

The Making a Difference Toolkit

Putting Victims First

By Simon Mapp

Victim Services Co-Ordinator

Greater Manchester Police

Simon.Mapp@gmp.police.uk

This project has been developed and maintained in engagement with various partners:

Initial Development

Simon Mapp

Further Development

Greater Manchester Police

Integrated Operational Policing System (Mobile) team

Salford Victims Hub

Greater Manchester Victims' Services

Victim Support

Salford City Council

Salford Target Hardening

Salford ASB Team

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

All Greater Manchester Local Authorities

Catch-22

This project is endorsed by Supt Amanda Murray of Greater Manchester Police Prevention Branch

Simon, this is a phenomenal piece of work. You should be really proud of what you have achieved with this. Really well done.

I have endorsed the document supporting the submission. Wishing you lots of luck!!

Many thanks

Amanda

Detective Superintendent Amanda Whittaker-Murray

Strategic Demand Reduction

Force HQ

Northampton Road

Manchester

M40 5BP

Mobile: 07855 486814

Email: Amanda.Murray@gmp.police.uk

Summary

Scanning

This is an internal problem-solving project aimed at transforming how work is carried out with victims. The GMP Victims' Services Coordinator (Salford) set up a dedicated police Victims' Hub to contact victims to fully scan the scale of the issue. It was found through direct contact with adult victims, that only 8% recalled being offered a support or partner service, and 38% had not been updated and did not know their crimes had been closed. This indicated that victims were not receiving their essential Victims Code of Practice (VCOP) Rights.

Analysis

A deep-dive was carried out into why victims were not receiving their entitlements. By observing and questioning policing personnel across a range of disciplines and branches, a pattern of barriers began to emerge. These barriers included a lack of credible service directories, and convoluted systems that made providing updates and signposting information to victims, to be enormously time consuming and impractical. Police teams wanted to do more for victims but were not empowered to do so.

Response

The GMP Victims' Services Coordinator (Salford) blueprinted a new computer system that would allow police personnel to overcome the barriers and challenges that they faced when trying to signpost and update victims. He personally coded the system in his spare time through a series of prototypes and iterations until a product was ready to be demonstrated to the police. This was donated to the Force at no cost, and with the support of the Integrated Operational Policing System (Mobile) team, became **The Making a Difference Toolkit**. The system empowered officers with innovative new functionality to provide crime updates and signposting to victims, while the code auto-generated emails, text messages, and audit trails into the crime records system.

Assessment

The Making a Difference Toolkit has addressed all aspects of the problem clarified in the scanning and analysis phase. To mirror the victims consulted in the scan, the same number of victims in a new sample had their crimes audited post-release of the new system – of these, **86% were sent Making a Difference Toolkit text messages, with either crime updates, signposting information, or both.**

The new system has transformed the way that victims are updated and signposted across the Force, and is used by over 10,000 users in GMP, with nearly a million-and-a-half page entries viewed.

Word count 383

Project

Scanning

This is an internal problem solving project aimed at improving how Greater Manchester Police provides its service to victims. There were a number of barriers identified internally to officers being able to offer a better service to victims. The Making a Difference Toolkit was aimed at understanding and resolving these barriers so that officers within GMP are equipped to offer the best possible service to victims of crime. It is now a forcewide toolkit available to all officers and many staff across the force.

Background to the project

This project started on Salford division, one of the busiest districts of the 10 districts within Greater Manchester Police force area.

1. Partner services in the City of Salford offered informal feedback (qualitative data) to the GMP Victims' Services Coordinator (Salford) that some victims were not receiving the police experience they were expecting. The two recurring issues raised were:
 - (1) **victims not being kept updated on their crimes; and**
 - (2) **victims not being signposted or referred to the wide range of available services operating in the City.**

This was a serious cause for concern, as these issues are directly linked to specific Victim Rights under the Victims' Code of Practice (VCOP), particularly:

Right 3 – To be provided with information when reporting the crime

Right 4 – To be referred to services that support victims and have services and support tailored to their needs

Right 6 – To be provided with information about the investigation and prosecution

Non adherence with the VCOP guidelines opened the force up to scrutiny and potential loss of public trust and confidence in police. The guidelines are a legal obligation set by government to ensure the best service to victims of crime. Serving victims is a fundamental purpose of the police.

2. The GMP Victims' Services Coordinator (Salford) adopted a SARA approach and sought to scan the scale of the problem. He requested a brief resourcing of restricted officers to set up a temporary **Salford Victim's Hub** – with a view to contacting a sample of victims of crime for the last three months, to ascertain whether they were being kept updated regarding their crimes, and whether they were being signposted or referred during their contact with police.
3. Attempts were made to contact 101 adult victims – 63 were successfully engaged.
4. **Only 8% of these victims were able to recall being offered a support or partner service. 38% of these victims did not know that their crimes had been closed with no further action, and were still waiting for updates.**
5. The figures showed significant failings of VCOP compliance, and indicated that many victims were simply not receiving their essential VCOP rights - to be updated and to be supported.
6. There was no single point of failure to address. The victims were of a range of crimes, in a range of neighbourhoods, and had been engaged by a range of policing teams and roles. The issue was widespread and rooted.

Analysis

In order to effectively understand our problem, a version of the problem analysis triangle has been used considering the organisation, community and officers.



Officers

The GMP Victims' Services Coordinator (Salford) sought to analyse why this was happening from the perspective of officers. He spent substantial time studying, observing, and engaging with operational personnel in a wide range of Salford policing teams, including:

Neighbourhood Officers	Response Officers
Crime Scene Investigators	Enquiry Counter Officers
Operational Support Officers	Police Community Support Officers
Call Handlers	Detectives
Public Protection Teams	Domestic Abuse Officers
Crime Resolution Officers	Crime Recording Officers

During each interaction, he discussed the key issues identified in the scanning phase, and the barriers they faced in meeting these VCOP requirements.

Barriers were identified through speaking with the service users of the officers themselves.

The issues concerning signposting and referrals were:

- a. The existing (26 page) directory of partner services was insufficiently detailed, unverified, and very out-of-date. It was only accessible in paper form, within a specific office in Swinton Police Station. **The information they had to signpost/refer victims was not credible.**
- b. It is very difficult to listen to a victim with concentration and empathy – either on the telephone or in person – while also trying to read a service directory to find them the best service. **The system they had was not conducive to good practice with victims.**
- c. To make referrals, or to offer signposting information to victims often required time-consuming processes of finding the appropriate referral forms or signposting materials, completing, composing an email, attaching the document, and separately updating that this had been carried out on the police crime recording system. This could add up to 15 minutes on each victim engagement – depending on the complexity of the need – which was time they did not have. **The process took too long and would backlog their workloads.**

Victims/Communities

The issues concerning victims' being kept updated were:

- d. The majority of personnel had limited analogue options to update victims – phone calls, posted letters or in-person contact. Victim emails were not routinely gathered, and in cases where they were, some teams were not

designated as single-points-of-contact (SPOCs) and were not permitted to give victims their work email addresses. **They were operating on analogue in a digital world.**

- e. There was a very limited third-party web service option – that allowed officers to text message (SMS) victims crime updates from their computers – but access to this was account-based and significantly restricted to niche teams. **They didn't have the have the tools they needed.**

Recurring barriers and challenges were suggested by all engaged teams. A Problem Analysis Triangle was developed. The issue was an enormous problem for victims – one which could result in victim disaffection, repeat victimisation and lack of satisfaction and support. However, the primary problem was that of flawed police systems.

Organisation

The organisation was feeling pressure with the backlog of work and huge incoming demand, there was added pressure for officers to be visible on the streets. The organisation was slow to adapt its technology. It was using paper referral systems which tying officers up for longer periods of time which meant that they were visible in communities.

It was around this time that HMICFRS described the “poor service the force provides to many victims of crime”, with unacceptable rates of VCOP compliance alongside other issues.

Response

1. The GMP Victims' Services Coordinator (Salford) recognised that a tailored, robust response was needed to empower the policing teams to meet victim need. Fortunately, he had a uniquely robust technological proficiency, and was able to combine this skillset with his expertise concerning victims and victim interactions, along with his ambition and commitment to definitively resolve the problem.
2. Outside of work in his free time, he blueprinted an innovative new computer system over a period of months, a product the likes of which had never existed within GMP. He engineered a number of prototypes in HTML code, testing, iterating and revising, until a workable product was ready to be revealed to the Force. With permission granted by the City of Salford GMP Senior Leadership Team, he trialled his bespoke new product with policing teams, and using user feedback, worked to make the system as quick and as user-friendly as possible.
3. Over 900 files of interacting dedicated code were written by the GMP Victims' Services Coordinator (Salford). This was informed by extensive research on partner services and referral pathways, included considerable prevention and victim-empowering resources, and was refined with considerable user feedback. Eventually the product was completed – and was named the **Victim Contact Toolkit**. The system was ratified by GMP IT and policy teams, and rolled out across the City of Salford, at no cost to GMP.
4. The app contained:
 - a. An interactive, responsive and focussed service directory, informed by subject-matter-experts and partnership engagement, on the definitive services to refer and signpost victims to. These were organised based on need and vulnerability. e.g. the entry for “Homelessness” would bring up

information on the district housing offers.

- b. The ability to generate pre-populated emails to victims. For example, if a victim had a need regarding ASB, the user could press a single-button to generate a fully composed email signposting the victim to the district ASB offer, with all contact details and appropriate email attachments.
 - c. A mechanism for out-of-date information to be immediately rectified.
5. The GMP Victims' Services Coordinator voluntarily relinquished all rights to the app, donating it to GMP on the proviso that it would always be used for serving victims.
6. The Victim Contact Toolkit was an immediate success in addressing the referrals/signposting aspects of the initial posed problem. User feedback was astonishingly positive, with the system praised for its ease-of-use, its speed, and the breadth and credibility of the information it contained.
7. There was an immediate demand for a GMP-wide system, that offered access and content beyond the boundaries of Salford. A partnership was formed, between the GMP Victims' Services Coordinator (Salford), the GMP Integrated Operational Policing System Mobile team, with external IT expertise from HCL Technologies. Together, they used the Victim Contact Toolkit as the foundation for an even more ambitious product.
8. The result was the ultimate response to the posed problem: **The Making a Difference Toolkit**. This final product redefined what GMP could do for its victims.
9. The Making a Difference Toolkit launched Forcewide, and enabled police personnel to:

- a. Access all the functionality of the previous Victim Contact Toolkit, but now on any Force device, including laptops, tablets, and mobile phones.
 - b. Instantly generate pre-populated text messages and emails to victims to update them on all stages of a crime – from incident creation, the assigning of a crime reference numbers, decisions made to progress or close investigations, and notifications of when officers intend to call or visit.
 - c. The system was linked into the GMP Integrated Operational Policing System – so that when any information was texted or emailed to victims, a record of what was sent was automatically transmitted to the crime recording system, evidencing the signposting and updating that was being carried out with victims, while eliminating the requirement for personnel to double-key or duplicate records. The crime records would therefore show the signposting and communication actions as part of overall crime chronology.
 - d. Gather usage data, giving insights into what messages are being sent to victims, and what services are being signposted.
10. The system content is administrated by a Forcewide team of GMP Victims' Services Coordinators (with the thematic lead owned by the system originator – the Salford VSC), who are responsible for the veracity of the services and resources listed. Policies have been enacted to ensure that all services listed meet the standards of quality, scale (able to handle the demand of such signposting) and inter-agency working.
11. The Making a Difference Toolkit is now available to all in GMP. It is installed on all officer mobile devices, and has pride of place as a prominent permanent link on the front page of the GMP Intranet.

Assessment

1. To mirror the 63 Salford adult victims consulted in the SARA scanning stage, 63 Salford adult crimes were audited in the SARA assessment stage. Of these 63 victims, **86% were sent Making a Difference Toolkit text messages, with either crime updates, signposting information, or both.** This is a dramatic improvement from the scanning phase, in which only 8% of were able to recall being offered a support or partner service, and 38% of these victims could not recall being updated on their crimes.
2. The Making a Difference Toolkit has received over 1.5 million pageviews by GMP Police personnel since its inception.
3. The system is used by a wide range of police personnel to send (approx.) 30,000 pre-generated text messages to victims a month, and has had over 10,000 users across GMP. These messages include crime updates, signposting, prevention materials, perpetrator behaviour-change information and information for victims regarding their journey through the justice system. **Before the system was created, the Force would send a bare fraction of this a month, through an obsolete process that took considerably longer to navigate.**
4. The system is praised internally by users, for its ease-of-use, speed, stability, accessibility and credibility. **This contrasts with the previous arrangements, which were described as clunky, outdated, inefficient and analogue.**
5. The system has received considerable corporate approval and backing, supported by a communications strategy encouraging use by all. The Corporate Communications team have been particularly pleased with how – through the use of pre-generated text and email templates – that professional and consistent wording is being automatically applied to these outbound communications with victims.

6. The Making a Difference Toolkit has been built into student officer training and officer briefings, highlighting how pivotal the system has become embedded in the Force.
7. The GMP Victims' Services Coordinator (Salford) has received a Chief Constable's Award for the inception of the system, and was a Spirit of Salford Award finalist for the same.
8. Evidence shows us that more referrals are being made. For example, after Project Nova was added to the Making a Difference Toolkit system, GMP became one of the top referrers in the country, winning Gold status in the Armed Forces Covenant Employer Recognition Scheme awards. The Force veterans lead, Inspector Jim Jones BEM, directly linked this achievement to the Making a Difference Toolkit, alongside the efforts of the Armed Forces specialists in GMP.
9. In terms of replication, demonstrations and specifications have been requested and provided to the Home Office, and the police forces of Gibraltar, Warwickshire, Derbyshire, Hertfordshire and more.
10. The change is sustainable and has momentum. Exciting and innovative developments are being implemented in Greater Manchester – a few of these are:
 - a. Text message and email updates in the recipient's native languages – Arabic and Urdu have been our first forays into this area.
 - b. The platform has been built into the Victims' Services commissioning process – the successful service provider has adopted usage of the system to aide them in supporting and signposting victims.
 - c. Built in support for integrated referral forms. The proposal is to empower police personnel to create Operation Encompass referrals directly through the system rather than via an external referral form, reducing the time spent from 10 – 25 minutes (depending on complexity and number of referred children)

to 2 – 5 minutes, while simultaneously increasing quality and consistency.

- d. Dedicated Toolkit sections are now prepared in advance for upcoming Force developments or rollouts. E.g. Right Care Right Person, creations of new centralised crime recording teams, etc. – to ensure that the Toolkit is ready to go for these purposes from day one.

11. The Making a Difference Toolkit fully addresses all aspects of the problem clarified in the scanning and analysis stages. From the quantities of messages being sent, from the audit trail that the app auto-copies into the crime records, from the usage data – we have a transformed policing ecosystem, regarding victim updates and signposting, with victims themselves at the centre. **Victims are updated by the thousands. Victims are signposted by the thousands. Victims are receiving the rights they were missing.** Police personnel satisfaction with the platform remained consistently high. The Making a Difference Toolkit simply allows GMP to do much more for victims than they ever could before, in a very quick and easy way.

Previous system (For LROs staff that had access to Rapidetext)

Log into Rapidetext = 30 seconds

Navigate to text message creation – 10 seconds

Write text message = 2 minutes

Navigate to PoliceWorks log – 2 minutes

Update PoliceWorks that text message has been sent with copy and paste of message – 3 minutes

Total (average) 7 mins 40 seconds 2.13 per crime

If all the 365,610 crimes recorded in GMP in 2022 went through this process it would cost GMP £778,747

Previous system (for officers – almost all of which did not have access to Rapidetext)

Use officer mobile to write text message to victim with update – 5 minutes

Navigate to PoliceWorks log – 2 minutes

Update PoliceWorks that text message has been sent, and also writing the text message again for PoliceWorks record– 6 minutes

Total (estimated) 13 minutes cost per crime is £3.38

If all the 365,610 crimes recorded in GMP in 2022 went through this process £1,235,761

Current system

Open MaD Toolkit – 10 seconds

Navigate to Crime Update section – 10 seconds

Complete sections on text message template – 30 seconds

Add crime reference number (for system to auto-update PoliceWorks) – 10 seconds

Press send – 5 seconds

Total (estimated) 1 minute 5 seconds is at 27p per crime

If all the 365,610 crimes recorded in GMP in 2022 went through this process £98, 714

The cost savings are at least £680,032- £1,137,047 per annum as the system requires no additional costs and is owned by GMP

This also allows officers more time in their communities servicing the public increasing public visibility of police.

Endorsements

“The Making a Difference Toolkit – a digital app provided through officers’ mobile devices including content specific to their local area, such as safeguarding arrangements, information to enable signposting and referral of DA and other vulnerable victims to appropriate support organisations either whilst at the scene with victims/witnesses or during the processing of paperwork. The force concerned highlighted this has been recognised as excellent practice by HMICFRS and is being considered for introduction in other areas.”

[National Police Chiefs’ Council \(NPCC\) response to recommendations](#)

“Simon Mapp works for Greater Manchester Police and has many years of experience in supporting victims of crime, including hate crime. He has combined this experience and enthusiasm with his remarkable IT skills to develop the successful GMP Victim Contact Toolkit. The system enables police staff to access up to date information on suitable support for victims and send it directly to the victim. This work has made a real difference for victims of crime and ensures that they can access tailored support including advocacy, information, signposting and financial help.”

Word count 2989