

Victims Taskforce

First Meeting – 12 December 2018

Paper 1 - Terms of Reference

Purpose

1. The terms of reference are made in relation to the Victims Taskforce established by the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and the Lord Advocate to improve victims' experiences of the justice system in Scotland. Its ambition is to work as an action and outcomes focussed group to achieve this goal.
2. This requires all members and their organisations to commit to providing high-level strategic leadership, focussing on what members can do individually, in collaboration and collectively to improve victims experience.

Remit

3. The primary role of the Taskforce is to co-ordinate and drive action to improve the experiences of victims and witnesses within the criminal justice system, whilst ensuring a fair justice system for those accused of crime.
4. As part of this, the Taskforce will monitor, support and facilitate the delivery of the following Programme for Government commitments:
 - Reduce and, where possible, eliminate the need for victims to have to retell their story to different organisations as they look for help, working with Victim Support Scotland and others.
 - Widen the range of serious crimes where the victim can make a statement to the court about how the crime has affected them, consulting on specific details by early 2019.
 - Ensure victims and their families have better information and greater support ahead of prison release arrangements.
 - Increase the openness and transparency of the parole system
 - Establish, by Spring 2019, a new support service for families bereaved by murder and culpable homicide
 - Improve the experience of victims of rape and sexual assault
5. The Taskforce will ensure existing and planned work streams are considered and implemented with an understanding of the perspective of victims and witnesses, ensuring that victims' voices are heard, their journey through the criminal justice system is streamlined where possible and wide-ranging support and information is available and accessible.

Membership and Responsibilities

6. Membership is detailed in **Annex A**, current as of December 2018. Membership of the Taskforce will be at the invitation of the Scottish Government.
 - Members will demonstrate commitment to make a positive, practical, meaningful and lasting contribution to the work of the Taskforce whilst working with members to drive action to improve the experiences of all victims and witnesses within the criminal justice system.
 - Members will communicate with and provide feedback from their organisations and ensure regular communication with the Taskforce and other relevant stakeholders.
 - Members are expected to attend or dial-in to meetings. However, the substitution of a deputy is acceptable on the understanding that the deputy will provide a report on the meeting to the substantive member and the group they represent. Members submitting apologies for meetings, and who are unable to send a deputy, should notify the secretariat in advance.
 - All members will make a full declaration of interests. If a member is uncertain as to whether or not an interest should be declared, they should seek guidance from the chair.

Leadership and Links with Other Relevant Activity

7. Meetings will be conducted by the Co-Chairs.
8. To ensure that the work of the taskforce is informed and effective at making links to other relevant areas of activity, the Secretariat will ensure appropriate communication and co-ordination with the wide range of other organisations, activities and Programme for Government commitments relevant to improving the experiences of victims and witnesses of crime.
9. This includes but is not limited to the Chief Medical Officer's Taskforce to improve services for victims of rape and sexual assault; Equally Safe Delivery Plan; the development of Scotland's first Restorative Justice Action Plan; consideration of the Barnhaus concept of trauma-informed services for child witnesses; progress of the Vulnerable Witnesses (Criminal Evidence) Bill.
10. The Secretariat and relevant members will ensure regular updates on the work of the Taskforce are provided to the collaborative Justice Board.

Frequency of meetings

11. It is proposed that the Taskforce will meet quarterly throughout 2019 with the frequency of meetings revisited after the first year. The taskforce will be operational for the remainder of the current Parliament, to May 2021.

Secretariat

12. Secretariat support for the group will be provided by the Scottish Government Justice Directorate.

Annex A– Membership

Co-Chairs

- Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Humza Yousaf
- Lord Advocate, James Wolffe

Scottish Government

- Director of Justice, Neil Rennick
- Director of Children and Families, Michael Chalmers

Criminal Justice Sector Representation

- Crown Office and Prosecutor Fiscal – Crown Agent, David Harvie
- Police Scotland – Chief Constable, Iain Livingstone
- Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service – Chief Executive, Eric McQueen
- Scottish Prison Service - Chief Executive, Colin McConnell
- Parole Scotland- Chair, John Watt
- Community Justice Scotland- Chief Executive, Karyn McCluskey
- Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration – Operational Development Manager, Pauline Proudfoot
- Social Work Scotland – Head of Children, families and Justice, Kathryn Lindsay
- Victim Support Scotland – Chief Executive, Kate Wallace
- Scottish Women’s Aid - Chief Executive, Marsha Scott
- ASSIST – Head of ASSIST and domestic abuse services, Mhairi McGowan
- Rape Crisis Scotland – Chief Executive, Sandy Brindley
- Victims Organisations Collaboration Forum Scotland - Rotating member from this forum
- Children 1st – Chief Executive, Mary Glasgow
- Law Society of Scotland – Chief Executive, Lorna Jack
- Faculty of Advocates - Vice Dean, Angela Grahame
- Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research – Director, Sarah Armstrong
- Victim representative, Lynn Burns