

KATE GREEN
**DEPUTY MAYOR
OF GREATER
MANCHESTER**

Rt Hon James Cleverly MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Date: February 2024

Dear Home Secretary,

SUBJECT: Criminal Justice Joint inspection of how well the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Probation Service support victims of crime

I write in response to the recent Criminal Justice Joint inspection of how well the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Probation Service support victims of crime.

I welcome this joint inspection to enable a holistic view of the various touchpoints a victim may encounter on a journey through the criminal justice system. Whilst there is a natural progression to criminal justice cases with ownership passing between appropriate agencies, the one constant throughout is the victim. It is imperative therefore that inspections such as this maintain a broad focus to ensure that individual and collective learning can be identified, acknowledged and responded to in a meaningful way.

The inspection identified a strong recognition from the police and Crown Prosecution Service as to the importance of providing a good service for victims of crime, and indeed a wish to improve the quality of service provided. However, it is disappointing that often high workloads and competing demands impacted on officers' ability to support this. It is also of concern that agencies do not have an effective way of measuring compliance against the victims code and how well they meet the needs of the victim. There is a need for further national guidance from respective agencies to support local practice in this area, and I support those recommendations within the report.

However, I am also aware and sighted on the interim report of Joint case building by the police and Crown Prosecution Service, which also highlights the increased bureaucracy, competing agency requirements plus IT systems that do not talk to each other, which are detrimental to the victim journey. Much more effort will be needed to meet the scale of the challenge.

There is a systemic issue as regards to what is meant by a victim needs assessment – for the purposes of a prosecution it is often framed within legal terms such as requirement for special measures and completion of a personal statement. This is not a holistic approach that manages the needs of victims, for example, safety concerns and the impact of trauma are often missed and this adds to mismanaged expectations.

We are dealing with the significant impact of vacated trials and very little consideration has been given to victim needs in a justice system that is in crisis. This needs a much more progressive and

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determined approach and it raises the question as to whether the Victims and Prisoners Bill measures will deliver agency accountability and most importantly, system change. The Victim Code of Practice exists at the moment but this has failed to deliver the 'whole system approach' required. Victim needs are not systematically recorded effectively, and due to the courts backlog, many vulnerable victims are staying in the system for longer periods of time. Although increasing referrals to the probation Victim Liaison Service is laudable, those whose offenders can serve long sentences are at risk of losing contact, which we have high-profile examples of in Greater Manchester. I would welcome the opportunity for further discussion on this to share local knowledge and experience in Greater Manchester.

In respect of responding to the recommendations within the report, there was one recommendation for Chief Constables to which I can provide the following response:

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.

Having received an update from Greater Manchester Police I can confirm that action is being taken in respect of this recommendation. I understand that the Chief Constable is awaiting the guidance on standards from the College of Policing and the National Police Chiefs' Council. When this has been published, the force will incorporate this into working practices.

I note the findings of the report for policing, in addition to wider Criminal Justice partners. I will therefore ensure that a copy of the inspection report is shared with partners on the Greater Manchester Justice and Rehabilitation Executive for consideration. I will also share this with partners at a new Greater Manchester Victims Strategy Board that is due for implementation soon.

Yours sincerely



Kate Green

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