

Criminal Justice Forum – March 14th 2013

Yellow group

1. What different needs may victims have following a crime?

Victims may suffer from post-traumatic stress and this can also happen to victims who have suffered a 'near miss'. The effects of this can last for many, many years and can be a factor in self-harm and damaging behaviour such as alcohol and drug abuse. Victims may also suffer from 'survivor' guilt.

Sometimes the need will be for practical support e.g. in the event of a fire or a domestic violence incident when the need will be for new locks. There may also be a need for interpreting skills.

Accurate signposting to other sources of support is helpful. Restorative Justice approaches have been found to be very beneficial by victims.

2. What can help or hinder someone recovering from a crime?

Hinder

Fear of being blamed

Attitudes in society

Failure to recognise that the same crime may have a different impact on different people/communities

Delays in the system

Lack of evidence or explanation for decisions

e.g. Public Interest Test – where the Crown Prosecution Service decide not to proceed with an investigation (despite having enough evidence) because it is not in the public interest

Help

Support from family and friends

However some prefer the anonymity of support groups especially if the perpetrator is known to them/family member

Seeing other 'survive'

Effective communication from helping agencies

3. What issues may affect witnesses attending court?

Fear of reprisals

Retribution

Adversarial nature of CJ System

Media coverage

Public Gallery

Wigs and gowns can be intimidating

4. How can we improve services for victims and witnesses?

Inter-agency working

Rediscovering empathy as many of us could be the first port of call for a victim

Offering Listening Services

Being much knowledgeable about the services one another offer

Contributing to policy making and scrutiny panels

Helping victims and witnesses to share both positive and negative experiences

PCC will be setting up Victims Forums to learn first-hand about their needs