

The Victims' Advisory Panel

The Victims' Advisory Panel (VAP) is a statutory advisory Non-Departmental Public Body established in March 2003 to enable victims of crime to have their say both in the reform of the Criminal Justice System (CJS) and in related developments in services and support for victims of crime.

The Victims' Advisory Panel consists of people who themselves have been victims of crimes such as burglary, anti-social behaviour and hate crime, are family members of murder victims or who provide support to victims.

The terms of reference for the Panel are to advise the Home Secretary, Lord Chancellor and the Attorney General (or their representatives), and through them other Cabinet Ministers, of the views of victims of crime with particular reference to their interaction with the Criminal Justice System and its agencies. The Panel's remit also includes offering views and advice on the prevention of crime from a victim's perspective and generally contributing to developing and safeguarding the rights of victims.

The current VAP has been in place since July 2006 and its 3 year tenure expires in July 2009. The VAP is chaired by David Wood, Director of Policy and Process at the Office for Criminal Justice Reform (OCJR). The VAP receives advice and support from officials with Victim and Witness responsibility from the Ministry of Justice, OCJR and the Crown Prosecution Service. Twice yearly full panel meetings take place and are attended by Ministers and officials from CJS government departments.

Panel members share their experiences and generate ideas and practical proposals for improving services to victims and witnesses. Panel members also advise Ministers in the trilateral CJS Government Departments on the Victim and Witness Delivery Plan and its seven national key priorities which are to ensure victims and witnesses:

- > receive information about their case and about the CJS;
- > receive a high quality of service in the CJS;
- > are offered practical help and support;
- > get their views sought and used in the CJS;
- > see their experience in court improved;

And that:

- > the most vulnerable and intimidated victims and witnesses get an enhanced service;
- > the needs of domestic violence victims are met.

Due to a recent recruitment exercise, the VAP now consists of 10 Lay Panel Members. The panel's spokesperson, Kathryn Stone is also the chief executive of Voice UK, a national charity for people with learning difficulties who have been victims of crime.

She said on the launch of the panel,

'Too often the voice of the victim is not heard properly, or not heard early enough. We are looking forward to being the voice of victims of crime at a crucial stage - when policy is first being developed.'

To contact Kathryn for media statements and for any other information on the VAP contact:

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