Vulnerability app

A mobile device app allowing officers to access advice and information relating to legislation, investigative processes and forms linked to vulnerability.

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Key details

Does it work?	Untested – new or innovative
Focus	Organisational
Topic	Child sexual exploitation and abuse Violence against women and girls Vulnerability and safeguarding
Organisation	South Wales Police
HMICFRS report	**PEEL 2023-2025 Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy: an inspection of South Wales**
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Region	Wales
Partners	Police Criminal justice (includes prisons, probation services)

Key details

Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Start date	March 2024
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Adults Children and young people General public Victims

Aim

The aim of the app is to provide officers with information and guidance around vulnerability in one place, taking away the need to search multiple internal systems for guidance, forms, and support services.

The app allows officers to:

- look at investigative guidance
- obtain details of the offences and legislation

- complete the relevant forms in relation to stalking offences
- email details of support services at the click of a button

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes are to:

- improve the support available to officers in relation to vulnerability
- improve victims satisfaction rates

Description

Development

The vulnerability app has been developed in collaboration with Gwent Police, utilising the skills of the digital services department and the relevant subject matter experts. As this has been developed in house, the app is able to access local systems and there has been no additional cost to the force in developing this. The app has been developed in stages, working on priority areas such as stalking, rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO) first.

The subject matter experts for each area developed a plan for the app, outlining the intended outcomes. The developers in the joint digital services department then created a trial version of how the app would look and function. Once the design was agreed by subject matter experts and the digital services team, it was coded by the IT department. Each section took from weeks to several months to develop, depending on the level of content required.

Officers use the app when dealing with any incident, or potential incident, of vulnerability and can select the relevant subject area within the app to access the guidance, forms, and related services.

Content

There are four areas currently live:

- stalking
- early help
- RASSO
- female genital mutilation

Additional sections

Additional sections of the app are being developed for:

- honour-based abuse and forced marriage
- domestic abuse
- adults at risk
- older people

- preventative orders
- missing persons
- child protection
- mental health, right care right person

Each section covers specific areas.

- Investigative guidance: instant access to comprehensive guidance ensures adherence to correct procedures.
- Legislation and offence details: detailed information on relevant laws and offences aids in decision-making.
- Form completion: digital forms, including victim focus referrals and Public Protection Notices, which can be completed and submitted seamlessly.
- Support services: officers can instantly connect victims with support services directly from the scene, ensuring timely assistance.

Overall impact

Having an app that incorporates all areas of vulnerability has brought varying workstreams together. Prior to the app, each area of vulnerability had its own force guidance and specific pages on the force intranet. It was a complicated process to find the relevant resources, reducing the quality of support available for the victim and for the officer. Having all information within one app has streamlined this process.

The app enables the user to have practical advice and can direct them to other areas of the app. For example, with domestic abuse, should the signs involve honour and shame, the user can go directly to the section of honour-based abuse and follow the guidance for that.

The stalking assessment has already assisted officers in identifying different stalking offences, which is an area that required improvement. This section will now be developed to incorporate a new stalking screening toolkit.

As this is still in development, the full impact of the app will not be known for 12 to 18 months.

Learning

As the initial design for each section can take a lot of time, it is useful to work on priority areas first. Once the first design has been completed, it can also be used as a template to adapt and use in other subject areas. This saves time during the development stage.

It can be challenging to get officers to use the app at the start. Use of the app was made mandatory, and this increased the number of officers applying the app to their day-to-day role. It is recommended to consider mandating the use of the app earlier in the process to maximise uptake.

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Tags

Operational policing   Vulnerable people