

Report to: Safer Sefton Together

Date of Meeting: 8 September 2022

Report of: Simon Burnett Assistant Director Communities

Subject: Draft Victims Bill

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1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Safer Sefton Together (SST) on the Draft Victims Bill and the impact it will have on Council and Partners.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 SST notes the contents of the report.

3 Background

- 3.1 The purpose of this Bill is to improve the end-to-end support for victims of crime so that they get the support needed to cope and recover from the impact of crime and feel able to engage and remain engaged in the criminal justice system. Together the measures will amplify victims' voices in the criminal justice process, strengthen transparency and accountability of criminal justice agencies and improve support for victims.
- 3.2 In 2019/20, it was estimated that 6.6% of 10-15-year olds and around one in five adults (19.3%) in England and Wales were victims of crime. In 2019, the Conservative Party's manifesto committed to pass a Victims Law which would guarantee victims' rights and the level of support they can expect. In December 2021, the Government launched a public consultation "Delivering justice for victims: A consultation on improving victims' experiences of the justice system" to inform development of this law. This consulted broadly on how to improve what victims can expect from the criminal justice system and how to improve aspects of victim support services. The consultation ran for eight weeks and received over 600 responses. Its aim was to better understand the experiences of victims and harness expertise from

frontline practitioners and experts to ensure that the Bill and accompanying measures improve support for victims throughout the criminal justice system.

3.3 The Government's response to the consultation set out the legislative and non-legislative measures planned to improve victims' experiences of the justice system. The Victims Bill will facilitate a more consolidated framework to better support victims through the following legislative measures:

- placing the overarching principles of the Victims' Code in primary legislation
- enhancing local oversight of delivery of the Victims' Code through better data collection and an enhanced role of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs)
- introducing a duty on PCCs, local authorities and Integrated Care Boards to collaborate locally, to facilitate more holistic and better coordinated victim support services
- placing Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) and Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) on a statutory footing by requiring persons who work with victims of criminal conduct, or any aspect of the criminal justice system to have regard to guidance about how to work with them.
- updating the role of the Victims' Commissioner, including a requirement for departments and agencies with a responsibility to meet the requirements under the Victims' Code to respond to relevant annual report recommendations
- bolstering national oversight through a requirement for regular joint thematic inspections on victims' experiences
- removing the need for a victim of crime to raise a complaint via an MP before it can be escalated to the PHSO

4 Next Steps

4.1 The Bill has completed its pre-legislative stages via the Justice Committee, and we are waiting for the Committee's final report and recommendations. We will bring further reports to SST once the Bill starts to progress through Parliament and any updates on the proposed duty.