

CROWN OFFICE AND PROCURATOR FISCAL SERVICE

VICTIM INFORMATION AND ADVICE



BUSINESS PLAN 2005-6

REVISED SEPTEMBER 2005

VICTIM INFORMATION AND ADVICE BUSINESS PLAN 2005-6

Statement of Aims and Objectives for COPFS

The Lord Advocate's vision of COPFS is an organisation which:

- Wins the confidence of the people of Scotland
- Is committed to professional excellence
- Pursues cases independently, fairly and consistently, in the public interest
- Is responsive to the public's needs
- Provides a full, satisfying and rewarding career for staff
- Communicates openly and effectively

The published Aim of COPFS is

To provide an independent, modern prosecution service which is committed to professional excellence, pursues cases fairly and consistently in the public interest and is responsive to the public's needs.

Agreed Objectives

Objective 1: To improve the delivery of justice by timely, efficient and effective investigation and prosecution of crime.

Objective 2: To secure public confidence, including that of ethnic minorities, in the prosecution system.

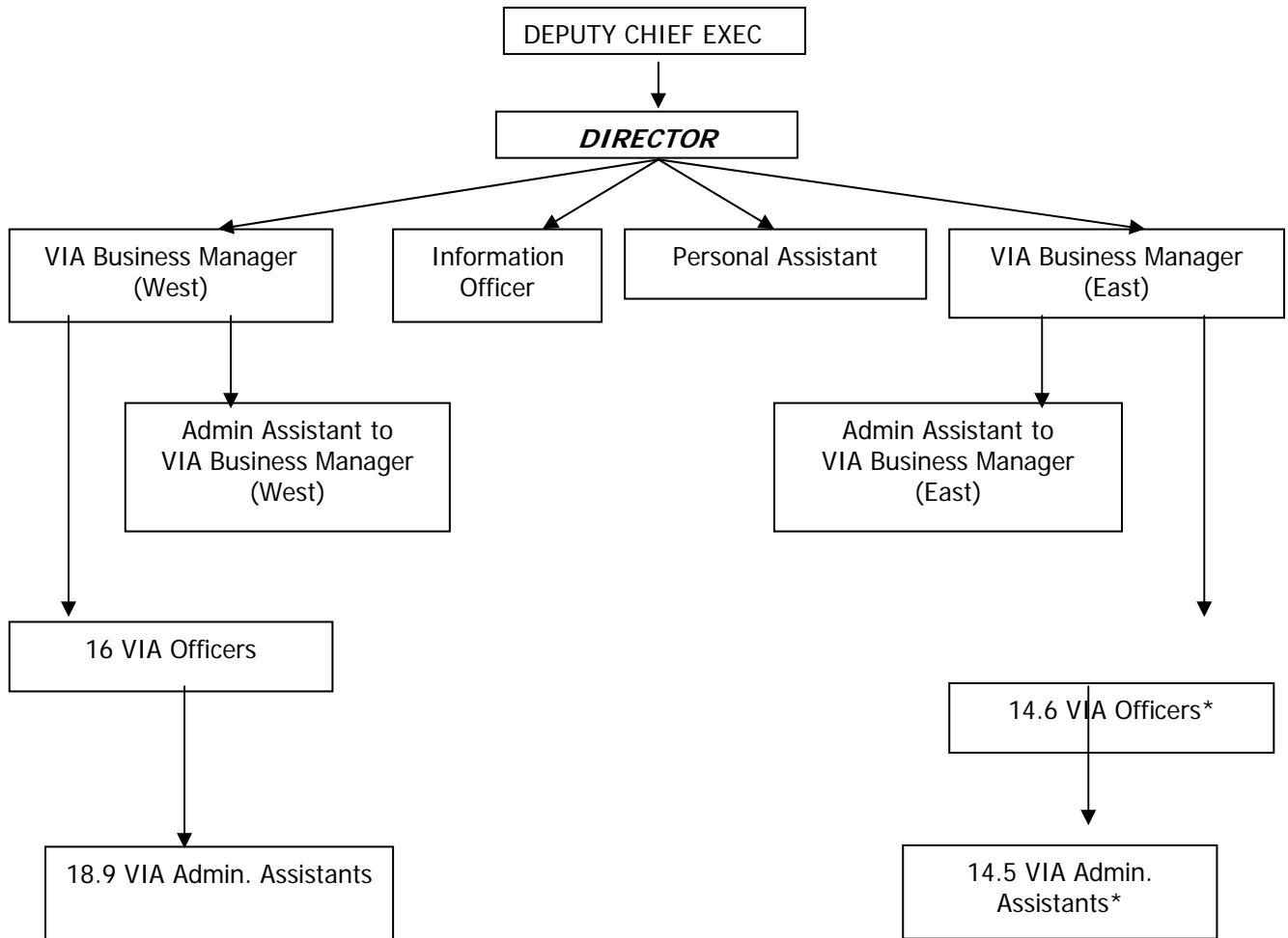
Objective 3: To give priority to the prosecution of serious crime, including drugs trafficking and persistent offenders.

Objective 4: To provide services that meet the information needs of victims, witnesses and next of kin, in co-operation with other agencies.

Objective 5: To ensure that all deaths reported to the Procurator Fiscal are investigated appropriately and speedily.

Objective 6: To provide thorough, timely and independent investigation of complaints of criminal conduct by police officers.

The Structure of VIA



***1 post funded separately under Victim Statement Pilot**

VIA has been fully operational in all Procurator Fiscal Offices since January 2005. There are 71 Full Time Equivalent posts within VIA, including the Director.¹

The VIA Review

A Review of the VIA Service was completed in May 2005 and a strategy for implementation of the Review recommendations has been designed, with completion dates for most tasks by 2006. Between October 2005 and May 2006 line management responsibilities for VIA operations staff will transfer to managers in PF Areas.

1. *The Main Functions of Victim Information and Advice*

- 1.1**
- To provide case specific and general information to victims of crime and vulnerable witnesses in certain cases reported to COPFS
 - To assist and advise on sources of support for crime victims, their families and vulnerable witnesses and to liaise with the relevant agencies
 - To feed back to COPFS the experiences of crime victims, their families and vulnerable witnesses so as to improve practice
 - To work with colleagues in COPFS to provide a high quality, integrated service to victims in all their contacts with the Department

¹ An additional 7.5 posts (5.5 FTEs) have been allocated from October 2005.

(e) To work with other criminal justice agencies in developing victim-aware policies and practices

1.2 VIA therefore focuses particularly on COPFS Objective 4 but contributes to the achievement of all other COPFS objectives, except Objective 6. VIA is involved in work implementing the Bonomy reforms and Project Solemn Renewal, which feed into COPFS targets in relation to Objectives 1 and 3. Public confidence in the service provided by COPFS is likely to be enhanced by VIA's work, assisting in the achievement of Objective 2. VIA deals with a significant proportion of sudden death referrals, assisting legal staff in the achievement of Objective 5.

2. *Resources*

VIA has been able to work within its 2004-5 budget of £ 1.7 million and resources have been available to meet the all Offices target by December 2004. Table 2 indicates the resources allocated to VIA in 2005-6. Seven new posts will be established in the second half of 2005-6, representing 2.01 Band D and 3.4 Band B posts respectively.

Table 1 Budget 2005-6

Staff	£1,645,000
Office and Admin.	£209,000
Case Related	£94,000
TOTAL	£1,948,000

2.1 Strategy for Controlling Variable Costs

VIA has few case-based costs. Wherever possible, offices use the same standard letters. Leaflets have been produced covering key procedures and the offences referred to VIA. Centralisation of printing and in-house production of leaflets is under consideration as part of the Review implementation process.

3. *Actual and Projected Workload*

Some VIA offices have not been fully operational for a complete year and therefore their current costs do not present an accurate picture of expenditure. This is particularly the case in Argyll and Clyde, Ayrshire, Central, Fife, Highlands and Islands, Lothian and Borders and Tayside. The Vulnerable Witnesses (Scotland) Act 2004 and the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) act 2004 will both involved an increase in workload for VIA. It has been agreed that VIA will be solely responsible for ascertaining the views of vulnerable witnesses about special measures and will be jointly responsible with designated PF staff for deciding the appropriate special measure. Over the course of the next 12 months VIA staff, particularly in Glasgow and Lanarkshire, will also be heavily involved with work resulting from Major Incidents that have occurred, updating survivors and next of kin and working closely with other COPFS staff.

Additional staff resources have been allocated in recognition of VIA's increasing workload.

4. *Specific Objectives*

4.1 Objective 1-Implementation of the VIA Review Recommendations

To ensure that the recommendations contained in the Final Report of the Review Team are implemented within the agreed timescale, subject to feasibility and maintenance of quality

Target- to complete the tasks allocated to the Review Implementation Workstreams on time and to the specification required by the Reference Group

Risk	Probability	Impact	Action
Reduction in quality	Medium	High	Monitor closely
Timescale slips	Medium	Medium	Monitor closely

4.2 Objective 2-Vulnerable Witnesses Act

To assist in the implementation of Phase 1 of the Vulnerable Witnesses Act in relation to child witnesses in solemn cases and to take the lead in:

- a) collating information on vulnerability
- b) ascertaining the views of parents and children on statutory and non-statutory measures
- c) providing a debrief to parents and children as desired

Target- to obtain the views of parents and children in 80% of all relevant cases during Phase 1 (April 2005-March 2006)

Risk	Probability	Impact	Action
Insufficient resources	Medium	High	Reprioritise other work
Cases not being referred	Medium	High	Close liaison with PF staff

4.3 Objective 2-Service Improvements-Quality Control

To carry out systematic inspections of a sample of local VIA Offices by August 2005 and to follow through with any necessary amendments to desk instructions, letters and office processes by December 2005, ensuring that a high quality, cost-effective and consistent approach is adopted throughout the country. The results of this exercise should be tested by further follow up inspections in 2006.

Target- to demonstrate a significant improvement in consistency, accuracy and accessibility of information provision between 2005 and 2006

Risk	Probability	Impact	Action
Lack of consistency between Offices	High	Medium	Clear National Guidance and regular inspection

4.4 Objective 3-Streamlined Approach to Victims -Sexual Offences Review

To implement in full any recommendations arising out of the Review that are relevant to VIA, subject to resources.

Target- to implement the Sexual Offences Review recommendations by March 2006 (subject to resources)

Risk	Probability	Impact	Action
Breakdown in trust of Support Agencies	Medium	Medium	Work closely with agencies

4.5 Objective 4-Joint Working with PF staff- Bonomy Targets

To contribute to developing ways of working within COPFS generally that reflect victim awareness and best practice in meeting the needs of victims, bereaved families and witnesses. The work of VIA should dovetail with the work of staff in PF Offices and at Crown Office and should assist in meeting COPFS' Bonomy targets.

Target- No target specific to VIA- feed into COPFS targets

Risk	Probability	Impact	Action
Duplication and uncoordinated work with PFOs	High	Medium	Clear National Guidance

4.6 Objective 5- Further Improvements in COPFS Services to Victims and Witnesses

To contribute to further improvements in COPFS' service to victims and witnesses, including giving reasons in no proceedings cases, assisting PF staff to meet targets in relation to victims and witnesses contained in Chapters 16 and 22, providing information and advice to more victims and witnesses through contact centres and enabling victims and witnesses to obtain information over the Internet.

Target-- No target specific to VIA- feed into COPFS targets

Risk	Probability	Impact
Failure to meet public expectations	Medium	High

5. *Performance Measures*

5.1 Performance Indicators

At present VIA has one performance indicator, relating to bail. Victims should be sent information about the bail decision within 24 hours of the accused's appearance. This target is currently being met in about 95% of all cases, according to figures collected since June 2003. We anticipate that we will continue to meet the target of communicating court bail decisions within 24 hours to 90% of victims in cases where the accused has appeared from custody.

As part of the Review implementation strategy consideration is being given to the establishment of additional targets for the VIA service. Any additional targets should be designated and in place by 2006-7.

5.2 Other Measures

A Customer Satisfaction Survey was commissioned from *Lambda* research consultants, who had already carried out similar work as part of an evaluation of the pilot VIA Offices. This was conducted over a 4 month period in the summer of 2003. Overall, the percentage of respondents who rated the VIA service as 'Excellent' or 'Good' was 84%. The survey will be repeated in 2005 and we aim to meet the target of an 85% satisfaction level by March 2005.

In light of the Review implementation plans it has been decided not to hold a Customer Satisfaction Survey in 2005. In future the service offered by VIA will be surveyed as part of COPFS-wide satisfaction surveys .

6. *Training and Development Plan*

6.1 VIA staff

*VIA (through the VIA Training Working Group) will continue to deliver and review its 2 day induction training course for use with new staff.

*An Away Day for all staff will be held early in 2006, aiming to review current VIA work, encourage consistent practices and team working, and prepare for Phase 2 of the Vulnerable Witnesses Act (see below).

*VIA will encourage attendance at an external basic counselling skills course for all VIA staff who have not had an opportunity to participate in such a course.

*All VIA Officers will participate in a COPFS bereavement course during 2005/6 unless they have already done so or are considered by their line managers to have the relevant experience.

*All new VIA Officers who have not already done so will undertake Management training.

*All VIA staff will receive FOS training appropriate to their work during 2005/6.

*VIA will take up places on Family Liaison Officer Induction Training courses at Tulliallan Police College, where possible.

*All VIA Officers will attend training on domestic abuse issues during 2005/6.

*All VIA staff responsible for the preparation and delivery of training and/or presentations will attend a PowerPoint presentation course and Presentation Skills course.

*Relevant VIA staff will attend regular Area and Group meetings dealing with operational and strategic issues, (held every 2-3 months) particularly in relation to monitoring Bonony and Vulnerable Witness Act implementation and Freedom of Information Act compliance.

*VIA Officers responsible for communicating with Child Witnesses and Vulnerable Adults will attend appropriate VWA training during 2005/6.

6.2 PFO staff

VIA will continue to liaise with Training Division regarding inputs to relevant training courses run by COPFS for staff.

6.3 External training

Police – VIA will input to training courses for Police Officers at Tulliallan, including Probationer courses, the Family Liaison Officer Course and Road Traffic Officer courses and the course on domestic abuse.

Other agencies – VIA will continue to deliver presentations to agencies such as Victim Support, Witness Service and Social Work. Further to discussion with Scottish Courts Service regarding input to Court staff, VIA will provide appropriate information presentations at local level.

Sue Moody
VIA Director