

Establish and maintain contact with victims, survivors and witnesses which acknowledges the effects of their experience

Overview

This standard is about establishing and maintaining contact with victims, survivors and witnesses of crime or anti-social behaviour. It involves making contact with individuals on a number of occasions, and over varying periods of time. It is essential that you recognise and acknowledge the impact of crime on people whilst at the same time maintaining a focus on the purpose of your employment. You need to be able to provide information about your own organisation, and that of other organisations that may be able to offer support to individuals.

The term 'support' may include the provision of information, practical help, counselling and emotional therapy.

In this standard, the term 'individuals' has been used to refer to the people you are assisting, including those who may be victims, survivors, witnesses or their associates.

In this standard, the term 'individuals' has been used to refer to victims and survivors against whom an offence was committed directly, witnesses, or a partner, relative or friend bereaved or affected by crime.

There are two elements

1. Establish contact with victims, survivors and witnesses in a manner which acknowledges the effects of their experience
2. Maintain contact with victims, survivors and witnesses in a manner which acknowledges the effects of their experience

Target group

This standard is applicable to those who are employed or acting as volunteers in organisations within the criminal justice system whose work brings them into direct contact with victims, survivors and witnesses. It includes the police, courts and the Crown Prosecution Service /Procurator Fiscal's Office and a wide range of other statutory, voluntary and independent organisations whose work brings them into direct contact with those affected by crime, including community safety agencies, local authorities, probation service, and voluntary organisations.

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Performance criteria

You must be able to:

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1. introduce yourself and take the necessary actions towards welcoming individuals and towards encouraging them to be at ease, in line with their needs
2. explain to individuals your own role and responsibility, and provide details of those to contact within your organisation if the individuals have any further concerns or questions
3. listen and respond to points made, acknowledging the effects of their experience, using communication techniques which suit the needs and abilities of the individuals
4. encourage individuals to discuss their experiences and express any immediate concerns they have about their own safety and that of those close to them
5. forward any information promptly to the appropriate organisation relevant to the safety of individuals and their family, where they have consented to this information being shared, or where there is a significant risk of harm to others
6. obtain any further information which is needed from individuals
7. encourage individuals to ask questions, providing them with information that may be disclosed, and seek confirmation of their understanding of the information provided
8. offer individuals information about other organisations that may be able to offer them support, the nature of the services they offer and assist individuals to make contact if they so wish

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9. provide individuals with information about the progress of the case and an explanation of the information that you are allowed to disclose to them, in line with their needs
10. explain to individuals who may have access to reports of their views, their right to request that information is not disclosed to the offender and the steps that can be taken to protect their anonymity
11. discuss with individuals the factors that are considered by decision-makers within criminal justice processes, including:
 - 11.1 why it may not always be possible to act on their views
 - 11.2 the range of possible conditions that could be attached to the case
12. encourage individuals to feel comfortable about making comments on any aspects which affect or concern them

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13. maintain reports of individuals' views using methods which protect their anonymity when this has been agreed with them, and in line with your organisation's requirements
14. discuss with individuals their need for further support and assist them to contact the relevant organisations, where appropriate

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Knowledge and understanding

You need to know and understand:

Legislative, regulatory and organisational requirements

1. legal and organisational requirements which relate to assisting victims, survivors and witnesses and assessing their needs for further support, and their impact for your area of operations
2. legislation, policies and procedures relating to data protection, health and safety, diversity and their impact for your area of operations
3. the role of your organisation and its services and the services which it provides in supporting victims, survivors and witnesses
4. your organisation's policy and procedures regarding confidentiality of information and the disclosure of information to third parties, and the specific circumstances under which disclosure may be made
5. organisational requirements relating to allowing others to be present in discussions with victims, survivors and witnesses, and the relative benefits and disadvantages that the presence of others can create
6. the limits of your authority and responsibility, and the actions to take if these are exceeded

Working with victims, survivors and witnesses

7. good practice communication techniques relevant to the situation and how to apply them
8. the impact of crime on victims, survivors and witnesses and their need for protection, respect, recognition, information and confidentiality
9. criminal justice processes, including processes for charging and prosecuting individuals, court and custodial processes
10. the ways in which it is necessary to alter communication when working with different individuals
11. the limits on the information that it may be possible to disclose to those affected by crime, including methods for explaining these
12. ways of explaining and promoting your organisation and the aims of its work to those affected by crime
13. ways of explaining and promoting the circumstances and feelings of victims, survivors and witnesses to other organisations
14. the characteristics of children as victims, survivors or witnesses and the particular requirements of child protection legislation
15. the role of your organisation and its services and how they relate to other organisations and services in the community justice sector
16. own role and responsibilities and from whom assistance and advice should

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be sought if you are unsure

17. the options for supporting witnesses and associates, including the reasoning processes used in determining the most appropriate options for the individuals concerned

18. methods of evaluating your own competence, determining when further support and expertise are needed

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