

# Victims' Commissioner News

December 2016/January 2017



## Thought for the day:

"Hope can be found in every new day and every new year."

## A message from Baroness Newlove

*Happy New Year!*

*Welcome to 2017 - if you have set yourself resolutions or new challenges this year, I hope they are going well.*

*I had quite a busy end to 2016; I raised a number of victim-related issues in the House of Lords, spoke at several conferences and managed to squeeze in a PCC visit to Gloucestershire.*

*So far in 2017, I have already met with a number of stakeholders to discuss how they can improve their involvement with victims, I feel like my feet haven't touched the ground! My team have also been working hard on a number of reviews that will be published before March - more on those later.*

*Best wishes,*

**There has been a significant amount of media interest regarding child sexual abuse recently**, and I took part in a House of Lords debate on 15<sup>th</sup> December to ask how the government will respond to the allegations of child sexual abuse within football clubs; and highlighting the importance of having sufficient numbers of qualified practitioners available to support survivors.

During the debate, I spoke of the importance of including any organisations that work with children: schools, colleges, health services and housing to co-operate and support any investigation.

Funding for these services, when demand rises, is understandably a concern for those who deliver them. In the debate, I was concerned about a potential 'postcode lottery'; I said that money should be available centrally, to meet the needs of victims who have been affected and come forward to tell their story.

Read more: <http://victimscommissioner.org.uk/victims-commissioner-speaks-in-house-of-lords-about-child-sexual-abuse-in-football-clubs/>



**I took part in a debate in the House of Lords on 15<sup>th</sup> December** to show my support for the government's plans to review sentences for driving offences.

I welcomed their proposals to introduce tougher penalties for those caught driving while using a mobile phone. However, while doubling the number of points and fine for this offence may act as a deterrent, any punishment needs to be combined with hard hitting education to ensure the media savvy generation are aware of the seriousness of this offence.

Find out more here: <http://victimscommissioner.org.uk/baroness-newlove-welcomes-the-governments-plan-to-review-sentencing-powers-for-driving-offences/>



**I took the opportunity to respond to the Henriques' report and the portrayal of victims of crimes as 'complainants'** at the South Yorkshire PCC Victims Showcase Event on 9<sup>th</sup> December. The event gave me an opportunity to raise my concerns about Sir Richard Henriques' recent report about the Metropolitan Police's handling of a number of non-recent sexual abuse cases. In his report he advises that police should start from a position where victims are not believed when reporting a crime, in order for them to be impartial. He also suggests that when such allegations are made, the person making the claims should be referred to as a 'complainant' and not as a 'victim'.

I mentioned that if these recommendations are accepted, the police would be taking a significant step backwards, undoing much of the progress made to give victims the confidence to come forward.



I further added that an important part of this is for victims to know that they aren't 'complainants' – and should be regarded as victims. Victims of crime, any crime, whether they have visible scars or not, are just that – victims.

To find out more: <http://victimscommissioner.org.uk/police-need-to-believe-victims-when-investigating-a-crime/>

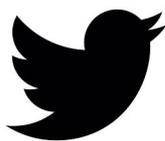
**I went to Gloucestershire for the last PCC visit of 2016.** It was an informative visit and was pleased to meet several victims who told me about their experiences of the criminal justice system.

I'll be travelling round the country again, starting with Derbyshire PCC on 20<sup>th</sup> January. I'll be looking forward to seeing how they are delivering victims' services.

Please do get in touch with your local PCC if you have any queries regarding victims' services in your local area.

**The VC team have been hard at work to finalise the latest reviews looking at compliance of the Victims' Code.** A follow up review analysing the demographic data of victims who are offered a Victim Personal Statement by the police will be released in January – look out for more information on the website!

My team are also finalising a review into whether children, who are victims of crime, receive their entitlements as set out in the Victims' Code. When it was amended in December 2013, it included specific provision of entitlements for children and young people under 18 years of age. The review will examine children's experiences of the criminal justice system, looking for any gaps in the provision of their entitlements, but also highlight and share any good practice where children have been well supported. It should be an interesting read!



#### **Tweet Tweet!**

You may have noticed that the name of the Twitter account has changed. If you would like to follow us on Twitter then make sure you search for @VictimsComm.

My team regularly posts information about what I am doing and who I am meeting; alerts about news, publications or speeches and other information that may be of interest to you. Hopefully see you on Twitter!

#### **Upcoming Dates**

**17<sup>th</sup> January:** Attending launch of National Standards of Support (NSS)

**20<sup>th</sup> January:** visit to Derbyshire PCC

**Stakeholder meetings:** VC to meet with Youth Justice Board, Association of PCCs, Mayor of Policing and Crime for London & Criminal Cases Review Commission



#### **Contact us:**



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