

Improving services for victims of an offence:

How can we make a difference?

1. Introduction



This paper presents some ideas that could help us work better with other organisation and within our own organisations on improving outcomes for victims of an offence. People who work together need a common language to help them be successful. If we agree on the words and the meaning, we can then focus our efforts on the actions.

The process starts with the ends and works backwards, step by step, to the means where:

- for communities, we consider the quality of life conditions we want for people.
- for services, we consider how we could better serve the people using our services.

2. Defining 'victims of an offence'



'Victim' is the word used in the Victims' Rights Act (2002). This word does not sit easily with some people. It refers to *'any person against whom an offence is committed or alleged to have been committed by another person'*.

The definition of a victim includes parents of child victims (aged 0-17 years) and close family and whānau members of a person who has died or been made incapable, unless that parent, guardian or close family member is charged with the commission of the offence.

Questions to consider:

- **What does the word 'victim' mean to you?**
- **What other words are used? Why?**

3. What outcomes does Government want for New Zealand?

Justice Sector Outcomes

The Government's justice sector comprises of the New Zealand Police, Department of Corrections, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Development (Child, Youth and Family) and Crown Law. In 2008, these agencies agreed on the outcomes in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Justice Sector Outcomes



Department of Labour and Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC)

The Department of Labour (2011) seeks a more effective immigration system, a more effective labour market and a better performing accident compensation system. ACC (2011) seeks to rehabilitate injured people in New Zealand more effectively and reduce the incidence and severity of injury where it is cost-effective to do so.

Whānau Ora

This government initiative is developed from a Māori world view and philosophy with a single overarching aim of – best outcomes for whānau (Te Puni Kōkiri 2011). Whānau-centred services are services that focus on the whānau as a whole, build on whānau strengths and increase their capacity (Report of the Taskforce for Whānau-Centred Initiatives 2010). For whānau, the outcomes that can be expected from receiving these services are:

- Self-managing
- Living healthy lifestyles
- Participating fully in society
- Confidently participating in Te Ao Māori
- Economically secure and successfully involved in wealth creation
- Cohesive, resilient and nurturing

Questions to consider:

- **What outcomes are trying to achieve in your community? How are they similar or different to the Government outcomes?**
- **Which outcomes do you think are important for improving the quality of victims' lives? Why?**

4. How are we doing as a nation?



How prevalent is victimisation?

- Two thirds of people experience no crime.
- There has been a 2 percent decline in the number of people experiencing crime between 2006 and 2009:
 - Fewer adults experienced personal offences, particularly threats and sexual offences, and confrontational crimes by partners.
 - Fewer households experienced vehicle crimes.
 - The total number of vehicle crimes declined.
- Assaults and threats are the most common forms of crime experienced.
- About a third of all crime is reported to the Police.

Who are the victims of crime?

- Some people are more likely to experience crime than others:
 - 6 percent of New Zealanders experience 54 percent of all crime.

What are the risk factors for victimisation?

- Social and economic disadvantage puts people at greater risk. Factors include:
 - being younger (aged 15 to 24 years)
 - being unemployed/on benefits or a student
 - living in a deprived area
 - being a sole parent, or living with flatmates
 - living in rented accommodation
- Due to the profile of the Māori population, risk factors for being a victim cluster for Māori. This means some Māori carry a heavier burden of risk and the sum of these risks results in even greater victimisation.
- Gender is not a significant factor in overall risk of victimisation, but women have a higher risk of experiencing serious confrontational crime (assaults/threats) by their partner.

Source: New Zealand Crime and Safety Survey (2006 and 2009)

5. What do we know about victims' concerns?

Victims of crime have said that they find the criminal justice system frustrating and confusing:

- there are many agencies involved and it can be difficult to know who to go to for specific information or advice.
- there are weak mechanisms to make criminal justice agencies accountable for the services they deliver to victims.
- victims often feel that they do not have any role in the criminal case involving them and do not know what is happening.

(Source: Ministry of Justice, 2010)

There are many victims who have very little contact with the criminal justice system. The crime is not reported or there is not enough evidence to further the investigation.

Of the 9 percent of victims (including reported and unreported crime) that said they had an *unmet need* for support (NZCASS 2009):

- 30 percent want more information from the Police.
- 25 percent want professional counselling.
- 21 percent want someone to talk to that they know.
- 18 percent want advice on how to keep safe.
- 17 percent want to talk to an anonymous person.
- 16 percent want legal advice.

Victims were mostly likely to say they had an unmet need for support after experiencing sexual offences (18 percent), violent offences (15 percent) and theft of vehicles (10 percent).

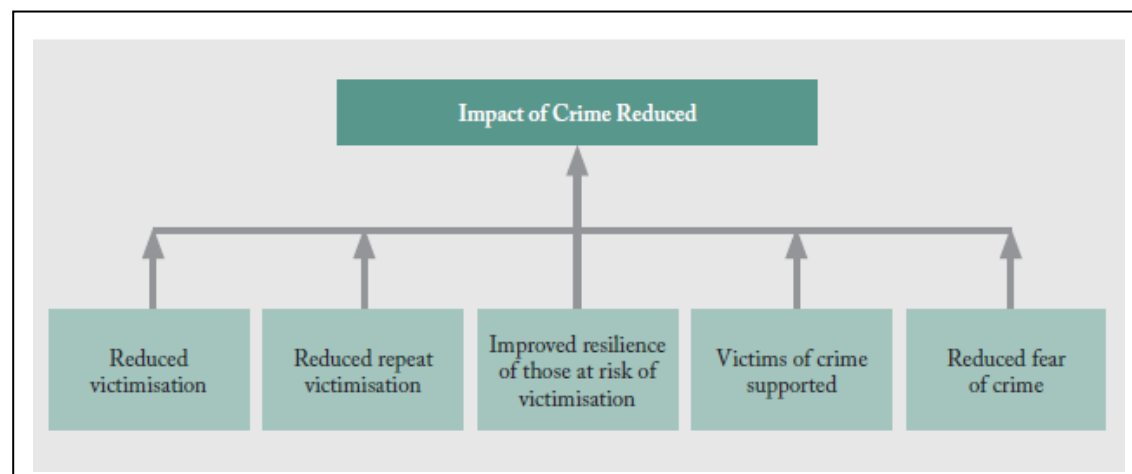
Questions to consider:

- **What other concerns do victims have that are not mentioned here?**
- **What issues are underlying their concerns?**

6. How could we improve the services provided to victims?

The Justice Sector Outcomes Framework (below) identifies some key areas that we could focus on to reduce the impact of crime.

Figure 2:



Questions to consider:

- **Are these useful areas to focus on for reducing the impact of crime across the country? What areas could we prioritise?**
- **How could we measure if we are making a difference to the quality of people's lives?**

Using the questions in the table below, consider what *your own agency* could do to make a difference for victims of an offence.

- **How could you tell if victims are better off as a result of your efforts?**

Criminal Justice and Support Services	
Keep doing?	Stop doing?
<p>Start doing or do better?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What are your three best service improvement ideas – include no cost and low cost options?</i> • <i>Who do you need to partner with to make these ideas happen?</i> • <i>Is there other information needed to help you make decisions about what actions to take (e.g. areas for further research or data gathering)?</i> 	

