What works: improving police contact with victims

Exploring the impact of improving police contact with victims on public perceptions.

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There are several police activities that have been shown to have a direct impact on public perceptions. The police have a higher degree of influence over these activities, which could form the basis of a public service model of policing.

Improving police contact with victims

Victims are more likely to be satisfied if they feel that the police have responded to their needs and concerns. The process that a victim experiences makes more of a difference to satisfaction than the end result does (such as the person responsible receiving a criminal justice sanction).

Satisfaction is associated with victims feeling that officers and staff:

- treated them with procedural justice
- responded in a reasonable time and when they were expected (but not necessarily quickly)
- took the matter seriously and took some steps to investigate
- kept them informed
- found the people who were responsible

The effect of public-initiated contact on trust in the police tends to be lop-sided. If victims or witnesses have a bad experience, the odds of them trusting or having confidence in the police will be much reduced. If they have a good experience, they will only be slightly more likely to trust or have confidence in the police.

What works

College research shows scenario-based training that aims to **improve the ways officers communicate with victims** can have a positive impact on victim perceptions.

A **systematic review** of the international evidence shows that restorative justice conferencing has been effective, overall, in increasing victim satisfaction.

The police have also successfully increased satisfaction by:

- making **reassurance phone call-backs** to victims of unsolved crimes
- providing domestic abuse victims with **rapid video responses** in cases where offenders are not present

Resources

- **Victims' Code**
- **College evidence review on public expectations of, and satisfaction, with police contact**

You can also search for examples of police practice on the College's **practice bank**.

Tags

Evidence-based policing   Community engagement