



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE
Education Department

Insight 18

An Assessment of the Support and Information for Victims of Youth Crime (SIUYC) Pilot Scheme

Welcome to *Insight*

Insight is a publication of the research group within Information, Analysis and Communication Division, which is responsible for providing analytical services within the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED). Their work is part of a multidisciplinary unit (consisting of researchers, economists and statistics staff) and the staff undertakes and funds economic analysis and social research in the fields of: school education; children, young people and social work; architecture; and tourism, culture and sport.

The Scottish Executive is committed to the use of sound evidence in the development of policy and practice as well as in the evaluation of policy and its implementation. We therefore want to disseminate the results of research that SEED has undertaken and funded, in a manner that is accessible, interesting and attractive.

Insight aims to present the essence of research projects in a format that will be useful and informative for practitioners, policy makers, parents, academics, and anyone else who has an interest in economic and social research in these areas.

The views expressed in this *Insight* are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Scottish Executive or any other organisation(s) by whom the author(s) is or are employed.

Copyright © April 2005, Scottish Executive Education Department

ISSN 1478-6788 (Print)
ISSN 1478-6796 (Online)

Insight may be photocopied for use within your own institution.

A limited number of additional copies can be obtained from the Dissemination Officer, Information, Analysis and Communication Division, Scottish Executive Education Department, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ (telephone 0131-244-0316). Copies of *Insight* and our other publications can be downloaded from our website: www.scotland.gov.uk/insight/

The *Insight* Series

1. *Classroom Assistants: Key Issues from the National Evaluation*
2. *The Impact of ICT Initiatives in Scottish Schools*
3. *Moving On to Primary 1: An Exploratory Study of the Experience of Transition from Pre-School to Primary*
4. *Accelerating Reading and Spelling with Synthetic Phonics: A Five Year Follow Up*
5. *Assessment of Benefits and Costs of Out of School Care*
6. *Meeting the Needs of Children from Birth to Three: Research Evidence and Implications for Out-of-Home Provision*
7. *Key Findings from the National Evaluation of the New Community Schools Pilot Programme in Scotland*
8. *Scottish Qualification for Headship: Key Issues from the Evaluation*
9. *The Sitter Service in Scotland: A Study of the Costs and Benefits*
10. *Awards in Early Education, Childcare and Playwork: A Qualifications Framework for the Future*
11. *An Evaluation of the Higher Still Reforms*
12. *The Management of Supply Cover in the Teaching Profession*
13. *Parents' Demand for and Access to Childcare in Scotland*
14. *Evaluation of Personalised Laptop Provision in Schools*
15. *Teachers' Perceptions of Discipline in Scottish Schools*
16. *Minority Ethnic Pupils' Experiences of School in Scotland (MEPESS)*
17. *A Seven Year Study of the Effects of Synthetic Phonics Teaching on Reading and Spelling Attainment*

If you have views on *Insight* or wish to find out more about SEED's research and economics programme, please contact Information, Analysis and Communication Division, Scottish Executive Education Department, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ or by e-mail on recs.admin@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Astron 210058 04/05

This document is produced from 100% Elemental Chlorine-free material, environmentally preferred material and is 100% recyclable.

Insight Summary

An Assessment of the Support and Information for Victims of Youth Crime (SIUYC) Pilot Scheme

Kate Skellington Orr, Traci Leven, Ewen McCaig
MVA Limited

Introduction

The Support and Information for Victims of Youth Crime (SIVYC) pilot scheme was introduced in Forth Valley (Stirling, Falkirk and Clackmannanshire) in October 2003.

It was introduced by the Scottish Executive in response to an increasing awareness of the need to involve victims in the youth justice process, to ensure that they have a voice and that they are made aware, more generally, of the youth justice system.

The need for greater victim involvement was highlighted in the 2004 Scottish Executive publication *Getting it right for every child: Report on the Responses to the Phase One Consultation on the Review of the Children's Hearings System* (Stevenson and Brotchie, 2004). Scotland's Action Programme to Reduce Youth Crime (Scottish Executive, 2002) stated the Scottish Executive's aim of giving victims an appropriate stake in Scotland's justice. A core component of the Action Programme was to consider the information that can lawfully be disclosed to the victim(s) and/or community on the actions taken by the Reporter, Local Authority, Police or Children's Hearing on offences by children and young people.

One of the National Standards for Scotland's Youth Justice Services, introduced in December 2002, is that "every victim should receive information about the process for dealing with the young person who has committed an offence against them and the outcome". The SIVYC pilot scheme was developed in response to this standard.

The main aims were to provide information and support to victims of youth crime. The pilot protocol was developed in the context of new legislative provision set out in Section 53 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003. The Act enables the Principal Reporter to release information to victims of youth crime regarding decisions and disposals relating to children and young people referred to the Reporter on offence grounds.

The pilot was administered jointly by the Police, Victim Support Scotland (VSS) and the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA). It provided victims with information about what had happened to a child or young person referred to the Children's Reporter in relation to a specific offence committed against the victim. Victims could opt to receive information either directly from SCRA or via VSS. The service also provided victims with access to practical and emotional information and support through VSS.

The SIVYC pilot was established to test a model of service delivery involving the three agencies in the following roles:

- **The Police** identified victims of youth crime, notified them of the scheme and referred victims to Victim Support Scotland for further support and information. The police also kept a record of victims who opted out of the scheme;

What were the main aims of the Pilot scheme?

How did the Pilot operate?

- **Victim Support Scotland (VSS)** offered practical and emotional support and information to victims, including information about youth justice and the Children's Hearings System. VSS was also responsible for notifying SCRA about whether the victim had opted out of the scheme or whether referral outcome information should be sent directly to the victim or via Victim Support; and
- **Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA)** provided information to victims as required and informed VSS of outcome information sent to victims. SCRA also kept a record of actions regarding the victim on its Referrals Administration Database (RAD).

MVA was commissioned by the Scottish Executive to carry out an evaluation of the pilot scheme during the first 12 months of its operation.

What were the main aims of the evaluation?

The objectives of the research were to:

- describe the key features of the operation of the pilot and assess the protocols and procedures developed and used by the three main agencies involved in administering the scheme. This included identifying any significant changes in approach to service delivery made within the SIVYC pilot area during the course of the pilot period and establishing the reasons for and impacts of these changes;
- explore the views and experiences of victims who participated in the pilot, and the key stakeholders in relation to the process and outcomes of the pilot; and
- utilise the evidence collected to make recommendations (where appropriate) of how such information and support services can be improved if they were to be introduced nationwide.

Methodology

There were three main strands to the evaluation:

- consultation with those responsible for administering the scheme to ascertain how the pilot was working in practice and to record any changes that were made to the service protocol in the course of the pilot;
- analysis of case records provided by the stakeholders and of the routine monitoring data held by each of the agencies (i.e. youth crimes recorded by the police, victims referred into the scheme and offence referrals to the Reporter where the victim was eligible to take part in the scheme); and
- consultation with victims of youth crime to explore their support and information needs, and whether they were adequately met. This involved postal questionnaire surveys and follow-up interviews. There were three groups of consultees: those who participated in the scheme; those who had been victims of youth crime in the pilot area before the scheme was introduced; and victims of youth crime in a comparison area (West Lothian).

A costing exercise was also undertaken to identify the type and scale of activities undertaken by each of the main stakeholders in the scheme and the associated expenditure. This also sought to provide an indication of the costs of different types of support and information provision. The purpose was to determine the scale of work and

expenditure implied by a national rollout (or other extension of the pilot) and to assist the Scottish Executive in estimating the implied costs.

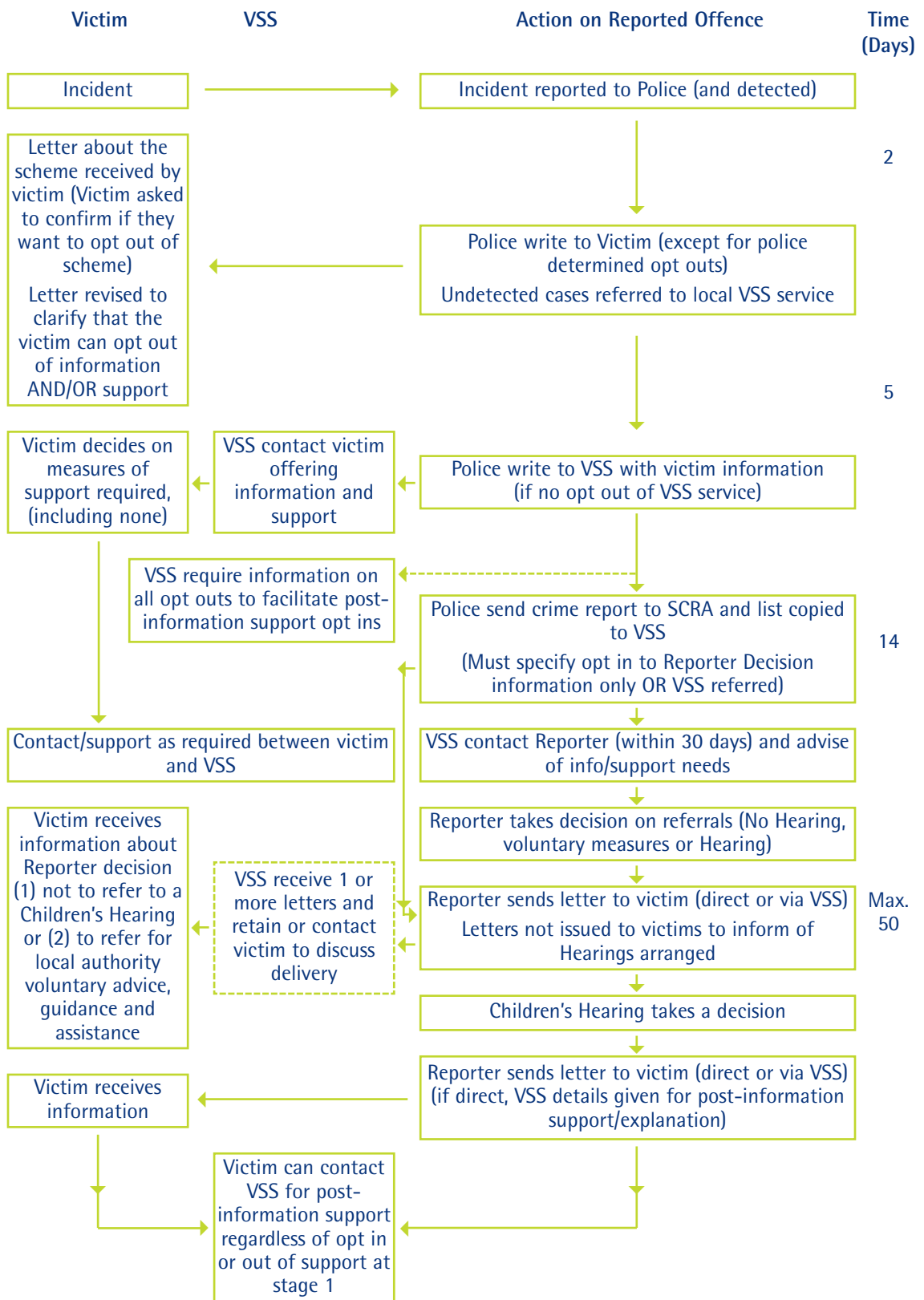
A complex administrative protocol had to operate effectively across three agencies and the implications for database design and communication of information were correspondingly complex. Some initial procedural difficulties had to be dealt with. Each agency had its own database and problems arose in communicating between these. Data referencing was a difficult issue, because of the inherent complexity of case information, where a single incident could involve single or multiple young persons, single or multiple grounds for referral, single or multiple victims, or no victim at all. These difficulties meant that individual victims could not be tracked through the SIVYC administration (i.e. from initial police contact through to referral information being released where requested) without considerable manual effort.

How well did the Pilot work?

The agencies responded by making revisions to the protocol. Because the pilot was underway, the revisions had to be made with limited changes to database functionality and referencing, so manual workarounds were involved. However, this significantly improved the service and allowed tracking of individual victims. At the end of the 12 month pilot period, the main stakeholders were considering further changes to SIVYC data processing, which should further address the operational difficulties that were experienced in the pilot.

Figure 1 shows how the pilot worked in practice, following the initial adjustments to protocol.

Figure 1 The Pilot Protocol



Due to the data inconsistencies, the recorded numbers of victims referred to the SIVYC service differed between the agencies. Police records showed 1289 victims linked to separate incidents who were eligible for the SIVYC scheme. Of these, 1119 were referred on to either VSS or SCRA, and 170 were eligible but were not referred. The main reason for non-referral was a police decision that the release of information could compromise either the victim or the young person involved.

How many victims participated in the scheme?

VSS records showed that, from 1139 victims who were referred to them, 526 opted into the scheme (46%). The majority of these opted to receive information on outcomes via VSS (85%) and 15% directly from SCRA. A total of 449 victims therefore received both information and support from the VSS SIVYC team.

For the twelve months of the pilot, 1066 offence grounds referred to SCRA were linked to SIVYC victims. It was not possible to extract the total number of victims associated with these records.

Research Findings

Two points must be made before presenting findings from the victim consultation. Firstly, the issues that arose regarding case referencing and database administration were addressed with respect to the operation of the scheme. However, the data inconsistencies caused difficulties in undertaking the analysis of case records required for the evaluation as individual victim referrals could not be tracked across the three agencies. This restricted the quality and scope of reporting in this area.

Secondly, the postal surveys of victims had a very disappointing response. The average response rate for the three types of consultee was 14% and the total number of returns was only 224. All questionnaires had to be issued by the police or Victim Support because of confidentiality requirements, so follow-up was not practicable.

The low response rate means that the data cannot be considered as representative. It also means that comparisons between the respondent groups cannot be made with any confidence. Some of the survey findings came through strongly enough to be reportable, especially when considered alongside the qualitative interview work, but readers should be aware that the findings presented here reflect very low response.

Type of Incidents: The most common type of victimisation experienced by victims in the pilot area was assault, violence or threats (45%). This was followed by vandalism/fire raising (35%) and crimes of dishonesty (20%). On average, victims who responded to the pilot survey rated the offences as being moderately serious.

What were the characteristics of victimisation and victims?

Responses to Victimisation: The main reaction to victimisation at the time of the incident was anger, cited by 56% of the main pilot respondents. By the time of survey, the main lasting effect of victimisation was fear, which was most prevalent among victims of assault. Victims of violence were far more likely (45%) to indicate fear than victims of theft (8%) or vandalism (11%).

Support and Information Needs: Information from the police and information on the progress of the case were cited more often than a need for more practical or emotional support. This was so among all the groups of consultees and was stated by 85% of victims who participated in the scheme and who responded to the survey.

What were the reactions to the Pilot scheme?

Awareness of the SIVYC Service: Findings from the survey suggest that some victims were confused about the SIVYC service. Only half of those who took part in the evaluation said that they had heard of the VSS SIVYC service before receiving the questionnaire (51%). This was despite most of these victims having been contacted by the police and by VSS in advance of the survey to notify them of the SIVYC service. Those receiving the SIVYC service expressed varying ideas about how they had come to learn of the service and what had been offered.

Experience of the SIVYC Service: Of the 110 people who responded, 80 (73%) said that they had been contacted by VSS SIVYC, 13 (12%) said they had not and 17 (16%) were not sure. Those who had been contacted by VSS SIVYC were asked what service(s) VSS SIVYC provided to them. Table 1 shows the responses received with the main service being information on the progress of the case. A third of victims also reported that they had received information about the Youth Justice System from the VSS SIVYC team and just under one quarter said that they had received emotional support.

Table 1 Services Received from the VSS SIVYC Team

Service Received from VSS SIVYC	Number of Respondents and Percentage of Responses
Information about the progress of the case	43 (50%)
Information about the Youth Justice System	28 (33%)
Emotional support	20 (23%)
Information about other agencies/contact details	19 (22%)
Practical support	11 (23%)
Nothing	2 (2%)

Note: Responses add up to more than 100% due to multiple response.

Contact with VSS SIVYC Staff: Victims who had taken part in the SIVYC scheme were more than twice as likely to have received support from Victim Support Scotland than those in the comparison area.

What information was provided by the scheme and how much was it valued?

Of the 79 respondents who answered, 38 (48%) said that the VSS volunteers were well informed, 38 (48%) were unsure and just 3 (4%) said the volunteers/staff were not well informed. It is not clear why so many respondents said that they were unsure about how well informed volunteers were. However, case study interviews suggest that this may be linked to victims finding it difficult to recall what they had been told by VSS staff.

79 respondents were able to say when the VSS SIVYC team had contacted them, and most were happy with the time lapse between the incident and their contact with VSS. Most contacts were made within 1-2 weeks of the incident occurring. Only 30% said they would have liked to have been contacted sooner.

Of the 92 people who answered the question, 28 (30%) said that they had received a referral outcome letter. Of these, 21 (75%) said the letter was helpful.

Of the 129 victims who responded to the question, 26 (20%) said that the people responsible for the offence had been referred to a Hearing and 12 (9%) said they had not been referred. However, most victims (91, 70%) said that they did not know whether the perpetrator(s) had been referred to a Hearing. Among those who knew whether the perpetrators had been referred to a Hearing, the named sources of this information were the Police and Victim Support.

Despite having received more information than non-pilot victims, 74% of victims who had taken part in the SIVYC scheme said that they would have liked more information about the progress of the case. This was similar to 70% of victims from Forth Valley prior to the pilot but significantly less than the 92% in the comparison area who would have liked more information.

Although 449 victims (39% of all SIVYC eligible victims referred to Victim Support Scotland) took up the option to receive both information and support, response rates to the survey meant that it was difficult to arrive at an overall assessment of reactions to the service. Qualitative interview data suggests that many respondents appear to have appreciated the service. However, some expressed concern about the time taken to receive referral information and were frustrated by the amount of information that could be released. Some doubted that the actions taken by the Reporter would impact on children and young people's future propensity for offending.

Data from the surveys and the interviews suggest that victims' most common needs appeared to be for information from the police and specific information on the progress of the case. The police were often seen as a source of information. A requirement for emotional or practical support was less common. Often victims said that they considered the offence not to be serious, so they were able to deal with its implications unaided.

Defining 'support' in this pilot was problematic and discussions with some victims suggest that they regarded information itself as a means of support. It is also possible that victims may not have wanted or been able to articulate their need for support separately from information. It is difficult to conclude from this work, therefore, whether a support need was present but not readily expressed. However, some victims did benefit from emotional support and, when it was needed, it appears to have been effective. Although the demand was not high, the value of this part of the scheme, where needed, should not be dismissed. The scheme did provide a significant number of victims with information and support that would not otherwise have been received.

How significant are the support needs identified in the research?

Costs

The costing exercise identified the main component costs to agencies of setting up and operating the scheme. The exercise suggested that the current system is administratively complicated, and therefore quite expensive.

The benefits to victims and communities cannot be valued in financial terms, so a cost-benefit analysis of different operational models cannot be carried out. However, any rollout of the scheme should take account of the numbers of victims requiring support as well as information. Although all were eligible for both, many appear to have wanted only information.

Legislation means that information can now be requested by victims of youth crime across Scotland. Lessons from the pilot suggest that the administrative system piloted is complicated, so less expensive models could be considered. These might differentiate the support and information needs of victims. Many who were eligible to receive support and information as part of the pilot appear to have wanted only information. If the system allowed 'opt-in' rather than 'opt-out' for support, it would be possible to consider a simpler administrative model and a less costly service. It would be for the police, VSS and SCRA together to make sure that, when making their decision, victims understood what was being offered.

What are the main considerations for the future of the scheme?

Conclusions

There was widespread recognition among the three agencies involved that victims should be able to get access to information and support. Considerable effort and imagination went into the development and delivery of the pilot. The scheme served its function as a pilot in that useful lessons were learnt, and the changes made during the pilot reflect the commitment of all those involved to developing an effective system. However, it did not fulfil the function of a demonstration model for the future. This was because of the changes that were made, those still under consideration and the low response rate. All this implies that further consideration should be given to further testing of local services before moving towards large scale rollout.

This pilot should not, therefore, be used as a basis on which the future effectiveness of an information and support service should be finally determined, because it is likely that the procedural changes that have been discussed and implemented since the end of the pilot will result in a different and more effective service. Rather, it offers an insight into the achievements of the scheme during the first 12 months of its operation as a pilot, and the difficulties that have been encountered. It also offers an opportunity to take stock of the lessons that may be applied in any rollout of the scheme.

References

Scottish Executive (2002) *National Standards for Scotland's Youth Justice Services*, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive

Scottish Executive (2002) *Scotland's Action Programme to Reduce Youth Crime 2002*, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive

Stevenson, R. and Brotchie, R. (2004) *Getting it Right for Every Child: Summary Report on the Responses to The Phase One Consultation on the Review of the Children's Hearings System*, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive



ISSN 1478-6788 (Print)
ISSN 1478-6796 (Online)