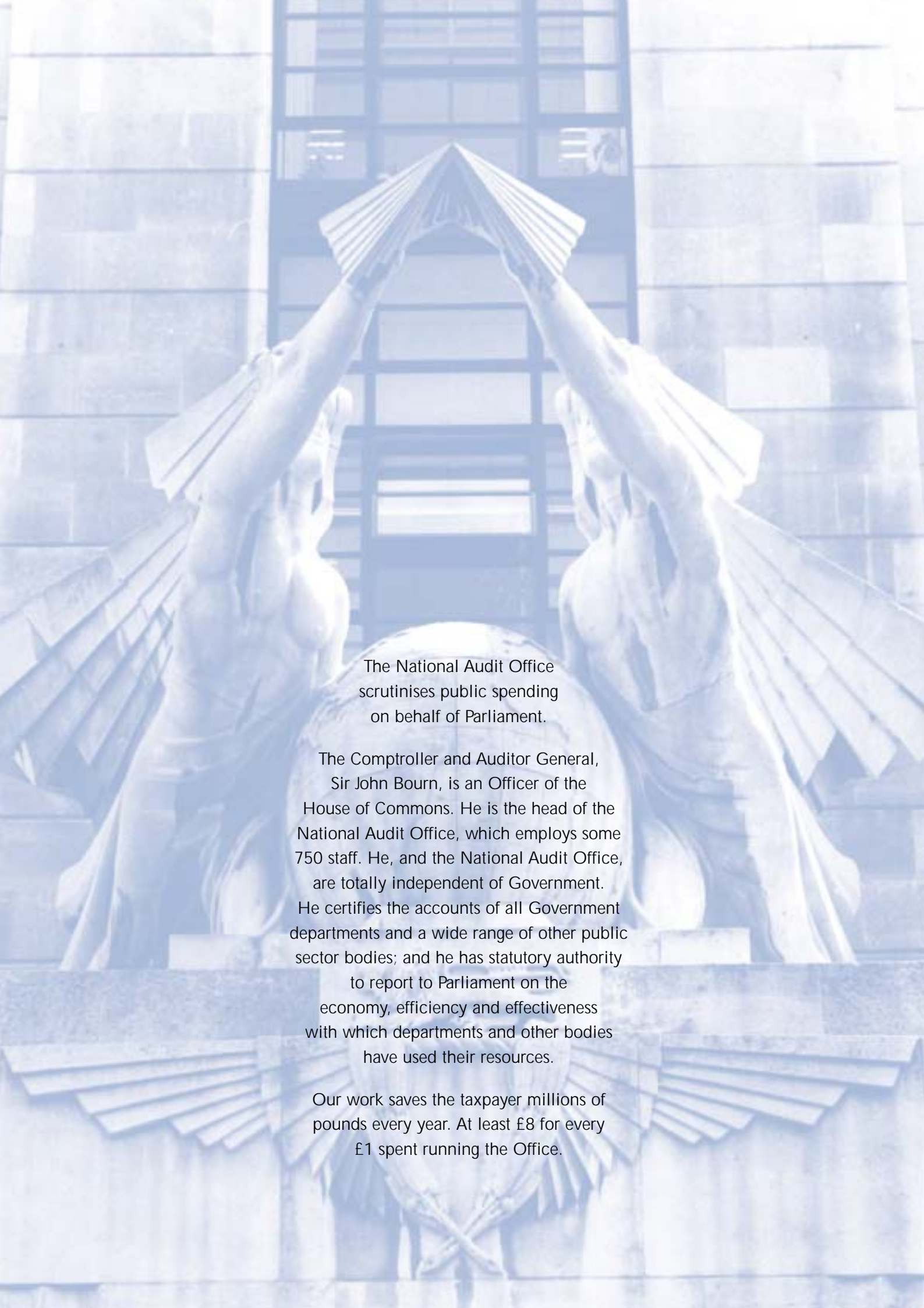


Helping victims and witnesses: the work of Victim Support

REPORT BY THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL
HC 1212 Session 2001-2002: 23 October 2002





The National Audit Office
scrutinises public spending
on behalf of Parliament.

The Comptroller and Auditor General,
Sir John Bourn, is an Officer of the
House of Commons. He is the head of the
National Audit Office, which employs some
750 staff. He, and the National Audit Office,
are totally independent of Government.
He certifies the accounts of all Government
departments and a wide range of other public
sector bodies; and he has statutory authority
to report to Parliament on the
economy, efficiency and effectiveness
with which departments and other bodies
have used their resources.

Our work saves the taxpayer millions of
pounds every year. At least £8 for every
£1 spent running the Office.

Helping victims and witnesses: the work of Victim Support



REPORT BY THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL
HC 1212 Session 2001-2002: 23 October 2002

This report has been prepared under Section 6 of the National Audit Act 1983 for presentation to the House of Commons in accordance with Section 9 of the Act.

John Bourn National Audit Office
Comptroller and Auditor General 08 October 2002

The National Audit Office study team consisted of:

Ms Goldsmith, Mrs Woodrow and Mr Boyle under the direction of Mr Gray

This report can be found on the National Audit Office web site at www.nao.gov.uk

For further information about the National Audit Office please contact:

National Audit Office
Press Office
157-197 Buckingham Palace Road
Victoria
London
SW1W 9SP

Tel: 020 7798 7400

Email: enquiries@nao.gsi.gov.uk

Contents

Executive summary 1

Detailed findings and conclusions	2
Recommendations	6

Part 1

Introduction 9

Victim Support helps victims and witnesses deal with their experience of crime	10
Successive governments have sought to increase the support and assistance provided to victims and witnesses of crime	10
Victims and witnesses have little confidence that the criminal justice system will meet their needs	12
Victim Support and Witness Services are provided by local Victim Support charities affiliated to the national charity, the National Association of Victim Support Schemes	13
Home Office funding for Victim Support has risen rapidly to £25 million in 2001-02	14
Reasons for this study and the structure of this report	14

Part 2

Meeting the needs of victims and witnesses 17

Whether the services provided by Victim Support are meeting the needs of victims	17
Whether victims have sufficient access to the services offered by Victim Support	18
Whether the Witness Service is meeting the needs of witnesses	25

Part 3

Managing the performance of Victim Support 29

Whether the Home Office has provided a clear vision of what it expects Victim Support to achieve	29
Whether the Home Office has exercised effective oversight of Victim Support's use of public money	30
Whether Victim Support has adapted its management arrangements to match its expanded role	33

Appendices

1. Summary of Coopers and Lybrand's value for money audit of Victim Support 1994	35
2. Compact on relations between Government and the voluntary and community sector in England	37
3. Study methods	38
4. National Audit Office survey of Victim Support local groups, Areas and Crown Court Witness Services	44
5. Support for victims in other countries	45

executive summary

In this section

Detailed findings and conclusions	2
Recommendations	6

- 1 Being a victim or a witness to a crime can be a life-changing event, whatever its nature or severity. From the British Crime Survey it is estimated that 28 per cent of adults in England and Wales were the victim of a personal crime or a crime on their household in 2001-02.
- 2 The Victim Support movement, which comprises a national charity, working with local affiliated charities, receives a large proportion of its funding from the Home Office (totalling £28 million in 2002-03) to provide support and information to victims and witnesses in England and Wales. Victim Support aims to contact all victims referred to it by the police to offer its support and operates telephone helplines available to the public. The support given to victims will often range from emotional support to help with practical matters such as seeking information on progress with the criminal investigation, completing claims for compensation and, if needed, seeking help from other agencies. Victim Support's Witness Service offers familiarisation visits to the Crown and Magistrates' Courts and information in advance of the trial to witnesses and their families and friends, and provides support on the day of the trial.



- 3 This report examines whether the services funded by the Home Office and provided by Victim Support are meeting the needs of victims and witnesses; and the management of the performance of Victim Support.
- 4 Our main conclusions are as follows:
 - Overall, the establishment of a national service for victims and witnesses across England and Wales compares favourably with the situation in many other countries and represents a notable achievement for the voluntary charitable movement that makes up Victim Support. The evidence indicates that Victim Support's services are highly thought of by both victims and witnesses. As Victim Support has expanded its work to provide more services to victims and witnesses, it has also strengthened management within the movement. As a locally based charitable movement Victim Support has added value to the funding provided by the Home Office, through its use of a large pool of volunteers and its fundraising from other sources. These findings reflect credit on the work of Victim Support's trustees, volunteers and staff.

- The continuing challenge for both the Home Office and Victim Support is to ensure that victims and witnesses have reasonable access to these services, irrespective of where they live, in particular that services are made accessible to those victims of unreported crime and defence witnesses who would like it. In meeting this Victim Support should retain flexibility for local groups to meet local needs, building on the local knowledge and experience of the voluntary movement. Our examination suggests that the Home Office needs to clarify its specification of its priorities for Victim Support and strengthen its arrangements for monitoring the level and quality of service delivered and the financial sustainability of Victim Support. Victim Support needs to focus on sustaining the volunteer base in the movement and use its new area structure to further improve the management and the financial sustainability of services.

Detailed findings and conclusions

On the provision of services to victims:

- 5 Victims we spoke to appreciated the dedication and professionalism of the service provided by Victim Support volunteers and considered their support had helped them cope with a traumatic experience. In recent national surveys two-thirds of victims found that contact with Victim Support had been very or fairly helpful. Representatives of the various criminal justice agencies we spoke to at local level, including police officers, court officials and staff from the Crown Prosecution Service, were positive about Victim Support's role in acting as an advocate on behalf of victims and witnesses and the work of its staff and volunteers.
- 6 Access to Victim Support's services can vary widely between areas for a variety of reasons. In the vast majority of victims' cases (97 per cent) Victim Support relies on information supplied by the police to make contact with victims. Our estimates suggest that there are fewer referrals from the police than there are recorded crimes. For example in 2000-01 police referrals represented 57 per cent of burglaries from dwellings and 69 per cent of thefts from the person. Referral levels varied significantly between areas, although some of this may be due to different counting methods. In part, some of the variability in referral rates has reflected differing interpretations amongst police forces about their obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998 with some constabularies significantly reducing the number of referrals they made. In October 2001, in consultation with the Information Commissioner, the Home Office issued revised guidelines seeking to clarify the referral arrangements. Some of the local groups we visited expressed concern that the new guidance might result in the police treating referral as discretionary rather than as an obligation in cases involving victims of crimes covered by the Victim's Charter.
- 7 Victim Support is also expected by the Home Office to provide support for victims of crime not referred to them by the police, in recognition that not all victims will report the crime. In 2000-01, self-referrals and referrals from organisations other than the police accounted for three per cent of Victim Support's total workload. However, the most recent British Crime Survey estimated that in 2000 only 45 per cent of crimes against people living in private households were made known to the police. It is likely that some of the 5.4 million victims of unreported crime would not wish to be helped. Nevertheless, an earlier survey in 1998 suggested that around a third of the victims of unreported crimes would welcome help in some form - principally advice on personal protection and security, and someone to talk to. This is likely to include some victims of crimes, which are excluded from the scope of the Victim's Charter. Whilst the number of self-referrals and referrals from organisations other than the police to Victim Support has doubled since 1998-99 to 35,000 in 2000-01, the overall total, including callers to the national Supportline, is still small compared to the number of victims of unreported crime.



- 8 The level of personal support provided to victims reflects, among other factors, the availability of volunteers compared to the levels of crime in the area. Data from local groups show that the number of referrals each volunteer has to deal with varies from one a week in Dorset to ten a week in the West Midlands. Between 1996-97 and 2000-01, the number of volunteers providing support to victims across England and Wales fell from 10,180 to around 6,970. It is not known how much this reflects a real reduction in volunteers or steps taken by Victim Support to improve its record keeping. Some volunteers are likely to have transferred to help set up the new service for witnesses. However, 53 per cent of local groups reported to us that they had difficulty in finding enough volunteers to provide support, although in some cases they could ask volunteers to take on extra cases away from their normal patch.

On the provision of services to witnesses:

- 9 By April 2002, the Witness Service had been established in all criminal courts in England and Wales. The introduction of a witness service in all Magistrates' Courts within a relatively short time span was a significant achievement. A recent survey by the Home Office found that almost three-quarters of witnesses surveyed in the Crown Court had contact with the Witness Service. Ninety-seven per cent of the witnesses surveyed who had contact with the service reported satisfaction with it.
- 10 Defence witnesses are less likely to have contact with the Witness Service - around 44 per cent of defence witnesses in 2000 had contact with the Service. Just over half of the defence witnesses who did not receive support indicated that such support would have been welcome. The levels of support for victims and prosecution witnesses reflect, in part, the arrangements agreed between the Crown Prosecution Service and Victim Support in the Crown Court, which enable the witness service to make direct contact in advance of the trial and also ensure that witnesses are sent literature explaining the services available. There are no comparable arrangements in place between Victim Support and the many hundreds of defence solicitors.
- 11 There is limited data available on the profile of the victims and witnesses referred to Victim Support or those it actually helps. The limited evidence, based on small samples, taken from the British Crime Survey in 1998 and a witness satisfaction survey commissioned by the Home Office in 2000, suggests that households with a black or Asian respondent were less likely to recall contact with Victim Support and the Witness Service. Local Victim Support groups responding to our survey had undertaken specific initiatives to reach out to sections of the community. Sixty-two per cent of local groups reported, for example, that they had undertaken initiatives to meet the needs of minority ethnic groups, and 36 per cent to meet those of gay men and lesbians.

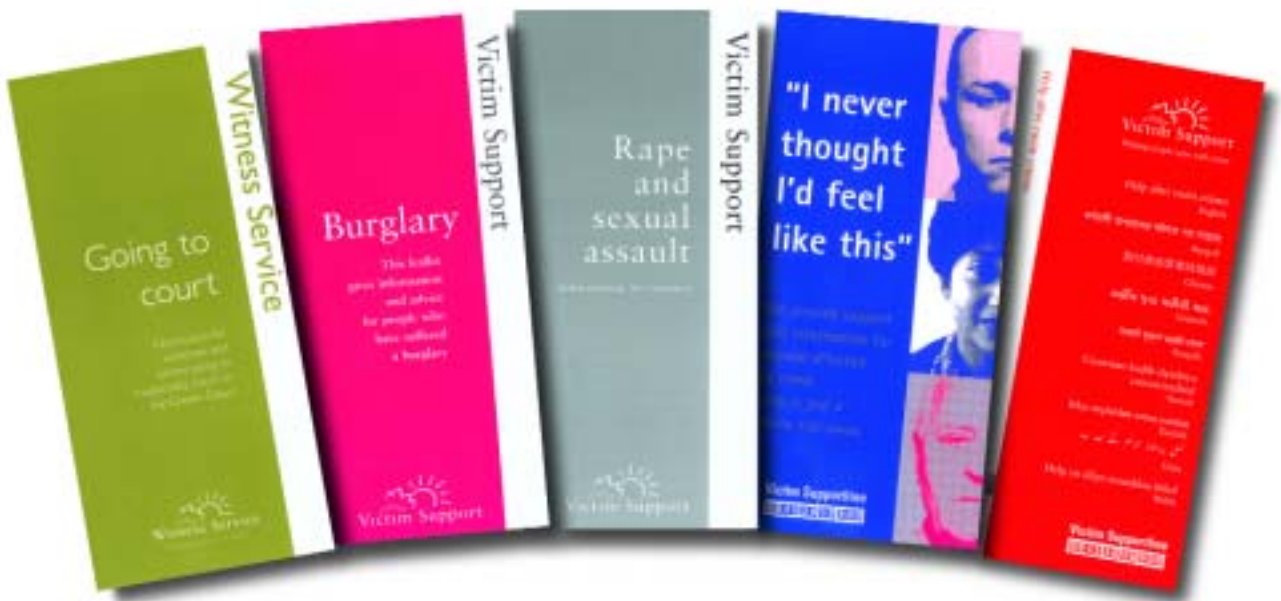
On managing the performance of Victim Support:

- 12 Since 1990, successive governments have used the Victim's Charter to set standards for the services victims might expect from the various criminal justice system agencies and Victim Support. The Charter was revised in 1996. In many respects, the Charter has helped guide the expansion of services across the various agencies. Although services to victims and witnesses have been reviewed as part of the comprehensive spending review process, the Home Office has not had a long term plan of how the services for victims and witnesses might be developed. For example, such a plan might be expected to specify what services should be delivered, who should deliver them, the desired outcomes and responsibility for reviewing achievements. The Home Office is now leading the development of a cross-departmental strategy, which is to include agencies beyond the criminal justice system such as health,

housing and local authorities. An outline of the strategy was presented to the Criminal Justice Strategic Board in May 2002. The strategy will be distributed in draft form for consultation later in 2002.

- 13 Research to date has primarily focused on victims' satisfaction with Victim Support. There has, however, been limited evaluation of the effectiveness of the support provided by Victim Support and other statutory agencies in helping victims and witnesses overcome the impact of crime. As well as meeting the immediate practical and information needs of victims, the services currently provided, including support from the health service and local authorities, could have an impact on the rate at which victims are able to return to their day to day life, including work. More research could help identify which services, or combination of services, have the greatest impact on meeting victims' needs. Further evaluation could also seek evidence of whether services available to victims and witnesses can play a part in encouraging them to report crime and come forward as witnesses.

- 14 The Home Office has not subjected the development of new services for victims and witnesses to competition from other providers. The Home Office told us that its aim had been to develop a seamless, comprehensive and consistent voluntary-based service to victims and witnesses from the time of the crime to the conclusion of the case. The 1998 Compact on relations between the Government and the voluntary and community sector allows provision for the Government to provide fair access to strategic funding. The Home Office has not had an explicit programme to enable voluntary sector organisations fair access to bid to run other services for victims and witnesses, although the Home Office did provide funding totalling £526,000 to two other voluntary bodies in 2001-02 to run specialist services. The Home Office told us that, when funding is available, it plans to go out to tender for a proposed new service for the victims of road traffic incidents and to do so for any other future new services.



- 15 To keep pace with the expansion of its role and funding, Victim Support has strengthened its Board of Trustees and its senior management team. Since 1997 it has pursued a major restructuring exercise to streamline the movement from some 450 affiliated local groups and potentially over 500 Witness Services to 49 new Area charities, and co-ordinated borough charities in London. With additional funding from the Home Office this has involved introducing a new layer of professional management at area level. During the reorganisation inspections of local services by the National Office were suspended, with reliance placed instead on Areas' completion of detailed planning reports. Victim Support is now planning to introduce more robust and independent inspection of local groups and is working towards allocating local funding on the basis of workloads determined by crime levels and the numbers of court cases.
- 16 The Home Office has increased its grant to strengthen Victim Support and to fund extensions to the services provided. We found it had specified and monitored these services in broad terms but had not specified the performance improvements required. As a result of late decisions on funding and uncertainty over future funding, Victim Support underspent against the sums allocated for the setting up of the Magistrates' Courts Witness Service, by £7 million over three years. Victim Support used the funds to support its other activities within the scope of the Home Office grant memorandum. We have identified weaknesses in the quality of data used by Victim Support to monitor the performance of local groups and found that the Home Office has not sufficiently used the data available to it to assess the level of service and the quality delivered, and to identify risks to Victim Support's performance. As a result, the Home Office is not in a strong position to appraise the extent to which the services specified in the grant memorandum are being provided across the country and hence the sufficiency, or otherwise, of the current funding levels.



Recommendations

We make the following recommendations:

- i** The Home Office should examine whether the victims of unreported crime have sufficient awareness of the services currently available from Victim Support and other groups and whether suitable help may encourage more victims to report crime. Victim Support should work to reduce the perceived barrier to self-referral which may arise when local groups are located in police accommodation.
- ii** Victim Support, the Home Office and the police should examine the reasons underlying the variation in rates at which victims are referred by police to Victim Support across the country. The Home Office should seek explanations and action to improve referral rates whenever expected levels are not achieved.
- iii** Victim Support should ensure that it has appropriate processes in place to recruit and retain sufficient volunteers to help deliver the services being funded. The Home Office should routinely monitor Victim Support's plans for addressing the risk of loss of volunteers. It should satisfy itself that any proposal from Victim Support to expand services is supported by a robust plan for the recruitment, training and retention of sufficient volunteers, whilst maintaining existing services at appropriate levels.
- iv** Victim Support should collect data on the profile of victims and witnesses receiving support and make comparisons against data from the British Crime Survey and the Witness Survey to confirm that the service is being taken up by all sections of society.
- v** The Home Office should commission research to evaluate the impact of the services provided by Victim Support and other agencies, to determine what works best in helping different groups of victims overcome the impact of crime, and use this evidence to improve services.
- vi** Victim Support should work with the Lord Chancellor's Department to ensure that defence witnesses have adequate access to information and support. In particular, Victim Support and the Legal Services Commission should reach agreement to ensure that defence witnesses are made aware of the services available in advance of the trial.

- vii Victim Support should work with police and the Crown Prosecution Service to complete a national procedure for the advance notification of witnesses attending the Magistrates' Courts.
- viii The Home Office should clearly specify what service priorities it expects Victim Support to deliver with the funding it provides. When granting additional funding, the Home Office should distinguish between the amounts intended to sustain existing services and the amounts intended for the development of new services.
- ix The Home Office should strengthen its arrangements for monitoring the progress made by Victim Support, including the financial sustainability of the services it supports. In particular, through setting clear performance goals, receiving better information on where its funding is being spent, for example against each of the main services, and reviewing reports on area inspections to assess the quality and quantity of services delivered around the country.
- x Victim Support should strengthen its scrutiny of the annual reports and accounts of local groups. The Home Office should carry out its own periodic scrutiny of this information.
- xi The Home Office should review the current arrangements for funding voluntary sector activity in the field, with the aim of improving co-ordination between government departments, clarifying its expectations for Victim Support's fundraising for services it is funding and ensuring that the opportunity to bid to run new services is available to all potential providers.



Part 1

Introduction

- 1.1 Being a victim or a witness to a crime can be a life-changing event, whatever its nature and severity. The British Crime Survey suggests that in 2001-02, 28 per cent of adults in England and Wales were the victim of crime, or lived in a household, which was subject to a household crime. This includes many people who experienced more than one crime, for example one in five victims of burglary were victims of more than one crime in the year.
- 1.2 Victims can experience a range of emotional and physical impacts, with each person affected differently by their particular circumstances. Emotional and physical reactions range from anger and shock to sleeplessness. Victims can also experience financial loss as a result of the costs associated with the crime, such as replacing or repairing property or being unable to work (Figure 1). Some victims may deal with these impacts themselves, and draw upon support from family and friends, and not need other help. Others, however, can be severely affected, and as a result suffer mental health problems, from anxiety and depression to post-traumatic stress disorder. Witnesses to crime may also experience some or all of these impacts. For both victims and witnesses the experience of giving statements to the police, giving evidence in court and other contact with the criminal justice system can add to the stress caused by the crime.

1 The impacts of crime on victims



Source: *Victim Support Handbook: Helping People Cope with Crime, 2000*

Victim Support helps victims and witnesses deal with their experience of crime

- 1.3 Victim Support, a national charity which receives a large proportion of its funding from the Home Office, exists to provide people affected by crime with appropriate recognition, support and information to help them deal with their experience, and to ensure that their rights are acknowledged and advanced in all aspects of criminal justice and social policy. The Home Office funds operations throughout England and Wales, and the Northern Ireland Office funds the Northern Ireland operations. There is a separate Victim Support organisation operating in Scotland.
- 1.4 Victim Support aims to contact all victims referred to it by the police to offer its support and provides a national telephone Supportline and makes local contact numbers available to all victims and witnesses. The support given to victims may range from emotional support to help with practical matters such as seeking information on progress with the criminal investigation, completing claims for compensation and, if needed, seeking help from a wide range of other agencies, including housing and social security. Victim Support also runs Witness Services, which offer familiarisation visits to the Courts in advance of the trial to witnesses and their families and friends, and information and support on the day of the trial. Witness Services operate in all 86 Crown Court centres and by April 2002 were established in all of the 340 Magistrates' Courts.

Successive governments have sought to increase the support and assistance provided to victims and witnesses of crime

- 1.5 Successive governments have sought to provide more information and support for victims and witnesses, to ensure that their needs are met and that they are treated with respect within the criminal justice system. The first Victim's Charter was introduced in 1990, and was a statement on behalf of the entire criminal justice system of how the system worked for victims. It was subsequently revised in 1996 to provide statements of what victims could expect from the criminal justice system (**Figure 2**). National standards of witness care were introduced in 1996 (**Figure 3**). And in 1999 the Government published its plan for implementing changes to improve support and assistance for vulnerable and intimidated witnesses, which were proposed in *Speaking Up for Justice* (1998), and the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act (1999) defined vulnerable and intimidated witnesses and provided for special measures for them in court.

- 1.6 The police are responsible for keeping victims informed of significant developments in their case and for warning witnesses to attend court. The Crown Prosecution Service, the Courts and the Probation Service also have responsibilities towards victims and witnesses as set out in **Figure 4 opposite**. The Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme provides financial compensation for eligible victims of violent crime. The Witness Service provides emotional and practical support to victims and witnesses attending the courts, in partnership with some other local voluntary organisations, where appropriate.

2 The Victim's Charter 1996

The Charter explains what happens after an offence has been reported to the police and the standards of service victims can expect, in particular that:

- a crime reported will be investigated and the victim will receive information about what happens;
- victims will be given the chance to explain the effects of the crime, and have their interests taken into account;
- if victims have to go to court as a witness they will be treated with respect and sensitivity; and
- victims will be offered emotional and practical support.

Source: The Victim's Charter, 1996

3 Statements of National Standards of Witness Care

The Statement established standards of witness care to be delivered by local criminal justice agencies. It established the following principles:

- witnesses will only be required to attend court to give evidence if this is essential in the interests of justice;
- every effort will be made to arrange trial dates that are convenient to witnesses and that waiting at court will be kept to a minimum;
- witnesses will be given as much notice as possible for their attendance at court;
- provision will be made for the special needs of witnesses;
- priority will be given to cases involving children and those at risk of intimidation;
- witnesses will be dealt with sensitively;
- witnesses will be given timely information about the progress and outcome of their case; and
- expenses claims will be dealt with promptly.

Source: National Standards of Witness Care in England and Wales: Trials Issues Group, 1996

4 The key roles of the criminal justice agencies and other organisations which support victims and witnesses of crime

	Victims	Witnesses
	Offers victims emotional help or practical help, for example on completing claims for insurance or on crime prevention and provides a national telephone support line.	The Witness Service offers witnesses and their families pre-trial visits to the court-room and information and support during court proceedings.
 Police	<p>Assess the need for protection and provide it.</p> <p>Offer victims the opportunity to make a Victim Personal Statement.</p> <p>Provide crime prevention advice and information on the support available to victims, refer victims to Victim Support or to other local victims' organisations.</p> <p>Keep victims informed of significant developments in their case, for example, arrest, caution, or charge, court dates and outcomes.</p> <p>Provide victims of serious crimes with personal contact, often known as family liaison officer.</p>	<p>Assess the need for protection and provide it.</p> <p>Take witness statements.</p> <p>Contact prosecution witnesses to notify them of a court date.</p> <p>Identify vulnerable witnesses and need for TV links for giving evidence.</p>
 Crown Prosecution Service	Informs victims and families bereaved as a result of crime of prosecution decisions, in particular of reasons for reducing or not pursuing charges.	<p>Explains to prosecution witnesses on the day, what to expect from the court proceedings.</p> <p>Pays expenses to prosecution witnesses.</p>
Defence Team		<p>Explains to defence witnesses what to expect from the court proceedings and how their evidence will be used in the defence case.</p> <p>Refers witnesses to Witness Service.</p>
 Court Service & Magistrates' Courts clerks	The court must consider making a compensation order for loss, damage or injury suffered, and must explain reasons if they decide not to make an order.	<p>Make arrangements for support at the court for vulnerable and child witnesses including the provision of screens in court and facilities for giving evidence by videolink.</p> <p>Pays expenses to defence witnesses.</p>
 Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority	Makes compensation payments to people injured or bereaved as a result of violent crime.	
Other voluntary organisations	Provide telephone support lines, emotional support and practical help such as rape crisis centres, refuges, local ethnic and religious support groups.	With the Witness Service provide pre-trial and court support, for example for vulnerable groups such as children.
Health and Social Services	Medical care and personal support can be provided by accident and emergency service, GPs, mental health services, and social services	
 NATIONAL PROBATION SERVICE	<p>Take statements from victims of their concerns about the release conditions for offenders.</p> <p>Informs victims of impending release of offenders who have committed serious sexual or violent crimes.</p>	
 HM PRISON SERVICE	Runs a helpline for victims who are receiving unwelcome contact from convicted offenders or are anxious about parole or release of a prisoner.	

Victims and witnesses have little confidence that the criminal justice system will meet their needs

1.7 Research evidence has suggested that victims' needs are not always sufficiently addressed by the criminal justice system¹. Victims and witnesses may not choose to report a crime - the British Crime Survey has found that victims report less than half of the crimes they experience. If they do, some witnesses can feel anxious about appearing in court² (Figure 5).

1.8 These experiences are reflected in the overall confidence that victims and witnesses express in the criminal justice system as measured by the British Crime Survey. In 2000 around 20 per cent of those who had ever been victims of crime or who had been in court as witness, spectator or juror, considered the criminal justice system met the needs of victims. Respondents who had recent experience as a victim of a crime reported to the police, had greater confidence in the way the system met the needs of victims (28 per cent)³. However still only three out of every five recent witnesses said that they would be willing to attend court again as a witness².

5 Witnesses' experience of the criminal justice system

Statements ¹	Evidence
"I'd never been in a courtroom before and I felt uneasy."	56 per cent of witnesses say that they are worried about going to court. ² We reported in 1999 that witness non-attendance accounted for 25 per cent of ineffective trials in the Crown Courts ³ . And non-attendance of witnesses accounted for 19 per cent of ineffective trials in the Magistrates' Courts ⁴ .
"The trial was as bad as the offence."	Only 53 per cent of witnesses are confident of the ability of the criminal justice system to bring people to justice. ²
"I was intimidated in court because I had to sit in the same part of the building as the defence witnesses."	Level of overall witness satisfaction is strongly related to feelings of intimidation. 23 per cent of victim witnesses are worried about meeting or seeing the defendant in court. ²
"I had to wait for ages before giving evidence."	Witnesses have to wait on average nearly 1½ hours in Magistrates' Courts and nearly 2½ hours in the Crown Court. ⁵
"No one contacted me to say that the sentencing date was brought forward. I found out about the court decision through the newspapers."	Witness dissatisfaction is related to a lack of information. ²
"This is the second time I have turned up to give evidence. The case was adjourned the last time."	A study found that only 54 per cent of witnesses attending court actually gave evidence on that day. ⁶
"I had to give evidence for nearly two hours and I suffered a panic attack."	Only 60 per cent of witnesses say they would be willing to be a witness again. ²

NOTES

1. National Audit Office interviews with witnesses.
2. Emmy Whitehead: "Witness satisfaction findings from the Witness Satisfaction Survey 2000" Home Office Research Study No 230, 2001.
3. National Audit Office: Criminal Justice: Working together HC 29 1999-00.
4. Lord Chancellor's Department, "Evaluation report of the joint performance management pilot scheme on cracked, ineffective and vacated trials." October 2001.
5. The Witness Monitoring Survey, November 2001, Lord Chancellor's Department.
6. Joyce Plotnikoff and Richard Woolfson, "Options for improved support for victims and other witnesses attending magistrates' courts." Home Office. Unpublished report. 1997.

Source: National Audit Office and surveys of witnesses

1 Catriona Mirrlees-Black, "Confidence in the criminal justice system: findings from the British Crime Survey", Home Office research findings, No 137, 2001
 2 Emmy Whitehead "Witness Satisfaction: findings from the Witness Satisfaction Survey 2000" Home Office Research Study No 230, 2001
 3 Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, Research Findings No 137

1.9 In February 2001 the Government issued a consultation paper⁴ on the case for further improving the service provided to victims, by introducing statutory rights for victims, a Victims' Ombudsman to investigate complaints and champion victims' interests and a "victims' fund" from which compensation orders would be paid out. In July 2002 in its White Paper "Justice for All" the Government has outlined its intentions to appoint a new independent Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses; to legislate to produce a Victims' Code of Practice setting out what rights victims have to protection, practical support and information; and to introduce a right of complaint to the Parliamentary Ombudsman where this Code has not been followed. Work with Victim Support and other victims' organisations concerning these proposals is ongoing.

established Victim Support's model of a local charity helping people cope with the effects of crime. Emotional support and practical assistance is offered by trained volunteers who are recruited, trained and supported by paid local co-ordinators. By the late 1990s, the Victim Support movement comprised some 450 separate Victim Support charities covering England and Wales, each with their own management committee, supported by a separate national charity, the National Association of Victim Support Schemes.

Victim Support and Witness Services are provided by local Victim Support charities affiliated to the national charity, the National Association of Victim Support Schemes

1.10 Most of Victim Support's victim and witness services are provided by local Victim Support charities. The first Victim Support Scheme, founded in Bristol in 1974,

1.11 The local groups are affiliated to and are members of the National Association of Victim Support Schemes, which is run from the National Office. The National Association sets Victim Support policy, operating procedures and minimum standards and allocates Home Office funds to the affiliated local groups. The Trustees of the National Association admit local groups and individuals into membership of the Association and the Members of the Association elect the Trustees (Figure 6).

1.12 At the time of this audit, the National Association, on the basis of a resolution agreed by a majority of the member local groups, was working towards achieving an area based structure, broadly reflecting the 42 criminal justice areas in England and Wales. This has involved local groups giving up their individual charitable status and becoming part of newly established area charities. By

6 The National Association of Victim Support Schemes and Victim Support Local Groups

National Association of Victim Support Schemes	<p>Board of Trustees</p> <p>Comprises individuals elected by Members of the Association and Member local groups; two representatives appointed by Member local groups; and others co-opted to the Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ admits individuals and local groups into the membership; ■ determines Code of Practice which local groups must adopt; ■ ensures compliance with minimum standards; and ■ is responsible for ensuring that grant-in-aid agreement is complied with. <p>Chief Executive and the National Office</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ support the Board and implement all agreed policies and strategies; ■ have day-to-day responsibility for policy development and oversight of Member Areas and local groups; and ■ provide national telephone Supportline.
--	---

Victim Support Local Groups	<p>Area and local Victim Support charities, which are Members of the National Association</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ are run by own Trustees; ■ provide emotional and practical support to victims; and ■ provide Witness Services in the Crown Court and Magistrates' Courts.
-----------------------------	--

Source: National Audit Office

March 2002, 23 Areas had been established, with another 25 due to be established by September 2002 with local groups in one area, Surrey, choosing to retain their individual charitable status. The structure for London remains to be decided.

- 1.13 The work of Victim Support relies heavily on the contribution made by more than 12,500 volunteers who give their time and skills to support victims and witnesses. Over 92 per cent of those who work for Victim Support do so in a voluntary capacity. In 2000-01, Victim Support and its affiliated local groups had 1,080 paid staff, of which 98 were working in the National Office and 982 in local groups. The staff co-ordinated the activities of over 9,000 volunteer providers of support for victims and witnesses. A further 3,660 volunteers acted either as committee members in the local groups or voluntary office staff (Figure 7 opposite).

Home Office funding for Victim Support has risen rapidly to £25 million in 2001-02

- 1.14 The Home Office first provided funding for Victim Support's National Office in 1979 and for local groups from 1987. The Home Office grant is for the provision of services to victims and witnesses and for Victim Support's policy development work, including its advice on Government policy initiatives. The Home Office grant has risen rapidly to fund extensions to Victim Support's services, including the Witness Services and the national telephone Supportline. This has resulted in funding almost doubling from £12.7 million in 1997-98 to £25 million for 2001-02 (Figure 8 opposite).
- 1.15 The Justice and Victims Unit, within the Home Office's Criminal Policy Group, is responsible for determining the grant conditions for Victim Support and monitoring its performance. The Justice and Victims Unit reports to Home Office Ministers for delivery against the Home Office aim of minimising the threat to and intimidation of witnesses and engaging with and supporting victims. It is also accountable for a range of justice issues and developments in victims' policy and for implementing initiatives through the Trials Issues Group and the Criminal Justice Strategic Board to the Criminal Justice Ministers Group. The Criminal Justice Ministers Group comprises the Attorney General, the Home Secretary and the Lord Chancellor and together they oversee the performance of the criminal justice system, review strategic issues affecting the criminal justice system and introduce initiatives to improve its efficiency and effectiveness.

Reasons for this study and the structure of this report

- 1.16 This study focuses on the Home Office's support for Victim Support. The Home Office's last review of the work of Victim Support National Office was carried out on its behalf by Coopers and Lybrand in 1994⁵. This found that the Home Office had maintained an arm's length relationship with Victim Support and had not set clear expectations as to what the National Office and the movement as a whole should achieve with its public funding. The report concluded that the Home Office had given priority to establishing Victim Support's basic infrastructure rather than focusing on its outputs and the Home Office considered that had been an appropriate priority at that time (Appendix 1).

- 1.17 In 1996 the National Audit Office reviewed Home Office support for voluntary organisations, to establish whether its grants were supported by clear funding strategies and detailed appraisal procedures, and whether they were monitored and evaluated to ensure that planned outcomes were achieved⁶. That examination covered grants made by the then Voluntary Services Unit to promote voluntary activity and grants made by other Home Office divisions and did not address the Home Office's grant funding for Victim Support. On the basis of that report, the Committee of Public Accounts concluded that the Home Office should spell out clearly its criteria for making grant payments, encourage diversity of providers and monitor grants effectively to ensure that value for money is being achieved⁷. In 1998, the Government agreed a Compact on relations between Government and the voluntary and community sector and a Code of Good Practice on funding to underpin it (Appendix 2).

- 1.18 This report examines:

- whether Victim Support services are meeting the needs of victims and witnesses; and
- whether there are effective arrangements for overseeing the work of Victim Support.

- 1.19 The report is based on interviews with victims and witnesses, surveys of all Victim Support groups and Crown Court Witness Services, visits to five Victim Support areas, analysis of Victim Support's data on the number of victims and witnesses it supports, and discussions with a number of other victims' organisations and criminal justice agencies. Details of the study methods, the survey findings and the organisations consulted are set out in Appendices 3 and 4. We also reviewed the support made available to victims in some other countries as set out in Appendix 5.

5 Coopers and Lybrand, "Value for Money Audit of Victim Support" Report for the Home Office. March 1994

6 Home Office Support to Voluntary Organisations HC 315 1995-96

7 Home Office Support for Voluntary Organisations, Committee of Public Accounts Thirty-Seventh Report 1995-96

7 **Volunteers' commitment to Victim Support**

Volunteers' contribution to the work of Victim Support:

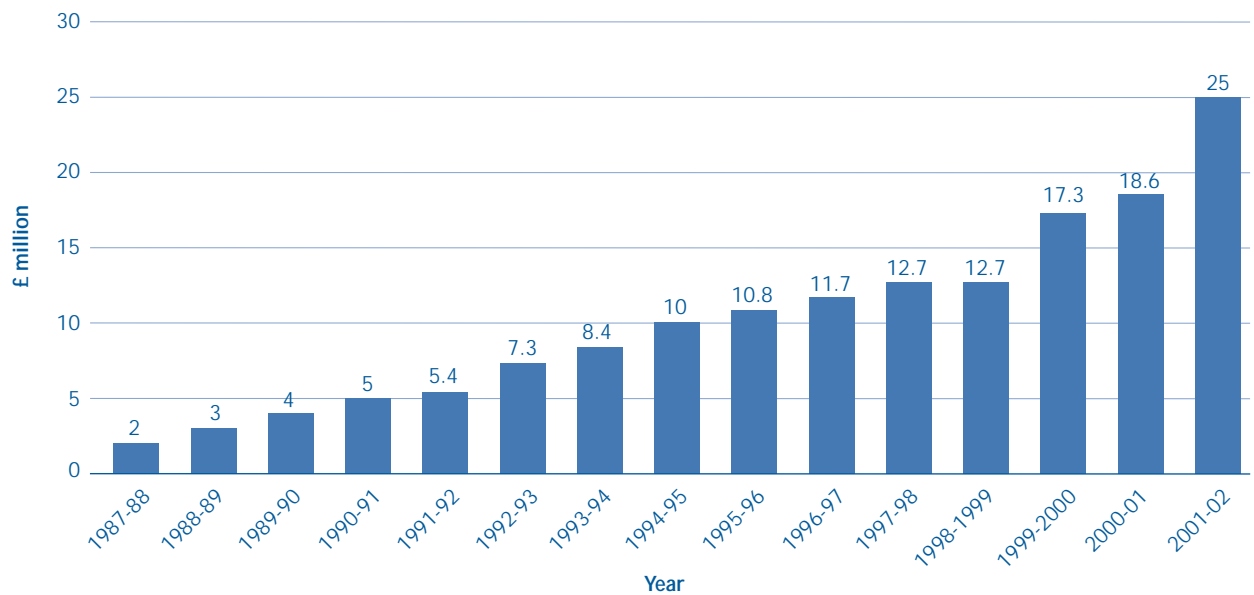
- Supporting victims by talking to victims on the telephone or in person in their home or in the local office and by staffing the national Supportline.
- Supporting witnesses in the criminal courts, by greeting them, showing them round, explaining court procedure and accompanying them in court.
- Helping with national or local office functions, fundraising and IT.
- Directing the work of Victim Support, as Trustees.

Victim Support's commitment to volunteers:

- Providing training, including specialist training for those supporting victims of serious crimes, and regular news updates.
- Paying for out of pocket expenses.
- Personal support and supervision, from staff.

Source: National Audit Office

8 **Home Office funding of Victim Support has almost doubled since 1997-98**



NOTE

The Home Office began contributing to Victim Support National Office costs in 1979.

Source: Home Office



Part 2

Meeting the needs of victims and witnesses

2.1 This Part examines:

- i whether the services provided by Victim Support are meeting the needs of victims;
- ii whether victims have sufficient access to the services offered by Victim Support; and
- iii whether the Witness Service is meeting the needs of witnesses.

Whether the services provided by Victim Support are meeting the needs of victims

Victims, and the various criminal justice system agencies, report high levels of satisfaction with Victim Support's services

- 2.2 Victim Support's services, described in **Figure 9**, are highly valued. Victims we spoke to appreciated the dedication and professionalism of the service provided by Victim Support volunteers, and considered their support had helped them cope with a traumatic experience (**Figure 10 overleaf**). The British Crime Survey has consistently reported that around two in three respondents, who had been victims of crime and could recall contact from Victim Support thought the service "very" or "fairly" helpful. This figure rises to around three out of every four victims who have had face-to-face contact with Victim Support.
- 2.3 Representatives of the various criminal justice agencies we spoke to at local level, including police officers, court officials and staff from the Crown Prosecution Service and Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority, were positive about Victim Support's role in acting as an advocate on behalf of victims.

9 Services to be provided by Victim Support

Victim Support receives Home Office funding to provide the following services to victims.¹

Victims

To provide emotional support to victims to help alleviate the anxieties caused by crime incidents.

To offer general practical help to victims, for example assistance with claims for criminal injuries compensation and advice on how a victim can seek protection or help with security measures.

To liaise with criminal justice agencies on behalf of victims.

To co-ordinate support for victims from other voluntary and community organisations.

To liaise with Witness Services to provide a continuing service to victims of crime.

NOTE

1. Local groups may provide additional services funded from other sources. Details of the additional services provided by the areas visited by us are at Appendix 3.

Source: Home Office Grant-in-Aid Memorandum

- 2.4 The Home Office told us that in its view the needs of victims and witnesses are best met by volunteers from their local communities as they can reflect the community's recognition of the harm that crime causes to them. This is why they have funded Victim Support rather than establish a government agency for victims and witnesses. The Home Office considers this achieves additional value through the efforts of Victim Support staff and its 12,000 volunteers.

10 **Victim of a serious assault**

Background

A female victim of a serious assault. She was seriously injured in a knife attack by a stranger.

Nature of first contact with Victim Support	A police liaison officer asked the victim whether she would like Victim Support to contact her. A Victim Support volunteer telephoned and arranged a visit.
Help provided	The volunteer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ gave the victim an insight into legal procedures and criminal injuries compensation; ■ helped the victim to complete a number of forms at a time when she "was not up to it"; and ■ understood the impact on the victim's husband and supported the victim and her husband through "talking and understanding."
Length of support	The volunteer provided support over a period of 22 months, with the level of support gradually reducing in this time.
Victim's comments on Victim Support	"A lifeline." "Pretty much the only help victims get. But I felt I couldn't trouble my volunteer too much, as she was doing it in her own time." "A valuable service in rundown facilities."

Source: National Audit Office

There has been comparatively little research conducted on the impact of the support provided to victims by the various agencies, including Victim Support

- 2.5 Our review of the support provided to victims in other countries (Appendix 5) suggests that Victim Support's national framework for providing services to victims and witnesses is more comprehensive and longer established than in these other countries. In terms of the broader assistance provided to victims, countries differ in the type of support provided and who provides it, with many countries using paid professionals or a combination of professionals and volunteers.
- 2.6 There has been comparatively little evaluation of the effectiveness of the type of support offered by Victim Support, and other services, in helping alleviate the impact of crime, for example in reducing fear, anger or other mental trauma which may in turn affect their ability to return to work and their day-to-day life. The British Crime Survey and other research studies have focused on the impact of crime on victims and the level

of contact victims have had with Victim Support and their satisfaction with it. Victim Support local groups' own work on the quality of their services has focused on the satisfaction of those who have had personal contact with the service. Further evaluation by the Home Office could, for example, examine the medium term impact on victims of different forms of support including, for example, the work of self-help groups, professional support, and the type of assistance offered by Victim Support and other voluntary and statutory agencies.

- 2.7 Support for victims and witnesses may also influence public perceptions of the criminal justice system and the willingness of victims to report crime and for victims and witnesses to give evidence. The annual British Crime Survey identifies broad reasons for victims not reporting crime and obtains data on witnesses' reporting of crime, finding for example that only in respect of breaking into premises did a majority of witnesses report the incident to the police⁸. There has also been research on the personal characteristics and needs of vulnerable and intimidated witnesses, as set out in the Home Office report "Speaking up for Justice"⁹, and this provides further explanations for victims' decisions not to report crime. A more detailed evaluation of the factors contributing to unreported crime and an unwillingness to come forward as witnesses could assess, for example, whether the services available to victims and witnesses play a part in raising confidence and encourage members of the public to report crime and act as witnesses.

Whether victims have sufficient access to the services offered by Victim Support

- 2.8 In total, Victim Support received nearly 1.2 million referrals in 2000-01. This level has been broadly static over recent years. The vast majority of Victim Support's work involves victims referred by the police after they have reported the crime (97 per cent of referrals). Self-referral accounts for two per cent and referral from other agencies one per cent (Figure 11).

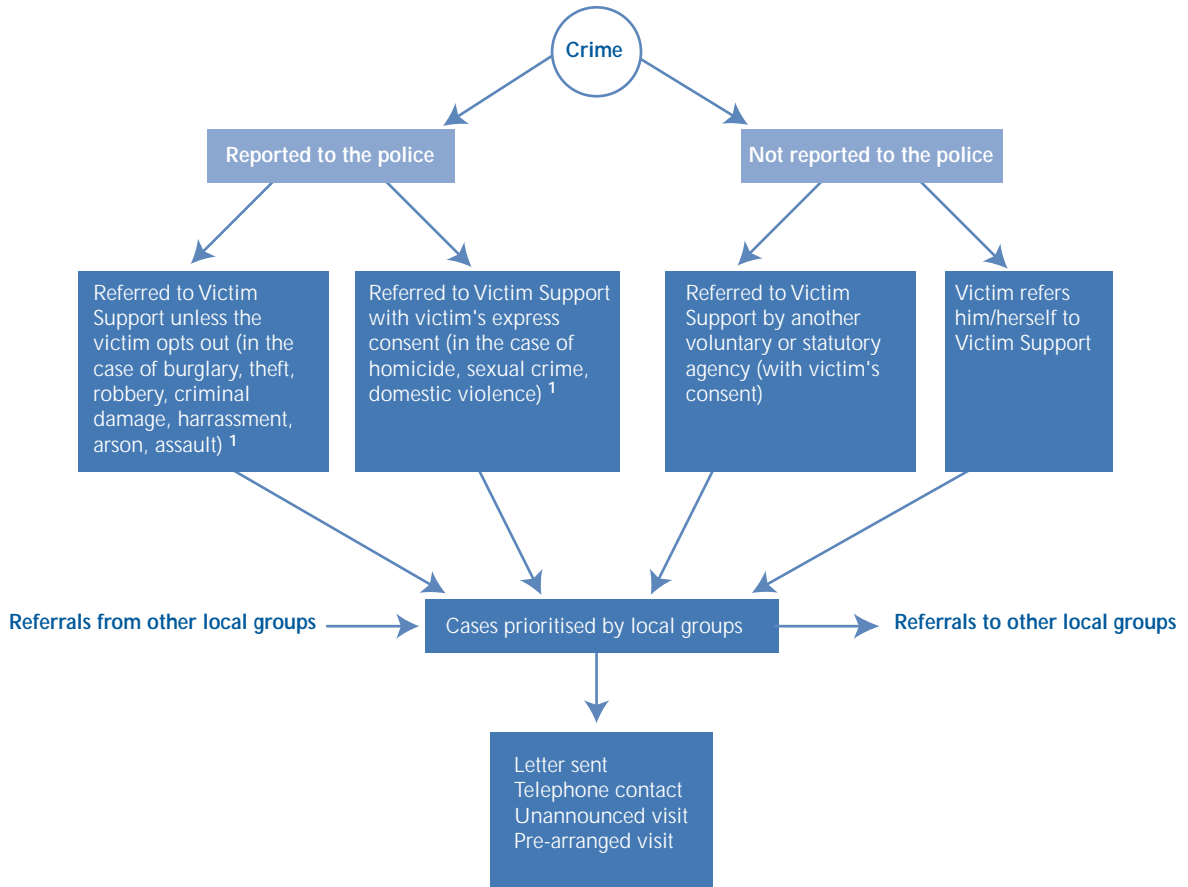
There are fewer referrals from the police than there are recorded crimes. However, most local groups were content with the extent of liaison with the police

- 2.9 Under the terms of the Victim's Charter, victims of most crimes (except victims of road incidents and theft from and of cars) can expect police to pass their details to Victim Support unless they express a contrary wish. For victims of more serious crimes, such as homicide, sexual

⁸ *Victim and Witness Intimidation: Key Findings from the British Crime Survey, Home Office Research Findings No 124, 2000*

⁹ *"Speaking up for Justice" Report of the Interdepartmental Working Group on treatment of vulnerable or intimidated witnesses in the criminal justice system, Home Office, 1998*

11 Referral mechanisms for accessing Victim Support and method of contact



NOTE

1. As a result of local agreements, referrals may include cases not specifically covered under the terms of the Victim's Charter including, for example, theft of and from cars and road deaths.

Source: National Audit Office

crime and domestic violence, police family liaison officers provide information and support to victims in accordance with police guidelines. Before also referring these victims to Victim Support the police must seek their express consent. Victims of child abuse within the family or by carers are the responsibility of social services departments and Area Child Protection Committees and therefore do not receive support from Victim Support. The details passed to Victim Support allow it to contact victims to offer support, enabling the victims to decide whether to take up the offer.

2.10 Our data suggested that not all victims are being referred to Victim Support. In 2000-01, Victim Support local groups received referrals from the police amounting to 57 per cent of recorded burglaries from dwellings, 69 per cent of thefts from the person and 62 per cent of robberies (Figure 12 overleaf). Referral rates varied enormously at local level. For burglary from dwellings, for example, half of the Areas received referrals of between 47 and 75 per cent of recorded crimes (Figure 13 overleaf).

2.11 The variation in referral levels reflects, in part, a lack of consistency in how referrals are counted across the country. Some local groups, however, considered that individual police officers only referred victims that they thought needed support, notably the elderly, although the majority of local groups responding to our survey reported that they were more than satisfied with the local police operation of the referral arrangements. Victim Support told us that, following enactment of the Data Protection Act 1998, there had been significant reductions in the number of referrals made by police, for example in Kent and Surrey. In October 2001, following discussions with the Information Commissioner, the Home Office issued new guidance to the police, restating that, except for serious crimes to the person where the victim must actively consent to referral, they should refer all victims unless, when given the opportunity, victims opted out. Some of the local groups we visited expressed concern that the new guidance might result in the police treating referral as discretionary rather than as an obligation. Kent County Constabulary informed us that internal audits have

12 In 2001, Victim Support received referrals from the police representing 87 per cent of homicides, and less for other selected categories of crime

Crime	No of recorded crimes	Police referrals	Percentage of crimes referred by police
Standard referrals	Violence against the person (excluding homicide)	600,023	37
	Burglary from dwelling	402,984	57
	Robbery	95,154	62
	Theft from person	87,332	69
Consensual referrals	Sexual offences	37,299	41
	Homicide	850	87

NOTE

For serious personal crimes, such as homicide, domestic violence and sexual offences Victim Support would not expect to get referrals for all recorded crimes because referrals are only made by the police with the express consent of the victim.

Source: Home Office Crime Statistics and data from Victim Support

confirmed that victims' consent is being sought and that many victims are opting not to be referred to Victim Support. They keep the matter under constant review and work with Victim Support on a local basis. Some areas, including Surrey, are establishing electronic referral systems, which are intended to reduce the likelihood of delay once victims have opted to be referred.

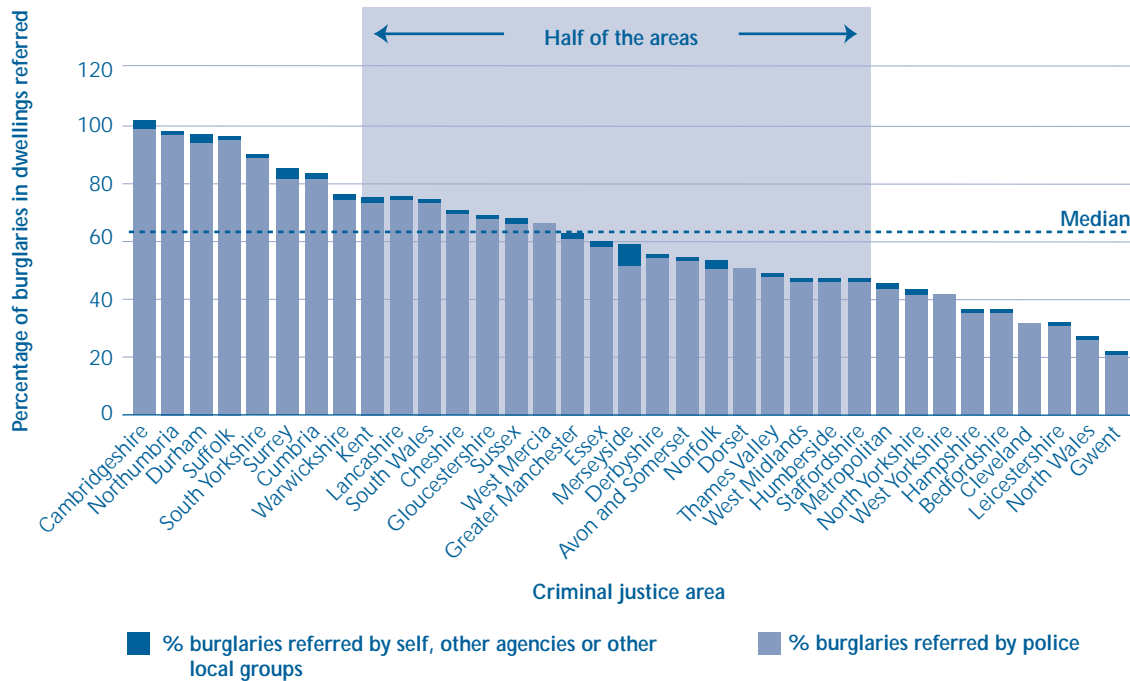
2.12 Victim Support does not routinely collect information on the age, sex or race of the victims it supports. Information on victims received from the police does not include this data and therefore local groups cannot compare the profile of those they support with the profile of people referred to them. Some limited evidence, based on small samples, taken from the 1998 British Crime Survey and a witness satisfaction survey commissioned by the Home Office in 2000, suggested, although they could not form a firm conclusion, that households with a black or Asian respondent were less likely to recall contact with Victim Support and the Witness Service. Victim Support has committed itself to providing equal access to its services to all victims. It has a Race Forum for black and ethnic minority staff which is examining ways of improving service availability to minority groups, and in 2001 it revised its guidance for dealing with racist crimes. In 2002, it plans to review its publicity materials and service models for supporting male victims of domestic and sexual violence.

Victim Support has sought to provide a service to the victims of unreported crime but the numbers are still small

2.13 The Home Office expects Victim Support to provide support for victims of crime not referred to them by the police, in recognition of the fact that not all victims will report the crime. Victim Support encourages victims to contact it directly through a national telephone helpline, local advertising and leaflets. It is not an objective of Victim Support to encourage victims to report the crime or to provide witness statements. It considers this would compromise the identity of the organisation and hence the independence of the support it offers victims.

2.14 In 2000, the British Crime Survey estimated that only 45 per cent of crimes against people living in private households were made known to the police. Over recent years, these surveys have found that over 70 per cent of victims of unreported crime did not report it because they considered it was trivial, involved no loss or that the police could not do anything. Nonetheless, the 1998 British Crime Survey found that just over a third of victims of unreported crime would welcome support, principally advice on security, protection and someone to talk to. Applying the survey findings to the estimated 5.4 million victims of unreported crime in 2000 would suggest that a large number may welcome the type of support, including emotional support and advice on protection and security, which Victim Support provides. This is likely to include some who have experienced crimes, in particular road incidents and car crimes, which the police are not required to refer to Victim Support under

13 Victim Support in half of the criminal justice areas received referrals for victims of burglaries in dwellings of between 75 and 47 per cent of recorded crimes



NOTES

- Excludes Dyfed Powys, Hertfordshire, Northamptonshire, Devon & Cornwall and Lincolnshire for which referrals data were not comparable with police recorded crime data; and Wiltshire and Nottinghamshire for which referrals data were not available or were not complete.
- The variance in the results may be explained by a number of factors, namely:
 - different methods of counting of referrals by local groups. For example some local groups record a household burgled as one referral, whereas others may record a referral for each member helped in a household;
 - different interpretations between local groups and their police forces about what crimes should be referred. For example, if it was agreed by police forces to refer burglaries to buildings other than domestic dwellings, this could result in referrals being greater than the level of referable crime, as is the case in Dyfed Powys, Hertfordshire, Northamptonshire, Devon and Cornwall and Lincolnshire; and
 - high levels of victims opting not to be referred to Victim Support.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Victim Support performance data 2000-01 and Home Office Crime Statistics

the Victim's Charter. If large numbers of these victims sought support this would place significant additional demands on Victim Support.

2.15 The Supportline, a local call rate telephone service staffed by volunteers, received 17,992 calls in the year April 2000 - March 2001. The Supportline is available every day except for Christmas and New Year's Day, from 0900 to 2100 hours Monday to Friday, to 1900 hours at weekends and to 1700 hours on Public Holidays. The number is publicised on Crimewatch on BBC television, and the line is staffed to 0100 hours on days when Crimewatch is shown. Victim Support considers that it needs to develop the Supportline to provide a 24 hour service and that it needs to promote it. However, there is no evidence to suggest that there is a high volume of callers attempting to contact the Supportline when it is not available - 80 per cent of current calls are made, for example, between 0900 and 1700 hours.

2.16 Victim Support's local groups' referrals from non-police sources amounted to some 35,000 in 2000-01, 25,000 from self-referral, that is, contacting local groups direct, and 10,000 from referral from another organisation. This represents over twice the level in 1998-99. In addition, some of the Supportline callers are referred on to their local Victim Support group. Overall this level of referrals is still low compared to the number of victims who do not report crime.

2.17 Some volunteers we spoke to suggested that the location of some Victim Support offices within police stations might put off those victims who may be more wary of criminal justice agencies and hence may not report crimes. Whilst local groups have sought to locate their offices away from police stations, in some areas this may be the only affordable solution. In September 2001, one in five Victim Support offices were located within police stations.

2.18 Aside from the police, there are no other nationally agreed referral arrangements for victims, for example with the National Health Service to refer victims attending Accident and Emergency Departments. However, local groups reported a number of local initiatives aimed at raising awareness of the services available. These initiatives included working with hospitals to raise awareness of the Victim Support service; distributing booklets and leaflets to raise awareness of homophobic and racist crime and promote the service provided by Victim Support; and involvement in joint initiatives to support victims of domestic violence (Figure 14).

The range and level of services provided at local level is crucially dependent on the availability of volunteers and may depend on local funding

2.19 Once local groups receive referrals, they contact victims by letter or in person to offer them support. In total in 2000-01 Victim Support sent 828,000 letters, made 162,000 visits and 211,000 telephone contacts, and it recorded having failed to make contact in only three per cent of its attempted contacts with victims. The level of personal support provided by local groups reflects local prioritisation of cases and the availability of suitable volunteers compared to the levels of crime in the area.

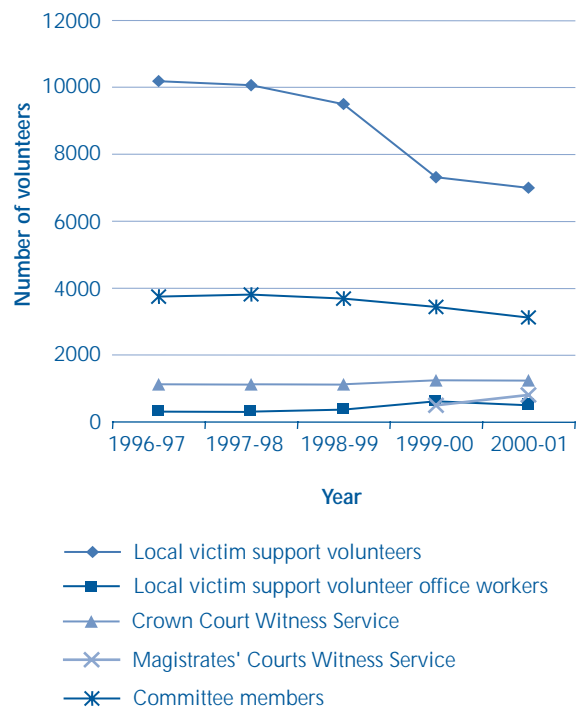
The availability of volunteers

2.20 Many local groups consider they have sufficient volunteers. Many, for example, are able to accept referrals and provide support for victims in addition to the categories stipulated by the Home Office. For example, 75 per cent of local groups told us they would provide a service to people bereaved by road death and overall some 900 referrals of road deaths had been received by local groups. In one Scheme visited by us, Bedfordshire, cases involving road deaths are handled by a specialist

unit, which is funded by local charitable funding and the local authorities. However, overall 53 per cent of local groups reported that they had too few volunteers to meet the demands they face. Data collected by Victim Support show that the numbers of referrals each volunteer has to deal with varies widely from one a week in Dorset to ten a week in the West Midlands.

2.21 In the last three years the numbers of referrals for homicide and rape - crimes that require the victim's express consent before referral - have increased by 25 per cent. Where volunteer numbers are short, local groups can ask volunteers to take on more cases to meet the additional demand from such priority cases, or ask volunteers to take on extra cases away from their normal patch, or ask staff to take on casework. However, two of the local groups we visited (Luton and Salford) believed that shortages of volunteers meant that although they were providing a good service, they were not providing support to as many victims of less serious crimes, such as burglary, as they wanted. And in one case, Bedfordshire, where victims of domestic violence

15 The number of volunteers working with victims has dropped in recent years but the numbers working in the Courts have increased



NOTE

In 2000-01 in addition to the above volunteers, Victim Support had 40 volunteers operating the national Supportline and 87 volunteers to help with the implementation and use of IT.

Source: Victim Support

14 Newcastle Victim Support works extensively with other agencies to enhance services to victims

Newcastle Victim Support has outreach workers based in high crime areas; it is a member of the city's Domestic Violence Interagency Forum; it is part of a multi-agency panel in the city to tackle racist incidents; it is part of the police homophobic monitoring scheme; it is delivering a crime prevention project for older people; and it has partnership arrangements with the local probation service on victim liaison and domestic violence.

Newcastle Victim Support has received significant additional finance from the Single Regeneration Budget, the local probation service and local authority which have enabled it to fund its extended services.

Source: National Audit Office

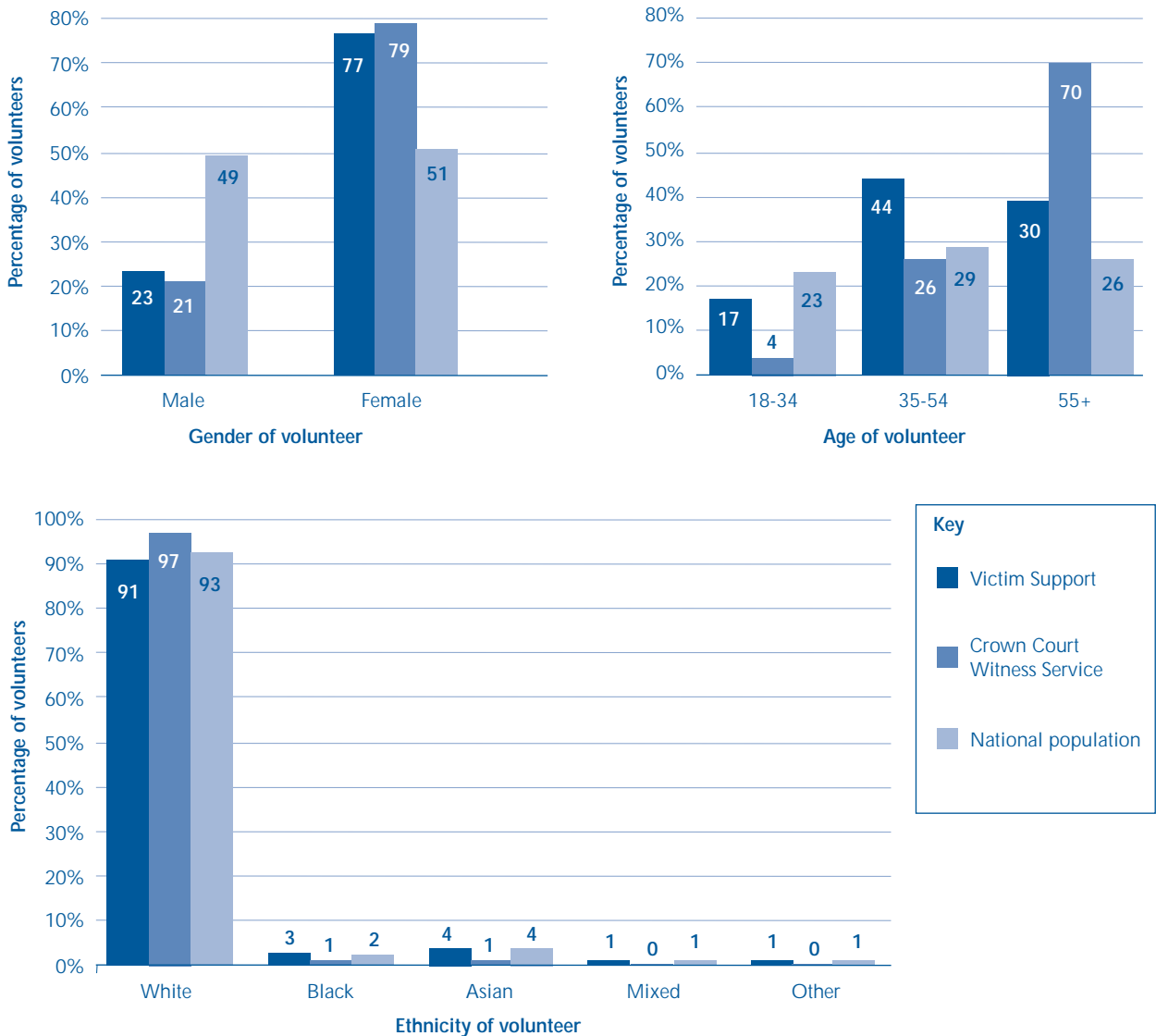
consented to being referred to Victim Support or referred themselves, the local group would provide them with appropriate information about other resources available in the community, but they would not offer on-going emotional support.

2.22 Despite the success of a £500,000 national volunteer recruitment drive in February 2000, which resulted in 2,500 newly trained volunteers, the total number of volunteers providing support to victims in local groups has fallen from 10,180 in 1996-97 to around 6,970 in 2000-01 (Figure 15). However, there is no information available on the average number of hours contributed by individual volunteers, which could make up for or exacerbate this fall. It is not known how much this

reflects a real reduction in volunteers or Victim Support's steps to improve its record keeping. In part, some of the fall may reflect the increase in the number of volunteers helping to establish the new Witness Service in Magistrates' Courts.

2.23 Data collected by Victim Support indicates that, in terms of total figures, it has recruited volunteers from ethnic minorities comparable with the proportion in the population at large (Figure 16). In addition, it has been relatively successful in recruiting volunteers from younger age groups although compared with the national population proportionately more come from the over 55 age group.

16 Many Victim Support volunteers are female and over the age of 55, but they are representative of the ethnic mix in the population at large



Source: National Audit Office analysis of Victim Support's performance data 2000-01

2.24 Although Victim Support is now monitoring volunteer recruitment and turnover, it has no national strategy for addressing the risk of falling numbers of volunteers. Local groups are expected to respond to shortages in volunteers by undertaking new volunteer recruitment drives, although Victim Support told us that local groups may not have the resources to undertake such drives - to pay for the advertisements, additional volunteer expenses, and the staff needed to recruit, train and supervise the volunteers. Because of a lack of reliable data Victim Support has no ready means of determining the extent to which fluctuations in volunteer support over time and between areas impact on the availability of services. In exceptional circumstances, local groups have nevertheless demonstrated their ability to respond, for example in helping the large number of cases arising from the victims of Doctor Harold Shipman (Figure 17).

17 Tameside Victim Support provide support to the victims of Doctor Harold Shipman whilst continuing to provide a service to other victims of crime in the area

The case first came to public attention in 1998 when a GP in Greater Manchester, Doctor Harold Shipman, was questioned by police about the deaths of a number of his patients. He was subsequently charged with murdering 15 of them. He was suspected of murdering many more. In January 2000, Shipman was convicted on all of the murder charges.

There was a very large number of victims involved in this case, including the families and friends of victims where charges were brought and of those where no charges were brought, as well as ex-patients and surgery staff. To meet the needs, Tameside Victim Support appointed two additional members of staff and recruited additional volunteers from across the Greater Manchester area. This was funded from £84,000 additional funding from the National Office and £15,000 from a local business organisation.

Victim Support attended initial meetings of victims' families to try to identify their needs. The type of support provided included: emotional support, advising on criminal injury compensation claims, representing victims in their dealings with the criminal justice agencies, organising pre-trial Court visits, providing transport to attend the Court, providing support in the Court throughout the three month trial in 1999, and dealing with the media. The families formed a support group, which Victim Support assisted. Volunteers have continued to provide emotional support to those who require it and to support the families and friends of victims at inquests in the Coroner's Court up until early 2002 and at the subsequent public inquiry. It has provided a monthly information newsletter to all involved in the case.

Over the four years in which Tameside Victim Support's work has been dominated by the needs of victims of Doctor Shipman, it has continued to provide a service to other victims of crime in the area. The Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police presented Victim Support with a commendation for its work on the Shipman case.

Source: National Audit Office

The training provided to volunteers

2.25 All prospective volunteers are interviewed by Victim Support staff. If the person is likely to be acceptable, checks are made with the Criminal Records Bureau and the names of referees sought. All volunteers are given training before starting work. The support provided to the victims of serious crimes requires experience and particular sensitivity and volunteers are given additional training before they can take on this work. Some cases can make significant time and emotional demands upon volunteers, and in some cases the victim may require support over a period of months or even years to come to terms with the impact of the crime. All volunteers are supported by the local paid co-ordinators and fellow volunteers.

2.26 We found variation between Areas in the numbers of experienced volunteers trained to support victims of serious crimes. For example, for sexual offences Gloucestershire receives an average of 29 referrals a year for each trained volunteer compared with three in Gwent. At one Scheme we visited, Bedfordshire, they had established their service for victims of sexual offences as a dedicated unit within the service, and this enabled the volunteers to build up their experience of supporting these victims. At another, Stockport, they had established a counselling service, to which victims they supported could be referred. Local groups may also refer victims needing specialist support to other agencies, for example Women's Aid refuges.

2.27 Local groups told us that they closely supervise volunteers, particularly those supporting the victims of serious crime. Fifty-five per cent of local groups reported to us that they had carried out or participated in surveys of victims' satisfaction with the services provided by Victim Support. The National Office reviews the quality of local groups' services through their three year reviews, which include an assessment of the supervision of volunteers, a review of records of the support provided to victims, and consideration of the results of local satisfaction surveys and any complaints made against the service.

Whether the Witness Service is meeting the needs of witnesses

By April 2002, the Witness Service had been established in all criminal courts in England and Wales. The introduction of a Witness Service in all Magistrates' Courts within a relatively short time span was a significant achievement

2.28 Victim Support built up its Witness Service in the Crown Court during the 1990s, initially with charitable funding and subsequently with funding from the Home Office. Following a review of options for improving support to victims and witnesses in the Magistrates' Courts in 1997¹⁰ the Home Office asked Victim Support to establish a Witness Service in all Magistrates' Courts by April 2002 (Figure 18). Victim Support told us it had achieved this aim by the target date.

The Witness Service is highly regarded by those who use it

2.29 In a Witness Satisfaction Survey commissioned by the Home Office in 2000, 97 per cent of witnesses reported their satisfaction with the Witness Service. This was slightly higher than satisfaction ratings recorded for court staff (96 per cent), judges and magistrates (95 per cent), by defence witnesses for defence lawyers (92 per cent), the Crown Prosecution Service (87 per cent), police (88 per cent) and Victim Support (88 per cent) - the relatively low figure for Victim Support may reflect the fact that some witnesses may not have had face-to-face contact with Victim Support. Witnesses we spoke to echoed these findings (Figure 19).

The Witness Service supports a high proportion of witnesses in Court but supports few defence witnesses

2.30 The majority of witnesses and the families and friends of victims/witnesses who make contact with the Witness Service do so on the day of the trial (71 per cent). The Witness Satisfaction Survey showed that 74 per cent of witnesses in the Crown Court had contact with a Witness Service, including 83 per cent of witnesses aged under 17. However, over a third of witnesses who did not receive contact with a Witness Service in the Crown Court would have liked to have received support.

18 Services to be provided by Victim Support

Victim Support receives Home Office funding to provide the following services to witnesses.

- To provide information on the court and its proceedings
- To facilitate pre-hearing visits to the court
- To support witnesses in any anxieties they may have on the day of the trial, before, during and after their court appearance
- To accompany victims or witnesses into court if requested (and if resources allow)
- To liaise with and refer witnesses to other statutory agencies or specialist services offering support, including Victim Support local groups

Source: Home Office Grant-in-Aid Memorandum

19 Witness to a theft

Background

A male witness to a theft from commercial premises. The trial was at a Magistrates' Court.

Nature of first contact with the Witness Service	The witness received a leaflet about the Witness Service with the witness orders and contacted the Witness Service to find out which court to attend.
Help provided	The Witness Service provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ a volunteer to talk to while waiting to give evidence. ■ advice about court proceedings and the layout of the court. ■ somewhere to wait that was separate from the defendant, who had made attempts to intimidate him before the trial.
Length of support	On the day of the trial
Witness's comments on the Witness Service	"Brilliant. I was nervous because I had never been in a courtroom before, but I was able to talk to someone and calm down." "Because of the Witness Service, the experience was not as daunting as I thought it would be."

Source: National Audit Office

10 Joyce Plotnikoff and Richard Woolfson, "Options for improved support for victims and other witnesses attending magistrates' courts." Home Office 1997

2.31 A witness may not receive support for a variety of reasons. Most significantly, the service may not be reaching defence witnesses. A survey in 1996-97 found that the needs of defence and prosecution witnesses are similar, being primarily a need for information rather than emotional support¹¹. The Witness Satisfaction Survey found that only 44 per cent of defence witnesses in the Crown Court had contact with the Witness Service and that half of those who did not have contact with the Service would have liked support¹². The Witness Service's own data also show that only two per cent of the people they support are defence witnesses (Figure 20). The support for victims and witnesses in the Crown Court depends, in part, on the arrangements agreed between the Crown Prosecution Service and Victim Support. Under these, the Witness Service can arrange for literature on the services available to be sent to witnesses along with details of the trial date and can make direct contact with witnesses who have consented to this. There are no comparable arrangements in place between Victim Support and the many hundreds of defence solicitors.

The Witness Service aims to provide pre-trial support to witnesses who want it, and particularly to vulnerable witnesses

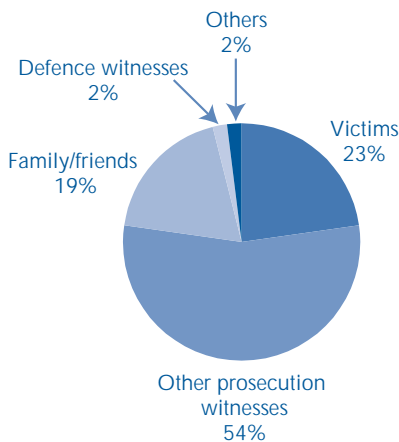
2.32 The Witness Service is able to arrange pre-trial visits to allow any witnesses who wish to familiarise themselves with the Courts and Court procedure. In 2000-01 the Witness Services provided pre-trial visits to 60,000 witnesses or their families and friends, in addition to 148,000 on the day of the trial. Pre-trial familiarisation

can be particularly important for vulnerable witnesses, such as children, and disabled or intimidated witnesses, who may be particularly anxious about the prospect of giving evidence, as illustrated in Figure 21. From April 2002, the Home Office is making available additional annual funding of £2 million towards enabling Victim Support to provide individual support before and at Court to witnesses considered by the Court to be vulnerable or intimidated. The Witness Service will work in partnership with other specialist bodies, such as social services or voluntary organisations where they are already involved. The specification for these services is being developed.

2.33 The new arrangements will only work if vulnerable witnesses are identified in advance. To date, the Witness Service has asked the Crown Prosecution Service to identify vulnerable witnesses and refer them to the Witness Service in advance of the trial, so that it can offer pre-trial services and ensure that it has enough volunteers available on the day of trial to be able to offer personal support.

2.34 Local Witness Services told us they are not always aware of witnesses who may need help until the day of the trial. Witness Services expect to receive a List of Witnesses Attending Court from the Crown Prosecution Service a few weeks before cases come to the Crown Court. There is no equivalent national agreement for Magistrates' Courts although work to develop one is in progress. If this list is supplied in sufficient time, the Witness Service may send a letter offering their service to witnesses two to three weeks before the case comes to court. Advance referrals, particularly of victims, can also be received from local Victim Support groups and other criminal justice agencies.

20 The Crown Court Witness Service has mostly been used by victims, prosecution witnesses and their family and friends



Source: National Audit Office analysis of Victim Support's performance data 2000-01

21 Witness to physical abuse of a child

Background

A female witness of abuse by a teacher against an autistic child in his care.

The witness' experience in court

The witness was given transport to the Court by the police. On the first day of the trial she waited from 10.30 to 16.00 when she was called to give evidence. On the second day she gave evidence until lunchtime, when the case was adjourned because the prosecution barrister could not attend court. On the third day she completed giving her evidence.

The support provided by the Witness Service

A volunteer sat with the witness in the Witness Service Waiting Room before she gave evidence and during breaks in her evidence; accompanied the witness into the courtroom; and accompanied her during lunch breaks.

The witness valued this support because she did not know the procedures, had no personal or family support with her in court and felt intimidated by the defendant.

Source: National Audit Office

11 Joyce Plotnikoff and Richard Woolfson, "Options for improved support for victims and other witnesses attending magistrates' courts", Home Office 1997
 12 Data from the Witness Satisfaction Survey 2000 supplied by the Home Office to the National Audit Office

Crown Court Witness Services reported to us that they were satisfied overall with the performance of their referral mechanisms, although only 59 per cent said that they received the List of Witnesses Attending Court from the Crown Prosecution Service all of the time. Victim Support and the Home Office told us that they are developing new arrangements under which the Courts will identify vulnerable and intimidated witnesses in advance of trial, but these do not apply to other witnesses.

There is considerable variation in the quality of facilities provided for witnesses in court

2.35 A key factor influencing witnesses' perceptions of the trial process is the quality of facilities available to witnesses waiting to give evidence. Research evidence suggests that prosecution witnesses particularly value separate accommodation to keep them apart from defence witnesses and defendants¹³. Witness Services have negotiated with Crown and Magistrates' Courts to obtain space and facilities for witnesses, and there is considerable variation in the quality of the facilities available. The facilities we saw ranged from a number of rooms, with amenities to cater for a range of witnesses in a Crown Court, to a single waiting room, without separate access to canteens or toilets (Figure 22 and Appendix 3, Table 3). In our survey, 89 per cent of Crown Court Witness Services said that they had separate accommodation for prosecution witnesses, but only 54 per cent said that they had separate accommodation for defence witnesses. In some courts consultation rooms may be available as separate waiting rooms.

22 Witness facilities in Newcastle Magistrates' Court are limited compared with those in the purpose built Crown Court in Kingston

The Witness Service in Kingston Crown Court is located in a building that was purpose-built in 1997. The Witness Service has a reception desk at the Court entrance; an office for the Co-ordinator and volunteers; two spacious rooms in which to hold witnesses (with televisions, radios, magazines, etc.); a privacy room just off one of these rooms; and a separate room in which child witnesses can wait (with toys and games).

The Witness Service in the hundred year old Newcastle Magistrates' Court only has one small office that has to be shared by the Co-ordinator, volunteers and witnesses needing support. There is no privacy for the witnesses and to keep witnesses apart, defence witnesses must wait in the general waiting area.

Source: National Audit Office

2.36 The Home Office and the Lord Chancellor's Department have a target to increase the satisfaction of users of the criminal justice system, including victims and witnesses, by 5 percentage points by 2002 and to maintain it thereafter. The Crown Court Design Guide published by the Lord Chancellor's Department stipulates that new court buildings should be built with dedicated rooms for police, prosecution, defence and young or vulnerable witnesses, and this standard also applies to new magistrates' court buildings. For existing buildings the Department expects that local staff will liaise to make best use of the available rooms and in particular in relation to the setting up of the Magistrates' Courts Witness Service, work together locally to identify and equip the rooms needed. Where the necessary funding for building works can not be found locally, applications can be made for a share of capital funds held by the Court Service and the Lord Chancellor's Department.





Part 3

Managing the performance of Victim Support

- 3.1 This Part examines the adequacy of the arrangements for overseeing the work of Victim Support. In particular, it examines:
- i whether the Home Office has provided a clear vision of what it expects Victim Support to achieve;
 - ii whether the Home Office has exercised effective oversight of Victim Support's use of public money; and
 - iii whether Victim Support has adapted its management arrangements to match its expanded role.

Whether the Home Office has provided a clear vision of what it expects Victim Support to achieve

The Home Office has not had a long term plan of how services for victims and witnesses might be developed, but it is now leading the development of a cross-departmental strategy

3.2 Since 1990, successive governments have used the Victim's Charter to set standards for the services victims might expect from the various criminal justice system agencies and Victim Support. The Charter was revised in 1996. In many respects, the Charter has helped guide the expansion of services across the various agencies. In addition to Victim Support being the main provider of services for victims and witnesses the Home Office has seen the organisation as a valuable source of expertise and policy advice. The Home Office has not had a long-term plan of how the services for victims and witnesses might be developed, and more specifically, the roles of the various agencies, including Victim Support and the wider voluntary sector. In the context of the proposals outlined in the July 2002 White Paper "Justice for All" (see paragraph 1.9), the Home Office is now leading the development of a cross-departmental strategy to deliver improved services for victims and witnesses. This will

include agencies beyond the criminal justice system such as health, housing and local authorities. An outline of the strategy was approved by the Criminal Justice Strategic Board in May 2002 and a draft strategy will be distributed for consultation later in 2002.

The Home Office has funded Victim Support to develop a comprehensive national service for victims and witnesses and has not had a strategy for making funding open to voluntary groups to provide other victim and witness services

- 3.3 Since the Home Office first funded Victim Support in 1979, Victim Support has helped deliver commitments made by successive governments, beginning in 1990 with the Victim's Charter, its revised version in 1996 and, more recently, the development of services for witnesses in court. In 2001-02, 98 per cent of Home Office funding for voluntary sector-based victim and witness services went to Victim Support.
- 3.4 In 1994, a Coopers and Lybrand review of Victim Support National Office¹⁴ commissioned by the Home Office concluded that exclusive government funding of one movement could, to some extent, be seen as removing potential benefits from diversity of supply and competition. More recently, the Government's 1998 Compact on relations between Government and the voluntary and community sector committed the Government as a whole to fair access to funding and stated that funders should spread their resources between strategic funding, project funding and development funding (Appendix 1).
- 3.5 The Home Office has not subjected the development of new services for victims and witnesses to open competition from other providers. For the telephone helpline and the provision of support for witnesses, Victim Support made the case for the services and piloted the witness service in the Crown Court with charitable funding. The Home Office told us its aim in

funding Victim Support to provide these new national services had been to develop a seamless, comprehensive and consistent voluntary-based service to victims and witnesses from the time of the crime to the conclusion of the criminal case and afterwards where necessary. The Government's Compact with the voluntary and community sector allows provision for fair access to strategic funding. Having established a national service for the victims and witnesses of crime, the Home Office is now committed, when funding becomes available, to going out to tender for the provision of a proposed new service for the victims of road traffic incidents; and to tender for any other future new services.

- 3.6 Some voluntary bodies working in the sector reported to us their difficulty in obtaining core funding for their services to victims and witnesses. Some had written to the Department of their own volition seeking funding for specific projects. Whilst most requests had been rejected, the Department has provided core funding to two voluntary organisations. Support After Murder and Manslaughter (SAMM), which has received funding since 1998-99, provides a self-help service to the families of homicide victims, and received £120,000 in 2001-02. And in April 2001, the Rape Crisis Federation Wales and England was offered three-year funding, £406,000 for the year 2001-02, to enable it to develop the range of services it offers to local Rape Crisis centres in England and Wales. By not providing open access to some of its funds, the Home Office has not complied fully with the principles of the Government's Compact with the voluntary and community sector to provide fair access to funding. This may have restricted innovation in community groups, although we found evidence of innovation in the local groups in the Victim Support movement.

Whether the Home Office has exercised effective oversight of Victim Support's use of public money

The Home Office has agreed the main features of the services to be provided by Victim Support, but where resources are limited has not specified which aspects of the service should receive priority

- 3.7 The review by Coopers and Lybrand in 1994 concluded that the Home Office had not clearly expressed what Victim Support should achieve with its public funding. Prompted by the publication of the Government's Compact with the voluntary and community sector in 1998, the Home Office drew up, in consultation with Victim Support, a new specification of grant terms and conditions. The resulting Grant-in-Aid Memorandum was agreed in March 2000 and was reviewed and

amended in late 2001. The memorandum specifies who should have access to the services, identifies the main referral sources and provides a broad description of the support Victim Support may provide. The memorandum allows Victim Support to determine how the services are to be provided and to determine its priorities within its existing resources. However, beyond the commitment in the Victim's Charter to offer to help victims and witnesses (see Figure 9) the memorandum does not specify the Home Office's priorities for a minimum level of service, for example meeting the needs of repeat victims, vulnerable groups, and the victims of particular categories of crime.

- 3.8 The Home Office told us that from the outset its funding for Victim Support has only been intended to make a contribution to costs, and that Victim Support nationally and locally would continue to seek other funding for its activities from other statutory agencies, local authorities and charitable sources. The implication of this is that variation in local authority funding and the success of local fundraising is likely to result in variation between Schemes in the level and range of the services they provide. The Home Office considers this funding arrangement brings added value for taxpayers, and accepts that locally determined priorities will bring some variation in local services.
- 3.9 Victim Support has set local groups a target of obtaining 20 per cent of overall funding from other sources, such as local authorities, trusts, companies and individuals, and considers this important for maintaining its independence from the Home Office and spurring developments to services. We found that of the 18 fully established areas responding to our survey, half had met or exceeded Victim Support's target, with funds raised from other sources totalling £6.19 million, accounting for 35 per cent of Victim Support's total income across the 18 areas. Amongst the areas, amounts raised ranged from two per cent to sixty-five per cent. Variation in local authority funding accounts for much of the difference in areas' local funding. Locally raised funding can be for specific local initiatives or to contribute to local costs.

Recent increases in funding have enabled Victim Support to fund improvements to its operations, but the Home Office has not always specified what it expects Victim Support to achieve with this funding

- 3.10 Over recent years, Victim Support has requested additional funding to enable it to improve the services it provides. Its bids have addressed the need for funds to increase salaries, training and fundraising costs to support its work and bids for extending its services in support of victims, in line with the Government's Criminal Justice aims, for example to support victims

involved in restorative justice initiatives (which involve offenders acknowledging the impact of their crime on victims and making reparation) and to increase support for vulnerable and intimidated witnesses. The Home Office has not typically required Victim Support to confirm in advance what can be delivered for the sum to be granted nor has the Home Office considered the balance being achieved between Home Office funding and other funding. In the five years since 1997-98, the Home Office grant to Victim Support has increased from £12.7 million to £28 million a year. Over this time the Home Office has granted additional annual funding totalling £150,000 for the introduction of the Supportline, £8.1 million to establish the Magistrates' Courts Witness Service, and £2 million to provide services to vulnerable witnesses. Aside from these items, the Home Office did not specify in its confirmation of its funding what service enhancements it expected from the remainder of the additional money.

- 3.11 After confirmation of its annual funding, Victim Support provides the Home Office with information on planned activities in the form of its annual business plan and in the course of the year it has sought approval for major changes in planned expenditure. Victim Support, with approval from the Home Office, used the increases in its funding for special one-off costs, for example in 1999-00 to introduce IT in all local groups (£1 million in 1999-00 and more in 2000-01), fundraising (£0.5 million in 1999-00 and £150,000 in 2001-02) and a volunteer recruitment drive (£0.5 million in 1999-00). It also introduced a minimum rate of pay for local volunteer co-ordinators (£16,709 in 2001-02) and funded the restructuring of local services into areas (Figure 23).

Late Home Office funding decisions have hampered Victim Support's ability to plan the development of its services

- 3.12 The Government's Funding Code, which provides guidelines to departments on funding voluntary and community bodies, promotes the benefits of strategic funding in helping to improve the stability of organisations and their ability to plan for the longer term. The Code advocates the use of three-year grants, subject to a satisfactory annual review of progress against agreed objectives and the availability of resources. In accordance with this, since 1999 the Home Office has specified Victim Support's funding for three-year periods, as part of the Government's spending reviews.
- 3.13 Recently, additional grant funding has been drawn from other budgets within the Home Office's Spending Review allocation (£2.4 million in 2001-02; and £1.0 million in 2002-03) and the Criminal Justice System Unallocated Reserve (£3.6 million in 2001-02 and £2 million in 2002-03). This funding is granted for the year, although it is to finance continuing services. These additional amounts have usually been determined by the Home Office and Criminal Justice Reserve once the financial year has started. Victim Support cannot assume that these amounts will be rolled forward from one year to the next and therefore cannot finalise its financial planning until a late stage.

23 Within its funding for Victim Support the Home Office has specified only the funding for new services

Year	Funding £ million			Specified increases in funding compared to prior year
	Total	National Office	Local services	
1997-98	12.7	1.5	11.2	£150,000 to National Office towards the cost of the Supportline
1998-99	12.7	1.5	11.2	
1999-00	17.3	1.9	15.4	£2.8 million for the introduction of the Witness Service in Magistrates' Courts
2000-01	18.6	2.2	16.4	£1 million for further expansion of the Witness Service in the Magistrates' Court
2001-02	25.0	2.5	22.5	£4.3 million for further expansion of the Witness Service in the Magistrates' Court
2002-03	28.0 ¹	2.8	23.2	£2 million for the provision of support for vulnerable witnesses

NOTE

1. Includes additional £2 million for the provision of support for vulnerable witnesses, for which agreement has not yet been reached on the specification and allocation to National Office and local services.

Source: National Audit Office

3.14 As a result of late decisions on funding and lack of certainty on future funding, Victim Support has not spent all its development funding in the year for which it was allocated. From Victim Support's annual reports and returns to the Home Office we found that Victim Support underspent against the estimated cost of the new witness service in Magistrates' Courts by £7 million over the three years it was being set up. The Home Office was aware Victim Support was underspending against its total grant. The amounts released have been used by Victim Support to help to fund its area management and its services to victims. There is a risk that services could become dependent on funding released as a result of temporary underspending on other activities. In allocating funding to local groups Victim Support distinguishes short-term funding from three-year funding, and it aims to ensure that the funding is only provided up to the level at which funding is assured for future years. Whilst monies for Magistrates' Courts Witness Services were not ring fenced, the Home Office should be reviewing how its grant is being spent to enable it to assess the full cost and sustainability of the services it funds.

The Home Office has regular contact with Victim Support but has not routinely and formally held Victim Support to account for its performance

3.15 The Home Office has frequent contact with senior managers at Victim Support. Home Office officials are, for example, regular observers at Victim Support committee meetings, including meetings of its Funding Panel which decides the allocations to individual Schemes. Officials have also met regularly to discuss bids for funding. However, until January 2002, the Home Office had not kept a regular formal agenda for monitoring performance and the stewardship of funds. The Home Office has relied on Victim Support to undertake inspections of the quality of services provided by local groups in their three-yearly reviews (see paragraph 3.28). The Home Office sees summaries of the resulting reports, but has not routinely obtained the full reports. Since January 2002, the Home Office and Victim Support have arranged meetings every two months to address strategy and performance issues.

3.16 In its 1994 report, Coopers and Lybrand recommended that the Home Office should move towards more detailed scrutiny of the outcomes achieved by Victim Support as a result of public funding. The report recommended that specific performance measures should be established to monitor quality of service and suggested that these could be used to link resource allocation with performance. In 2000, the Home

Office's Grant-in-Aid memorandum specified a set of performance measures covering, for example, the percentage of referral cases contacted by Victim Support, the length of time from the victim reporting the crime to initial Victim Support contact, the number of complaints received about the victim and witness services, satisfaction ratings and ethnic monitoring data for victims and witnesses supported. Victim Support was to collect the relevant data in 2001-02, with the intention that targets would be set in due course. Victim Support has collected operational data, on referrals and contacts with victims and witnesses, but has not been able to collect the other data required. In January 2002, the Home Office agreed with Victim Support that further information would need to be collected in 2002-03 to establish a better basis for setting future targets and help identify other potential measures.

3.17 To produce meaningful results, any new performance indicators would need to be based on comprehensive and reliable data. A report commissioned in 1997 by Victim Support from Morgan Harris Burrows suggested that data collected by Victim Support from local groups contained inconsistencies and that their reliability was open to doubt. The consultants recommended action to improve the reliability of the data, as well as investment in information technology. Victim Support told us that it had achieved improvements in the quality of the data collected but it recognises that some of the data are still incomplete. Our examination suggests that some of the data held by Victim Support National Office may not always be helpful in monitoring performance. For example it records referrals and the contacts made with victims and witnesses, but the contact statistics do not allow analysis of how it has contacted the victims referred to it, or the number of victims receiving support over an extended period, as opposed to a single offer of support.

3.18 In October 1999, the Home Office approved a request from Victim Support to spend £1 million of its grant on its IT strategy by March 2000. The investment was intended to help local groups to improve their management of services and generate information on local performance, including referral statistics. Many users did not have the skills needed to cope with the referrals software and Victim Support organised the recruitment of volunteers with specialist IT skills to help them. Victim Support provided training for its new software to cover this skills gap. Some users preferred the functionality and user friendliness of their own systems, and three of the ten local groups we visited in November/December 2001 were continuing to use their own software. Victim Support told us it issued revised referrals software in January 2002, which local groups are now using.

Whether Victim Support has adapted its management arrangements to match its expanded role

Victim Support's efforts to reshape its structure, both at national and local level, have clarified responsibilities and should lead to improved management

3.19 The Trustees of the national organisation, the National Association of Victim Support Schemes, are responsible to the Home Office for providing services to victims and witnesses as specified in the Grant-in-Aid memorandum. The separate charities, which are the Victim Support local groups, are members of the National Association of Victim Support Schemes and have voting rights to elect the Board of Trustees at national level, set policy and change the constitution (which requires a three-quarters majority). This structure makes formal accountability for delivering against the Home Office's requirements more complex than in other service delivery agreements. However, it has been adopted by the Victim Support movement as the optimum balance between the historic structure of the movement, the need to ensure the future commitment of the local charities and the need to provide an accountable national service.

3.20 Historically, the Trustees were practitioners from local groups. However, in keeping with published guidance from the Charity Commissioners, Trustees in recent years have been selected for election to the Board on the grounds of their specific expertise. This has strengthened the Board and the national direction and management of the Victim Support movement.

3.21 Up until the late 1990s, the Victim Support movement comprised some 450 affiliated Victim Support groups each with their own charitable status and management committees and nearly 100 Crown Court Witness Services managed by local groups. In 1997, the National Association of Victim Support Schemes resolved to enable the merging of local groups and Witness Services to form new Area charities to more closely match the boundaries adopted by the criminal justice agencies. By April 2002, new Victim Support charities had established themselves to cover 23 areas. A further 25 areas were to have completed their reorganisation by September 2002. In London, local groups have merged to form an affiliated scheme for each borough and a decision is pending on a structure for managing the service across London. In Surrey, local groups proposed to introduce a new single Area charity, whilst retaining the existing local charities. In their view, a single area charity would be more costly and the quality of management offered by their existing committees would be lost. The proposed structure did

not conform with either of the models adopted by the National Association in 1997. Therefore the local groups have decided to retain their individual charitable status. One local scheme, East Lindsey in Lincolnshire, decided not to join its Area and closed its service in 2001 and the role of supporting victims in that area has passed to another Scheme.

3.22 The reorganisation has allowed local groups and Witness Services to introduce area offices with Area Managers and area managed training programmes at a cost of £3.9 million in 2001-02, paid from Home Office funding. Amongst the local groups we visited, we found that this had enabled Area Managers to start reviews of local financial procedures, employment and health and safety policies, to introduce area-wide training programmes and to encourage the development of operational protocols drawing on best practice. Because of the closer match with the boundaries of local criminal justice agencies, local groups reported improved communication with local agencies at a strategic level.

Victim Support has sought to update and improve its financial and management systems

3.23 In February 1999 the National Association commissioned consultants, Horwath Consulting, to review the senior management structure at Victim Support. The consultants concluded that the organisation could be improved by strengthening the senior management group, increasing the focus on finance, administration and fundraising and improving internal communication and planning. This has led to an expanded senior management team designed to have greater input to the development of strategy and the organisation, including a new post of Deputy Chief Executive with responsibility for finance and administration.

3.24 Victim Support has sought to improve its arrangements for allocating funds to the local groups. Applications for funding are decided by the Funding Panel, which is appointed by the Trustees, subject to the consent of the Home Office, and reports to the Board of Trustees. Applications are normally intended to cover a three-year period and are considered by the Panel throughout the year. This method of allocation has resulted in an uneven distribution of funds to local groups. In 1997, consultants commissioned by Victim Support, Morgan Harris Burrows, suggested that allocations should be based on workload, as measured by crime levels and the number of cases disposed by the courts. Since 2000, funding allocations have taken account of these indicative workload figures. But because of the need for additional funding to be used to enable local restructuring and the establishment of the Magistrates' Courts Witness Service, allocations remain uneven. In 2001-02, seven Areas and London received less than 75 per cent of the funding implied by their workload and 16 Areas received more

than 25 per cent more¹⁵. From 2002-03, Victim Support told us it aims to work towards bringing Areas' allocations into line with their workload.

3.25 The National Association has always received a clear audit certificate. In April 2001, Victim Support changed its external auditors for the first time in over 20 years and brought its accounts into line with recent changes in company and charity law. In July 2001, an Audit Committee was established and considered the first report from the new auditors, which reported concern that there had been no review by the National Office of local groups' audited accounts. Victim Support told us this is now being done. There are now plans to hold meetings of the Audit Committee every six months. During 2002-03 Victim Support is also appointing an internal auditor to work within its new Quality and Standards Inspectorate (see paragraph 3.29).

3.26 In accordance with the recent Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities (SORP2000), Victim Support has sought to identify the major risks to its business and establish the systems needed to mitigate those risks. At the time of our audit, this work was still in its infancy with major work still required, for example on managing the risks associated with recruiting and retaining sufficient numbers of volunteers.

Victim Support is working to increase further the consistency and quality of the service it provides to victims and witnesses

3.27 Victim Support seeks to ensure that its affiliated local groups operate to national policies and procedures. As part of their affiliation requirements Victim Support requires local groups to:

- Comply with the Victim Support Code of Practice, which is a statement of the principles to be applied in the management and delivery of services, including equal opportunities, employment and supervision issues, volunteer selection, recruitment and training, accessibility to services, confidentiality, codes of conduct and complaints procedures.
- Use standardised basic training for all volunteers working with victims and volunteers in the Witness Service.
- Follow guidance documents such as training and employment guidelines and guidance on assisting with Claims for Criminal Injuries Compensation.

3.28 Victim Support monitors compliance with these requirements through annual affiliation reviews of local groups and three-yearly reviews. Key results from the reviews are made available to the Funding Panel for taking into account in considering local groups' plans and bids for funding. The reviews, involving interviews with staff and volunteers and inspection of local case records, have been carried out by staff from the National Office Field Team, who also have responsibility for providing advice to local areas on meeting its Code of Practice standards. However, in 2000-01, because of the heavy workload associated with the reorganisation of the local groups, 10 out of 22 planned area reviews were deferred, with reliance being placed instead on the completion by Areas of detailed area planning reports. In September 2001, the Funding Panel agreed to a proposal to defer the reviews and rely on the area planning reports for 2001-02 whilst the restructuring exercise was being completed.

3.29 National Office staff responsible for conducting inspection visits are able to feedback to local groups and offer advice based on their work with other local groups, but Victim Support has not had the information systems required to do this more formally. In their 1997 report, Morgan Harris Burrows observed that more use could be made of information collected during the three-yearly reviews, if key data from the returns were collated and stored centrally. At the time of our audit Victim Support could use its data to inform its reviews of local groups and made national data available to local groups through its annual report, but there was no mechanism for providing regular detailed feedback to local groups on performance.

3.30 In April 2002, the dual function of the National Office Field Team was divided between a new Members Services Department supporting local services and a new Quality and Standards Department taking charge of review/inspection. Victim Support told us it is reviewing the scope and cycle of its inspections. It intends, however, that the inspection reports will be used to confirm that the funding awarded by the Funding Panel is being put to proper use. The changes are intended to ensure that inspections are robust and independent.

¹⁵ The areas which in 2001-02 received less than 75 per cent of the funding implied by their workload were Buckinghamshire, Cheshire, London, Somerset, Staffordshire, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire. Those which received more than 25 per cent more than the funding implied by their workload were Avon, Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Devon, Durham, Gloucestershire, Hereford, Hertfordshire, Kent, Lincolnshire, Merseyside, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire.

Appendix 1

Summary of Coopers and Lybrand's value for money audit of Victim Support, 1994

Aims of the audit:

The terms of reference for the audit, which was commissioned by the Home Office, were to:

"look at the work of the National Office of Victim Support, at its systems and methods, and to evaluate and report on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of its service delivery".

Key findings:

- the staff of the National Office have a reputation for commitment and energy, have substantial achievements to their credit though they are few in number, and are very well regarded by the National Office's stakeholders.
- external stakeholders involved in the criminal justice system value the services provided by Victim Support highly.
- the National Office does not have the mechanisms and processes to assure the Home Office that good value for money is being obtained from Home Office funding for the National Office, largely because the Home Office's expectations as to the outputs that should be provided are not made clear.
- the National Office also cannot provide assurance that value for money is being obtained from Home Office funding for local groups, because expectations for the services to be provided are not made clear, the line of accountability from the local groups to the Home Office is not clear, and the National Office's constitutional position prevents it from implementing measures to improve value for money without local groups' consent.
- the National Office faces no tension to maximise value to clients whilst minimising costs, but the management arrangements are in general consistent with those that would be expected in an organisation of this type and size.

- procedures for the allocation of resources to local groups and evaluation of local performance fall significantly short of good practice, with funds allocated by the local Funding Panel without prioritisation and no adequate processes to evaluate what has been achieved with the funds provided. This position in part reflects the absence of a clear statement of objectives from the Home Office.
- the Victim Support movement has succeeded in mobilising volunteers to provide a much needed service to high professional standards, with obvious benefits for the economy of the service. The management arrangements developed in the National Office recognise the requirements for recruiting, retaining and motivating volunteers.
- the audit did not involve a formal audit of accounting systems, but there was no evidence that funds had been used for any purposes other than those for which they had been approved.

Recommendations

- i The Home Office should enter into a dialogue with the National Office, through which clear objectives that the National Office should achieve with the funds provided will be established; and
- ii consideration should be given to grouping National Office activities into a range of different categories, to take account of the diversity of different types of role that the National Office performs, to each of which different funding principles will apply. The categorisation would be the subject of joint review.

Action taken: Following the Coopers and Lybrand report, National Office activities were grouped and costed separately to make it clear how much staff effort was being devoted to broad areas of activity. It was hoped to use this information in a service level agreement, starting in 1997-98. This was not introduced. From April 2000 the terms and conditions for the Home Office grant to Victim Support have been set out in the Grant-In-Aid Memorandum.

- iii Clear objectives and accountabilities for the use made of local funding should be established, and in particular the Local Funding Panel should be appointed by and made accountable to the Home Office.

Action taken: The Home Office rejected the recommendation that the Local Funding Panel should be appointed by and made accountable to the Home Office. It considered that the Home Office should not get involved in the detailed process of grant allocation and monitoring. The Home Office continued to set criteria for local groups to satisfy before they qualify for grant aid, and the Local Funding Panel administered local groups' bids for funding and the allocations made.

- iv Specific performance indicators should be established in relation to which the quality of service provided by the local groups can be evaluated as a basis for linking resource allocation with performance. Ideally these should include indicators of both quantity and quality of services provided.

Action taken: Grant criteria from 1995-96 onwards required local groups to provide information about recorded crime, referrals and personal contact rates. A report by Morgan Harris Burrows in 1997 recommended a number of performance indicators that would help measure the performance of local groups. In October 1996, Victim Support intended to ensure that by 1998-99 allocations made to local groups were prioritised according to need. In January 2002, the Home Office and Victim Support agreed that further work was still required to identify meaningful performance measures. Victim Support aims from 2002-03 to bring area funding allocations into line with measures of their workload.

- v Victim Support's Director's role in managing the staff of the Communications Department, in addition to performing a wide range of other roles, created the risk that the Director's time will not be used as efficiently as possible, and options for strengthening the support to the Director in this regard should be considered.

Action taken: Victim Support rejected this recommendation, but undertook to keep the matter under review. As a result of a review of Victim Support's senior management structure in February 1999 by consultants, Horwath Consulting, the senior management team has expanded from one Director and two Assistant Directors to a Chief Executive and a Deputy plus eight Heads of Department, including Head of Media and Public Relations.

- vi Victim Support is reviewing the possibility of organising activities at a county rather than at a local scheme level, and this should be encouraged, to make more efficient use of resources at local level and address the overload on the National Office's Field Services Department.

Action taken: Home Office grant criteria from 1995-96 were amended to encourage the development of county groups, and in 1997 member local groups voted to support the policy of encouraging the merger of local groups to form new area charities to more closely match the boundaries adopted by the criminal justice agencies. An area structure was expected to be completed in all areas except for London and Surrey by September 2002.

- vii The current level of in-house resource provided for IT development is excessive in relation to foreseeable future needs, and the design of this post should be reviewed.

Action taken: Victim Support rejected this recommendation. In October 1996, the Home Office found that Victim Support's IT manager was fully engaged in helping local groups to implement and develop a common software package and concluded that the National Office might have too little resource rather than too much. In 1999-2000 Victim Support spent £1million on issuing new hardware to all local groups and introducing a software package to record referrals and contacts made by local groups.

- viii The internal financial control system at Victim Support's National Office should be strengthened by further limiting access to the cheque book and by maintaining a cheque book log.

Action taken: Victim Support made the necessary changes in 1994.

- ix Victim Support should consider organising the Crown Court Witness Service on a county or a national basis, and the Home Office should consider whether funding responsibility for the Service should be transferred to the Lord Chancellor's Department.

Action taken: Victim Support rejected the recommendation, on the grounds that Crown Court Witness Services benefited from close liaison with local Victim Support groups. Responsibility for funding the Crown Court Witness Service was given to the Home Office.

Appendix 2

Compact on relations between Government and the voluntary and community sector in England

Government requirements and undertakings to achieve an effective funding framework:

- Value for money
- Procedures consistent with the principles of good regulation
- Respect for the sector's independence
- Improved sustainability and longer term planning
- Recognition of core costs and the different ways these can be met
- Support for the sector's infrastructure
- Fair access to strategic, project and contract funding
- Improved co-operation and consistency between departments
- Clarity in funding conditions
- Joint approach to monitoring and evaluation

Voluntary and community sector undertakings

The sector undertakes to pursue good practice in the use and administration of public funds, including:

- Clear and effective employment policies, management arrangements and procedures
- Effective and proportionate systems for the management, control, accountability, propriety and audit of finances
- Compliance (where applicable) with the accounting framework for charities and appropriate guidance from the Charities Commission
- Systems for planning and implementing work programmes
- Systems for monitoring and evaluating against agreed objectives
- Systems for quality assurance and accountability to service users, including complaints procedures and the involvement of users, wherever possible, in the development and management of activities and services
- Policies for ensuring equality of opportunity in both employment practice and service provision
- The involvement of volunteers in service provision
- Public acknowledgement of Government support

Appendix 3

Study methods

Visits to Victim Support Areas

1. We visited five Areas to determine how services are delivered and to identify what factors affect local service delivery. The visit programme included a mix of rural and urban areas, high crime and low crime areas, areas at different stages in the move to area status and areas with varying rates of police referrals and contacts with victims and witnesses. The five areas visited were Bedfordshire, Greater Manchester, Northumbria, Nottinghamshire and London, and their characteristics and services at the time of our visits are set out in more detail at the end of this Appendix.
2. The visit programme involved:
 - interviewing the area manager where applicable;
 - interviewing staff at two Victim Support branches and at the Magistrates' Court and Crown Court Witness Services;
 - interviewing the chairman and trustees of the management committee;
 - interviewing a number of volunteers;
 - interviewing others working within the criminal justice system at the local level, including representatives from the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Probation Service.

Examination of evidence from victims and witnesses

3. During our visits we spoke on a one-to-one basis with a small number of victims and witnesses. They had been invited to speak to us by Victim Support or were in Court on the day of our visit. We have considered the individual cases heard and views offered as illustrative rather than necessarily representative of the experience of all victims and witnesses. We also reviewed area victim and witness satisfaction surveys, where they had been carried out, to gather information on the views of victims and witnesses on the support that they have been offered and received. And we drew on the findings of the British Crime Survey, particularly the 1998 survey that focused on Victim Support, and the 2000 Witness Satisfaction Survey.

Survey of local Victim Support groups and Crown Court Witness Services

4. We undertook questionnaire surveys of all Victim Support local groups, Area Managers of fully established areas and all Crown Court Witness Services. The survey methodology and results are set out in Appendix 4.

Data analysis

5. Based on a review of referral data and a volunteers' database held by National Office we generated a series of analyses on Victim Support's services across the country for the year 2000-01. Data were analysed on an area basis, by type of crime and contact method.

A series of interviews at the Home Office and Victim Support National Office.

6. We interviewed Home Office staff in the Justice and Victims Unit and reviewed relevant documentation about the relationship between the Home Office and Victim Support.
7. We held meetings with Trustees and staff of the National Association of Victim Support Schemes and examined relevant National Office papers and files to assess the operation of their financial and service delivery controls and their support for local groups. We observed a meeting of the Funding Panel, which decides allocations of Home Office grant to local groups.

Structured interviews with interested parties

8. We interviewed representatives of criminal justice system organisations at a national level to identify the relationships between Victim Support and these agencies, and the impact of Victim Support on the agencies' activities.

9. We invited comments from a range of other organisations with an interest in providing services to victims and/or witnesses and received comments from:

- National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)
- National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO)
- North Of England Victims' Association
- Rape Crisis Federation Wales and England
- Roadpeace
- Support After Murder and Manslaughter (SAMM)
- Victims of Crime Trust
- Voice UK
- Victim's Voice
- Women's Aid

Review of literature

10. We undertook a review of literature on evaluations of victims' and witnesses' needs, their position in the criminal justice system and satisfaction with their treatment by it, the merits of different contact methods, and the role of the voluntary sector in helping victims and witnesses. We met Professor Paul Rock to discuss research on victims, and Joyce Plotnikoff and Richard Woolfson to discuss witness issues.

Table 1 A summary of areas visited¹

	Bedfordshire	Greater Manchester	London	Northumbria	Nottinghamshire
Status	Established area	Established area	Not yet moved to area status	Not yet moved to area status	Established area
Population	532,000	2,131,000	6,890,000	780,000	1,020,000
Number of recorded crimes	49,627	363,454	1,002,488	134,777	139,903
Total victim referrals	8,176	112,135	190,978	29,647	24,566
Number of Victim Support local groups	2	10	36	9	5
Total witness referrals	2,722	30,364	20,969	5,425	2,391
Number of Crown Court Witness Services	1	3	12	1	1
Number of Magistrates' Courts Witness Services	2	10	0 ²	3	2
Number of paid staff (Victim Support and Crown Court Witness Service only)	26	73	115	33	12
Number of registered volunteers (excluding Committee members)	148	708	1,226	222	161
Amount of Home Office funding	£257,477	£896,816	£2,337,216	£418,544	£318,299
Amount of fundraising from other sources	£289,935	£748,194	£991,722 ³	£346,034 ³	£21,776

NOTES

1. All statistics relate to the position as at March 2001 or year ending March 2001, except for the number of volunteers (October 2000) and the number of paid staff (October 2001)
2. At the time of our audit visits Witness Services had not been established in Magistrates' Courts in London
3. Estimate only

Table 2 A summary of local groups visited¹

Branch/Scheme	Area/Federation	Main referral mechanism	Contact policy	Additional services offered
Bedford County	Bedfordshire	Crime reports delivered daily by the local police courier service.	Always initially sends letter explaining services.	Specialist units at area level for road death, sex crime, murder and racial harassment victims or their families. Provides a service for car theft victims if they request it.
Luton	Bedfordshire	Collect crime reports from the local police station.	Always initially sends a letter explaining services.	Specialist units at area level for road death, sex crime, murder and racial harassment victims or their families. Provides a service for car theft victims if they request it.
Salford	Greater Manchester	Direct electronic mailing from the police.	Always initially sends a letter explaining services.	Provides a service for car theft victims if they request it and families of road death victims. Provides personal alarms to victims who want them.
Stockport	Greater Manchester	Direct electronic mailing from the police.	Usually initially sends a letter, but will visit without a letter in emergencies.	Provides services to families of road death victims, those suddenly bereaved other than by homicide and, in some cases, to car theft victims. Fits security upgrades, provides emergency payments to victims in special cases and provides a counselling service.
Croydon	London	Faxed through from the police.	Unsolicited calls, except for consensual referrals or where there may be danger to the volunteer or victim.	Provides a service to the few families of road death victims referred.
Westminster	London	Faxed through from the police.	Always initially sends a letter explaining services.	Support can be provided in 25 languages. Provides personal alarms to victims in special cases. Has an outreach service.

NOTE

1. The policies, practices and services described were those in place at the time of the audit visits, in October/November 2001

Table 2 A summary of local groups visited¹ (continued)

Local groups	Area/Federation	Main referral mechanism	Contact policy	Additional services offered
Newcastle	Northumbria	Faxed through from the police.	Usually initially sends a letter, but will visit without a letter in emergencies or, occasionally, where the referral was made on outreach work.	Provides an occasional service to families of road death victims. Provides personal alarms and additional security, such as locks and house alarms to vulnerable victims of crime. Has an outreach service.
North Northumberland	Northumbria	Faxed through from the police.	Always initially sends a letter explaining services, but will visit without a letter in emergencies.	Provides a counselling service, staffed by volunteers who are professionally qualified counsellors. Provides panic alarms to vulnerable victims of crime.
Carlton and South Nottingham	Nottinghamshire	Faxed through from the police.	Will cold call if the volunteer is comfortable with this. Will telephone or send a letter depending on circumstances.	If victims self-refer, provides a service to road traffic victims, the suddenly bereaved other than homicide and victims of car theft.
Mansfield and Ashfield	Nottinghamshire	Direct electronic mailing from the police.	Cold call burglary and theft victims. A letter is sent to other victims.	On request, provides a service to families of road death victims, those affected by sudden bereavement other than homicide and victims of car theft.

NOTE

1. The policies, practices and services described were those in place at the time of the audit visits, in October/November 2001

Table 3 A summary of Witness Services visited¹

Witness Service	Area/Federation	Type of facilities	Separate accommodation for defence witnesses?	Separate accommodation for vulnerable/intimidated witnesses?
Luton Crown Court	Bedfordshire	A morning reception point; separate prosecution and defence witness waiting rooms (both smoking rooms); a general waiting area and a number of consultation rooms available on an ad hoc basis; a secure corridor for vulnerable witnesses, including a video-link room for child witnesses; a small office in the main corridor for staff and volunteers.	Yes	Yes
Luton Magistrates' Court	Bedfordshire	A suite of rooms in a secure corridor of the Court.	Yes	Yes
Manchester Crown Court	Greater Manchester	A large office for staff; a waiting room and kitchen; a large double lounge; a smoking room; and an additional room. Contained within a secure corridor.	No	Yes
Manchester Magistrates' Court	Greater Manchester	A large room for staff, volunteers and witnesses; a Court training room that can be used for over-spill; a separate room for defence witnesses on another floor; a smoking room. Facilities include a kitchen area, a TV and video and a playstation.	Yes	Yes
Kingston Crown Court	London	A reception desk at the Court entrance; an office for the Co-ordinator and volunteers; two spacious rooms in which to hold witnesses (with televisions, radios, magazines, etc.); a privacy room just off one of these rooms; and a separate room in which to hold child witnesses (with toys and games).	Yes	Yes
Inner London Crown Court	London	A reception desk at the entrance to the Court; a large office for staff and volunteers; and two separate rooms for witnesses.	Yes	Yes

NOTE

1. The facilities and accommodation described were those in place at the time of the audit visits, in October/November 2001

Table 3 A summary of Witness Services visited (continued)

Witness Service	Area/Federation	Type of facilities	Separate accommodation for defence witnesses?	Separate accommodation for vulnerable/intimidated witnesses?
Newcastle Crown Court	Northumbria	An office for the co-ordinator; a witness waiting room and a children's waiting room.	No	Yes
Newcastle Magistrates' Court	Northumbria	A small office shared by the co-ordinator, volunteers and witnesses needing support.	No	No
Nottingham Crown Court	Nottinghamshire	An office for the co-ordinator; a waiting room for witnesses; a room for child witnesses or for volunteers if not in use.	No	Yes
Mansfield Magistrates' Court	Nottinghamshire	A small room for staff, volunteers and witnesses. But have recently acquired another room.	No	No

NOTE

1. The facilities and accommodation described were those in place at the time of the audit visits, in October/November 2001

Appendix 4

National Audit Office survey of Victim Support local groups, Areas and Crown Court Witness Services

Survey of Victim Support local groups

1. We undertook a questionnaire survey of the 334 local groups extant at the time of our examination. We obtained 294 responses, a response rate of 88 per cent.

Survey of Crown Court Witness Services

2. We undertook a questionnaire survey of all 89 Crown Court Witness Services at the time of our examination. We obtained 82 responses, a response rate of 92 per cent.
3. Both surveys asked for information on:
 - Referrals
 - Service delivery
 - Volunteers and staffing
 - Relationships with other agencies
 - Funding
4. The questionnaires were initially piloted in two areas and sent to National Office for comment.
5. The data from the questionnaire returns were inputted into a SPSS database and then analysed, mainly by frequency and crosstabulation analysis.
6. The results of the surveys feature in the main body of the report.

Survey of Area offices

7. Where local groups and Witness Services are part of an Area, their budget is set and managed by the Area, and attendance at inter-agency groups is often the responsibility of area staff rather than individual local groups. We therefore undertook a questionnaire survey of all 20 Area offices at the time of our examination and asked:

- which types of local inter-agency groups they were a member of, and
- what their sources of funding were, including the split between Home Office Funding and other sources.

We obtained 18 responses, a response rate of 90 per cent.

8. To enable comparative analysis, we then aggregated the responses to the same questions from local groups, which do not yet belong to formal areas, into Area responses.
9. The results of these surveys are available on the National Audit Office website, at www.nao.gov.uk.

Appendix 5

Support for victims in other countries

Introduction

- 1 As part of our examination, we reviewed what support is made available to victims in other European countries, New Zealand and the United States of America based on our review of literature and information obtained from the internet. We looked at who provides the support, the nature of the support offered, which types of victims receive support, and how that support is funded.
- 2 We found that Victim Support in England and Wales is more comprehensive and better established than in many other countries. There are several European countries - notably those around the Mediterranean - in which there are few, or no, groups in existence with the specific objective of assisting crime victims. In the United States victims do not all have access to services in the aftermath of a crime.
- 3 Victim Support has promoted its model for the support of victims and this has influenced the development of Schemes in several other countries - notably, in the Netherlands, Ireland, France and Sweden¹⁶. In many countries, notably the Netherlands, more specialised services are provided by other voluntary groups for example the counselling and assistance from rape crisis centres to victims of sexual assault and the shelter offered to battered women by women's refuges. Another important development, of which there are examples in France, Spain, and Italy, is the voluntary provision, by suitably qualified groups, of legal advice and assistance to victims, principally in the area of claims or actions for compensation.

France¹⁷

- 4 Since 1983, the Ministry of Justice has financially supported private initiatives to establish victim support organisations. There are more than 150 different victim support organisations in France, with more than 500 local centres, and the centres are not distributed evenly throughout the country. Many local centres are open for only a few hours a day, or a few days a week. Since 1986 a national umbrella organisation, Inavem, has existed to promote and evaluate victim services and co-

ordinate and support the services provided by its members. Inavem is also involved following national emergencies, for example ensuring that there is professional support for victims.

- 5 The local victim support organisations assist about 75,000 victims annually. They receive a third of their funding from the Ministry of Justice, and two-thirds from local authorities and other local budgets. The local Schemes are run by professionals, such as lawyers and psychologists. The volunteers who work at the victim support centres usually have a university degree in law or psychology, and are often professionally active in these fields. Service provision varies widely but in general, victims services provide information about judicial proceedings, psychological assistance and organise meetings to mediate between victims and offenders. The police do not refer victims to victim support in a systematic manner but medical doctors do.

Germany¹⁷

- 6 Throughout Germany, there are many organisations offering support of various kinds to victims of crime. The largest is the charity Weisser Ring (White Circle) founded in 1976, which has a national office, 18 regional offices and 400 branch offices. Staffed by 78 professionals and approximately 2,300 volunteers, its funding is provided by the fees paid by 70,000 individual members, the proceeds from court fines and private donations and legacies. The organisation offers advice and practical support including assisting victims in their dealings with officials, accompanying them to court and referring to other agencies offering services. It may also provide financial support, primarily emergency payments.
- 7 Within an umbrella organisation, ADO, there are also fifteen other victim support organisations, financed with state funding, donations and proceeds from court fines. These work mainly with professional employees.

¹⁶ Mike Maguire and Joanna Shapland "Provision for victims in an international context." R.C. Davis and A.J. Lurigio, "Victims of crime." 1997

¹⁷ Victims of Crime in 22 European criminal justice systems, MEI Brienen and EH Hoegen, June 2000

Ireland¹⁸

- 8 Victim Support was founded in Ireland in 1985. In 2002, it has 43 branches nation-wide, with over 500 volunteers. It is a government funded voluntary organisation, and raises additional funds and sponsorship to support its services.
- 9 Victim Support aims to provide victims of crime with emotional and practical support and information about victims' rights. It also aims to influence policy to obtain fair and compassionate treatment for people affected by crime and to increase public awareness of the needs of victims of crime and the issues affecting them. Victim Support runs a 24 hour lo-call helpline and its volunteers visit victims at home and provide support before and during trials. Specialist services set up by Victim Support include support for the families or close friends of murder victims, support to tourists who are the subject of crime when in Ireland and a youth awareness programme, designed to raise awareness of the effects of crime amongst young people.

The Netherlands¹⁷

- 10 Since the 1980s the Netherlands has had a National Victim Support Organisation, which built on grass roots services dating back to the 1960s. Since 1994, there have been 75 local victim support centres, which are spread evenly throughout the country and include tourist victim support services. The National Organisation is an umbrella body. The local victim support schemes offer short-term moral and practical support, for example by accompanying victims to hearings; information and legal advice; practical assistance, for example in obtaining compensation; and indirect assistance by referring victims to other services, such as social services or mental health services. It is funded from three sources. The Ministry of Justice finances the national organisation, the local councils pay for the local schemes, and a Victim Support Fund, a charitable fund established by traffic organisations, pays for most of the costs of volunteers.
- 11 Services are provided free of charge, and available to every victim. The support is provided by a workforce of 1,500 volunteers, assisted by more than 200 professionals. 75 per cent of Victim Support's clients are referred by the police who are required to ask victims if

they would like assistance from Victim Support. About 20 per cent contact the local victim scheme on their own accord and the remaining victims are referred by social agencies and other agencies. Complicated cases are referred to professional agencies. In 1995, 38 per cent of victims contacting the service were referred to a specialised professional agency, including 60 per cent of victims of sexual crime.

Spain¹⁷

- 12 In Spain, no national victim support service exists. The establishment and funding of services is the responsibility of local communities and there is great disparity between the services available to victims in different communities. The majority of victims who come to local victim support services, have suffered physical, psychological, or sexual abuse. Services provide support and practical help, and psychological help.
- 13 In addition to the victim support services, there are some services, which provide assistance to specific categories of victims. Some, such as the information centres for women's rights, and the association for assistance to raped women can be found in the major cities. Other services are locally based. There are also national Bureaux for victims of terrorism and for economic assistance for victims of violent and sexual crimes. There are many social services which work with victims of crime, some providing financial and practical support, such as shelters for victims of domestic violence.

New Zealand¹⁹

- 14 Victim Support New Zealand is a community based voluntary organisation relying principally on volunteer workers to provide crisis intervention and support to victims of crime, accident and emergency. Originating in the early 1980s, by the year 2000, there were 67 Victim Support Groups throughout New Zealand, staffed by 2000 volunteer workers, providing early intervention services to victims 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The Ministry of Justice funds about 60 per cent of the salary cost for paid staff in the groups plus a number of Victim Assistance Schemes such as Counselling for Murder Victims, Assistance to attend High Court trials or Parole Board hearings, and security assistance for low income people who are victims of repeat crimes.

¹⁸ Communication from Victim Support Ireland

¹⁹ Website and Annual Report of the New Zealand Council of Victim Support Groups

United States of America²⁰

- 15 The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) within the U.S. Department of Justice was created in 1983 and oversees diverse programmes that benefit victims of crime. OVC works with international, national, tribal, state, military, and local victim assistance and criminal justice agencies, as well as other professional organisations, to promote fundamental rights and comprehensive services for crime victims. The OVC awards annual compensation and assistance grants to States. State victim compensation programmes help reimburse victims for costs incurred as a direct result of the crime, including medical bills, funeral expenses, and lost wages. State victim assistance programmes provide funds to community agencies that assist crime victims through such services as crisis intervention, criminal justice advocacy, counselling and emergency shelter.
- 16 Organisations receiving assistance grants are required to give priority consideration and to spend a minimum of 10 per cent of their funds in each of the priority areas. The priorities are victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse and under-served victims, who are generally considered to be victims of drink driving, surviving family members of homicide victims, and victims of physical assault, elder abuse, robbery, hate crime, arson and financial fraud.
- 17 OVC has reported to Congress that only a fraction of the United States' estimated 29 million victims has access to comprehensive, quality services in the aftermath of a crime. Certain victim populations, including those who live in remote areas, victims with disabilities, and victims who speak little or no English, may find it difficult to get the help they need. OVC is committed to improving a victim's access to services, regardless of his or her age, race, religion, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or capability or the nature or geographic location of the victimisation.
- 18 The National Organization for Victim Assistance is a private, non-profit making organisation whose aim is to promote rights and services for victims of crime and crisis. It is an umbrella group for national organisations, which have an interest in victims' issues. It runs a national 24 hour telephone supportline, which refers victims to appropriate local services listed in its directory. It provides information, training and technical assistance and has pioneered community crisis response teams, staffed by volunteers.