



## Victoria Police submission to the *Monitoring the Family Violence Reforms* review by the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor

Victoria Police welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the Implementation Monitor's review of the status and impact of the family violence reforms. We have outlined below our organisational contribution to the reform agenda and comments on the questions you pose.

### What are the major changes you have seen in the family violence service system since the Royal Commission?

The Royal Commission provided a unique opportunity for a whole of community, whole of service system discussion about victim needs, system gaps and collective aspirations for ending family violence. While not all forms of family violence received equal attention, the Royal Commission nonetheless provided a framework for developing a shared understanding of and a common approach to the nominated priorities. This has resulted in overarching reforms such as the development of a new common risk assessment framework (the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework), the state-wide roll out of Risk Assessment and Management Panels, and the information sharing reforms. Achieving such wide-ranging reform is difficult without a mandate that requires all agencies, whether government or non-government, to change.

Significant service system reform has also been enabled by considerable Government investment in people, processes and places. This includes increased funding to the service sector to provide various support services to victims and children who experience family violence, strengthen Child Protection's workforce, and, expand treatment options for young people who display sexually abusive behaviour (such as treatment services, and access to Therapeutic Treatment Orders). There has also been the creation of Specialist Family Violence Courts, and, significant support for interventions that seek to change and challenge violent behaviour, keep perpetrators in view and hold them accountable for their behaviour, including through behavioural change programs and intensive engagement of perpetrators with complex needs. An Expert Advisory Committee on Perpetrator Interventions was also established and published a report on ensuring the diversity of programs, services and initiatives that respond to perpetrators of family violence in Victoria.

The broader system investment by Government has also enabled a complete transformation of the Victoria Police family violence response model, the establishment of a Centre for Learning dedicated to building the workforce's knowledge, skills and practice in responding to family violence, and, strengthening of quality and accountability measures to ensure compliance with policy, procedures and to promote good practice.

This investment has been complemented by other enabling supports, such as major legislative reforms, including the introduction of a Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme and the ability to trial digitally recording the statements of family violence victims as their evidence in chief.

The combination of a collective approach, significant investment and enabling legislation has provided the conditions for step change reform that is well beyond the improvement that could have been achieved by individual agencies incrementally.

As outlined below, this combination of inputs has enabled Victoria Police to make major organisational changes that contribute to the reform of the service system.



## *Transforming the Family Violence Response Model*

The Family Violence Response Model (FVRM) introduces a specialised capability to the police response to family violence. Continuing the evolution of the past twenty years, this adds another tier to the police response that previously relied on frontline members and members seconded to family violence teams. The FVRM aligns our response to family violence with the tiered response to other categories of crime, including sexual offences and child abuse, and general crime, namely the escalation of high risk cases to dedicated specialist investigators, the use of evidence-based risk assessment and management tools, the delivery of targeted and ongoing training, and an increase in capacity commensurate with the volume of demand.

The components of the FVRM are:

### **Family Violence Investigation Units (FVIUs)**

FVIUs have been established within each police division to investigate serious family violence matters, including high risk, complex and repeat cases. They also support general duties police and other specialist units with guidance on appropriate risk management interventions.

In July 2018 Victoria Police introduced the Family Violence Investigation Model Concept of Operations as the cornerstone policy to provide guidance to Victoria Police employees, to facilitate the timely and thorough investigation of family violence offences. It introduces the functions of the FVIUs and provides the investigation charter and expectations of the response. This includes:

- Providing guidance to members to determine where investigation primacy lies;
- Promoting a consistent state-wide approach to the investigation of family violence offences; and,
- Holding perpetrators to account, whilst ensuring there is continued focus on victims and prevention of family violence through a victim-centric approach.

The 31 FVIUs have strengthened Victoria Police's focus on investigation management with specialised victim-centric approaches that prevent further family violence and increase safety for adult and child victims.

Each FVIU is led by a Detective Senior Sergeant, managed by a Detective Sergeant and supported by a team of Investigators, an Intelligence Analyst and a Family Violence Court Liaison Officer.

Whilst they do not make up part of the FVIUs, it is worthwhile noting that family violence-specific police lawyers support the prosecution of family violence matters.

### **A new risk assessment and risk management tool – the Family Violence Report (FVR)**

Developed in partnership with Swinburne University and Forensicare, in response to the Coroner's findings of the Luke Batty Inquest and the Royal Commission, the FVR is a question-based, scored risk assessment tool for the initial police response to family violence incidents. The completed FVR produces a score that is indicative of the likelihood of future family violence reported to police and the severity of that violence. This information guides the police response and is the basis for triage of high-risk family violence cases for proactive risk management and specialist response by the FVIUs. The FVR has also operationalised the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) Framework for Victoria Police.



Practice guidance was also developed to support the new FVR and to ensure it is consistent and sustained.

### A Case Prioritisation and Response Model (CPRM)

The CPRM is a framework for FVIUs to identify and prioritise the highest risk cases and tailor risk management to prevent serious harm. The CPRM ensures consistency of practice across the FVIUs and delivers evidence-based identification of medium and high-risk family violence cases, and, ensures Victoria Police's resources are focused on family violence cases where ongoing harm to victims is likely and where specialist policing responses will have the greatest impact.

### Increased focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities, LGBTI+ communities, people with a disability, older people and youth

The FVR includes a number of direct questions that allow victims and perpetrators to choose to identify with communities of meaning to them and those who may be needing assistance, in order to ensure they have the supports required to participate in the police process. This includes a direct question regarding whether someone has a disability, the type, and the support required for individuals with their disability.

The *Victoria Police Practice Guide – Family Violence – Priority Community Response* highlights some of the key additional considerations members should take when responding to family violence situations within these communities.

In addition, Victoria Police has also produced accessible resources and videos for CALD communities translated into the various languages and available in Easy English. These include:

- *Information and Support Referral* brochure which provides resources and information to respondents of family violence regarding what happens after a family violence incident, including the civil and criminal investigations police may pursue.
- The *Family Violence Safety Notice* booklet which explains what constitutes family violence, what is a Family Violence Safety Notice and the importance of the standard conditions.
- The *Family Violence Safety Notice – Standard Conditions* information sheet which is intended for police to use as a communication aid to explain the importance of complying with the conditions of the Family Violence Safety Notice.
- The *Family Violence: What Police do* information sheets which explain Victoria Police's response to family violence. They have been developed for victims of family violence, perpetrators of family violence and, people and/or services supporting them.
- The *Family Violence: Technical Terms Bilingual Tool* which is designed to help communication when talking about family violence and using interpreters.
- A suite of videos in multiple languages to encourage people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities to seek help if they are experiencing family violence.
- The recently updated *Reporting sexual offences to police* booklet which provides information regarding the police investigation of sexual crime and contact information for support services for victims.



## Aboriginal Family Violence Police Protocols

Aboriginal Family Violence Police Protocols (AFVPPs) are developed in agreement between local communities and police and provide guidance to police in how to effectively engage with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities while responding to family violence in the local area. The protocols serve to strengthen the police response and to reduce the number of family violence incidents over time. In addition to the protocols implemented in Mildura, Ballarat, Darebin, Shepparton, Bairnsdale and Dandenong (prior to the Royal Commission), Victoria Police has since implemented the protocols in further sites - Wimmera, Swan Hill and Warrnambool. Work is underway to also implement the protocol in Echuca and Geelong.

The development of protocols in additional sites in order to provide state-wide coverage will complement the development of an Aboriginal Action Plan by Family Violence Command with Aboriginal communities in support of self-determination.

## *Centre of Learning for Family Violence (CFV)*

The CFV was established in 2017 to deliver tailored career-long education to police. The CFV has conducted an organisational training needs assessment to determine training priorities for each rank and role and commenced with enhancing the family violence specific training provided to recruits. Another key training deliverable to date has been the development and delivery of online and face to face training for all members up to and including the rank of Superintendent in family violence risk assessment and management, including the risk indicators in the new FVR. FVIUs have also received training and education on the new CPRM and, the training program for specialist detectives is under development.

Training and education is also provided in the workplace by the divisional Family Violence Training Officers (FVTOs) who also work from CFV. FVTOs monitor practice and outcomes at the local level and are responsible for making timely and direct interventions to improve knowledge, skills and practice. FVTOs also advise CFV on local workplace issues that merit addressing through formal training courses.

An Academic Board was established in the development of the CFV and its education model, however, an informal model of reference to academic assessment has now been implemented to support CFV's ongoing functioning.

## *New technology to enhance the police response*

### **Body worn camera trial**

Victoria Police completed a trial, from 3 October 2018 to 2 October 2019, of body worn cameras for the purpose of taking a Digitally Recorded Evidence in Chief (DREC) statement from a victim at a family violence incident.

The trial locations were Epping and Ballarat police stations and the FVIUs within those divisions also participated. The court locations impacted by the trial were Heidelberg Magistrates' Court, Ballarat Magistrates' Court and Melbourne Magistrates' Court.

An independent empirical evaluation of the trial has been completed by Monash University. The outcome of the evaluation will inform the expansion of the use of this mechanism for gathering evidence-in-chief for victims across the state, which Victoria Police will commence shortly in collaboration with all key stakeholders to implement and embed this reform.

## **DREC Case study**

### **Incident**

*There was an incident where Joe\* perpetrated violent acts against his partner Anne\* including, strangulation, emotional abuse, taking the Anne's personal items (phone, keys, wallet) so as to isolate her, and, he also physically assaulted her. Anne has four children who were impacted by these acts of violence towards their mother, as well as, victims themselves of emotional abuse from Joe. Bonnie\*, the eldest daughter (16 years old) tried to intervene and protect her mother during the incident and also suffered injuries as a result. Anne and her children managed to barricade themselves in a room inside the house and called 000 for assistance. Joe then proceeded to cause property damage in the house and make threats to kill Anne and Bonnie.*

*Joe has significant mental health issues, uses alcohol, however, at the time of the incident he had no criminal history.*

### **DREC**

*The DREC was taken when Anne was in hospital. Anne was able to tell her story whilst the memories of the incident were still fresh on her mind. The DREC captured the emotional impact of the incident on Anne, the injuries she had suffered as a result, and, Anne was also able to demonstrate how and where she was assaulted by Joe (through gestures and referencing injuries on her body).*

### **Benefits of the DREC**

*The DREC was able to reduce the trauma experienced by Anne in the justice system, as she was only required to tell her story once and in her own words.*

*Higher quality evidence was also able to be captured through the use of the DREC, as it visibly showed the emotional and physical impact of the violence on Anne in a way that a written statement could not.*

### **Outcome**

*Due to the strength of the evidence presented in the DREC no bail application was made by Joe and there was an early guilty plea. This led to the matter being finalised within three days of the incident.*

*This meant that Joe was effectively held to account, there was further reduced trauma for Anne in the court process (i.e. not drawn out, contested), and, Anne and her children were safe.*

*\*Pseudonyms were used for the purpose of this case study to maintain confidentiality.*

## **Video and Audio Recorded Evidence (VARE)**

Amendments to the *Criminal Procedure Act 2009* came into effect from the end of March 2018, enabling the use of VARE statements for children and people with a cognitive impairment who are victims of family violence offences. It is expected that VAREs will reduce re-traumatisation by the justice system for particularly vulnerable victim survivors.



## Mobile devices in the field

Victoria Police is currently rolling out new mobile technology. There have been approximately 12,500 devices rolled out to all frontline members, with additional devices currently being extended to the Senior Sergeant rank.

The availability of this technology has enabled relevant criminal history to be automatically populated on the FVR when police are attending an incident, meaning that they can complete the whole risk assessment in the field. This ensures that previous family violence, non-compliance with court orders and general criminal history informs police assessment and management of risk in real time.

The devices are also being used to capture evidence, carry out identity checks (including whether a person has an unserved intervention order) and swiftly report crime and other events.

## *Strengthening policy, service quality and accountability measures*

### *Policing Harm, Upholding the Right: Victoria Police Strategy for Family Violence, Sexual Offences and Child Abuse 2018-2023*

Victoria Police launched the *Policing Harm* strategy on 8 December 2017. The strategy builds on previous reforms seeking to improve victim experiences and ultimately reduce and prevent violence against women and children and incorporates the findings and recommendations from the Royal Commissions into Family Violence, and Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

The strategy seeks to integrate responses to family violence, sexual offences and child abuse where these themes are linked or co-occurring.

The strategy sets out Victoria Police's strategic vision and leadership objectives.

The strategy is implemented through rolling action plans led by Family Violence Command. The second rolling action plan is under development to review and adjust our progress toward our objectives in relation to victim safety, perpetrator accountability, child safety and our workforce capability.

## Practice Guidance

To support the roll out of the new Family Violence Response Model, Victoria Police developed five detailed Practice Guides that will be regularly updated:

- Practice Guide – Family Violence Report L17 – Frontline response
- Practice Guide – Family Violence Roles & Responsibilities
- Practice Guide – Family Violence Investigation Unit – Investigative Response
- Practice Guide – Family Violence – Priority Community Response (as noted above) which includes a recent update to include guidance regarding dowry abuse and forced marriage
- Practice Guide – Family Violence Intelligence Analyst – Core Duties and Principles

In addition to the guides outlined above, Victoria Police has developed practice notes in the *Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence* covering the following issues:

- Seeking personal property conditions in family violence intervention orders – this includes, the importance of personal property conditions in affording the protected person safety and



protection; provides examples for when it is appropriate to seek this type of conditions and guidance for how to do this; details the use of exclusion conditions; guidance for police when attending property collections; and, the importance of utilising property exchanges as an opportunity for risk assessment and management.

- The use of interpreters – Victoria Police has a clear policy on the use of interpreters, however, to further strengthen this, guidance has been added in the Code of Practice which outlines – the risk of emotional trauma on children or people known to the victim who are exposed to the details of the family violence incident when acting as an interpreter and that this risk may arise due to fear of police due to cultural associations and beliefs about police; risk of increased psychological harm caused by the family violence incident upon a participant who then acts as an interpreter; the possibility that a family member or a person known to the victim may be hesitant to relay certain information for fear of incriminating another family member, omit critical information or their interpretation may be biased; the requirement to engage a professional interpreter service provider to ensure an accurate and unbiased account is provided; and, that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that the interpreter is not associated with the victim or their immediate cultural community.
- Responding to sex industry workers experiencing family violence – noting that women who work in the sex industry are disproportionately affected by family violence; they can be victims of family violence perpetrated by an intimate partner within the home; are disproportionately more likely to have experienced violence in their childhood; may have entered the sex industry in order to support themselves and/or their family because of family violence; males and transgender workers in the sex industry are also affected by family violence; community attitudes to sex workers impact on their capacity and willingness to seek assistance with their family violence matters; violence within the sex industry may be normalised which can impact on a victim's understanding of what constitutes family violence, this can also lead to lack of reporting or seeking support or inability to recognise intimate partner abuse as family violence; and, the importance of ensuring that people who work in the sex industry who are victims of family violence receive appropriate responses and support to ensure their safety and aid in their recovery.

### Review framework and audits

Victoria Police developed a review framework to support specialist family violence position holders to monitor compliance with the Victoria Police Manual and other family violence procedural requirements. The review function has been incorporated into the remit of specialist family violence position holders, primarily in a monitoring and compliance function, and, Family Violence Training Officer roles. This is acknowledging that inconsistent application of policy and practice should be primarily addressed from a training and education perspective.

Victoria Police has also established a regular cycle for audits to be conducted annually. The audits will be focused on areas of significant organisational risk as a result of non-compliance with the Victoria Police Manual. Outcomes from the audits will be fed into the annual planning process and capability uplift priorities.

Victoria Police has also incorporated progress updates on the implementation of the new family violence response model through the Victoria Police annual report since 2016-17.



## *Proactive mental health and wellbeing support for specialist investigators*

The Specialist Investigators Supports Unit (SISU) was introduced in 2018 and provides a model of proactive mental health and wellbeing support provided to Victoria Police members who work in specialist police units investigating child abuse, sexual offending and family violence.

These services include a suite of individual, team and organisational interventions, which are in addition to organisational wide wellbeing services, and in accordance with the recommendations of the Victoria Police Mental Health Review (Victoria Police, 2016) which made specific mention of the need for dedicated mental health and wellbeing supports for Victoria Police employees working in the crime themes of sexual offences, child abuse and family violence.

In 2019 Victoria Police engaged Monash University to conduct an independent evaluation of the introduction of SISU and to develop an ongoing evaluation framework (Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre, 2019, 2020). Following a review of the existing literature and research in 2019 the researchers reported that:

1. The SISU model is unique in the international and national literature and offers many features that show it to be a forward looking, effective and adaptive model. Of most significance is the embedding of the service in the specialist units and the continuity of service with a known clinician. These aspects fit with best practice as highlighted in the literature review.
2. The model is innovative at the macro level in being framed within a wellbeing conceptualisation and operative model. The model is consistent with a positive occupational health approach and importantly acknowledges the medical issues of mental health and the need to ensure employees at risk of medical ill health are linked to appropriate psychological services.
3. The literature reveals that the most effective outcomes for police mental health arise from psychological counselling delivered one-to-one and group processes that build resilience and promote changed ways of thinking. Both these elements are core aspects of the SISU model.
4. Overall this review of studies on mental health interventions in police forces indicate that reframing of programs to an occupational health approach rather than victim-based approach is the best framework to support enhanced mental health for all employees. New frameworks within positive occupational health psychology have moved away from the use of medicalised or pathogenic frameworks for ascertaining the health of organisations to wellbeing framings. In these frameworks the entire organisation is the unit of analysis. The interventions move beyond the traditional focus on individual risk factors to protective factors and resources that act simultaneously at the individual, social (group) and organisational level.

## **How has the experience of seeking services and support for victim survivors, including children, and perpetrators of family violence changed since the Royal Commission?**

Victoria Police recognises that views on the improvements to seeking services and support may differ between the 'client' experience and the agency experience, particularly as we are likely to have differing priorities and needs. This truism was borne out by system analysis commissioned by the Department of Premier & Cabinet, which mapped various 'client journeys' throughout the family



violence service system against the reforms being driven under the Royal Commission recommendations. The results clearly demonstrated that while significant improvements have been made to a wide range of systems, services and processes across the service system, there remains considerable opportunities for improving the 'client journey' when viewed from a client perspective. Accordingly, Victoria Police has committed to creating victim feedback mechanisms to ensure that the 'client voice' is audible in our service development planning, design and reform.

From an agency perspective, Victoria Police has sought to improve the response to victim survivors including children, and, to perpetrators since the Royal Commission by strengthening the rigour of the identification of the range of risks victims face and serious/escalating risks perpetrators pose (through the new FVR and CPRM), providing a specialist compliance management response to high risk perpetrators, timely connection to support services, tailoring of responses to specific vulnerabilities (for victim survivors), using technology to reduce re-traumatisation by the justice system, and, improving enforcement of control strategies.

The most significant change more broadly for victim survivors in the service system is the implementation of five Orange Doors. Orange Doors co-locate key community services to provide a holistic response to victim survivors, including children and perpetrators. They are the gateway for people experiencing family violence and perpetrators of family violence, and their role is to coordinate required services and support to manage the family violence risk. Whilst Victoria Police is not an agency that is part of the Orange Doors, we collaborate with each Orange Door through their governance mechanisms to support and inform local processes and practices and contribute relevant information through the Central Information Point to aid in comprehensive risk assessment.

The service system is also sharing more information on risks and responses between agencies, and, guided by common risk indicators, there is coordinated responses to complex/high risk cases (such as through RAMPs) and, improved referral pathways.

### *Improvements to Family Violence Intervention Orders (FVIOs)*

Victoria Police has worked to improve the management of family violence intervention orders in order to strengthen the safety and protection of victims and their children, and, to effectively hold perpetrators to account.

#### **New affidavit to support FVIO applications**

A new affidavit was developed and implemented by Victoria Police in consultation with the Magistrates' Court of Victoria (MCV) to support applications for FVIOs. The purpose of this affidavit is to ensure that Magistrates have access to risk relevant information in order to inform their decision making with regards to the FVIO application, including family violence history, risk factors identified in the FVR for the current incident, previous FVIOs and any associated breaches relevant to the victim and perpetrator, information regarding bail and criminal proceeding (previous or forthcoming), and, whether the victim consented to the FVIO application.

#### **Improvements to the service of FVIOs**

Victoria Police has developed additional guidance and associated training on the service of FVIOs and the supervision of service, in order to ensure that priority is given to the service of FVIOs on high-risk perpetrators or those suspected of avoiding service. Performance measures have also been implemented as part of the Performance Management Framework to monitor the service of FVIOs.



Work is currently underway to develop a technical solution to enable courts to electronically provision FVIOs for service to Victoria Police. This will reduce reliance on paper copies of FVIOs requiring service and further increase efficiencies in police members' capacity to ensure they are served as early as possible and ensure victim's safety.

Legislation was also enacted to allow for police to request alternative service at the time an interim or final FVIO is made (March 2018). Alternative service options include personally serving the document on a third party, electronic service (including social media) or post, and can be requested at the time the order is made. This enhancement expanded upon the powers enabling police to request 'substituted service' through the court where the respondent was not able to be located after several attempts to personally serve the documentation. Options available under 'substituted service' include personally serving the document on a third party, electronic service (including social media) or post.

### *Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) Framework*

The MARAM Framework requires services to work collaboratively to provide coordinated and effective risk assessment and management responses, including early intervention when family violence first occurs, and, to collectively and systematically create opportunities for perpetrator accountability.<sup>1</sup>

Victoria Police is a key agency in the response to family violence and as such has operationalised the MARAM Framework, within the new Family Violence Response Model. In particular, the new FVR risk tool has incorporated the evidence-based risk factors from the MARAM Framework, and, it highlights risk factors for future and more severe violence. The FVR is the key tool Victoria Police utilises to assess the risk to victims and their children, to triage our response, then to identify the management strategies that will need to be put in place to ensure their safety and hold perpetrators to account.

Importantly, the new FVR now captures more information about children present at an incident in order to assist police members ensure that they are considered as individuals impacted by family violence, and, the strategies that need to be put in place to ensure their safety and making referrals to appropriate support services.

### *Information sharing reforms*

Victoria Police has also implemented the Family Violence Information Sharing (FVIS) Scheme and the Child Information Sharing (CIS) Scheme as an Information Sharing Entity (ISE) and Risk Assessment Entity (FVIS only). The intent of the schemes is to ensure that victims and children who experience or are at risk of family violence are appropriately assessed and protected (FVIS), and, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children (CIS). The FVIS in particular is guided by the MARAM Framework and sharing information about family violence risk and management is the key mechanism by which agencies collaborate and respond consistently to victims and perpetrators.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Family Safety Victoria, 2018, *Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework*, pp. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pp. 37.



## Inter-agency Information Sharing Service (IISS)

Victoria Police established the IISS with the implementation of the CIS Scheme in order to support the organisational response under both the CIS and FVIS. The IISS is a team of VPS staff that responds to standard requests for Victoria Police information that is relevant to the purposes outlined in the FVIS and CIS. Many of the requests that are sent through to the IISS are for perpetrator information, in order to support other ISEs manage risk for victims and their children, and, hold perpetrators to account.

Requests for information that require operational engagement can still be made to police members who will collaborate with ISEs and share information where applicable. This is to ensure that local relationships between police and support service agencies are maintained and strengthened.

## Central Information Point (CIP)

Victoria Police is also one of the four agencies that has established the CIP alongside MCV, Corrections Victoria and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), with Family Safety Victoria (FSV) as the Administrative Head for the CIP. The CIP provides comprehensive perpetrator information from the four agencies to Orange Doors under the FVIS in order to support their triaging and risk assessment and management functions.

## L17 Portal

The L17 Portal is a platform developed and managed by DHHS. Victoria Police submits all FVRs (also known as L17s) to the portal to facilitate referrals to support agencies for victim survivors, their children, and for perpetrators. Victoria Police has also provided all historical FVRs to the Portal in order to support other agencies when conducting risk assessments and safety planning.

To ensure that referrals are made as quickly as possible members submit the FVR after attending an incident. A portal update allowing edits to information within 14 days has also been implemented by DHHS and around 65% of reports are being updated by police members; mostly to the victim and perpetrator contact details and, the vast majority are updated within a day or two.

## *Forensic examinations for family violence victims*

Victoria Police has a contract with the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM) for the delivery of forensic medical examination services for serious assault and sexual assaults for adults and children. Family violence falls within the scope of serious assault, and as such this service is available to family violence victims.

Victoria Police has pilot tested access to forensic examinations from the VIFM at the Dandenong Multidisciplinary Centre for family violence victims, in order to look at further enhancing service delivery.

We will continue to work with VIFM to test new approaches to gathering evidence to assist the criminal justice response.



## *Elder Abuse*

Building on the recommendation from the Royal Commission to scope options for a trial of dedicated family violence and elder abuse response, and, in order to further strengthen Victoria Police's response to financial elder abuse, an innovative trial has commenced to address this issue.

### **Financial Elder Abuse Trial**

*On 30 March 2020, Victoria Police commenced a trial to combat financial elder abuse in partnership with Seniors Right Victoria, Office of the Public Advocate, State Trustees and Eastern Community Legal Centre.*

*The trial is operating in Morwell, Box Hill, Croydon, Bendigo and Somerville. It will run 12-18 months and will conclude with an independent evaluation.*

*Part of the scope of the trial enables FVIUs to accept notifications of financial elder abuse directly from participating agencies, such as the banking industry, aged-care, health, legal and advocate services.*

*The main objectives of the trial are to:*

- Establish a suite of tools and information to support the identification of financial elder abuse and response options for police, support services and the healthcare sector;*
- Develop a greater awareness of financial elder abuse and avenues for victims to report and seek help;*
- Encourage reporting of financial elder abuse;*
- Provide recommendations on additional options (judicial and non-judicial) to protect victims of financial elder abuse; and*
- Enhance stakeholder networks to support the identification of, and response to financial elder abuse.*

## **What are the critical changes to the family violence service system that require more attention?**

Victoria has made extensive progress in improving the family violence system response to victim survivors, including children, and in holding perpetrators to account. However, further work remains to strengthen reforms and approaches, and, to fill some of the critical gaps in the system.

### *Legislative reform*

There are a couple of key legislative changes that would fill critical gaps in the criminal justice system's capacity to hold perpetrators to account and effectively prosecute all family violence offending.

#### **New offence for strangulation**

Following a proposal from Victoria Police, the Victorian Government has committed to introducing a standalone, indictable offence for strangulation under the Community Safety Statement 2019-2020.

The creation of a new offence for strangulation will overcome shortcomings in the existing legislation by removing barriers to successful prosecution, making it easier to hold perpetrators to account.



The existing legislation fails to adequately convey the risk of ongoing and escalating violence faced by victims of this type of offending. In circumstances of family violence, strangulation is an established predictive risk factor for future serious violence and homicide. When introduced, a specific strangulation offence will serve to alert police members, courts and community services practitioners to the risk posed by an offender, with consequential benefits to risk management practices and victim safety.

### Issuing FVIOs when the family violence occurred interstate

Victorian Magistrates' power to make an order is limited by the geographical location of where the alleged family violence occurred. This means that they are unable to grant an order in circumstances where all of the alleged family violence occurred interstate.

Victoria Police has had victims present seeking protection who now live or work in Victoria, but experienced violence while outside of Victoria. We understand from the dynamics of family violence that physical distance is not necessarily a deterring factor for violence. However, in these circumstances Victorian courts are unable to issue FVIOs to ensure the safety of victims, because jurisdictional nexus has not been established.

Victims should be able to seek a FVIO for protection regardless of where or when the offending occurred.

The National Domestic Violence Order Scheme (NDVOS) is a recognition and enforcement scheme only. The proposed reform would be aligned with the intent of the NDVOS to expand the capacity to apply for orders in Victoria where all of the family violence offending occurred in a different state.

### Police Protection Notices (PPNs)

Victoria Police has two methods by which action can be taken to enhance victim safety:

- Police issued Family Violence Safety Notice (FVSN); and
- An application to a court for a FVIO (application)

The FVSN once served, provides immediate protection and acts as an interim order until the matter is heard at Court and an order is made. If the court does not make an order, then the FVSN is no longer valid as a means of protection. Police can make an application to the court for a FVIO; however, the application provides no protection until an order is served.

The RCFV recognised that a police-issued intervention order scheme—administered fairly, safely and effectively—could free up court and police resources, delivering a net reduction on police workloads and allowing resources to be re-focused on other public safety priorities, including repeat or high-risk family violence perpetrators. However, the RCFV highlighted risks relating to existing gaps in police practice and did not support immediately introducing police issued intervention orders, recommending that:

*The Victorian Government consider [after five years] whether Victoria Police should be given the power to issue family violence intervention orders in the field, subject to the recommended State-wide Family Violence Advisory Committee and Family Violence Agency advising that Victoria Police has made significant improvements to its response to family violence, taking into account the Commission's recommendations (Recommendation 59).*



Victoria Police has developed a model of a limited police-issued family violence protection scheme that would offer similar protection to the FVSN without the need for parties to attend court, noting that most FVIOs are issued with the consent of both parties (i.e. are not contested). The PPN would offer protection for a period 12 months, and, in cases where the court is required to make a determination there will be a 28 day period in which this can occur (not 14 days as in the FVSN), allowing more time for all parties involved to take the matter to court and to prepare for court, whilst protection continues to be in place. The other key benefit is this will also save court resources to focus on the most high-risk cases, and, police resources through a more streamlined process.

Police would follow the same response and investigation process as they currently do when determining the appropriateness of a FVSN, and the PPN will offer the same immediate protections to a victim once issued (i.e. the ability for police to enforce a breach). The PPN would be valid for 12 months. Parties will be able to object to the PPN or an element of the PPN and elect to have the matter determined by a court within 28 days of service. The key difference between the PPN and FVSN is the requirement for the matter to be heard by the court within 14 days.

Once served the PPN would be considered a nationally recognised domestic violence order, and enforceable across Australia. A breach of a PPN would be enforced in a similar way to a breach of a FVSN or FVIO (final or interim).

Importantly, PPNs would not be issued in high risk cases, where one party is unlikely to understand the nature or effect of the order or where a commonwealth order, child protection order or community correction order could be inconsistent with the intended police issued order.

Victoria Police is working with the Department of Justice and Community Safety on this reform.

#### [FVIO service by another agency – Corrections Victoria](#)

In response to Recommendation 56 of the RCFV, Victoria Police has been exploring options for FVIOs to be served by another agency, as the current practice of a single agency (i.e. police members) being primarily responsible for the 'personal' service of all family violence documentation (applications and orders) is not sustainable.

The Victorian Government has started to address this risk through the introduction of legislation in 2018 with regards to the service of orders in court when the respondent is present and the option for police to apply for alternative service at the time the order is issued, as well as, through a project that DJCS is leading to trial the service of private FVIO applications by the Sheriff of Victoria. However, this trial will be limited, as the service of interim and final FVIOs will remain solely with police.

As a further enhancement to support service by another agency, it is proposed that Corrections Victoria could become another agency who can serve all applications and orders for any party in their custody. In most cases, persons in custody have fixed locations, Corrections Officers are trained to engage with a range of offending behaviour, and they are already enabled to serve FVIOs under existing legislation, the legislative gap is that currently a Corrections Officer is unable to certify service.

This will build on the existing role and responsibilities Corrections Victoria has with persons in custody, which includes to assist them with not breaching conditions of an order (i.e. not permit phone calls or visits from the victim), they are also aware of court dates, and, can support them with access to support services and behavioural change programs (broader welfare management of persons in custody).



This addition of service by Corrections Victoria will be another effective mechanism for ensuring that FVIOs are served in a timely and appropriate way without requiring Victoria Police's involvement, police in turn can continue to focus on the high-risk perpetrators residing in the community.

### *Policy and Practice reforms*

#### **Integration of Victoria Police's response to family violence, child abuse and sexual offences matters**

Victoria Police's strategic focus in the organisational response to family violence, child abuse and sexual offences, acknowledges that there are distinct links between the three types of abuse and many victims experience them all either concurrently or historically.

Therefore, in order to meet victims' needs there needs to be better integration of family violence, child abuse and sexual offence responses. Victoria Police has already progressed work to provide more integrated responses through Multidisciplinary Centres (three of which have sexual offences and child abuse investigators, as well as FVIUs co-located, in addition to therapeutic services and Child Protection).

Victoria Police will continue to build on this work and look for further opportunities to integrate the policing responses to family violence, child abuse and sexual offence matters including through alignment of roles, training, policies and processes.

#### **Service system response to children aged 0-5 years who experience or are exposed to family violence**

Children can be seriously impacted by family violence, even if they are not the immediate victim or do not witness physical violence themselves. Exposure to violence has been linked with a wide range of detrimental outcomes for children and young people, including psychological and emotional impacts, and health and behavioural consequences.

The first three years of life are an important period for brain formation that provides the structure for ongoing development; children are most vulnerable to the effects of violence during his time.<sup>3</sup> Repeated harm causes neural pathways to be established that are highly sensitive to threat and these interfere with the child's basic development goals.<sup>4</sup>

People who have experienced abuse in childhood are at an increased risk of experiencing violence as an adult. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2016 Personal Safety Survey (PSS) showed 71 per cent of people who experienced childhood abuse also experienced violence as an adult, compared with 33 per cent of those who did not experience childhood abuse.<sup>5</sup> It also found that as adults, those who experienced childhood abuse tended to have lower levels of educational attainment, income and life satisfaction, and were more likely to report financial stress and poor health.

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<sup>3</sup> Commission for Children and Young People (2016) *Neither seen nor heard – Inquiry into issues of family violence in child deaths*, Melbourne, Commission for Children and Young People, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016), Personal Safety, Australia, Available: [https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4906.0~2016~Main%20Features~Characteristics%20and%20Outcomes%20of%20Childhood%20Abuse%20\(Feature%20Article\)%20~30](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4906.0~2016~Main%20Features~Characteristics%20and%20Outcomes%20of%20Childhood%20Abuse%20(Feature%20Article)%20~30), accessed 18 June 2020.



Victoria Police's response to children who experience or are exposed to family violence involves ensuring their safety through mechanisms such as including them in FVIOs, investigating any offences committed against them, making appropriate referrals to support services, and, through mandatory reporting to Child Protection. However, often by the time police become involved in a family violence situation, the violence has escalated and is significant. Further to that Victoria Police's role is largely limited to ensuring safety and carrying out enforcement actions to hold perpetrators to account.

A remaining concern for Victoria Police is that there needs to be greater focus across the service system on **early intervention** for children and their families, in particular for children in the 0-5 years of age group, where significant neurological development is occurring that impacts on their psychological, health and behavioural outcomes into adulthood. This can lead to these children using family violence as they become adolescents and potentially into adulthood.

Addressing emerging risk factors and issues for these children and their families will lead to an increase in breaking the cycle of violence, through disruption of the violence, giving families appropriate supports and strategies, increase positive health outcomes, and, mitigate the escalation of violence which leads to engagement with the criminal justice system and increased poor health outcomes.

In particular, Victoria Police sees a need for critical touch points across the service system (such as Maternal Child Health Nurses, GPs, Early Childhood Education), to be able to trigger a comprehensive case management response and intervention for these children and their families in order to achieve these outcomes.

#### Service system response to adolescents who use family violence

*"Family violence used by adolescents is a distinct form of family violence and requires a different response to family violence by adults."*<sup>6</sup>

Adolescents who use violence towards their parents (most often towards mothers), siblings and to intimate partners have often experienced it themselves, therefore it is a learned behaviour, at times they've also been recruited by an adult perpetrator to use violence, and/or it can be utilised as an expression of grief, loss and trauma.<sup>7</sup>

Responses to adolescents who use family violence should be therapeutic and diversionary from the criminal justice system, wherever appropriate/possible. In particular, therapeutic approaches should be utilised to identify and address individual risk factors such as history of child abuse and neglect, trauma, mental illness, disability and other factors that impact on adolescents use of family violence.<sup>8</sup>

Whilst adolescents who use family violence make up less than 10% of police reported family violence incidents occurring in Victoria in the period between 1 July 2014 and 30 June 2019, the number of incidents has increased 11.8% over that time.<sup>9</sup> It is also known that there is under reporting of adolescents' use of family violence due to parents' feelings of shame, stigma, and a sense of blame for the behaviour or that it is their job to manage and protect their children above all.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Family Safety Victoria, 2018, *Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework*, pp. 33.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Phillips, B. and McGuiness, C. (2020) *Police reported adolescent family violence in Victoria*, Melbourne: Crime Statistics Agency, pp. 11.

<sup>10</sup> Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, March 2020, *The PIPA Project: Positive Interventions for Perpetrators of Adolescent violence in the home, Key findings and future directions*, Issue 04, Research to Policy & Practice, pp. 2.



Recent research from the Crime Statistics Agency has also shown that adolescents who use violence and are reported to police are likely to have contact with the criminal justice system: two thirds had previous contact prior to the first family violence incident (over half of these the contact was related to family violence), 80% had future contact with the system after their first family violence incident, and more than half perpetrated further incidents of violence.<sup>11</sup>

This seems to indicate that the criminal justice system is currently not adequately addressing the impact of family violence on children and adolescents, and links back to the issue outlined above regarding the system response to children. It also demonstrates that criminal justice responses (that were intended for intimate partner violence), are being utilised when adolescents use family violence, when the focus should be on therapeutic and diversionary approaches.

Victoria Police's response to adolescents who use family violence is focussed on ensuring the safety of victims and the adolescents, and, making referrals to appropriate support services. However, often the only tool available to police is to seek FVIOs, and, there are limited support services for adolescents, including therapeutic treatment services and alternative care and accommodation.

Furthermore, as mentioned previously, often by the time Victoria Police becomes involved in a family violence situation the risk is escalated and the level of violence quite significant. Indicating that there are missed opportunities for the service system to intervene and provide effective supports and strategies to adolescents and their families to break the cycle of violence.

Whilst practice guidance to work with adolescents who use family violence is currently being developed by FSV, some additional funding has been provided for pilots, and evaluations of programs targeted at supporting adolescents who use family violence are promising, given the rising number of reports, Victoria Police strongly supports development of an integrated state-wide service response to effectively support adolescents who use family violence and their families.

Further focus and work need to occur in the whole service system to develop comprehensive and appropriate responses to adolescents who use family violence that are therapeutic and diversionary as indicated by the MARAM Framework, and, decrease reliance on the criminal justice system response.

Victoria Police is keen to partner with FSV and other key government and community agencies to further progress reforms in this area.

## What measures could improve the ongoing implementation of the reform and the remaining Royal Commission recommendations?

### *Keeping the intent of reforms front of mind*

Focusing on the intent of reforms, understanding why the reform is required, who it will impact on and the relationship with other reforms before sequencing and streamlining service delivery is critical in achieving such large-scale change.

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<sup>11</sup> Phillips, B. and McGuiness, C. (2020) *Police reported adolescent family violence in Victoria*, Melbourne: Crime Statistics Agency, pp. 12.



Importantly, as it has now been four years since the Royal Commission handed down its report and recommendations it's important to focus on how the system has changed in that time, and the impacts of already implemented reforms have had on the service delivery, as well as other environmental factors (such as COVID-19) when scoping and implementing the remaining recommendations. Focusing on the intent rather than the specific wording of recommendations ensures that any learnings over the last four years and changes that have evolved in the service system can be effectively captured in the implementation of the reforms, and lead to more effective and connected services.

### *Strengthening understanding and practice of sexual offending and child abuse within family violence*

The reforms have been focused on intimate partner violence. Whilst this type of family violence accounts for the majority of reported family violence incidents, there are other types of violence that are also occurring and increasing, this includes sexual offending and child abuse. This type of violence can also be perpetrated by adolescents towards siblings and other family members.

As highlighted above there are gaps in the service response to particular cohorts, and the service system is still largely tailored to addressing intimate partner violence. There needs to be further work to ensure that responses across the service capture the various types of violence, and in particular, that there is an understanding of, and response to, child abuse and sexual offending which co-occurs in family violence situations.

### *Family violence involving Victoria Police employees*

Under Recommendation 45, we have reviewed how we responds to family violence involving Victoria Police employees. We have developed a strong understanding of the challenges facing victims seeking help when the perpetrator is a police employee, and the gaps in the organisational response to ensure victims are supported, and perpetrators are effectively held to account. This work has identified a range of changes to policy, practice and systems and Victoria Police is committed to implementing these changes, complemented by a significant cultural change program as part of the next phase of this reform.

### *Streamline service delivery of reforms*

Implementation of Royal Commission recommendations is not the end point of the reform. Therefore, implementing reforms with an appreciation of the long-term resource implications will support the transition to business as usual, streamline service delivery for clients and reduce expenditure for the public service.

The investment allocation and separate expenditure accountabilities through individual agencies did result in agencies looking inwards to complete large projects such as infrastructure projects and resourcing to support ongoing and expanding functions such as information sharing. Similarly, there has been some disconnect between individual pilots and trials across agencies where there may have been some linkages. The development of cross agency funding submissions and business cases moving forward, would take into account that there is a collective opportunity to streamline ongoing expenditure across the board, recognising the finite resources available.



### *Increased funding for frontline service delivery*

There has been significant investment from Government in whole of system reforms and to support the transformation of the Victoria Police response to family violence, which has been important in reshaping the system.

However, frontline support services continue to lack sufficient resources to meet the continuously growing demand, and to provide the increasingly varied/tailored services that are required (i.e. to adolescents who use family violence, female perpetrators, male victims etc.). This is evident through the length of time taken for services to action police referrals which can take up to two or three weeks. Police make the referrals believing that assistance and safety planning for victims, and help for perpetrators, will be enacted within a couple of days, and this is not case. Sometimes there are also no appropriate services available.

This is concerning across the system, particularly for those medium to high risk cases that are being actively managed by FVIUs. This can be a very dangerous period, where further significant harm can be perpetrated with no additional support strategies and interventions in place other than those provided by police.

### *Ongoing review and evaluation*

Ongoing review and evaluation of the reforms coming out of the Royal Commission is important to ensure that they are embedded and remain fit for purpose. Some of the major reforms such as MARAM and information sharing have evaluations built into the legislation, however, it is also important to ensure that other reforms are reviewed so that they can be continuously improved. Victoria Police in particular will be looking at evaluating the Family Violence Response Mode.

Other reforms external to Victoria Police that would merit ongoing evaluation include the Orange Doors and the Central Information Point.

## **What has been the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the family violence service system, and the consequences on the progress of the family violence reform in Victoria?**

There is recognition worldwide that the restrictions necessitated by COVID-19 heighten the risk of family violence occurring and, potentially, not being reported to police and/or support services. The combination of family members being compelled to spend the majority of their time in close proximity, the constraints on their ability to engage with and be visible to third parties, and the stressors of the current environment make it unlikely that the current reporting levels are a true reflection of the harms being experienced.

While Family Violence Reports (FVRs) have trended higher than in 2019 and 2018 throughout the COVID-19 period to date, the increase has not been as significant as Victoria Police and the family violence sector expected, especially considering overseas trends, most likely due to a change in reporting behaviour and under-reporting. Other Australian policing jurisdictions are reporting similar trends.



The main impacts of the pandemic on the service system have been:

- Most agencies (apart from the emergency services organisations) moving to predominantly remote service delivery, by phone or online. While this has been positive in terms of ensuring some form of business continuity, particularly for victims, it has been challenging too in terms of the suitability of matters to a remote response, the building of a backlog in some services (e.g. court hearings) and the engagement between services (e.g. police needing statements from other professionals);
- A greater focus on system operation and victim needs, than the business as usual focus on specific initiatives or programs of work; and
- More rapid and routine information sharing on trends and issues, and a willingness to take swift action (e.g. Victoria Police producing safety videos in 27 languages in response to advice from the specialist family violence services on the changes to their service demand).

Responding to the demands of the pandemic has unquestionably diverted focus and some capacity to progressing the family violence reform agenda in two ways:

- Many of the system architects of the reforms across government have been the same people driving the reshaping of service delivery under the pandemic; and
- Many of the service agencies have been consumed with rapidly changing their service delivery model to meet the demands of the lockdown and have therefore not been able to also pursue reform.

**Has the COVID-19 crisis highlighted any strengths or weaknesses in the system, or resulted in any great practice that should be continued?**

The crisis response has highlighted an over-reliance on police to meet system gaps:

- Measures put in place by other agencies to adapt service delivery in a COVID-19 environment have had an impact on police processes and responsibilities (e.g. remote hearings, adjournments and extensions of interim intervention orders by the courts; proposed cessation of the Independent Third Person program; greater use of telemedicine for forensic examinations). Negotiating with other agencies to mitigate these impacts has been time-consuming and highlights the extent of inter-dependency between services;
- Overall expectations of, and demands on, police increased as other agencies retracted their in-person service delivery. While most categories of calls for service declined during the restrictions, police were still responding to calls and conducting COVID checks. There was also an expectation that police would also carry out in-person activities on behalf of other agencies (e.g. welfare checks for ChildFIRST or Child Protection);
- The reliance on police as the primary in-person service for much of the service system has meant that Victoria Police had limited success in advocating for legislative and process reforms to also enable police to minimise community contacts and streamline service delivery where possible (e.g. remote bail reporting was enabled, but the extension of Family Violence Safety Notices was not); and

- Managing external expectations is also required in demands from other agencies for police data and investigation. As a data rich agency performing visible activities during the COVID period, there was a constant and high level of demand for police information and additional operational responses, often reflecting a lack of coordination between other agencies and a paucity of data on other service outcomes. In many cases, the link between the information sought and the decisions that could be made by other agencies was not clear.

The crisis response has highlighted the following strengths across the system:

- Briefing other agencies (including weekly) on police capacity, processes, demand and targeted operations (e.g. Operation RIBBON involving investigators proactively contacting the highest risk victims and perpetrators) has been valuable in terms of increasing visibility of operational issues and collaborating to address challenges;
- Participating in regular (including weekly) cross-agency system impact meetings to share data and service delivery issues to plan for the transition out of the restrictions, has been invaluable and highlighted how rare it is to engage with a system focus, rather than a programmatic focus. This has demonstrated the effectiveness of real time engagement in order to effectively plan and coordinate a whole of system response; and
- There was also benefit in implementing a consistent process for sharing information across policing jurisdictions, such as trend analysis on the themes of family violence, sexual offences and child abuse. The consistent process facilitated our data extraction, analysis and sharing, and, the consistent reporting facilitated our understanding of the similarities and differences between jurisdictions in the trends being experienced, which in turn was helpful for planning for response and the transition period and was valued context for other agencies.

In terms of good practice that Victoria Police intends to continue:

- The use of social media to produce timely and targeted safety messages, informed by the advice received through the regular engagement with partner agencies, has recalibrated our expectations of how swiftly, professionally and effectively we can reach key audiences. We now anticipate producing multilingual messages (written and verbal) more routinely, and are looking at child and youth-specific messages too;
- We would advocate more assertively for streamlining governance and coordination across government. We have found ourselves providing the same information and having the same discussions with various configurations of the same agencies; and,
- Enhanced reporting of business as usual activities (e.g. Operation RIBBON) has been an effective way of drawing agency and broader community attention to the prevalence and seriousness of family violence, and also of providing recognition to the specialist investigators working under sustained and complex demand. We anticipate scheduling similar high-profile activities (e.g. weekends of action) and exploring a streamlined version of enhanced reporting on the 'hidden' work of the FVIUs and the Sexual Offences & Child Abuse Investigation Units.

Our major learnings are:

- Significant system and process reform is achievable, within a relatively short period of time, with a collective will and, ideally, enabling technology. As an example, the greater use of telemedicine for aspects of forensic examination greatly expands the accessibility of forensic examinations, particularly to victims in regional areas and after hours, the timeliness of response and the convenience to the victim. Likewise, remote hearings (including meetings



with prosecutors and witness support services) enable victims to continue to receive direct, personal service, with minimal impost;

- Conversely, as a system, we have identified that remote service delivery is not ideal for all victims. Prosecuting agencies, for example, have triaged their outstanding matters partly according to the suitability of victims to participate in a remote hearing (e.g. some victims have been assessed as too vulnerable to be viewing and hearing their matter and the outcome, unsupported, from their living room); and
- We also recommend the commissioning of research into the victim experience during this period. While not all victims will have prior experience against which to compare the different approach, it would nonetheless be interesting to know their priorities and considerations during this period, so we can anticipate them during any future large-scale/protracted incident. For example, our victim support partners report that while they did not receive a significant increase in referrals, their existing clients required longer and more intensive support, for issues that were not necessarily related to their justice matter.