking closely at the recommendations.

#### **5. Portfolio Update from London's Victim Commissioner and Partners including MPS update on VAWG strategy and Baroness Casey Review**

##### **London Victims Commissioner Update**

###### Chair's update, VAWG strategy and Police and Crime Plan (PCP) Consultation

The Chair discussed the PCP consultation meeting in December 2021 to engage board members. The Chair holding focus groups with victims of FGM, Honour-based Violence (HBV), Black women, older victims and sex-workers. The consultation period ended on 21st January 2022. The online results will inform the VAWG strategy, alongside the PCP. The MPS are also in the process of developing a VAWG action plan.

###### MPS Update

The MPS discussed the MPS VAWG action plan and the online survey which is now closed seeking public feedback. The MPS Streetsafe pilot is for anyone to anonymously tell the MPS about public places which feel unsafe. There is now a reporting function set up for women to report into. This is under review with local authorities, and community safety partners are looking at lighting and open spaces.

Baroness Casey's Review will start on 6th February and run for the next 9-12 months. The terms of reference (TOR) have been agreed. The review will look at the following areas: MPS systems, standards and procedures, MPS culture, the 'Rebuilding Trust Programme', review of vetting procedures and complaints. The MPS welcome the review across the entire service. There is a clear level of commitment and recognition within the MPS to get the 'behaviour' right and understand the impact on victims.

### CPS Update

The backlog of Crown Court cases is now stabilising. There are two recommendations for the CPS within the Rape Review. CPS are rolling out their trauma-informed training programme.

### National Probation Service (NPS) Update

The Victims Members Group met to discuss the Initial Contact Letters (ICLs). The ICL letter which will be launched nationally will have a big impact.

### London Victims Witness Service (LVWS)

The LVWS provided a summary of Q3 data. LVWS are working closely with Cyber Helpline, a specialist cyber security charity to improve their response to victims of cybercrime and has participated in a training session.

### **Any other business (AOB)**

The Crown Court often found it difficult to screen the language needs of jury members and they are interested in whether any of the board members had examples of good practice, or other suggestions that might be helpful on this issue.

### **Close of meeting.**