



Exploring Victims' Interactions with the Criminal Justice System: A Literature Review

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October 2019



Foreword

I am delighted to share the first in a series of research reports commissioned to support our strategic direction by the Department of Justice and Equality over the coming year. This work builds on the Department's commitment, outlined in the 2018-2020 Data and Research Strategy, to support the development of more evidence-informed policy making. Research reports exist to inform policy making. They do this by providing comprehensive and timely overviews of research in criminology, criminal justice and equality studies. The establishment of the Department's Research and Data Analytics Unit is core to this effort.

Following a substantial Programme of Transformation throughout 2019, a new operating model has been implemented in the Department. The work of the Department has been aligned under a Civil Justice and Equality Pillar and a Criminal Justice Pillar. The work in each Pillar will be structured by functional areas - 'what is done', e.g. Policy, Service Delivery.

Our increased capability in the Policy space will ensure we are developing holistic, research-based long-term policy, through research and analysis from multiple sources. It will ensure that we are adopting a proactive and strategic view of Justice and Equality Policy formulation and review, providing "best-in-class" advice to Ministers and Government in the long-term interest of all citizens.

Our first report focuses on the important area of victims' interactions with the criminal justice system. Whilst significant progress has been made in this area, particularly since the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act 2017, an evidence gap regarding approaches that improve the nature and quality of victims' interactions with the criminal justice system was identified. This research report utilises a strict and rigorous review process to summarise the most relevant, international, primary research studies conducted in this area.

Covering the initial reporting stage all the way through parole, Dr. Healy's report provides a strong evidence context from which we can consider the development of policies and practices. We welcome the particular focus on studies conducted with victims with specialist needs such as victims of intimate partner violence, sexual violence and victims at the intersection. This body of evidence will be essential to inform our future policy discussions and development.

Whilst this report offers a comprehensive review of literature on victims' interactions at each stage of the criminal justice system, it is important to highlight the gaps in existing academic literature identified by this study. Therefore, this report should also be used as a springboard for further research projects to build upon.

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This project brings together a body of evidence on best practices that help to increase victim satisfaction, enhance victim wellbeing and encourage victims to participate in, or stay involved with, the criminal justice process. It is hoped that the review will provide stakeholders with a deeper understanding of victim interactions with the criminal justice system and an evidence base that can be used to enhance victims' experiences within the criminal justice system. The review will also constitute a valuable resource for researchers and act as a springboard for future empirical research on best practice in this area.

After a long history of neglect, crime victims have become an "important stakeholder" in the criminal justice system in recent years (Kilcommins et al., 2018). Yet, there are currently no state-of-the-art Irish or international reviews of victims' interactions with the criminal justice system. The current project, which was funded by the Department of Justice and Equality, aims to address the gap by conducting a state-of-the-art literature review which consolidates and critically evaluates the current body of evidence on what constitutes best practice in this area. State-of-the-art reviews differ from other types of literature review in that they focus on the current state of knowledge regarding best practice, typically focusing on research conducted within the last decade. To locate relevant studies, a systematic search of the academic literature over a ten-year period (2009-2019) was conducted, producing a final sample of 136 studies. Only studies that reported on primary research and directly investigated victims' interactions with the criminal justice system were included in the review (i.e. studies that explored the issue from the perspective of victims and/or criminal justice professionals or employed methodologies such as case file analysis).

Best practices in victims' interactions with the criminal justice system: Key themes.

Six overarching themes were identified regarding best practices in victims' interactions with the criminal justice system:

1.1 Effective communication and information sharing

Effective communication and information sharing emerged as a major, cross-cutting theme across every stage of the criminal justice process and every victim group. Victims appreciate receiving high-quality information about criminal justice procedures, their rights as victims and support services as well as regular case updates. The mode of delivery is also important and personal communication is the preferred method.

1.2 Coordinated holistic and multi-disciplinary approaches

Coordinated, holistic and multi-disciplinary approaches appear to be particularly important at the reporting, investigation and prosecution stages of the criminal justice process. Such approaches are widely used with hard-to-reach groups and can help to enhance victim satisfaction and wellbeing, though evidence regarding their impact on case outcomes is mixed.

1.3 Supportive and victim-centred responses

Supportive and victim-centred responses from the criminal justice system are important at all stages of the criminal justice process. In particular, victims appreciate receiving caring, fair (procedurally just) and respectful treatment from criminal justice professionals.

1.4 Clearly defined victim participation mechanisms

Victim participation mechanisms, such as victim impact statements, have been introduced in many countries to give victims a voice in criminal proceedings, but mostly serve an expressive or communicative function. Clear guidelines can help to ensure that victims and professionals have a good understanding of the purposes, scope and permissible uses of these mechanisms.

1.5 Tailored approaches for victims with specialist needs and experiences

Different victim groups (e.g. victims with disabilities, or victims who are members of an ethnic minority) can have very different experiences and needs within the criminal justice system. The current review highlights the importance of developing tailored approaches that are sensitive to the specific needs and experiences of particular victim groups.

1.6 Equal access and enforcement of rights

Victim rights are not always correctly implemented or enforced in practice. In addition, some victim groups experience unequal access to the criminal justice system, most notably those situated at the boundary between 'victim' and 'offender.' Evidence suggests that the presence of a victim advocate can help victims navigate the criminal justice system, protect their rights and improve criminal justice experiences.

2. Introduction: Victims and the criminal justice system in Ireland

Crime victims have become increasingly salient in academic, media and political discourse in recent years (Bottoms and Roberts, 2010). Within the Irish context, the victim has become an “important stakeholder” in the criminal justice system, though the delivery of effective supports has been hampered in the past by a lack of resources, an absence of political will, limited understanding of victims’ needs and poor information provision (Kilcommins et al., 2018, Leahy and Spain, 2017). On the victims’ side, concerns about the criminal justice system, limited knowledge of legal procedures or support services and psychological trauma can lead to under-reporting or withdrawal of a complaint (Kilcommins et al., 2018, Hanly et al., 2009). The Irish literature on this topic is sparse but existing evidence suggests that victims’ initial interactions with the criminal justice system are mostly satisfactory, though satisfaction rates tend to decline over time. For instance, Hanly et al (2009) conducted a national study of survivor, prosecutor and court responses to rape and found that victims expressed largely positive views regarding their initial contacts with police. However, satisfaction fell steeply during the investigation stage, mainly because of a lack of information and case updates from Gardaí.

In recognition of these issues, significant progress has been made in recent years with regards to victims’ rights. Because the issue of victims’ rights can come to the fore at any stage of the criminal justice process, all criminal justice agencies have put some measures in place to support victims, including An Garda Síochána, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Courts Service of Ireland, the Probation Service, the Irish Prison Service and the Parole Board. While a comprehensive overview of victim-centred measures is beyond the scope of this project, a few examples are provided here for context. Key pieces of legislation include the Criminal Evidence Act 1992, which inter alia allows victims in specified sexual or violent cases to give evidence via video link, and the Criminal Justice Act 1993 which introduced victim impact statements for victims of specified offences (for a detailed overview of legal provisions, see (Kilcommins et al., 2018)). A range of victim-oriented policy documents and guidebooks have also been produced by criminal justice agencies; for instance, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions produced the *Attending Court as a Witness* booklet and the *Prosecution Policy on the Giving of Reasons for Decisions* policy document (Kilcommins et al., 2010). The first *Victims Charter and Guide to the Criminal Justice System* was published in 1999 and subsequently updated in 2010

(DJLR, 2010). The rights contained in the Charter are designed to improve victims' experiences with the criminal justice system. By way of illustration, An Garda Síochána promises to treat every victim with dignity and respect, provide regular information and updates and offer additional supports to victims if required (e.g. a free translation service for non-English speakers). The most notable legislative development is the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act 2017, which transposed the European Directive (2012/29/EU) into Irish law. The Act places certain rights on a statutory footing including the right to information (e.g. about support services, criminal justice procedures, case updates) and the right to protection during investigations and criminal proceedings (e.g. victims can be accompanied to Garda interviews by a person of their choosing, the Gardaí undertake to assess victims' protection needs, and the public can be excluded from criminal proceedings in order to protect victims from retaliation).

Despite these changes, there are currently no state-of-the-art Irish or international reviews of victims' interactions with the criminal justice system. The current project, which was funded by the Department of Justice and Equality, aims to address the gap by conducting a state-of-the-art literature review which consolidates and critically evaluates the current body of evidence on what constitutes 'best practice' in victims' interactions with the criminal justice system. The term 'best practice' refers to practices that, according to the research evidence, produce the best possible outcomes for victims. The project focuses on issues that are common to all victims as well as the needs and experiences of specialist victim groups, including victims with particular vulnerabilities (e.g. a mental health issue or disability), victims with certain socio-demographic traits (e.g. age, gender and race) and victims of different offence types (e.g. sexual violence and intimate partner violence).

Methodology

The study comprised a state-of-the-art review of the literature on best practices in victim interactions with the criminal justice system. State-of-the-art reviews differ from other types of literature review in that they focus on the current state of knowledge about best practice, typically focusing on research conducted within the last decade. The use of secondary sources has many advantages as well as some disadvantages. For instance, available sources may reflect a publication bias (i.e. studies that generate statistically significant findings are more likely to be published than studies reporting null – or insignificant – results); the quality of the research may be uneven; key variables may be defined differently across the literature, making direct comparison difficult; important topics may not be

explored within the literature; and inadequate search parameters may cause relevant sources to be overlooked (Jahan et al., 2016). To overcome this, assessments of research quality were undertaken, and searches were conducted using systematic search procedures.

Literature search strategy



A systematic search of the academic literature was conducted to identify contemporary research studies on best practice in victims' interactions with the criminal justice system. Relevant studies were identified through keyword searches of three well-known digital databases, namely PsycINFO, Web of Science and Scopus. These databases were chosen because they are inter-disciplinary in nature and contain abstracts and index records for a wide range of peer-reviewed journal articles, reports and academic texts. It was originally planned to include dissertations and theses in the review. However, preliminary searches identified an enormous amount of studies, which could not be searched properly in the timeframe available (e.g. the ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database contained 17,000 records for the keywords 'victims AND policing'). The exclusion of dissertations and theses is not necessarily a disadvantage, as strong postgraduate research is usually published at some point in peer-reviewed journals and research monographs.

The initial search strategy was designed to be as inclusive as possible in order to maximise the number of studies identified. Initial searches were conducted using a broad Boolean search string, namely 'victims AND criminal justice.' Further searches using more specific keywords (e.g. 'parole AND victim input', 'victim impact statements') were then conducted but did not yield any additional studies. This suggests that the initial search strategy captured most of the relevant literature. A ten-year limit was imposed (2009-2019) on the searches to ensure that only the most recent research studies were identified. Victims were largely neglected within the criminal justice system until relatively recently, which means that examples of best practice have only begun to emerge, and be subjected to research, in the past decade or so. While it is possible that the final list of studies is not exhaustive, the search identified more than enough studies to draw meaningful conclusions about best practice in this area.

The initial search yielded a total of 2,659 studies across the three databases, which was reduced to 1,295 studies after duplicate records were removed. Next, the titles and abstracts of each study were reviewed to make a preliminary determination of the study's relevance to the research question. When relevance could not be ascertained from a reading of the title and abstract, the full text was consulted to determine its significance. As a result of this process, 1,159 studies were excluded from the study, leaving a total of 136.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

As noted above, an inclusive search strategy was employed to identify as many studies as possible. However, a set of inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to ensure that the selected studies focused on the topic at hand. First, studies were chosen according to relevance; that is, they had to investigate victims' interactions with the criminal justice system. Large numbers of studies were excluded for this reason; for instance, many studies focused on non-criminal justice agencies (e.g. shelters) or the predictors of decision-making (e.g. demographic factors, case characteristics) rather than best practice or victims' experiences of the criminal justice system. Second, only studies that presented a piece of primary research were included in the review. Accordingly, studies that provided literature-based analyses or legal commentaries were excluded (although systematic literature reviews were included). Third, studies had to directly investigate victims' interactions with the justice system; for instance, exploring the issue from the perspective of victims and/or criminal justice professionals, or employing methodologies such as direct observation or case file analysis



Quality assessment

The quality of the studies was then assessed using a modified version of the CASP (Critical Skills Appraisal Programme) Qualitative Checklist (CASP, 2018) which aims to help researchers determine whether the results of a study are valid, what results have been generated from a study, and whether the findings are of local relevance. The checklist contains ten questions to which researchers answer 'yes', 'no' or 'can't tell' (the author

added 'partly' to cover studies that partly addressed the questions posed). The questions are:

- I. Was there a clear statement of the research aims?
- II. Is the methodology appropriate?
- III. Was the research design appropriate to address the research aims?
- IV. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the research aims?
- V. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research question?
- VI. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?
- VII. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?
- VIII. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?
- IX. Is there a clear statement of findings? (x) Is the research valuable?

Though the checklist is not designed to produce a numerical score, the number of 'yes' answers per study was summed to provide an indication of research quality (see Appendix). It was decided to exclude studies that had less than five 'yes' answers.

Analytic strategy

First, information about each study was extracted and systematically coded in an Excel spreadsheet. The codes were: (i) the authors of the study (ii) the year of publication (iii) the type of publication (iv) the number of citations (v) the criminal justice site (vi) the country in which the study was conducted (vii) the stated aims of the research (viii) the sample (ix) the sampling strategy (x) the research design, and (xi) the CASP Qualitative Checklist score. Once the data were gathered and coded, a thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) of the full-text documents was conducted to summarise, structure and interpret the findings. Thematic analysis was chosen because it is flexible enough to accommodate the heterogeneity of the literature included in this review. As can be seen, the studies employed a variety of conceptual definitions, research methods, outcome measures and data sources, and also focused on a wide range of criminal justice sites, practice models, offence types, and countries (see Appendix). The aim of thematic analysis is to identify "repeated patterns of meaning" within a dataset (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 86). Researchers first immerse themselves in the dataset and familiarise themselves with the data through multiple readings of the materials. Next, overarching themes are identified, a process that in this case was data-driven to allow themes to emerge inductively from the data. Lastly, themes are named

and defined, then reviewed to ensure that they are coherent and consistent with the meanings attributed to the data as a whole.

A note on terminology

The definition of ‘victim’ as set out in the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act 2017 was adopted in the current review. The Act defines a victim as “a natural person who has suffered harm, including physical, mental or emotional harm or economic loss, which was directly caused by an offence.” According to the Act, family members are also victims but only in certain cases “where the death of a victim is caused directly by an offence ... provided that the family member concerned has not been charged with, or is not under investigation for, an offence in connection with the death of the victim.” It is important to acknowledge that this definition does not cover all types of victims, but it is consistent with the definitions used in most of the reviewed studies.

2.1 Overview of report

The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

Chapter 3 discusses research on best practices for supporting victims in the criminal justice system. The literature reviewed in this chapter focuses on victims’ experiences in general; that is, it does not differentiate between the lived experiences of different victim groups. The chapter is organised according to victims’ experiences at different stages of the criminal justice system, namely the initial police contact, investigation, prosecution, trial, sentencing and parole.

Chapter 4 reviews the research on best practices for victims with specialist needs and experiences. It begins with a discussion of the criminal justice experiences of victims of two different crime types namely intimate partner violence and sexual violence. It then moves on to discuss the experiences of victims at the intersection, recognising that individuals’ identities shape their interactions with the criminal justice system as well as the professional responses to victims. This section explores the experiences of migrant and ethnic minority groups, people with mental health issues or disabilities, people who experience hate crime, and children and young people.

The conclusion draws the various strands together to provide an overview of best practices for supporting victims through the criminal justice system.

3. Best practices for supporting victims in the criminal justice system

3.1 Best practices at the initial reporting stage

Victims' interactions with the criminal justice system begin when they report a crime to police and evidence suggests that the treatment received at this stage of the process plays an integral role in victim satisfaction. Accordingly, police services around the globe have implemented an array of measures to enhance victims' experiences with police. In the Irish context, An Garda Síochána promises that victims will receive a quick response, the contact details of the investigating Garda, regular updates about their case and information about victim support services (DJLR, 2010, Edwards, 2013). The current study identified 13 studies that explored examples of best practice with regards to victims' initial interactions with police. Three key themes emerged, namely the importance of (a) processes that follow the principles of procedural justice; (b) effective communication and information-sharing strategies; and (c) referrals to victim support services.

3.1.1 Processes that follow the principles of procedural justice

The bulk of the literature on the initial police reporting stage examines the role of police processes and case outcomes in victim satisfaction, with most studies showing that process variables are among the most important precursors of victim satisfaction. Process variables include inter alia the quality of victim-officer interactions, the level of information provided about the victim's case and criminal justice procedures, the perceived sympathy and supportiveness of police officers and the perceived fairness of criminal justice processes. The concept of procedural justice features strongly in this literature and is most associated with the work of Tyler (1990) who proposed that people who perceive police procedures as fair are more likely to characterise police services as legitimate and obey the law. Subsequent scholars have explored the impact of procedural justice variables on victims' experiences with the criminal justice system. For instance, Koster et al. (2016) conducted a systematic review of 15 studies globally to understand whether perceptions of procedural justice enhance victim's willingness to cooperate with police and found partial support for the theory. Victims who felt fairly treated by police were more likely to describe the police as legitimate, but evidence regarding the relationship between legitimacy and willingness to cooperate with police was mixed. The authors suggested that the ambiguous findings may be explained by methodological issues, since the studies were drawn from different

jurisdictions, and used different research designs and measures of procedural justice (this is a common challenge for researchers conducting meta-analytic research and systematic literature reviews).

To further explore the role of procedural justice in victim satisfaction, Koster (2017) conducted her own research in the Netherlands using a prospective research design to study the experiences of 417 victims. She found that victims who characterised the police response as procedurally just and who rated police performance highly were more likely to perceive the police as legitimate (legitimacy was defined as trust in the police and perceived obligation to comply with the law). Of these legitimacy measures, only perceived obligation to comply with the law was associated with a greater willingness to cooperate with police, indicating partial support for Tyler's theory. Using an Australian sample, Murphy and Barkworth (2014) confirmed the relationship between procedural justice and willingness to cooperate with the police.

In addition to increasing victims' willingness to engage with the criminal justice system, there is also evidence that procedural justice can enhance victim satisfaction rates. In Australia, Elliott et al. (2011) found that victims who perceived police procedures as fair (procedurally just) tended to report greater levels of satisfaction and legitimacy and to believe that the outcome of the case was fair. While obtaining the desired outcome was also associated with greater satisfaction levels, procedural justice emerged as a much stronger predictor of satisfaction. This indicates that police processes play a more important role in victim satisfaction than case outcomes. The authors also used qualitative analysis to probe further into participants' perceptions of procedural justice and found that procedurally just treatment was interpreted by victims as evidence that the police valued them as members of society (mentioned by 79.9% of respondents), that the police were competent (mentioned by 68.2% of participants) and trustworthy (mentioned by 53.64% of participants), that they were helped to recover from the crime (mentioned by 40% of participants) and were encouraged to reengage with the police if necessary (mentioned by 21.82% of participants).

Research also suggests that a sense of procedural justice can aid victim recovery in the aftermath of a crime. Using a survey of 171 Australian victims who reported the crime to police, Barkworth and Murphy (2016) found that victims who reported a sense of procedural justice were less likely to report negative emotions, feelings of social isolation or that their quality of life was diminished by fear of crime. Moreover, self-reported feelings of shame and anxiety appeared to mediate the impact of procedural justice on both fear of crime and

perceptions of social inclusion, while feelings of anger mediated its effect on fear of crime but not perceptions of social inclusion. The authors drew on several theories of emotion to explain these findings, suggesting that victims are concerned with how others perceive and respond to them. When they are believed and taken seriously, victims feel validated and valued which can mitigate the trauma of victimisation. The authors concluded that police services should focus on enhancing procedural justice by listening to victims, being respectful in their interactions and showing victims that they care about the crime.

While procedural justice plays a significant role in victim perceptions of policing, some researchers suggest that police performance is also important. Consistent with the wider literature, Aviv and Weisburd (2016) found that victims in Israel tend to perceive police as less legitimate than non-victims. To understand the reasons behind the legitimacy gap, the authors surveyed a random sample of victims and non-victims in Israel. They focused on two mechanisms thought to underpin legitimacy, namely procedural justice and police performance. Procedural justice emerged as the most important predictor of legitimacy for both victims and non-victims. When the groups were compared, no differences were found with regards to the impact of procedural justice on perceived legitimacy. However, police performance was shown to play a significant role in perceived legitimacy for victims but not non-victims. In other words, and in contrast to the findings of many studies, both police performance and procedural justice emerged as important determinants of perceived legitimacy. In fact, higher ratings of police performance seemed to decrease the legitimacy gap between victims and non-victims. The authors concluded that police services should focus on enhancing police performance as well as procedural justice if they are to increase their legitimacy in the eyes of victims and the wider public.

While these studies show that procedural justice increases victim satisfaction, wellbeing and willingness to cooperate with police, they do not identify the specific practices that contribute to a greater sense of satisfaction among victims. Using data from the British Crime Survey, Myhill and Bradford (2012) attempted to identify the aspects of police work that influenced victim satisfaction. Again, process and outcome variables influenced victim satisfaction, but process variables were found to be the most significant predictors. The analysis showed that police treatment, defined as the belief that police showed a genuine interest in the case, was an 'essential' precursor of victim satisfaction, while quick response times and being kept informed helped to consolidate satisfaction. Obtaining a positive case outcome (e.g. an arrest) also increased satisfaction but was not an essential component. In fact, high-quality police processes were associated with greater satisfaction levels, irrespective of the case

outcome. The authors concluded that police policy should focus not just on improving outcomes (e.g. increasing arrest rates) but also on enhancing the quality of police-victim interactions.

As the first point of contact with the criminal justice system, the quality of police-victim interactions has the potential to shape victim satisfaction and willingness to proceed with a case. To enhance these interactions, research highlights the need for police to have a good understanding of the dynamics and impact of victimisation as well as specialist training to ensure that police contact does not exacerbate the trauma of the offence. In some countries, victim advocates have been appointed to help victims navigate the criminal justice system and protect their rights. Metzger et al. (2015) conducted focus group interviews with 12 co-victims of homicide in the USA, and found that high-quality communication and displays of compassion were integral to victim satisfaction at all stages of the criminal justice system. Victims often felt overwhelmed due to a limited understanding of criminal justice procedures and a belief that their needs were secondary to the administration of justice. They felt that their journey through the criminal justice process would have been enhanced by the presence of a victim advocate. The authors also recommended specialist training for legal professionals to improve victims' criminal justice experiences and thereby increase overall satisfaction levels.

Highlighting the need to account for local contexts in such research, Kumar (2018) found that victim satisfaction in India was increased when police promptly registered the case, when the case resulted in a successful outcome, when police modified the accuracy of the record to increase the chances of a successful prosecution, and when victims did not have to pay a bribe to police. It is unlikely that the latter two indicators would be relevant in more developed jurisdictions. Interestingly, the provision of written information did not contribute to satisfaction (it is possible that police provided verbal information, but this was not studied). Moreover, Kumar (2018) found that the most important predictors of satisfaction were outcome variables such as a successful case outcome. This contrast with the other studies discussed here, which emphasise the importance of process variables.

3.1.2 Effective communication and information sharing

The second theme in the literature concerns the importance of high-quality communication between police and victims. The idea that victims should be kept informed about their case is regarded in many jurisdictions as a fundamental right. However, evidence suggests that criminal justice professionals often fail to communicate properly with victims, generating

significant discontent. To address this issue in a cost-efficient manner, some police services have begun to implement and test technological solutions. Irazola et al. (2015) evaluated responses to an automated notification system in the US from the perspective of 1,246 service providers and 723 victims. These computer-based systems are operated by the state and provide information and notifications to registered victims (e.g. about court dates, offenders' custody status, etc.). Satisfaction rates among victims and service providers were high (76% and 63% respectively) and perceived benefits included increasing victims' sense of safety, feelings of empowerment and voice. However, just 23% of victims who took part in the study had accessed the system, primarily because they were unaware of its existence. In addition, both groups identified issues with the system, including outdated or inaccurate information and difficulties accessing the website. By way of improvements, participants recommended that the system should operate seamlessly across the criminal justice system as a whole, that early notifications be provided to victims to aid safety planning and that public education campaigns be developed to increase awareness and use of the system. These findings suggest that technological solutions have merit but require further research to establish their utility and effectiveness.

Access to information about the justices system may be particularly challenging for victims of complex crimes who may be faced with multiple reporting pathways. Button et al. (2013) observed that victims of fraud in the UK may interact with multiple networks including the criminal justice and civil law systems as well as



numerous statutory and private agencies (e.g. banks, insurance companies). These networks may operate at cross purposes or in unison, in parallel or in opposition to one another. Overall, the study showed that responses to fraud victims were pluralistic, piecemeal, and varied according to the agency that was dealing with the victim. Victims themselves expressed a preference for a centralised service for crime reporting (such as the Action Fraud centre, see <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/>). Cross et al. (2016) explored the experiences of online fraud victims in Australia and found that they wanted to be treated with respect when reporting and not blamed for the offence; clear crime reporting channels; access to trained staff; and information about support services.

3.1.3 Referrals to victim support services

As noted above, referral to victim support services has also become a key part of the initial police response to victims. Madoc-Jones et al. (2015) explored the effectiveness of the police referral process to victim support services from the perspective of 33 service providers and identified several shortcomings. In England and Wales, police systems transfer crime reports to a central victim support unit every 24 hours, whose staff then automatically contact victims of certain crimes. Service providers felt that the decision to contact victims should not be determined by offence type, as this could leave some vulnerable victims without support. For instance, antisocial behaviour is classified as a minor offence, but can have a severe impact on victims exposed to numerous incidents. While officers had the option of referring individual victims to support services, they did not know whether that victim was already in touch with the victim support unit. As a result, some victims fell through the net and received no support, while others received contacts from multiple providers. This highlights a lack of joined-up thinking within the system as well as significant duplication of services. While victims classified as high-risk were referred to multi-agency support services, the study found that these services were under-resourced. Victims assessed as low risk were simply given referrals to local support groups. As a result, service providers lacked information about these victims' circumstances which impeded effective service delivery (e.g. some were unsure whether it was safe to telephone a victim of domestic violence at home). The study also explored service providers' attitudes towards each other. Again, service providers commended the initial police response to victims but also highlighted the lack of follow-up communication with victims. Advocates were considered to play a vital role in keeping victims informed about their case and reassuring them about the criminal justice process. The authors recommended that multi-agency working be implemented, along with end-to-end case management of victims' needs and better coordination between services.



3.2 Best practices at the investigation and prosecution stages

Having reported the crime, victims next encounter the criminal justice professionals who investigate and prosecute their cases. Research suggests that satisfaction rates tend to diminish the deeper victims progress into the criminal justice system, as victims needs increasingly come into conflict with organisational imperatives. Though not always successful, measures have been introduced to improve victims' experiences with investigators and prosecutors; for instance, Irish prosecutors have undertaken to consider victims' views in decision-making, treat victims with dignity and respect, and provide regular case updates (DJLR, 2010). They also agree to provide information about court procedures but cannot discuss victims' evidence (in other jurisdictions, such as the USA, prosecutors have greater levels of contact with victims). The current study located 14 studies that focused on the investigative and prosecution stages of the criminal justice process and provided evidence that the following practices have the potential to enhance victims' interactions with investigators and prosecutors: (a) effective communication and information sharing; (b) sensitive treatment and compassion to show victims that professionals care about their needs; and (c) interagency collaboration to provide a holistic service to victims.

3.2.1 Effective communication and information-sharing



The first theme highlights the importance of effective communication for enhancing victim satisfaction, wellbeing and perceptions of the criminal justice system. Research by Stretesky et al. (2010) on the experiences of co-victims in cold case homicide investigations found that 36 of the 37 co-victims interviewed for the study were unhappy with the level of communication received from police. The lack of information led most participants to believe that the police were no longer actively investigating their case. In addition, co-victims felt that their efforts to access information were perceived by investigators as annoying. The decision not to prosecute was also met with anger, as victims came to believe that the system was prioritising offenders' rights over victim rights. Poor communication and the resultant sense of injustice appeared to impede victim recovery and undermine their faith in the justice system. In a separate study conducted in the US, Stretesky et al. (2016) examined the factors that increase co-victims' perceptions that police are actively investigating their cases and again confirmed the

importance of effective communication. Co-victims were more likely to believe that an investigation was active when provided with what they perceived as 'important' information and when they were satisfied with how that information was delivered. The authors also concluded that annual conferences organised by a victim support group facilitated communication by bringing together key stakeholders such as police, victims, advocates and enabling victims to meet with the detectives in charge of their case.

Two further studies highlight the importance of communication and information sharing. Antrobus and Pilotto (2016) studied Australian victims' perceptions of an enhanced police response to residential burglaries using a randomised control trial. The enhanced response involved specialist evidence-gathering techniques (this aspect is not discussed here as it is not relevant to the current analysis) as well as a model of victim engagement based on the principles of procedural justice. The latter involved a brief police training session that encouraged officers to spend more time at the crime scene, clearly explain procedures to victims, treat victims with respect and allow space for them to raise any issues or concerns. Compared to victims who received standard police treatment, victims who received the enhanced response rated officers higher on measures of procedural justice. However, both groups were equally likely to express satisfaction with the police response (though it should be noted that both groups provided high satisfaction ratings, which may explain the lack of statistical significance). Though her research focused primarily on the negative consequences of the decision by prosecutors to drop domestic violence cases, Gauthier (2010) also highlighted the value of effective communication in the Canadian context. The 22 legal professionals who participated in her study believed that effective communication from prosecutors would help victims and other legal professionals to better understand the reasons why a case was dropped, and thereby retain their faith in the system.

3.2.2 Sensitivity, care and compassion

The second set of studies highlight how effective emotion management strategies can help to mitigate victims' distress and aid criminal investigations. Norwegian detectives interviewed by Risan et al. (2016) believed that their efforts to work with victim emotions helped to produce more detailed and coherent witness accounts. The 21 detectives who participated in this study were experienced in dealing with traumatised witnesses, having interviewed 150-170 witnesses to the killings that took place on Utøya Island in 2011. Detectives described how they studied witnesses' body language to ascertain their levels of distress and their capacity to cope with trauma. To help witnesses manage their emotions during the interviews, detectives tried to create a safe space in the interview room for

emotional expression and show witnesses that they were comfortable with emotional expression. If necessary, detectives gave witnesses the option of taking breaks during the interview and provided positive feedback throughout (e.g. assuring them that their statement would make an important contribution to the investigation). This study shows that witnesses' distress need not undermine police work but can aid investigations if managed through effective interviewing strategies.

Reed et al. (2019) offered a more negative assessment of US detectives' emotional labour during homicide investigations, focusing on the tensions that can arise due to the differing priorities of detectives and co-victims. Interviews with co-victims (n=26) and homicide detectives (n=26) showed that the former were preoccupied with the emotional consequences of the crime while the latter were focused on investigative tasks, not victim welfare. Co-victims felt that death notifications were delivered insensitively, with detectives providing too much or not enough information about the crime. While recognising the seriousness of the news being imparted, detectives acknowledged their aloofness during the notification process, which was designed to protect their own mental health and enable them to return quickly to investigative tasks. Some admitted that they did not feel emotionally equipped to deliver such news and passed the task to other professionals, such as the medical examiner's office. Co-victims also characterised detectives as emotionally distant during the investigation and found it difficult to obtain information about the status of the case. Again, detectives explained that they withheld information to protect the integrity of the investigation process. For instance, they feared that co-victims might leak information to others, enabling suspects to destroy evidence or intimidate witnesses. Despite their apparent detachment, detectives stressed that they felt a strong sense of responsibility towards victims and their families. The authors recommended that detectives would benefit from training on the delivery of death notifications and from the development of protocols for information sharing. They also suggested that crisis counsellors and victim advocates could prove to be helpful resources at this stage of the criminal justice process.

Existing evidence suggests that victim advocates offer a promising solution to the tension that can arise for investigators between meeting victims' needs and completing on the investigative aspects of police work. Ekman and Seng (2009) evaluated an innovative police unit in Colorado, staffed by trained victim specialists who provide assistance to victims at crime scenes. Officers can ask victim specialists to attend a crime scene but, even if their presence is not requested, the specialists contact victims the next day to offer assistance. Officers valued the work of the specialists, noting that their skills in performing emotionally

challenging tasks like death notifications and supporting victims at the crime scene enabled officers to concentrate on police work. They also believed that specialists' rapport with victims helped to elicit additional information about the crime, which aided the investigation. Research by Gaines and Wells (2017) also highlighted the benefits and challenges of introducing victim advocates to the US criminal justice process. For the most part, the 44 investigators and 35 prosecutors who took part in the study held favourable views of victim advocates' work, recognising that their focus on emotional and practical support enabled criminal justice professionals to concentrate on the legal aspects of the case. However, there were concerns that advocates occasionally became over-invested in cases and that their priorities differed from those of prosecutors, leading to conflict. The researchers concluded that collaboration between advocates and criminal justice agents would be enhanced by the implementation of clear protocols developed in consultation with all stakeholders as well as cross-training to enhance stakeholders' understanding of one another's roles. Relatedly, Globokar and Erez (2018) found that employment status of victim advocates in the US shaped the kind of support provided to victims. Specifically, advocates who were employed by prosecutors played a more limited role in victim support than advocates employed by NGOs. While prosecutor-employed advocates concentrated on providing notifications and updates to victims, NGO-employed advocates provided a wide range of services to victims (e.g. crisis counselling, safety planning) both during and after the criminal justice process. Because prosecutor-employed advocates served a dual function (supporting victims and facilitating the progression of a case), they perceived a tension in their victim work and felt that they were sometimes distrusted by victims as a result.

Research suggests that the ability to deal sensitively with victims in distress is also a useful skill for prosecutors. Goodrum (2013) found that expressions of shared emotions played a vital role in victim satisfaction with prosecutors in the US. When prosecutors demonstrated that they shared victims' emotions (e.g. through displays of compassion or anger), victims felt supported and perceived prosecutors' work more positively. This remained the case even for victims who were unhappy with the outcome of their case, suggesting that effective processes are more important for victim satisfaction than case outcomes. In contrast, prosecutors who remained emotionally neutral were perceived as lacking investment in the case. Prosecutors were willing to oblige, recognising that expressions of shared emotions played a vital role in building rapport, trust and meaningful relationships with victims. The presence of shared emotions also helped to give victims a greater voice in proceedings. Even though victims were not formally permitted to influence decision-making, prosecutors used their discretion to grant this privilege on occasion. However, they sometimes felt over-

burdened by victims' emotions or deferred to victims' wishes against their better judgement (e.g. opting for trial when they would have preferred a negotiated agreement).

Notwithstanding these issues, expressions of sympathy appeared to benefit prosecutors by increasing victim satisfaction with the criminal justice system and victims who gained additional privileges by eliciting sympathy from prosecutors.

Lastly, Armour and Umbreit (2012) explored the experiences of homicide survivors with the criminal justice process in two US states: Texas where the maximum sentence is the death penalty and Minnesota where the maximum sentence is life without parole. Though not focusing solely on this issue, the study found that victims appreciated respectful and close relationships with prosecutors and that such relationships helped to enhance victims' psychological wellbeing.

3.2.3 Coordinated, holistic and multi-disciplinary responses



The next set of studies explore the benefits and challenges of interagency collaboration at the investigation and prosecution stage. Cattaneo et al. (2009) evaluated the impact of a novel approach in the US, the Victim Informed Prosecution (VIP) project, which aims to provide intensive supports to victims and enhance collaboration between key stakeholders including prosecutors, civil lawyers (who represent victims in civil protection order

cases) and victim advocates (who support victims and refer them to relevant support services). The findings showed mixed results for the project. On the one hand, victims who participated in the VIP project reported greater levels of interaction with victim advocates and civil lawyers than a matched comparison group of non-VIP participants. On the other hand, similar numbers in each group felt they had a 'voice' in proceedings, suggesting that the VIP programme did not increase victims' sense of inclusion. Most importantly, there were no significant differences between VIP and non-VIP participants in terms of their level of interaction with prosecutors. In fact, the level of contact between VIP participants and prosecutors fell below expectations, largely because prosecutors' heavy workloads left little time for victim-centred work. Nevertheless, the sub-group of VIP participants who experienced higher levels of contact with prosecutors reported a stronger sense of 'voice' than non-VIP participants, suggesting that the VIP programme has merit but only if implemented properly. The results regarding collaboration were also disappointing; while the VIP programme encouraged greater information-sharing between stakeholders, evidence of cooperation was rare. For instance, prosecutors rarely initiated contact with other stakeholders with a view to including them in casework. The high turnover of prosecutors also weakened the level of institutional buy-in, highlighting the importance of ensuring commitment from all stakeholders at an early stage of programme development.

In a related analysis, Calton and Cattaneo (2014) used a prospective quantitative design to explore the impact of the VIP project on victims' psychological wellbeing and the likelihood of future help-seeking. They found that VIP participants held positive views of the court system and experienced high levels of distributive justice (i.e. perceived outcomes to be fair) and procedural justice (i.e. perceived processes to be fair). Further analysis showed that victims who experienced a sense of procedural justice reported better mental health outcomes and

a greater willingness to engage with the criminal justice system in the future. Interestingly, a sense of distributive justice did not exert an independent effect on victim outcomes but interacted with procedural justice to enhance victims' quality of life and the likelihood of future system engagement. Lastly, victims who experienced a sense of empowerment during the court process also reported better outcomes on these same measures (Bennett Cattaneo and Goodman, 2010). These findings suggest that a sense of procedural justice is particularly important for victims, but that satisfaction can be improved further when processes and outcomes are perceived as fair.

3.3 Best practices at the trial stage



In most jurisdictions, victims are assigned the status of witnesses at the trial stage. With evidence showing that many victims experience a second victimisation due to the adversarial nature of court proceedings (at least in countries with common law systems), measures have been put in place to assist victims who are attending court, giving evidence and/ or undergoing cross-examination. Within the Irish context, victims can avail of separate waiting areas in courthouses, pre-trial visits to familiarise themselves with the layout of the court, access to liaison officers and information about court processes (DJLR, 2010). The current study identified just eight studies that explored best practices at the trial stage. Despite the small number of studies, the evidence suggests that the following practices show promise for enhancing victims' interactions with the courts: (a) effective communication, information sharing and support; and (b) implementation and enforcement of rights.

3.3.1 Effective communication, information sharing and support

As noted above, victims are assigned the role of witnesses in court proceedings, which means that their influence on court processes and outcomes is limited. Some scholars fear that an increased policy emphasis on victim rights could generate unrealistic expectations among victims about their level of influence in the criminal justice system. Wemmers and Cyr (2016) investigated whether victims' expectations of their role in court proceedings matched the reality. Using a sample of 188 Canadian victims, they found that the majority of victims had realistic expectations in line with their legal status as witnesses. While 54.6% expected to have little or some influence on the criminal justice process, 64.2% understood that they had no role in the sentencing decision. This suggests that information about the victim's role in court was communicated effectively to victims. However, victims of intimate partner violence often expected to have an influence on the criminal justice process as well as the sentencing decision. Wemmers and Cyr (2016) recommended that efforts be made to ensure victims do not have unrealistic expectations about their role in the criminal justice system.

Communication and information sharing have emerged as important factors at all stages of the criminal justice process and the same is true of the trial stage. Again, research suggests that victims' court-related needs are not always fully met, in part due to a tension between

victim needs and court procedures. Kirchengast (2014) surveyed 142 victims and 19 justice professionals about their experiences of the court system in New South Wales, Australia. The study found a disjunct between victims' and professionals' views with regards to the scope of victim participation in the justice system. While victims regarded their participation at trial as unproblematic, professionals envisaged a peripheral role for victims in order to protect the integrity of the adversarial process. Nevertheless, the survey showed that victims were largely satisfied with the support they received from justice professionals and other support services. However, satisfaction with how the criminal justice dealt with their cases was mixed (about 20% reported being 'very satisfied' while about 35% reported feeling 'very dissatisfied') and the majority were dissatisfied with sentence imposed by the courts. The author offered a number of recommendations to improve victims' experiences including: better communication between victims and justice professionals; better information about court procedures to manage victim expectations and enhance their understanding of procedures; training to ensure professionals understand victims' needs, their responsibilities under the victims charter and victims' role in the criminal justice process; and the introduction of victim advocates to support victims throughout the process.

Some jurisdictions have created specialist units to address the lack of information and support provided to victims at the trial stage. For instance, Vidmar and Bajto (2018) studied the work of Victim and Witness Support Departments, established at Croatian county courts to provide information and support to victims. Their survey of 101 witnesses and their supporters revealed that the majority (68.4%) learned about the Departments when they received their subpoenas, giving them the opportunity to access support prior to attendance at court. Only a minority actively sought assistance from the Department, but the remainder generally accepted help when it was offered by officials. In most cases, victims hoped that the Department would provide them with information about court procedures and accompany them to court. They felt that this would have helped to calm their fears about the court process. The majority found the court experience emotionally harrowing and reported high levels of anxiety and fear before, during and after their testimony. In all, 83.8% said they were completely satisfied with the support they received though it should be noted that the sampling strategy may have produced a sample that was biased towards those with positive court experiences. Nevertheless, the survey shows that victims appreciate being offered support and information about the trial process.

Recent studies suggest that victim satisfaction with the trial process is relatively high in countries like England and Wales, where victim rights are deeply embedded in the justice

system. However, some gaps and service deficiencies remain. Wood (2015) surveyed 7,723 victims and witnesses about their experiences of dealing with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in England and Wales and found that overall satisfaction with the CPS was high (67% of victims and 74% of witnesses reported that they were satisfied with the CPS). The majority also reported being treated with respect, said they were satisfied with the level of information provided by the CPS and felt that the CPS took their needs into account at every stage of the process. Unsurprisingly, satisfaction was increased by a favourable case outcome; for instance, victims whose cases resulted in a guilty verdict and who perceived the sentence as fair reported higher levels of satisfaction. However, victims were often unsure as to the outcome of their case and a check of administrative records revealed significant disparities between victims' perceptions of case outcomes and actual case outcomes. This suggests a communication failure around case outcomes, which is potentially problematic given the important role played by case outcomes in satisfaction ratings.

A range of process variables also enhanced satisfaction, particularly the provision of support and information. Victims appreciated being given the name of a contact person who acted as a single point of contact throughout the process. This role was usually fulfilled by the Witness Care Unit who also provided victims with information on the court process and the status of the case. Though most respondents found their contacts with the Unit helpful, just a fifth reported receiving information about the trial process or the Going to Court DVD from the Unit and less than half received a full needs assessment before going to trial. Respondents also valued the support of Victim Liaison Officers (VLOs), who are tasked with informing victims when charges are dropped or altered. Overall, satisfaction was higher among victims who achieved a favourable case outcome, were given the name of a single contact person, felt supported by a VLO, received an explanation of the sentence imposed, felt treated with respect, underwent a needs assessment, were referred to victim support services, had their Victim Personal Statement read out in court and were offered access to special measures such as a video-link. Despite high levels of satisfaction among victims, the authors identified some areas where services could be improved. For instance, they found that communication and information provision could be clearer, particularly for vulnerable groups.

3.3.2 Processes that enhance the sense of justice and legitimacy

Although recent initiatives have markedly improved the experiences of victims and witnesses (e.g. special measures such as the option to give evidence via video-link, separate waiting

rooms, etc.), research by Jacobson et al. (2015) on the operation of the English Crown Court uncovered several outstanding issues that undermined satisfaction with the process. The first concerned victims' and witnesses' limited understanding of legal procedures which indicated poor information provision on the part of the authorities. For instance, some believed that the prosecution team was their legal team and were confused by the limited amount of interaction with prosecutors. Victims and witnesses also missed key legal explanations that might have enhanced their understanding of the trial process and outcomes (e.g. explanations about the burden of proof) because they were not allowed to attend the trial until after they had given evidence. Moreover, victims and witnesses were not always aware that they could attend court after giving evidence and did not know how to access special measures. Many were not informed of the verdict or sentence after the trial. The second issue concerned the inconvenience and cost of attending court. Waiting was a central feature of the court experience as cases were frequently rescheduled or adjourned (e.g. to allow for plea negotiations, legal arguments, etc.). As well as increasing anxiety, delays meant that victims had to miss a significant amount of work, reschedule other appointments or source additional childcare. This was particularly frustrating for victims and witnesses were then told that they did not have to give evidence after all (e.g. if a plea agreement was reached at the last minute). The third issue concerned the process of giving evidence in court. Victims and witnesses were unhappy that they could not relate the story in their own words, being only allowed to answer the questions posed. They were nervous about taking the witness stand and cross examination proved particularly challenging, with victims and witnesses citing defence lawyers' use of technical and complex language to bamboozle them, the nit-picking over small inconsistencies in their accounts and the sense that their stories were disbelieved.

Jacobson et al., (2016) found that victims and witnesses characterised the UK court process as positive and legitimate when decision making was perceived to be fair. For instance, victims valued an attentive jury, expressions of empathy from legal actors as well as small gestures that suggested concern for their welfare. Interestingly, victims valued judges who adopted an impartial and neutral stance towards both victims and defendants. Legitimacy was further enhanced by respectful treatment and most described court staff, police and prosecutors as compassionate, supportive and courteous. Victims and witnesses were particularly positive about the support provided by the Witness Service. Achieving a fair outcome was also important, with satisfaction increased by a guilty verdict and a sentence perceived as proportionate to the crime. At the same time, some felt guilty when a defendant was given a custodial sentence, suggesting that harsh sentences are not always

desired by victims. Lastly, court processes were seen as legitimate when they aligned with the moral code of the victim or witness, though the reality of court proceedings often undermined the sense of moral alignment. To improve the court experiences of victims and witnesses, the authors advocated better information provision to enhance victim understanding of court procedures, improved case management to increase efficiency and an emphasis on procedural justice to reduce feelings of marginalisation.

To gain insight into victims' understandings of 'justice', Holder (2015) conducted a prospective study that explored the perspectives of 33 Australian victims at three points in time: after the offender was charged, after the case was finalised in court and 6-8 months after the case was finalised. The author found that the concept of justice was complex, fluid and individualised



and was shaped over time by victims' interactions with different criminal justice agents. Victims experienced a sense of justice when they perceived their treatment as respectful; that is, when criminal justice agencies engaged in regular communication and were seen to treat the crime as a serious matter. In practice, few were kept informed about the progress of the case and some felt that they did not receive equal treatment in court (e.g. because they had a criminal record). Justice was also associated with outcomes perceived as fair and beneficial to the offender, victim and wider community. Importantly, justice was seen to be served when victims were given an influential voice in proceedings, though this was rare. For victims, being heard was about more than emotion expression; it was a formal acknowledgement that they had important insights to share with the court that could be used to enhance decision making. Fair outcomes and respectful treatment were associated with satisfaction across the criminal justice process, while voice correlated with satisfaction only at the prosecution and court stages. However, victim satisfaction was eroded as they progressed through the criminal justice system. Victims were most satisfied with the police response, with satisfaction levels falling significantly at the prosecution and court stages. This suggests further work is required to ensure that justice (as defined by victims) is present at all stages of the criminal justice process.

3.3.3 Implementation and enforcement of rights

While victims' rights in the criminal justice system have expanded considerably in recent years, these rights have not always been placed on a statutory footing. As a result, victims

have limited recourse if their rights are not respected. Davis et al. (2009) evaluated the National Crime Victim Law Institute (NCVLI) Victims' Rights Clinics, an innovative model designed to promote awareness, knowledge and enforcement of victims' rights in the US criminal justice system (see also (Davis, 2012)). The NCVLI's view is that victims' rights are meaningless if they are not, or cannot be, enforced in court. Accordingly, the clinics provide direct legal representation to victims in court, filing motions when rights are perceived to have been denied and launching appeals to enhance the interpretation and strength of victim rights statutes. They also offer legal educational training and information on victims' rights to legal professionals. The eight clinics included in the study varied widely in terms of structure, referral routes, level of specialisation and caseloads. Clinics were variously housed in law schools, victim service provider offices and law firms and the study identified advantages to each model. For instance, clinics in law schools benefited from the high standing of the schools and access to cheap (or free) student labour, while clinics in service provider offices benefited from strong professional networks. The process phase of the evaluation (Davis et al., 2009) identified some implementation challenges, including resistance from legal professionals to the idea of separate legal representation for victims as well as funding and resource issues. It also identified some successes; for instance, clinics facilitated prosecutors' work (e.g. by helping victims to complete paperwork) and helped legal professionals to better understand victims' rights issues in particular cases (e.g. by informally communicating with them to resolve issues, providing detailed briefs to judges).

The impact evaluation (Davis, 2012) identified evidence of some, albeit limited, successes. Compared to areas without victims' rights clinics, criminal justice professionals in clinic areas experienced a small but positive shift in attitudes towards victims' rights and a larger shift in perceived compliance with victims' rights. Analysis of prosecutorial case files also showed that victims' rights were more likely to be honoured in clinic areas, although these differences were not statistically significant; for instance, victims in these areas were more likely to receive an initial notification of their rights and to submit a victim impact statement. The study also found that the presence of a victims' rights attorney did not increase the likelihood that victims' rights would be honoured. However, cases in clinic areas were less likely to be dismissed and more likely to result in a guilty plea. Importantly, victim surveys revealed a high level of satisfaction with victims' rights attorneys (80%) but, surprisingly, suggested that victims in clinic areas were less satisfied with the work of criminal justice professionals and case outcomes. The authors attributed this to either raised awareness or pre-existing dissatisfaction with the criminal justice system that led them to seek the help of the clinic in the first place. The author also endeavoured to study the impact of clinics on the

legal landscape, a much more difficult task, and found examples of successful appellate cases taken by clinics that enhanced victim rights and of clinics contributing to legislative change. Overall, the author concluded that this model can help to promote victims' rights for individual victims and help to change attitudes and enhance compliance among professionals.

3.4 Best practices at the sentencing stage

Thus far, the practices shown to enhance victims' interactions with the criminal justice system can be broadly categorised under the heading of welfare or service rights (that is, the rights to information, support and protection). At the sentencing stage, another set of rights come to the fore, namely participation or procedural rights (that is, the right to participate in decision-making) (Hoyle, 2012). These rights are considered quite contentious with scholars fearing that greater victim participation in criminal proceedings may introduce an unacceptable degree of emotion and subjectivity into an otherwise rational and objective legal process. Nevertheless, many jurisdictions have introduced mechanisms to enhance victim participation, the most notable being the victim impact statement which allows victims to make statements to court about the harm caused by the offence. In Ireland, victim impact statements are delivered after the defendant is found guilty and before sentencing, and judges are required to take the statement into account when making decisions on sentencing. Generally speaking, victim impact statements are purported to serve two purposes, with the first proving the most controversial: an instrumental function (that is, designed to impact on sentencing decisions) and an expressive function (that is, giving victims an opportunity to communicate with the court and have a voice in proceedings). The current study identified 19 studies that explored best practice with regards to the use of victim impact statements. Analysis of this literature showed that victim participation was difficult to achieve in practice but can be aided by: (a) effective communication and information sharing; (b) greater clarity around the aims, scope and permissible uses of victim impact statements; and (c) a foregrounding of the expressive function of victim impact statements, combined with emotion management strategies, to protect the integrity of the legal process.

3.4.1 Giving victims a voice?

The first set of studies to be considered suggest that victim impact statements have not achieved the goal of increasing victim participation since victims are often reluctant to deliver victim impact statements. Lens et al. (2015) discovered that victim participation rates in the Netherlands were moderate with just 28% opting to deliver an oral victim impact statement (of the remainder, one third did not deliver a statement and 38% delivered a written statement). In a related analysis, Lens et al. (2013) found that victims who delivered written or oral statements differed significantly from non-participants, indicating that victims who deliver statements are not necessarily representative of all victims. Certain kinds of victims were more likely to deliver victim impact statements, including victims of serious offences

and victims who experienced longer gaps between the crime and court appearance. Victims who delivered statements also tended to experience greater psychological distress as a result of the offence than non-participants, suggesting that the impact of the crime played a role in their decision to participate.

Using data from the British Crime Survey, Mastrocinque (2014) examined the use of victim personal statements in the UK which, in contrast to victim impact statements, are sought from victims when they report a crime to police. Like Lens et al. (2015), she found that participation rates were relatively low (in this case 50%) and that certain kinds of victims were more likely to avail of the opportunity; specifically, victims who were female, perceived the crime to be serious and suffered an injury. Offence characteristics also influenced participation rates with victims of certain crimes (e.g. non-racially motivated crimes) less likely to participate. Overall, these findings raise concerns about the ability of such schemes to enhance participation among all types of victims and raise questions as to why victims are hesitant to participate in the sentencing process. Though none of the studies included in this study directly addressed this question, the literature has highlighted a number of barriers to victim participation.

3.4.2 Effective communication and information sharing

The first obstacle relates to a lack of communication with victims about their right to deliver a victim impact, or victim personal, statement in court. Roberts and Manikis (2013) examined victims' experiences with victim personal statements using data from the Witness and Victim Experience Survey in the UK. Concerningly, they found that just 43% of the 2011 cohort remembered being told by police that they could prepare a statement, though the percentage increased year-on-year. Only around 50% opted to prepare a statement but two-thirds of these felt that their input had been 'taken into account' by criminal justice actors. Similarly, a survey by Wood (2015) of 7,723 victims and witnesses in the UK found that over half of victims who prepared a victim personal statement did not know whether it was used in court. However, victims whose statements were read out in court reported higher satisfaction with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). To truly increase victim participation via the medium of victim impact statements, these findings suggest that effective communication strategies are needed to ensure that victims know that they have the right to deliver a victim impact statement and are subsequently told whether and how it was used in court.

3.4.3 Clarity around the purpose, scope and permissible uses of victim input mechanisms

The next obstacle concerns the ambiguity that exists with regards to the purposes, scope and permissible uses of victim impact statements. As noted above, victim impact statements can potentially serve several purposes but, in practice, the aims that apply in a given jurisdiction are rarely articulated. This creates confusion for victims as well as criminal justice professionals, who may end up operating at cross-purposes as a result. In a series of articles, Englebrecht (2011, Englebrecht, 2012, Englebrecht and Chavez, 2014) explored the use of victim impact statements in homicide cases in the US from the perspective of victims' families, legal professionals and victim advocates. Data were drawn from a range of sources, including trial transcripts and in-depth interviews with criminal justice workers and victims from ten New York State counties. The research revealed that prosecutors placed great emphasis on regular contact with victims in order to seek their input and provide them with information about the case. The absence of official guidelines meant that prosecutors and advocates also helped victims to draft their victim impact statements. Victims valued their relationships with prosecutors; feeling respected, included and informed added to their sense of procedural justice. However, tensions arose when victims disagreed with criminal justice workers as to the content and delivery of the statement. Victims were left frustrated and angry when asked by prosecutors to remove text from their statements (e.g. threatening statements about the defendant) or when their views were not acted upon (e.g. in plea bargaining decisions). A number of victims also felt excluded from the process when limits were placed on the number of victims allowed to deliver statements in court. Moreover, victims in some counties were asked to deliver their statements from the back of the courtroom so that they were placed behind the defendant, which generated discontent and dissatisfaction with the process. Victims preferred to deliver their statement at the front of the courtroom, situated amongst the other courtroom actors and facing the defendant. Ultimately, these tensions arose from a lack of clarity surrounding the purpose of victim impact statements with stakeholders expressing contradictory views; for instance, criminal justice workers cited their therapeutic benefits while victims emphasised the opportunity to speak directly to defendants (though this was not permitted under the rules, judges often exercised discretion in this regard).

Miller (2013) provided a critical analysis of the issues that can arise when the aims of victim impact statements are not carefully elucidated for criminal justice professionals and victims. Like Englebrecht (2011, Englebrecht, 2012), her research on the Canadian experience showed that prosecutors and victims held different views as to the purpose of victim impact

statements. Whereas victims used the statements to communicate the harm caused by the crime, prosecutors employed them for instrumental purposes (e.g. to highlight aggravating factors and argue for a longer sentence). Communication via victim impact statements proved difficult for some victims who lacked the skills to articulate a convincing story around the harm caused. Such victims may be at a disadvantage in jurisdictions where victim participation is an integral part of sentencing hearings. Most concerning, several victims in the sample found that their statements were subsequently repurposed for use in other settings without their consent. For instance, six participants recounted how defendants later used the victim impact statements in family court to argue that their victims were unfit parents. These findings show the importance of obtaining informed consent from victims if statements can potentially be used in other settings. In a related article, Miller (2014) documented victims' dissatisfaction with the imposition of rules around statement content and showed that they regularly misunderstood the instructions given to them. This highlights the need for clear communication with victims around the purpose, content and role of victim impact statements at sentencing hearings.

Drawing on interviews with 27 legal professionals in Northern Ireland, Moffett (2017) demonstrated how the potential benefits of victim impact statements (called victim personal statements in this jurisdiction) can be eroded if victims' expectations about having a voice are not met. In Northern Ireland, victims do not play a direct role in proceedings and their voices are mediated by a range of legal actors including statement-takers (e.g. victim support services, police), prosecutors and defence lawyers. How accurately the statements convey victims' experiences depends on the skills of the statement-takers who transcribe victims' words. While no constraints are placed on content, statement-takers explained that they tried to steer victims away from inappropriate material, suggesting that some censorship takes place. Additionally, prosecutors exercise discretion over how much of the statement to read in court, while defence lawyers are permitted to edit statements and cross-examine victims (the former was common, but cross-examinations were rare). Lastly, analysis of sentencing remarks suggested that judges rarely referenced victims' statements, creating uncertainty as to whether victims' views were considered at sentencing. Moffett (2017) concluded that these mediating forces can undermine procedural justice by distorting the accuracy of statements about the harm caused and reducing victims' sense of control over proceedings. The study also highlighted reasons why victim participation may be low, some of which may be unique to Northern Ireland, including fear of cross-examination, fear of retaliation in cases involving intimate violence, and distrust of police as a result of the Troubles.

Victim advocates may offer a solution to this dilemma because their role is to address victims' needs and helping them to navigate the system, allowing prosecutors to concentrate on the legal aspects of the case. Englebrecht (2011, Englebrecht, 2012) highlighted the important role played by victim advocates at the sentencing stage of the criminal justice process. In New York State, victim advocates are based either in non-profit organisations or in the offices of the district attorney. Englebrecht (2011, Englebrecht, 2012) favours the former arrangement because advocates who worked alongside prosecutors often experienced role conflict as they attempted to negotiate a middle ground between victim and prosecutor needs. In contrast, advocates who worked outside the system felt less conflicted and more victim-centred in their work. In Minnesota, Propen and Lay Schuster (2010) found that the assistance provided by victim advocates helped victims to effectively communicate their subjective experiences to the court without overstepping court norms and rules and successfully brought emotions into an otherwise neutral process.

3.4.4 Foregrounding and managing the expressive function of victim input mechanisms

Even if the purpose of victim impact statements is limited to an expressive function, this raises the related issue of how to manage emotional expression in court to protect the integrity of the legal process. Research suggests that it is not only victims who experience strong emotions in court, but also legal professionals such as prosecutors and judges. In the US, Schuster and Propen (2010) (see further (Propen and Lay Schuster, 2010, Schuster and Propen, 2011)) examined judicial attitudes to victim impact statements and highlighted challenges around integrating victims into sentencing hearings. While they appreciated hearing about the impact of the crime on victims, judges emphasised the importance of objectivity and neutrality in decision-making and tried to suppress their emotional responses to maintain a sense of authority and control. This proved difficult to achieve in practice as judges had to listen to emotional statements, then apply objective sentencing guidelines (federal judges in the USA must adhere to sentencing guidelines when determining sentences). Judges expressed concern about the impact of their decisions on victims, particularly if sentences did not accord with victim preferences, and employed rhetorical strategies in their statements to temper the harm caused; for example, they stressed how judges are obliged to conform to sentencing guidelines. Ultimately, they believed that victim input was more pertinent to determining the conditions to be attached to sentences rather than the sentence. The study also examined judicial responses to different kinds of emotional expressions within victim impact statements and found that expressions of grief (within limits) and compassion were deemed acceptable while anger, particularly if directed

towards the court, was not. The authors expressed concern that the silencing of 'bad' emotions could impede the recovery process for some victims.

Offering a more optimistic analysis, at least from the victim perspective, an ethnographic study of capital sentencing hearings in the US by Kaufman (2017) suggested that victims' expressions of suffering united them with other courtroom actors and set the emotional tone for the proceedings. She observed judges and jurors visibly empathising with victims, even becoming tearful at times. Victims and their supporters were given a privileged position among the other courtroom actors and received institutional supports that were not available to defendants and their (smaller) group of supporters. However, she noted that victims must be powerful communicators to achieve emotional resonances of this kind, which could disadvantage victims that lack these skills. Though the study did not measure impact on judicial and juror decision-making, the author expressed concern that introducing an emotional component to proceedings could undermine objectivity.

It is clear that the delivery of victim impact statements can heighten emotional tension during sentencing hearings in adversarial systems. However, Booth (2012) showed how carefully designed structures and practices may help to contain difficult emotions, protecting victims and the integrity of sentencing procedures in the process. In New South Wales, Australia, prosecutors meet victims to discuss the content and delivery of the statement before the sentencing hearing. Booth (2012) found that this provided victims with a private space for emotional expression, helped them to come to terms with legal constraints on the content of their statements and enabled them to prepare statements that would be admissible in court. As defence lawyers received copies of victim impact statements during the consultation phase, prosecutors were also able to forewarn victims about aspects of their statements that could be queried in court. At the sentencing hearing, judges adopted an attentive and empathetic stance towards victims as they delivered their statements and dealt sensitively with any objections raised by the defence. Interestingly, the content of statements was rarely questioned by defence lawyers, even though many contained material that exceeded statutory limits (e.g. commentary about the offence or offender). Judges' statements in court implied that the non-statutory content would not influence sentencing decisions, thereby protecting defendants' rights. Booth (2012) concluded that prosecutors, defence lawyers and judges had worked together to give this latitude to victims and, at the same time, protect defendants' rights.

Erez et al. (2014) also shed light on the strategies used by criminal justice professionals to manage victim involvement in the criminal justice system, using interviews with seven victim-activists and 36 criminal justice professionals in the US. Recognising that the criminal justice process can appear intimidating and opaque to laypersons, professionals tried to demystify the process by providing information about criminal justice procedures and preparing victims for the challenges of giving testimony. Professionals also provided emotional support, not only to protect victims but also to ensure that they had sufficient control over their emotions to deliver their evidence or victim impact statement in court. Activists disagreed with this strategy on the basis that asking traumatised individuals to control their emotions is unfair and unduly burdensome. Additionally, professionals tried to shield victims during the criminal justice process (e.g. standing between them and the defendant during sentencing, suggesting that they deliver victim impact statements to judges rather than defendants) and sometimes discouraged victims from attending court if they were deemed too vulnerable. Activists were also critical of the latter strategy, which they perceived as disempowering.

Overall, these studies show that professionals can accommodate victim participation in the criminal justice process in ways that benefit both victims and the criminal justice process, but also highlight the tensions that arise when victim participation mechanisms are grafted onto legal structures that are not designed to accommodate them. That said, it must be remembered that the constraints placed on victim input are designed to protect the integrity of the legal process and defendants' rights, meaning that these tensions cannot easily be resolved. Research suggests that integrating victims into inquisitorial systems may be less problematic. Booth et al. (2018) studied the courtroom experiences of victims in the Netherlands which has an inquisitorial, rather than an adversarial, legal system. They found that the dialogic nature of hearings under the inquisitorial system proved better equipped to accommodate victim's voices than adversarial systems. In the 36 hearings that were observed, most victims were given an opportunity to speak (though eight victims who expressed a desire to speak were not permitted to do so. In these cases, judges delivered the statements on their behalf). Victims were generally allowed to speak freely and express emotions, since advance approval of statement content was not required. But, as the authors note, having a 'voice' involves more than an opportunity to speak; it also requires the words to be heeded by decision-makers. This seemed to be the case in the Netherlands where defendants frequently acknowledged the harm caused and apologised to victims, and prosecutors and judges cited victim impact statements in their statements to the court.

Such displays of emotion by defendants may be rarer in adversarial legal systems. Booth (2013) also examined whether victim impact statements elicited expressions of remorse from defendants in the Australian context. As victims spoke, just one defendant was observed to display an emotional response while the rest remained expressionless. Moreover, victims found apologies contentious and were sceptical about defendant's motives for expressing remorse. It is possible that defendants experienced inward emotional responses, but the scarcity of overt emotional displays is important, particularly since victim impact statements are purported to have an expressive, or communicative function (this contrasts with the findings of Booth et al. (2018), discussed above). Booth (2013) suggests that the structure of legal proceedings may mitigate against emotional expression, allowing little space for dialogue or emotions.

A key question not yet answered concerns the actual impacts of victim impact statements on court decision-making and victim wellbeing. Lens et al. (2015) used pre- and post-trial surveys of 143 victims in the Netherlands to test the theory that delivering victim impact statements aids emotional recovery. They discovered that victim participation rates were moderate with just 28% opting to deliver an oral victim impact statement (of the remainder, one third did not deliver a statement and 38% delivered a written statement). Importantly, delivering a statement did not appear to have direct therapeutic benefits since victims' distress levels remained stable over time. The limited therapeutic effect is consistent with psychological research showing that recovery is rarely aided by single opportunities to express emotion. On a more positive note, victims who experienced a sense of procedural justice displayed fewer psychological symptoms. This is noteworthy as victims who delivered oral statements experienced the highest levels of procedural justice. Interestingly, the perceived purpose of victim impact statements did not impact on the decision to participate. Victims cited a range of motivations around participation, including the desire to express emotions, influence outcomes or avoid negative consequences (e.g. a negative response from defendant). The authors concluded that victims are not a homogenous group and that policymakers should "focus on which instrument works for whom and under which conditions" (Lens et al., 2013: 491).

Given that there exists significant scholarly concern about the possible negative effects of victim impact statements on criminal justice outcomes, it is notable that their impact on sentencing outcomes is currently under-researched. While some older studies exist, a search of the current literature located only one current study (Myers et al., 2018) which included a brief analysis of the impact of emotionality on sentencing outcomes on death

penalty verdicts in the US. The findings showed that expressions of emotions like anger or sadness did not impact significantly on verdicts, though the sample (n=52) is too small to draw meaningful conclusions.

3.5 Best practices at the parole stage

In many jurisdictions, victims have been given welfare and participatory rights at the parole stage. Participatory rights have again proved controversial, with scholars arguing that victims have already had sufficient opportunities to influence a sentence through the victim impact statement, that there are no procedural safeguards in place at the parole stage to protect prisoners' due process rights, that victim input introduces subjectivity (and therefore inconsistency) into the decision-making process, and that consideration of victim needs does not mesh with the aims of parole hearings which are to assess prisoners' risk of reoffending and rehabilitation prospects (Padfield and Roberts, 2010). In the Irish context, victims can make a submission to the parole board and the parole board will take their views into account during decision-making. Reflecting the limited body of evidence on this topic, the current review identified just five studies that explored best practices at the parole stage and pinpointed the following themes: (a) effective communication and information sharing; (b) balancing the needs of victims and criminal justice professionals; and (c) clear statements on the purposes, scope and permissible uses of victim input.

3.5.1 Effective communication and information sharing

Consistent with the findings reported in the review so far, research again shows the value of a proactive approach to communication and information sharing at the parole stage. Using interview data gathered by the Commissioner for Victims' Rights in South Australia, O'Connell and Fletcher (2018) explored 157 victims' perspectives on the parole process in murder cases. The Commissioner is responsible for compiling victim submissions and actively seeks to engage victims in the parole process, including those who have not registered for notifications. Victims in South Australia have a right to information about parole hearings, including the date of the hearing, outcome, parole conditions and reasons for the decision to release a prisoner. Parole boards are also required to consider victims' views in decision-making. When a release is approved, victims have the right to request a review within 60 days of the decision. In such cases, the Commissioner and Chair of the Parole Board try to negotiate a solution that addresses victims' concerns. This study highlighted the value of active, high-quality and regular communication between the Commissioner and victims. For instance, efforts to communicate with unregistered victims increased participation rates at parole hearings. The Commissioner's approach also generated high levels of satisfaction and a sense of procedural justice among victims. Victims described feeling validated and empowered when their views were taken into account in setting parole conditions, even if they did not always agree with the outcome of the hearing.

3.5.2 Balancing the needs of victims and criminal justice professionals

As noted in the previous section, the decision to give victims a greater role in the criminal justice process can create logistical and emotional challenges for criminal justice professionals. Young (2016) conducted 25 semi-structured interviews with parole decision-makers to explore the perceived impact of the California Victims' Bill of Rights Act 2008 [Marcy's law] on the parole process for life sentence prisoners. Marcy's law, which enhanced victim rights throughout the criminal justice process, grants victims at the parole stage the right to be notified about the date of the hearing, the right to attend hearings and the right to provide testimony without time or content restrictions. The law also extended the range of people who could attend hearings to include the primary victim (if applicable), family members and up to two victim representatives. Notwithstanding their overwhelming support for these measures, this study showed that parole decision-makers (known as commissioners in California) encountered logistical and emotional challenges in accommodating victim participation. Since just ten percent of victims attended parole hearings, schedules did not usually allocate time to hear victim testimony. When victims were present and provided lengthy testimonies, the schedule often overran, leaving commissioners concerned about their concentration levels by the end of the day. Commissioners also experienced emotional distress on hearing victim testimony but tried to separate the emotional impact of the victim's story from the facts when making decisions. They believed that victim testimony did not have a substantive impact on decisions but found their presence beneficial in other ways. For instance, they felt that victim presence lent moral legitimacy to the process, provided useful new information (e.g. if the prisoner had tried to contact the victim), aided rehabilitation by bringing the prisoner face-to-face with his or her victims, kept victim issues at the forefront of commissioners' minds and gave victims a voice in proceedings.

3.5.3 Clarity around the purposes, scope and permissible uses of victim input mechanisms

Despite policy rhetoric emphasising the victim's place at the heart of the decision-making process and parole commissioners' endorsement of victim participation rights, Young (2016: 478) argues that "it remains unclear precisely what kind of impact we want victim testimony to have." Research shows that victim input into the parole process rarely plays an important role in parole decision-making. Using a representative sample of 820 parole applicants in New Jersey, Caplan (2010) explored the influence of victim input on parole outcomes. The study showed that the number of victims who chose to provide input was tiny, representing

less than 12% of all victims in the sample. Of these, 87% expressed negative sentiments, indicating that only certain kinds of victims choose to participate in parole hearings. Most importantly, victim input played a limited role in decision-making. Controlling for a range of factors known to influence parole outcomes including institutional behaviour, crime seriousness and demographic factors, Caplan (2010) found that victim input – whether positive or negative – was not a statistically significant predictor of parole outcomes (though the numbers providing positive input were too small to draw meaningful conclusions). There were also no significant differences in outcomes between written and oral statements, suggesting that the method of delivery is not a significant consideration. Irrespective of these findings, Caplan (2010) concluded that victim rights legislation increased victim participation in the parole process. This is because victims who registered to receive notifications (and therefore received official requests to participate) were more likely to participate than unregistered victims. In terms of recommendations, he argues that the negative sentiments expressed by victims highlight the need for better mental health support at this stage of the criminal justice process. To address the disjuncture between rhetoric and reality around victim participation in parole decision-making, he recommends that the rationale for requesting input from victims be clarified, along with the relative weight that should be attached to their views by decision-makers. This would help to clarify expectations for victims and decision-makers.

Two other studies researched the impact of recent legislative reforms on parole decision-making in the US. To gauge the impact of Marsy's Law on case outcomes, Richardson (2011) compared parole outcomes before and after its introduction through analysis of parole hearing transcripts (n=211). Again, victims seemed reluctant to participate, evidenced by a participation rate of just 17%. Despite its victim-centred ethos, Marsy's law did not affect parole outcomes though the length of time between hearings lengthened considerably following its enactment. Friedman and Robinson (2014) used a similar methodology, analysing parole hearing transcripts (n=302) to establish the impact of Marcy's law on decision-making. In contrast to the other studies discussed here, they found that a victim presence increased the likelihood of release. They explained this counter-intuitive finding by suggesting that victims are more likely to attend hearings as prisoners' release dates draw near. Despite major enhancements to victim rights at the parole stage, these outcome studies showed mixed results regarding the impact of victim input on parole outcomes. This is perhaps not surprising since parole boards are required to consider a wide range of information including inter alia the offence, the prisoners' institutional behaviour, social support and chances of rehabilitation after release as well as victims' views.

To improve victims' experiences at the parole stage, Young (2016) advocates the development of a clear rationale for including victim testimony in parole hearings, along with clear procedures to achieve these aims. Additionally, she recommends that victims be kept fully informed about the case; offered travel expenses and employment protections (such as those offered to jurors) to increase attendance levels; and given mental health care after their testimony. To aid decision-makers, she proposes that procedures should specify how victim testimony should be treated in decision-making; schedules should be flexible enough to accommodate victim testimony and; decision-makers should be given psychological training and counselling to manage emotional distress.

4. Best practices for victims with specialist needs and experiences

4.1 Intimate partner violence

The literature includes a large body of evidence on best practices with regards to victims of two specific offence types, namely victims of intimate partner violence and victims of sexual violence. These groups tend to face unique challenges within the criminal justice process, and a number of specialist measures have been implemented in an effort to mitigate these issues. Due to their importance within the literature, their unique needs and the specialist measures that exist to support them, standalone sections of this report are dedicated to the needs and experiences of these two groups. It is important to acknowledge that victims of other offence types also have specialist needs and experiences but remain largely invisible in the literature (for instance, victims of white-collar crime, cyber-crime and homicide, to name but a few).

The first section of this chapter explores the experiences and needs of victims of intimate partner violence, while the second focuses on the needs and experiences of victims of sexual violence.



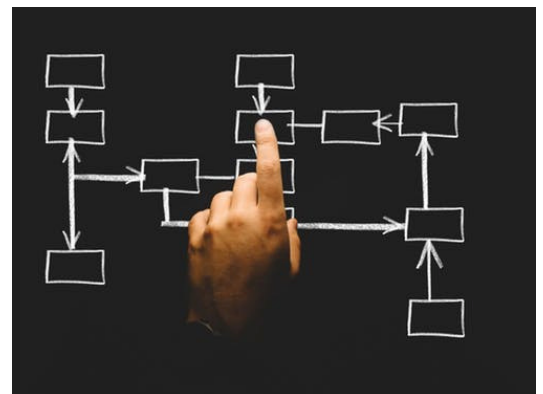
According to the World Health Organization (2017), intimate partner violence constitutes “behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours.” The terms ‘intimate partner violence’ and ‘domestic violence’ are often used interchangeably in the literature but most scholars prefer the term ‘intimate partner violence’ because of its broader scope. ‘Domestic violence’ originally referred only to violence within marital relationships whereas ‘intimate partner violence’ encompasses abuse perpetrated in any kind of intimate relationship, irrespective of the sexual orientation, marital status, or gender of victims and perpetrators (Wallace, 2015). Accordingly, this term is used in the current review, unless referring to a specific intervention that uses the designation ‘domestic violence.’

Victims of intimate partner violence are generally regarded as a unique victim group requiring tailored criminal justice approaches. This is due to the complexity of their needs, the hidden and intractable nature of the abuse as well as the long-lasting and wide-ranging impact of the abuse on victims, families and their extended social networks. After a prolonged history of neglect, efforts have recently been made to assist victims of intimate partner violence during interactions with the criminal justice system. In general, such approaches focus on enhancing victim safety and holding offenders accountable for their crimes. Within the Irish context, national policy aims to change societal attitudes in order to achieve a reduction in intimate partner violence, improve the supports available to victims and hold offenders accountable for their actions (COSC, 2016).

As will be shown, there are differences as well as similarities between victims of intimate partner violence and other victim groups. Compared to victims in general, victims of intimate partner violence appear to have more negative initial experiences with police and require access to a wider range of supports that address welfare and safety needs. On the other hand, access to information represents a universal need across all victim groups. Due to the large number of studies on the topic of intimate partner violence, this section is divided into three sub-sections that focus on best practices during: (a) the initial police report; (b) investigation and prosecution; and (c) trial and sentencing.

4.1.1 Initial police report

The 14 studies discussed in this section examine precursors to satisfaction among victims of intimate partner violence who reported their abuse to the police. Best practices at this stage of the criminal justice process include the provision of: (a) supportive and compassionate responses; (b) effective communication and information sharing; (c) services that address safety needs; (d) multiple pathways to support services; and (e) universal access to legal and social supports.



4.1.1.2 Supportive and victim-centred responses

It is important to begin by noting that many victims of intimate partner violence report negative experiences with the police. For instance, Meyer (2011) documented a high level of dissatisfaction among Australian victims, with 70.6% of victims reporting negative experiences due to officers' poor understanding of intimate partner violence and apparent unwillingness to pursue the case. The victims claimed that such treatment would deter them from seeking police assistance in the future. This is particularly worrying as victims were most likely to contact police when the abuse escalated to a serious level; their aim was to ensure their safety and that of their children. When police failed to respond appropriately, victims found themselves at risk of retribution from the perpetrator and living in a potentially dangerous situation. Another interesting finding to emerge from this study contradicts received wisdom about victims of intimate partner violence, namely that they are reluctant to seek help. In fact, Meyer (2011) found that victims employed a range of proactive help-seeking strategies; for instance, many of those who found the police response unhelpful approached the courts to obtain a Domestic Violence Order (though often found the court process unsatisfactory as well). Meyer (2011) recommended that police be given specialist training to ensure a comprehensive understanding of intimate partner violence, including victims' responses to abuse and the risks posed by such abuse.

Other studies show that victims of intimate partner violence, in common with all victims, view police interactions positively when officers show compassion, provide sufficient information and facilitate access to resources. Saxton et al. (2018) explored 2,831 victims' experiences with the police in Canada using a combination of closed and open-ended survey questions. The results showed how open-ended questions can generate more nuanced answers among vulnerable respondents. For instance, 68.8% of victims rated the police response as helpful on closed questions, but their open-ended responses suggested that 43.6% had negative encounters with police. Victims valued a supportive and sympathetic response, being kept informed about the case and being given access to resources. The outcome of the encounter was also important, since victims reported higher levels of satisfaction when the suspect was arrested or warned. Experiences with the rest of the criminal justice system were described as frustrating, with victims reporting that the system was difficult to navigate, expensive and ultimately ineffective. Like Meyer (2011), Saxton et al. (2018) recommended specialist training to improve individual and organisational responses to intimate partner violence. Kunst et al. (2013) found a relationship between post-traumatic stress disorder and satisfaction with the initial police response among 156 victims of intimate partner violence in the Netherlands. The authors studied two dimensions of police satisfaction, namely

satisfaction with police performance (e.g. whether police officers were perceived as efficient) and satisfaction with police procedures (e.g. whether police officers were perceived as polite and respectful). Unsurprisingly, victims who reported psychological distress at the time of reporting to police were more likely to develop post-traumatic stress disorder over time. While neither measure of satisfaction independently predicted the development of post-traumatic stress disorder, low satisfaction rates on both indicators increased the likelihood that early distress would develop into post-traumatic stress.

By analysing 517 incidents of family violence in the US, Hamby et al. (2015) explored whether police and victim advocates were using best practice in intimate partner violence cases. They also investigated whether the use of best practices impacted on key outcome variables such as arrest and victim separation from perpetrator. Having identified ten examples of best practice in domestic violence cases, they found that these practices were more commonly used by victim advocates than police; 79.6% of advocates used six or more of the listed practices compared to 31.8% of police officers. Importantly, the likelihood of an arrest was higher when police used best practice. In all, 85.7% of cases described as following at least six best practices led to an arrest, compared to 40% of cases described as not following best practice. Best practices included providing information about protective orders; court procedures and services for child witnesses; safety planning; providing information about support services including shelters; and following up with the family after the initial police contact. The use of best practice also impacted on the victim's decision to separate from the perpetrator (occurred in 38.1% of cases where police followed at least six best practices compared to 15.9% of cases where police did not follow best practice).

4.1.1.3 Effective communication and information sharing

As noted earlier, communication and information provision represent core victim needs, and this is also true for victims of intimate partner violence. Illustrating the value of high-quality communication, Slothower et al. (2015) evaluated the impact of a novel approach to intimate partner violence in the UK whereby offenders were randomly assigned to either diversion or criminal prosecution. Though the programme was not designed as a victim-centred approach, the evaluation showed that effective information provision could help to enhance victim satisfaction. During the early implementation stages, victims reported feeling angry and dissatisfied when offenders were assigned to the diversion programme, believing that offenders would regard diversion as a lenient option and that diversion was not an appropriate response to intimate partner violence. Additionally, they felt that they did not receive sufficient information about offenders' progress. To address this, the research and

implementation team developed a new approach to communicating with victims. Police officers received training to improve communication with victims and were required to track victims' responses by recording what worked or did not work using an online tracking system. Police officer reflections were monitored by a senior staff member who provided regular feedback to officers. The communication strategy was modified whenever negative victim responses were documented. Subsequent surveys showed that victim satisfaction increased significantly after the implementation of this strategy.

As a particularly hard-to-reach group, criminal justice professionals often find it difficult to initiate and maintain contact with victims of intimate partner violence. Brame et al. (2015) compared standard policing practice with regards to no-contact orders to a proactive policy introduced in South Carolina, USA. By increasing the level of police contact with victims, the proactive policy aimed to monitor offender compliance, and ensure that victims understood the goals of no-contact orders and knew how to avail of police assistance if required. Brame et al. (2015) found that the proactive policy was implemented successfully, as the number of attempted police contacts was much higher in the proactive policy group than in the comparison group (67.5% and 3.1% respectively). However, police efforts to communicate with victims often failed, with contact made in just 37.1% of cases, highlighting the hard-to-reach nature of this population. Further analysis revealed no differences between the groups in terms of re-arrest rates, suggesting the policy had minimal effect on offender behaviour. However, victims in the proactive policy group had more contact with victim advocates and were more likely to be separated or divorced by the end of the study, which suggests that the policy encouraged them to avail of supports and end abusive relationships. Worryingly, victims in the proactive policy group tended to experience greater levels of physical aggression, stalking and threatening behaviour. However, it is unclear from the figures whether these victims were actually exposed to a greater risk of victimisation. It is also possible, for example, that the policy increased victims' understanding of abusive behaviour and thus their willingness to report victimisation experiences to the authorities. A higher reporting rate would in turn create the appearance of an elevated victimisation risk in the data.

The importance of effective communication is further illustrated in an analysis by Srinivas and DePrince (2015) of the US context. Victims who reported that their expectations were not met by police experienced more severe Post-traumatic Stress Disorder symptoms and greater levels of anger than victims who felt that their expectations were met. The authors recommended that information about the criminal justice process be provided to victims on

the grounds that victim expectations may be more realistic if victims have a good understanding of criminal justice procedures and likely outcomes.

4.1.1.4 Safety needs

Victims of intimate partner violence are known to be at significant risk of re-victimisation and can benefit from greater access to security measures. Technology is increasingly used by police to provide cost-efficient solutions that address victims' ongoing safety needs.

Natarajan (2016) assessed the response of UK victims to a mobile phone service, TecSOS, which enables users to make immediate contact with police via a single button-press and records both the call and information about the victim's location. The survey data showed a high level of satisfaction among victims who found the phone easy to use and conceal and rated the service more highly than general emergency services. Victims also reported that the service elicited quick responses from the police and made them feel safer. However, usage data revealed that police did not always respond quickly enough to callers who requested immediate assistance either because the victims' exact location was unclear, or the victim had left the scene before they arrived. Technical glitches also meant that police received a high number of accidental calls and did not always respond to calls deemed accidental (subsequent iterations of the system have attempted to resolve this issue).

Safety needs can also be addressed through offender monitoring. Erez et al. (2013) evaluated a pre-trial electronic monitoring programme in the US which used GPS to monitor defendants' movements in intimate partner violence cases, including their entry into exclusion zones around victims' residences, with a view to enhancing victim safety. While victims reported feeling safer as a result of knowing that defendants' movements were monitored, the system generated other concerns. For instance, some victims were afraid to leave exclusion zones in case they encountered the defendant or worried that defendants would find a way to manipulate the system. Others became concerned when they did not receive any alerts, fearing that the defendant was not properly monitored. Victims were also troubled by the setting of exclusion zones around their homes, which gave defendants clues as to their address. To deal with this, some monitoring agencies developed 'unknown zones,' which were known to victims but not defendants. Victims were notified when defendants entered these zones, but defendants were not penalised for incursions. The programme was also financially burdensome for victims who felt obliged to pay rehabilitation programme fees (which could cost around \$8 a day) so that defendants could remain in employment and thereby support the family. Despite the victim-centred rhetoric, Erez et al. (2013) found that programmes focused primarily on controlling defendants rather than

helping victims. For instance, few gave advice on how to keep safe or notified victims when violations occurred. They concluded that victims benefit most from programmes that provide clear information about the programme's capabilities and limitations, consider their views, provide information (e.g. regarding violations) and engage in regular communication.

4.1.1.5 Multiple pathways to support

It is clear from the foregoing discussion that victims of intimate partner violence do not always receive a satisfactory response from the criminal justice system, and that some prefer not to pursue legal remedies. Accordingly, it is important to ensure that victims have sufficient access to supports both within and beyond the criminal justice system. The need to establish multiple pathways to support is illustrated in a study by Miles and Condry (2015) of criminal justice responses to a specific type of family violence, namely adolescent violence against parents, in the UK (family violence is an umbrella term that refers to acts of violence between family members.) In most cases, victims reported being unhappy with the police response. As parents, they did not wish to have their child prosecuted but wanted the police to take their reports seriously, provide emergency assistance on request, and offer access to support services. Criminalisation was not seen as desirable by parents or service providers because the adolescent perpetrators typically had complicated life histories which meant that they were perceived as both 'victims' and 'offenders' (e.g. a history of intimate partner violence between parents, learning difficulties, mental health issues). Criminalisation also created potential legal difficulties for parents because parental accountability laws in the UK mean that parents could be legally required to pay children's fines or attend court-mandated parenting courses. Service providers reported practical challenges resulting from the criminalisation of vulnerable young people; for instance, it is difficult to find suitable accommodation for under-18s, which would increase perpetrators' risk of homelessness. Instead, the authors proposed that an effective response should offer multiple pathways to support (i.e. not just via the criminal justice system); holistic and individualised approaches delivered by trained staff; specialist rehabilitation programmes that worked with the adolescents and their parents; and operate within a multi-agency structure.

Such approaches have not been widely tested but models such as the multi-level Victim Empowerment, Safety and Perpetrator Accountability through Collaboration (VESPAC) model (White and Sienkiewicz, 2018) could act as a template for such a response. White et al. (2019) found that leading US professionals in the field of intimate partner violence endorsed the general principles of VESPAC by recommending that service providers work to: (a) enhance community readiness; that is, implement public awareness campaigns and

ensure appropriate infrastructure is in place, including equipment, training and resources; (b) offer victim services such as hotlines, shelters and therapeutic services to address immediate and long-term safety needs and wellbeing; (c) provide effective justice services including civil and criminal remedies, crime prevention and crime reduction programmes, offender treatment programmes, victim safety measures and victim-centred approaches; (d) develop coordinated community responses to facilitate collaborative interagency responses, and; (e) implement culturally relevant practices that are flexible and individualised enough to address the needs of different victim groups. The proposed model is holistic and multifaceted in its focus on improving outcomes for victims, offenders, service providers, organisations and communities. For instance, victims may benefit from improved access to services, offenders may benefit by moving towards desistance from crime, service providers from enhanced skills, organisations from more sustainable resources and communities from greater awareness. It is important to note, though, that the VESPAC model has not yet been subjected to systematic evaluation.

4.1.1.6 Equal access to legal and social supports

Studies show that referrals to support services can also have a positive impact on victims' safety and welfare. Using data from the US National Crime Victimization Survey, Xie and Lynch (2017) explored the impact of three interventions on re-victimisation rates, namely reporting the crime to police, an arrest by police and obtaining support from non-police agencies. The researchers found that reporting to police, seeking assistance from support services and, to a lesser extent, arrest were important predictors of future victimisation. Notifying the police was associated with a 34% reduction in risk of re-victimisation while seeking help from support services was associated with a 40% reduction in risk of revictimisation. However, arrest reduced risk of re-victimisation by just 13%, suggesting it was the least important of the three responses. In addition to enhancing victim safety, the authors noted that access to support can help to protect the mental health of victims of intimate partner violence.

Victims of intimate partner violence can face a geographic lottery with regards to access to support services. In particular, victims living in rural areas experience significant barriers to help-seeking, necessitating the creation of new structures (or the adaption of existing structures) to support them. Johnson et al. (2014) explored the work of 25 victim advocates with victims of intimate partner violence in rural US communities. The rural context created both opportunities and challenges for advocates trying to build relationships with victims and criminal justice professionals. Rural communities were characterised by dense

interpersonal networks and a lack of privacy which reduced victims' willingness to seek help from the criminal justice system. To compensate, advocates used various strategies to build rapport; for instance, developing a professional identity that focused on defending victims' reputations and safety, and going beyond their official remit to help victims (e.g. driving them to appointments). They also held meetings at a variety of locations to safeguard victims' privacy as much as possible. To facilitate advocacy work and obtain resources for victims, advocates also had to develop personal relationships, or draw on pre-existing acquaintances, with criminal justice professionals in their areas. These relationships occasionally proved problematic, with one advocate recounting how a chief of police attempted to dissuade her from seeking a protection order in a case involving his friend. Patriarchal cultures within these communities often resulted in victim-blaming and a reluctance to pursue cases. Consequently, advocates used their roles to try and change professional attitudes; for instance, developing training programmes which not only enhanced other professionals' understanding of intimate partner violence but also highlighted advocates' professional standing and expanded professional working relationships.

Ragusa (2013) explored the criminal justice experiences of 36 victims of intimate partner violence living in rural Australia. Overall, their interactions with police were mixed, with some describing positive encounters and others reporting negative experiences. Calling the police represented a very important step for victims because they were acknowledging that a crime had occurred, often for the first time. However, police did not always take reports seriously unless there was evidence of a serious physical injury (in such cases, it was obvious to them that the abuse was a crime matter). The author concluded that the poor police response was partly due to a lack of understanding about the dynamics of intimate partner violence and partly because police regarded themselves as law enforcers rather than a potential source of support for victims. Victims explained that when police treated their reports as offences, this validated their experiences and helped them to feel empowered. Ragusa (2013) noted that some of the issues faced by victims of intimate partner violence are universal (e.g. social isolation) but others are unique to particular social contexts. In this case, victims from rural areas found it difficult to access services as there are fewer state supports available to victims in isolated communities. Poor internet quality also made it harder for them to identify services. The study showed that a centralised service was needed to provide a single point of contact for victims and that police should incorporate information provision into their duties.

4.1.2 Investigation and prosecution

Fourteen studies researched best practices with regards to the investigation and prosecution of intimate partner violence and highlighted the importance of the following practices: (a) services that address victims' complex social, psychological and legal needs; (b) victim-centred prosecution policies; and (c) coordinated community responses.

4.1.2.1 Supportive and victim-centred responses

Victims of intimate partner violence experience a wide range of social, psychological and legal needs, which may act as barriers to participation in the criminal justice system. Accordingly, criminal justice agents in many jurisdictions have begun to provide access to holistic support services including counselling, housing support, information about restraining orders and financial assistance. Existing research suggests that such services may aid victims' access to justice. In a study by Bechtel et al. (2012) which examined 353 US state-level domestic violence case files, the provision of assistance to victims of intimate partner violence was one of the most important predictors of victim cooperation and case outcome. Victims who received support from victim advocates were more likely to cooperate with the system, which in turn increased the likelihood of conviction. Dichter et al. (2011) supported this finding, highlighting how psychological, social and legal barriers can undermine victims' willingness to engage with the prosecution process in the US. They emphasised the value of regular communication from prosecutors to encourage victims to remain involved in the system. In addition, they stressed the importance of public education to ensure victims knew what supports were available, and psychosocial services to help victims and their families to cope with the aftermath of a conviction. These studies suggest that links to local services may be particularly important for victims of intimate partner violence who have multifaceted needs and are often isolated from community networks. The research also demonstrates how efforts to address these needs can improve the functioning of the criminal justice system by increasing the likelihood of victim cooperation.

4.1.2.2 Victim-centred prosecutorial approaches

Mandatory arrest policies are becoming increasingly common across the US even though recent studies have identified harmful consequences for victims. For instance, Çelik (2013) found that states with mandatory arrest policies had higher levels of intimate partner homicide and lower victim reporting rates, suggesting that mandatory arrest policies place victims at greater risk of violence and deter them from seeking help. Additionally, Sherman and Harris (2015) conducted a randomised trial with a 23-year follow-up period, which showed that victim death rates were substantially higher when suspects were subject to mandatory arrest. Records documented 92.8 deaths per 1,000 victims among mandatory arrest cases compared to 56.6 deaths per 1,000 victims among cases where suspects received a warning. Though most of the deaths were due to illness rather than homicide, the study suggests that a higher death rate among victims of intimate partner violence is an unintended consequence of the mandatory arrest policy.

Negative findings such as these have prompted some jurisdictions to develop more 'victim-centred' responses to intimate partner violence. Finn (2013) compared the impact of two different approaches - the 'evidence-based' and 'victim-centred' approaches – to cases of intimate partner violence in the US. The 'evidence-based' approach is concerned with maximising available evidence to increase the likelihood of conviction. Under this model, victims are excluded from decision-making and assigned the status of witnesses. Conversely, the 'victim-centred' approach is concerned with enhancing victim wellbeing through participation in prosecutorial decision-making. The comparison revealed markedly different results with regards to case outcomes, with fewer of the 'victim-centred' cases being formally managed by the courts (this perhaps reflects the well-known reluctance among victims of intimate partner violence to pursue prosecutions). While perceptions of safety and empowerment were similar across both groups, victims in the 'evidence-based' area were four times more likely to report a recurrence of psychological aggression and seven times more likely to report a recurrence of physical violence. These findings suggest that, even though the number of cases that go to court is smaller, victim safety is enhanced under victim-centred approaches.

4.1.2.3 Coordinated, holistic and multi-disciplinary responses

The last theme in this section focuses on coordinated community responses, considered by many to be the 'gold standard' in the field of intimate partner violence due to a strong evidence base. Regoeczi and Hubbard (2018) used a quasi-experimental design to evaluate the impact of the Domestic Violence Project on case progression in Cleveland. The project aimed to improve criminal justice outcomes for victims through the introduction of specialist police and prosecution units, victim advocates, and a separate Domestic Violence Docket system at court. Highlighting the need for coordinated intervention at the reporting stage, Project cases were significantly more likely to progress to the next stage of the criminal justice process than non-Project cases. In fact, three-quarters of non-Project cases (which were processed by regular police officers) did not progress beyond the initial incident report. This may be because police and advocates proactively contact victims in Project areas, whereas victims in non-Project areas are simply given referrals to meet with a prosecutor though they rarely follow up. However, the Project proved less impactful at later stages of the criminal justice process. Looking just at cases that were reviewed by a prosecutor, there were no significant differences in the percentage of Project and non-Project cases that resulted in charges, court hearings, or a conviction. In terms of sentencing, sanctions were harsher for the non-Project group, with 22.2% of Project defendants receiving a prison sentence compared to 44.4% of non-Project defendants. Defendants in Project cases were also significantly more likely to be sentenced to a treatment programme (e.g. 67.8% of Project defendants were sentenced to the Domestic Intervention and Education Training programme versus 48% of non-Project defendants). Recidivism rates were similar, suggesting that the approach did not reduce offending behaviour. The authors concluded that the lack of impact was due mainly to external factors such as high prosecutor caseloads and poor scheduling of court hearings. They recommended that specialist units be appropriately staffed and court schedules be carefully planned to minimise waiting times for victims.

DePrince et al. (2012a) examined the impact of a different coordinated community-based response on criminal justice engagement among victims of intimate partner violence. As part of an outreach programme in Denver, community-based advocates initiate contact with victims to offer confidential access to support services. The comparison group comprised victims who received referrals from system-based advocates and were required to initiate contact with support services themselves. Compared to victims who either declined referrals or proved uncontactable, victims in both the outreach and referral-based systems reported deeper engagement with the criminal justice system, suggesting that each type of victim

contact proved helpful. Victims in the outreach group were slightly more likely than victims in the referral group to attend court but there were no significant differences in case dispositions (this is in line with the results reported by Regoeczi and Hubbard (2018) though of course concerns a different programme). In a related article, DePrince et al. (2012b) examined the impact of the outreach system on victim wellbeing and discovered that victims in the outreach group experienced greater reductions in PTSD symptoms, depression and fearfulness than the referral group whose mental health deteriorated over time. Victims in the outreach group also reported greater satisfaction with victim support services, even though both groups had similar levels of access to services. This is possibly due to the former's access to tailored services via the outreach programme.

Despite these positive effects, the outreach programme did not appear to increase victim safety and both groups remained at significant risk of ongoing abuse (this is again reminiscent of the findings of Regoeczi and Hubbard (2018)). DePrince et al (2012b) noted that this finding is to be expected since offender behaviour is beyond the influence of victims or victim support services. Victim characteristics also mediated the impact of the outreach programme. For instance, the programme seemed particularly effective for ethnic minority women but proved less effective for victims with a physical dependence on the offender (i.e. victims who believed that their physical wellbeing was dependent on the offender). While some may consider the lack of impact on case outcomes as evidence of programme failure, DePrince et al (2012b) countered that this can also be viewed as a positive outcome. The null effect shows that efforts to enhance victim agency in the criminal justice process do not undermine, or conflict with, legal processes, thereby addressing a common criticism of victim-centred approaches.

Exum et al. (2014) studied the impact of a specialist Domestic Violence Police Unit on recidivism rates among perpetrators of intimate partner violence in the US. The unit, since disbanded, aimed to provide a coordinated community response to intimate partner violence by promoting collaboration between police and other service providers, coordinating legal responses (e.g. serving and enforcing protection orders), developing proactive community interventions, identifying at risk families and intimate partner violence hotspots and undertaking intensive criminal investigations. Volunteers at the unit provided further assistance to victims; for instance, filling out paperwork and accompanying victims to court. Compared to standard policing models, case file analysis (n= 891) suggested that suspects processed by the Unit were significantly less likely to have a further incident report on file 18-

30 months later. This finding contrasts with the findings reported in the previous two studies, which suggested that coordinated community responses do not influence reoffending.

Cerulli et al. (2015) examined whether divergences in victims' preferences and prosecutors' decisions impacted on victim willingness to seek assistance in the future. Again, the US-based research site followed best practice in the field of intimate partner violence by adopting a coordinated community response which pursued offender accountability through criminal justice involvement, offender monitoring through treatment programmes and probation supervision, and victim safety through evidence-based prosecution among other things. Case file analysis (n=414) showed that victim and prosecutor preferences regarding the decision to prosecute matched in 65% of cases. Interestingly, disagreement did not impact on victims' willingness to reengage with the system if subjected to re-victimisation. In fact, women who disagreed with prosecutors' decisions were significantly more likely to reengage with the criminal justice system in future or seek other kinds of remedies (e.g. protection orders). These findings suggest that victims are not necessarily deterred when cases are dropped or pursued against their wishes and will turn to other support services when criminal justice responses prove unhelpful. However, the extent to which the coordinated community response influenced victims' decision-making is unclear.

Another study explored the impact of coordinated community responses on case outcomes in Illinois, USA. In this case, Allen et al. (2013) studied the impact of Family Violence Coordinating Councils on the conversion rate of emergency protection orders (temporary court orders) to plenary orders of protection (long-term court orders) over a 15- year period. The primary aim of such councils is to enhance interagency collaboration between stakeholders. Generally, council membership comprises representatives from ten stakeholder groups (e.g. representatives from victim service providers, offender treatment programmes, law enforcement, justice, court system, religious groups, community organisations and cultural/ ethnic groups). The conversion rate averaged 32.3% over the period and appeared to be increased by the presence of a council. Though the study design did not permit examination of the mechanisms underpinning these effects, the authors suggested that councils may foster system change by facilitating interagency working (e.g. the collaborative development of materials such as educational leaflets and protocols).

Simmons et al. (2016) reviewed the extant literature on the Family Justice Centre (FJC) model, an approach that is widely regarded as best practice in the field of family violence. FJCs help victims navigate complex systems by providing a one-stop-shop for criminal

justice and social services. Noting the scarcity of high-quality outcome evaluations, the authors identified an evaluation by EMT Associates (2013) as the most rigorous. Victims in this study reported high satisfaction rates and easy access to services, though few returned to the centre after the initial contact. In another UK study, Hoyle and Palmer (2014) found that both staff and victims regarded the centre model as empowering. However, Weir et al. (2009) documented ambiguous results, with FJC clients experiencing a reduction in certain harmful behaviours (e.g. unprotected sex) but not in intimate partner violence. Some of the studies included in the review highlighted the challenges associated with interagency working. For instance, Duke et al. (2015) discovered that interagency collaboration proved difficult due to the differing priorities and values of the various stakeholders. Moreover, the centres tended to emphasise criminal justice matters, creating frustration for victims who were unsure about whether to pursue legal action. Based on these findings, Simmons et al. (2016) recommended the introduction of motivational interviewing techniques to the FJC model, arguing that this could help to increase victim engagement and resolve ambivalence. To support this, they cite research which suggests that motivational interviewing can enhance victims' motivation to change, self-esteem, feelings of self-efficacy about leaving the relationship and understanding of their abuse history (Rasmussen et al., 2008).

Adopting a different angle, Davies and Biddle (2018) explored interagency working at the organisational level in the UK, recognising that such approaches have positive (e.g. better information sharing and service provision, localised collaboration) and negative (e.g. lack of clarity around aims, roles and relationships, organisational fears about losing independence and goal conflict) outcomes for criminal justice professionals. This study focused on the Domestic Violence Perpetrator Intervention project which offers a multi-pronged approach to domestic violence including offender risk assessment, offender referrals to Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination (MATAC) partnerships, and toolkits for managing offenders through support or enforcement depending on offenders' acceptance of responsibility. The survey showed that representatives from the partner agencies claimed to have a good understanding of the partnership's aims (75%) and their own roles (85%) in the project. However, just a third believed that statutory agencies were sufficiently involved, while 85% stated that the project created onerous workloads. Non-engagement appeared to be influenced by austerity-era budget cuts, concerns about information sharing and the non-statutory nature of the programme. Nevertheless, the authors recommended partnership approaches to intimate partner violence on the grounds that they offer a society-level and holistic ("prevent and protect") approach to intimate partner violence.

Ekstrom and Lindstrom (2016) provide the last example of a novel collaborative approach to intimate partner violence to be considered in this section. The Relationship Violence Centre (RCV) was established in Sweden to provide social, emotional and practical support to female victims of intimate partner violence as well as information about the legal process. The aim was to increase prosecution rates by supporting victims in the criminal justice process and enabling police to concentrate on police work rather than victim needs. The Centre is staffed by social workers who are employed by social services but based in police stations. They provide assistance to victims during criminal investigations and trials and the relationship ends when charges are dropped, or the trial is complete. Victims who require ongoing assistance are referred to general social services. Ekstrom and Lindstrom (2016) found that the take-up rate for the Centre's services was low, with just 35% of victims requesting support. However, cases involving victims who received support from the Centre were slightly more likely to result in a prosecution, suggesting that the Centre helped in a small way to increase prosecution rates.

Considering this literature as a whole, the research shows mixed results with regards to the impact of coordinated community responses (however structured) on victim safety, case progression, case dispositions and victim participation. However, the studies reviewed here suggest that victim wellbeing and satisfaction may be enhanced by such approaches.

4.1.3 Trial and sentencing

The final sub-section explores best practices with regards to victims of intimate partner violence at the trial and sentencing stage. The seven studies that explored this issue identified the following as examples of best practice: (a) specialist courts to give victims a voice and streamline legal processes; and (b) the provision of information and support to victims, including the enforcement of legal orders.

4.1.3.1 Specialist courts

Specialist Domestic Violence Courts, where domestic violence cases are assigned to a separate calendar and heard by a designated judge, have been introduced in many countries. However, there is little consensus as to how these courts should operate and their effectiveness is poorly understood. To address this gap, Cissner et al. (2015) compared outcomes of cases heard in Specialist Domestic Violence Courts in New York to outcomes of cases heard in non-specialist courts. The results showed that specialist courts had minimal effects across a range of criminal justice outcomes. For instance, no significant

differences were found with regards to re-arrest rates or sentencing outcomes. However, the introduction of specialist courts reduced case processing times by two months and slightly increased convictions (convictions were four percentage points higher in the specialist courts). Interestingly, court policy appeared to impact on re-arrest rates. Specialist courts whose policies promoted offender rehabilitation, deterrence, offender accountability and victim safety had a greater effect in terms of reducing re-arrest rates compared to specialist courts that did not have such policies.

Anderson (2015) observed proceedings at three US courts and discovered significant differences with regards to their treatment of victims of intimate partner violence. While none of the courts allowed victims to contribute to judicial decision-making, one court - which operated a specialist Domestic Violence Docket - afforded victims a degree of participation which enhanced courtroom proceedings in small but important ways. Their involvement encouraged respectful treatment of victims by stakeholders; for instance, judges actively sought their input at sentencing, even rescheduling hearings to facilitate victim attendance. This helped to strengthen victims' sense of agency and enabled them to feel supported in the court process. Giving victims a voice in proceedings also permitted more accurate assessments of safety needs. To illustrate, victims were given the opportunity to speak privately with advocates during hearings, which enabled them to communicate a need for protection without the defendant's knowledge. Lastly, their involvement enabled judges to tailor outcomes to victims' needs. In one case, the judge responded to victim concerns about the financial cost of rehabilitation by requiring the defendant to seek cost-free treatment for substance abuse. It seemed that the differences between courts were due to the work of change 'champions' (in this case, the judge and victim advocate) and low caseloads more so than specialised nature of court proceedings.

Birnbaum et al. (2014) evaluated the early implementation of the Integrated Domestic Violence Court (IDVC), which was established in Toronto in 2011 to improve responses to intimate partner violence. The IDVC aims to enhance decision-making by facilitating information sharing between stakeholders; increase the efficiency of the court process by resolving criminal and family matters in a single court; enhance the consistency of outcomes by assigning a single judge to each family and; improve access to support services. The evaluation found that judges and prosecutors valued the sharing of information but family and criminal lawyers (who represent the parents) expressed several concerns about the IDVC approach. In particular, they were troubled by their lack of knowledge about the IDVC process and the expenses that would be incurred by families due to longer hearings. They

were also apprehensive about judges' ability to disregard information presented in one hearing (e.g. a criminal case) that was disallowed in another (e.g. a family case). Though the sample of victims and offenders who participated in the study was very small (n=4), they appreciated the holistic approach offered by the IDVC which in their eyes provided judges with a comprehensive picture of their lives and experiences.

A related study by Birnbaum et al. (2017) examined case files and found that the court experience of the IDVC group differed significantly different from that of a matched comparison group. For instance, IDVC cases tended to have a greater number of agencies involved in their cases (e.g. child protection services), more legal representation and fewer court appearances. The court process was also elongated due to involvement of multiple agencies and stakeholders. Though compliance rates were similar across both groups, offenders in the IDVC group were more likely to complete treatment programmes and were given greater access to their children over time. The authors suggested that access levels may be higher because the involvement of multiple agencies provides greater oversight of offenders' activities. However, they also acknowledged the possibility that children's welfare was being treated as a secondary concern by the courts. Ultimately, the authors concluded that IDVC constitutes a "promising alternative" (p630) but suggest that time and further research is required to fully evaluate its effects.

4.1.3.2 Information, support and enforcement

Victims of intimate partner violence can also benefit from the provision of high-quality information and support at this stage of the criminal justice process. Ragusa (2013), also discussed earlier, found that victims' experiences in court were largely negative, with victims highlighting the lack of privacy, the challenges associated with having to deal with male officials, and the non-availability of separate areas which meant that they often encountered defendants in court buildings. This, in conjunction with a limited understanding of court procedures, left victims feeling dissatisfied, emotionally distressed and intimidated. Victims also found it difficult to obtain an apprehended violence order (AVO) through the courts and those who did discovered that the orders did not protect them from offenders, particularly since breaches were treated leniently by the authorities. Such experiences have the potential to undermine victims' faith in the criminal justice system.

In a study involving interviews with 290 victims who participated in court proceedings in the US, Bell et al. (2011) found that the perceived helpfulness of the court's response was predicated on two factors, namely case disposition and court processes. While a prison

sentence offered peace of mind and a sense that offenders had been held accountable for their actions, victims also wanted access to other sentencing options such as treatment. Additionally, they appreciated unambiguous dispositions that left no room for misinterpretation on the part of the offender. Though initially happy with the disposition, many were later disappointed to discover that breaches of conditions were ignored by authorities and worried that this would lead the offender to view the offence as a minor matter. In terms of process, the majority felt that their expectations of the court experience were met and that the court system was fair and helpful. The supportive atmosphere of the court empowered victims to proceed with the case and helped them to understand that help was available. They appreciated being given referrals to support services (e.g. shelters) and information about legal remedies and court procedures. More negatively, attendance at court appeared to impose an administrative burden on victims. Victims were often required to attend court on multiple occasions due to lost paperwork or procedural errors, which increased the risk of withdrawal and left them unprotected. In terms of policy recommendations, the authors stressed the importance of focusing on criminal justice processes as well as outcomes, focusing in particular on respectful treatment, regular updates, and victim involvement in decision-making. The study also highlighted the need to ensure that court processes are streamlined as much as possible to reduce the administrative burden on victims and ensure they receive adequate protection.

Lastly, Richards and Gover (2018) examined a novel response to intimate partner violence in Colorado, where Domestic Violence Treatment Advocates not only provide support to victims but also sit on multi-disciplinary treatment teams that treat and monitor offenders, alongside probation officers, parole officers and treatment providers. Though the initiative had the potential to improve victims' access to justice, the study highlighted several implementation issues. Victim engagement with advocates was variable across the research sites (ranging from 1% to 95%) and few requested follow-up appointments after the first meeting. While disengagement from services is common among victims of intimate partner violence, the authors identified an additional logistical barrier within the organisational structure of the programme. Victims' consent was required to pass contact details to advocates, which delayed communication and caused the critical window for victim engagement to be missed. To address this, the authors recommended that a central clearinghouse within the Department of Justice be established to record and share victim information. More positively, treatment victim advocates found the multi-disciplinary structure effective, with 74% feeling their input was valued and 86% believing they had successfully advocated for victims.

4.2 Sexual violence

Attrition in cases involving sexual violence is extremely high due to a variety of factors, including under-reporting by victims and a reluctance among prosecutors to put cases forward for trial. In Ireland, it is estimated that less than 10% of adult sexual assault victims report the crime to police (McGee et al., 2002) and less than 30% of rape complaints are prosecuted (Hanly et al., 2009). Up-to-date comparative data are not available, but the most recent figures (relating to 2014) suggests that Irish conviction rates are particularly low in the European context (Aebi et al., 2017). Internationally, measures have been put in place to tackle the problem of attrition and address the unique issues faced by victims of sexual violence within the criminal justice system. Similar measures have been implemented in the Irish context, for instance, victims of sexual violence can avail of specialist support services, request a doctor and Garda of the same gender and give evidence in court through a live video link. Such measures are important as research shows that fear of the criminal justice process constitutes a major deterrent to victims of sexual violence reporting. These fears may be well-founded, with some scholars likening contact with the criminal justice system to a 'second victimisation' (Tempkin and Krahe, 2008). The current review identified 20 studies that explored best practices with regards to victims of sexual violence. The research suggests that certain practices may help to improve their experiences of the criminal justice system, including the provision of: (a) high-quality information and supportive treatment; (b) coordinated, holistic and multi-disciplinary responses; (c) advocacy to ensure that victims' rights are respected and their needs are met; and (d) special measures in the courtroom.



4.2.1 Effective communication and information sharing

Research suggests that the provision of high-quality information (e.g. about criminal justice procedures and case status) is the most important precursor of satisfaction among victims of sexual violence. Focusing on the Irish context, Hanly et al. (2009) surveyed 100 victims of rape about their initial experiences with An Garda Síochána (AGS, the Irish Police Force). Like other victim groups, victims expressed positive views about the initial police response, but satisfaction levels waned over time, primarily due to a lack of information and updates

about their cases. Turning first to the initial Garda contact, satisfaction levels were higher among victims who felt that Gardaí were warm and supportive and treated them with sympathy and compassion. Victims were also appreciative when Gardaí demonstrated a belief in the veracity of their account of the crime and conducted the interview at the victim's pace. Victims were asked about four commitments under the Charter and the majority said that they were given the option of a female Garda at interview (63%), information about support services (58%), explanations about the investigation (64%) and explanations about criminal proceedings (56%). Administrative issues also influenced satisfaction levels; for instance, satisfaction was lower among female victims who were interviewed by male Gardaí and those who endured lengthy interviews or felt that their cases were not thoroughly investigated.

After the initial contact, satisfaction declined considerably and was primarily linked to a lack of follow-up information about the status of their cases. Concerningly, 40% of participants seriously considered withdrawing their case at some point during the criminal justice process and the most common reason given was poor treatment by Gardaí. At the same time, there were some examples of Gardaí providing emotional support and follow-up contact that were greatly appreciated by victims; for instance, some victims described how Gardaí phoned them afterwards to check on their welfare or gave up annual leave to attend the medical examination. To enhance victims' experiences, Hanly et al. (2009) recommended that the Gardaí develop a victim communication protocol to improve information sharing practices. In addition, they advised that Gardaí undergo further training to ensure that victims are always treated with sensitivity; for instance, allowing victims to complete interviews at their own pace and take breaks if necessary. This is particularly important for Gardaí dealing with vulnerable victim groups (e.g. victims with mental health issues or intellectual disabilities) who may require specialist training. Lastly, the study suggested that providing support to victims from the outset may encourage more of them to stay engaged with the criminal justice system. Similar results have been documented in other jurisdictions. For instance, Carbone-Lopez et al. (2016) studied reporting experiences among 102 women who experienced sexual assault in the US. Overall, 31% reported that they were very satisfied with the police response, with satisfaction increased primarily by the arrest of the perpetrator. Dissatisfaction was higher among those who felt that the police did not treat the case seriously, did not attend the scene, or failed to arrest a suspect.

To address these issues, some jurisdictions have introduced measures to improve communication with victims. Sulley et al. (2018) reported on the work of a US-based multi-

disciplinary team tasked with developing best practice protocols for victim notification in sexual violence cold cases. As part of their work, they sought the views of 23 victims of sexual violence on the content of a formal notification letter. Victims were shocked and angry to learn that letters were to be used as the primary method of notification, believing that written communication would undermine already precarious relationships with police. They regarded letters as too impersonal and feared that the sudden arrival of a letter at a victim's home would cause further distress by reopening old wounds. Participants recommended that communication protocols be designed to protect victims' privacy and keep them safe. They advised that letters should provide specific and factual information to help victims make informed decisions, avoid legal jargon; provide concrete information about the next steps in the case and offer advice on accessing victim supports. As a result of this exercise, communication protocols were altered so that face-to-face communication became the primary mode of communication, with letters used only as a last resort when all other attempts at communication failed. A dedicated helpline was also set up by the police service to provide information to victims as well as links to support services and access to the investigator and/or advocate assigned to the case.

4.2.2 Coordinated, holistic and multi-disciplinary responses

Some countries have developed coordinated, multi-disciplinary responses to address the problem of attrition in cases involving sexual violence. One of the best known and most widely used models is the Sexual Assault Response Team (SART), which is designed to coordinate legal, medical and other services for victims of sexual violence. In doing so, SARTs aim to enhance victims' help-seeking experiences, case outcomes, public awareness and the system's response to sexual violence (Greeson et al., nd). Campbell and Greeson (2013) explored the work of SARTs in the US, and identified significant structural diversity across the 172 SARTs included in the study (see also (Greeson et al., 2016)). SARTs at one end of the spectrum were highly structured, following recommended practices such as multi-disciplinary training, and evaluating their work. At the other end, SARTs adopted loose structures and did not implement recommended guidelines or conduct evaluations. Respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of their SART on a range of indicators including the impact on victims' criminal justice experiences and case outcomes. Overall ratings were moderately positive, and SARTs that followed a structured model achieved the highest rating on all indicators (see also Greeson et al., n.d.). Campbell and Greeson (2013) examined these 'model' SARTs more closely and found that stakeholder relationships with the teams were characterised by strong mutual trust and respect, reciprocal

collaboration and active membership. However, Greeson et al (n.d.) found that collaborative activities were relatively rare in practice; for instance, just 40.6% of SARTs reported that they regularly engaged in multi-disciplinary case reviews and only 18.8% said that they regularly participated in multi-disciplinary training. The authors recommended that training and manuals be introduced to ensure that all SARTs follow best practice in this area.

Cole (2018, Cole, 2011) also studied the operation of SARTs in the US with a particular focus on SART members' experiences of inter-agency collaboration. Overall, the 78 SART members who took part in the study painted a positive picture of collaboration characterised by shared trust, respectful interactions and a commitment to inter-agency working. Notwithstanding the challenges posed by the existence of diverse goals, practices and philosophies within the team, the presence of different professionals was regarded as a strength of the SART model. Nevertheless, almost three-quarters spoke about professional conflicts arising in SARTs and some respondent groups gave lower ratings to the quality of inter-agency collaboration. The groups who gave lowest ratings included advocates, people who believed SART team members had a strong commitment to their profession/organisation, people who regarded SART structures as hierarchical and people who believed that leadership was not shared.

Another key issue concerned the sharing of information between agencies, which was complicated by the different victim confidentiality protocols operated by each agency. For instance, victims must sign waivers before advocates are permitted to discuss cases with the SART, but victims' communications with police and prosecutors are not privileged (i.e. these are not confidential but can be shared with other SART agencies). In cases where victims did not sign a waiver, team members sometimes felt frustrated by the limits imposed on information sharing by advocates, while advocates felt that their statutory obligations to victims were poorly understood by other team members. At the same time, the majority of respondents (58.2%) did not view confidentiality protocols as an impediment to collaboration, though some respondents' comments indicated a level of confusion over what information could and could not be shared by other team members. Cole (2011, 2018) argued that professional conflicts can be constructive if managed correctively and recommended that SART members be trained in conflict resolution skills to maximise the potential of collaboration. They also suggested that team members focus on developing a shared understanding of victim confidentiality requirements.

Such approaches are not always easy to implement in practice. A study by Brooker and Durmaz (2015) explored whether Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) in the UK followed policy guidelines by providing therapeutic risk assessments and access to supports to victims. SARCs are one-stop-shops that aim to provide victims with access to a range of medical, forensic and other services, whether or not they reported the crime to police. The survey showed that just 46% of SARCs conducted therapeutic risk assessments for every victim on their caseloads (a further 17% provided assessments to some victims). The majority of SARCs also said they were unable to directly refer victims to support services, in some cases because there were no referral pathways or placement agreements in place. Other barriers included the fact that some services did not operate outside business hours and others were reluctant to work with the client group.

Coordinated, multi-disciplinary responses have also been introduced to other parts of the criminal justice system. The Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) programme aims to reduce attrition in sexual assault cases through the provision of high-quality medical, psychological and forensic services to victims. In addition to providing these services, the specially trained nurses also consult with prosecutors or police and can testify as expert witnesses in court. Campbell et al. (2012c) evaluated the impact of this programme by comparing case progression rates before and after the introduction of SANE in a midwestern US state. They found a slight increase in the percentage of cases referred by police for prosecution (cases not prosecuted fell from 49% pre-SANE to 43% post-SANE) and a slight increase in the percentage of cases resulting in a conviction or guilty plea (from 24% pre-SANE to 29% post-SANE). There were also small decreases in the number of cases warranted by prosecutor, but later dropped or acquitted at trial (17% pre-SANE to 15% post-SANE). Overall the findings suggested that the programme had a limited impact on case outcomes, though there may be other benefits not measured by the researchers (e.g. victims may have benefited from the provision of high-quality services). In a different study exploring the use of SANE by police during investigations, Campbell et al. (2012a) found that SANE involvement had an indirect effect on the likelihood that cases would be forwarded for prosecution. Their analysis suggested the existence of a forensic examination encouraged police to gather additional evidence, thereby increasing the likelihood of case referral.

Due to the hard-to-reach nature of this population, SANEs often report difficulties in communicating with victims after examinations. Hicks et al. (2017) evaluated a novel text messaging service in the US, iCare, which was designed to improve post-examination communication with victims. Victims who sign up to the service receive five standardised

messages asking questions about medical issues, feelings of safety, emotional wellbeing, access to STI screening and criminal justice contact. Illustrating the hard-to-reach nature of this population, just 28% of victims at the research site proved contactable prior to the introduction of the service. The text messaging service increased the level of communication between victims and nurses, with 64% of eligible victims signing up to the iCare service. Of these, 65% responded to at least one text. However, few victims accepted the additional help offered by nurses and the proportion who responded to text messages fell significantly over time. The authors suggested that victims might respond better to a two-way interactive text messaging service (as opposed to iCare's automated message system) that allowed assistance to be tailored to victim needs. The study also revealed that reliance on technological solutions could further marginalise already disadvantaged groups. A third of registered victims were unable to receive messages because their phone technology was too old to support the text format, while 14 could not enrol in the service because they did not own a phone.

4.2.3 The role of advocacy

Research suggests that advocates can play an important role in protecting the rights of victims and ensuring their needs are met. The support of a victim advocate could be particularly helpful for victims of sexual violence who may be severely traumatised by the crime and whose experiences of the criminal justice system can be acutely challenging. Long (2018) interviewed 23 victim advocates in the US about their experiences with victims of sexual violence and police in emergency rooms. Here, victim advocates support and empower victims, and help them to navigate criminal justice and medical systems. Overall, advocates experiences with police officers were mixed. Some said that officers appreciated the work of advocates and were willing to collaborate with them to address victim needs. When officers were friendly and willing to enter conversations, advocates often used this as an opportunity to educate them about the nature of sexual violence and the victim advocate role. Negative experiences were also common, with advocates regularly witnessing a lack of compassion towards victims, apparent disinterest in the victims' case and a lack of knowledge about sexual violence. Advocates recognised that some of these tensions arose because the goals of advocates and victims differed from the goals of police officers. While the former prioritised victims' needs, the latter were focused on gathering evidence as quickly as possible. Concerningly, officers occasionally engaged in inappropriate behaviour towards advocates (e.g. a number were asked on dates by officers, which is particularly inappropriate in this context). Advocates also strive to dismantle patriarchal structures and

said that they worked hard to find a balance between building rapport with officers in order to help victims and challenging misconceptions and hurtful behaviour.

Murphy et al. (2011) interviewed 14 victim advocates to gauge their perceptions of victims' interactions with the criminal justice system, again in the US. Advocates' relationships with criminal justice actors were mixed and often experienced as challenging, though most acknowledged that relationships had improved over time. They noted that victims' experiences of the criminal justice system were often difficult. Examples included victims becoming overwhelmed by the level of information provided at the start of the process or frustrated by the length of the process. They described the response of criminal justice actors, particularly first responders, as a critical factor in victims' willingness to proceed with a case. The victim advocate may be in a position to mitigate some of these difficulties. Patterson and Tringali (2015) explored the work of victim advocates in the US through the eyes of advocates themselves as well as SANE nursing staff. Both sets of respondents stated that the primary role of victim advocates was to assist and empower victims in the criminal justice process by providing emotional support and helping to address practical needs. Interviewees also believed that advocates facilitated criminal justice participation in several ways. For instance, advocates helped victims to recognise that they were not to blame for their victimisation, thereby shifting the blame to the offender. In addition, advocates helped victims to obtain protection orders, allaying victims' safety concerns. By positioning themselves as allies, advocates also served to mitigate the harm of negative criminal justice interactions. Lastly, advocates often accompanied victims to meetings with criminal justice professionals, which helped to protect them from negative treatment.

Supporting these findings, Hester and Lilley (2018) studied victims' and professionals' experiences with Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) in England and Wales. ISVAs are state-funded and are usually based in rape crisis centres or SARCs. They provide a flexible, 24-hour a day support service to victims of sexual violence in areas such as counselling, emotional support and referrals to other agencies. Victims found that ISVAs not only helped them to recover from the trauma of the crime but also facilitated participation in the criminal justice system. ISVAs helped to allay victims' concerns about the criminal justice process, supported them in making a decision about whether to report the crime and kept channels of communication open between victims and police. They also provided a safe space to help victims cope with the vagaries of the criminal justice process and 'held' them in the lead-up to the trial.

Turning next to the perspectives of police officers, research shows mixed views regarding the perceived advantages and disadvantages of the victim advocate role. Maier (2014) explored the perspectives of 40 US-based police officers on dealing with victims of sexual violence in the criminal justice process. For the most part, police officers believed that the criminal justice process revictimised and harmed victims. With regards to their own role, officers recognised that investigative interviews were burdensome for victims due to police questioning tactics (e.g. questions that challenged victims' accounts could be experienced as disbelieving or judgemental), the need to provide multiple and detailed descriptions of the crime and a shortage of female detectives. They tried to mitigate these harms by ensuring that victims were aware of their options, connecting them to advocates and other support services, providing explanations of investigative and criminal justice procedures, conducting interviews in a comfortable setting and being sensitive, approachable and caring. The work of advocates was praised though officers felt that advocates sometimes overstepped their boundaries (e.g. by offering legal or medical advice to victims), undermined the investigation (e.g. by telling victims that they did not have to cooperate with police) or overloaded victims with too much information early on in the criminal justice process.

4.2.4 Special measures in the courtroom

As noted above, victims of sexual violence often find contact with the criminal justice system to be a challenging experience. Antonsdottir (2018) examined the criminal justice experiences of victims of sexual violence in Iceland through the lens of feminist and social justice theories. She concluded that victims' peripheral role in the criminal justice process violates a core principle of social justice, namely "parity of participation". Barriers to equal participation include misframing (when a person with a legitimate interest in a case is denied the chance to participate in the criminal justice process), misrecognition (when victims are denied equal status due to institutionalised value hierarchies, in this case a gendered legal culture) and maldistribution (when unequal economic distribution prevents victims from interacting with other stakeholders as peers). In Iceland, victims are assigned the status of witnesses and have limited procedural rights, which Antonsdottir (2018) characterises as an instance of misframing. The victims who participated in her study experienced their peripheral status as alienating and unjust. In particular, they were concerned about the lack of updates from police, which meant that they often learned about case developments from other witnesses or the media. In addition to exacting an emotional toll, this left them unable to make safety arrangements in the event that the offender approached them. Additionally,

victims reported feelings of anger, humiliation and injustice when prosecutors decided not to pursue the case. Victims interpreted the decision not to proceed as a public statement of the offenders' innocence. Even when they disagreed with prosecutors' reasons for dropping the case, victims rarely exercised the right to appeal, believing that prosecutors were biased towards the offender. Their sense of exclusion was compounded at the trial stage when, as witnesses, they were not permitted to hear offender testimony (this is also true of the Irish context). This was perceived as unfair, particularly since offenders could listen to victims' testimony. However, the issue of maldistribution was somewhat mitigated by the provision of state-funded independent legal counsel to victims of serious crime; whose support was greatly appreciated by victims.

Special measures have been introduced in many jurisdictions to protect vulnerable and intimidated witnesses, including victims of sexual violence, from suffering further trauma during the court process. Examples include allowing witnesses to give evidence via video link or from behind a screen. While most scholars agree that these measures are beneficial to victims, Smith (2018) found that they do not offer victims full protection from intimidation or distress. Smith's (2018) observation of rape trials in England and Wales showed that the use of video evidence added on average 75 minutes to each trial, mainly due to technical issues with the equipment. Indeed, the video-link equipment was widely regarded by courtroom actors as cheap and unreliable. The rooms allocated to victims for the purpose of giving video evidence were also small and cramped (their claustrophobic atmosphere even led one witness to opt for the witness stand instead). Moreover, the video link was only available during the evidence-giving process, meaning that victims could not watch the rest of the trial unless they sat in the public gallery where they risked intimidation by defendants and their supporters. The alternative – giving evidence from behind a screen – also proved unsatisfactory as victims were required to walk past the public gallery to reach the stand. The screen did not shield victims from the public gallery so they could see, and be seen by, the defendant's supporters. Victims and their supporters in the public gallery were observed being intimidated by defendants' supporters on a number of occasions. Smith (2018) offered some recommendations to improve victims' experiences, including additional funding to purchase high-quality technological equipment and improve facilities for victims giving video evidence; creating witness corridors or alternatively clearing the public gallery whenever witnesses enter or exit the stand; and permitting victims to watch the trial via video link after they have given evidence (an alternative is to film the trial and offer private viewings to victims).

The last study to be discussed here explored policy and practice recommendations put forward by 224 female victims of sexual violence in the US. Gagnon et al. (2018) organised their recommendations into six themes: (a) greater availability of female, or same-sex, professionals (cited by 17% of participants) to help victims stay calm and thereby enhance their willingness to discuss the crime and proceed with the case; and (b) better communication with victims and between professionals (cited by 40% of participants). Victims argued that greater information sharing and coordination between professionals would lessen victim frustration by reducing the number of times they were required to retell their stories; (c) assistance with accessing resources such as compensation or safe housing (cited by 40% of participants). Victims wanted a centralised list of service providers, assistance with navigating available services and additional counselling services to reduce waiting times; (d) a professional culture characterised by non-judgemental attitudes towards victims, explicit statements that their stories were believed, and an end to victim-blaming (cited by 54% of participants). They appreciated professionals who were non-judgemental and did not discriminate on the basis of victims' lifestyles or racial identities; (e) greater knowledge and understanding of trauma-related responses among professionals (cited by 63% of participants); for instance, accepting that memory gaps may occur and interacting with victims in a caring, compassion and sensitive manner and; (f) better training for those who work with victims to enhance knowledge, understanding and sensitivity to victims' needs (cited by 17% of participants).

4.3 Victims at the intersection

Thus far, victims have been discussed as a relatively homogenous group with similar needs and experiences of the criminal justice process. However, it is increasingly recognised that individual victim groups can have very different experiences of the criminal justice system. Intersectionality theorists propose that people's lived experiences – and the social response to them – are shaped by multiple, intersecting and socially constructed identities based inter alia on race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, nationality, and socioeconomic class (Potter, 2015). Proponents of this perspective, which emerged from critical race theory, argue that certain social groups are afforded less social privilege within society due to their subordinated social statuses. As a result, their lived experiences (including interactions with the criminal justice system) may differ from the experiences of other more privileged groups. To illustrate the relevance of this argument to victims' interactions with the criminal justice system, Parry and O'Neal (2015) showed that same-sex intimate partner violence victims not only have to contend with the challenges faced by all victims of intimate partner violence but also encounter additional barriers to help-seeking; for instance, victims may be reluctant to report to police out of fear that they will receive a homophobic response. Some also experience discriminatory treatment by criminal justice agents, which can have a detrimental effect on their satisfaction, wellbeing and access to justice. Because of this, intersectionality theorists argue that dominant modes of thought (which have traditionally emerged from a white, male frame of reference) and one-size-fits-all policies cannot accommodate the experiences, or needs, of marginalised victims groups. Accordingly, they call for closer attention to be paid to the lived experiences of marginalised groups within criminological thinking and policymaking (Potter, 2015).



Relatedly, there is increasing concern with the needs of 'vulnerable' victims. Vulnerability is usually defined according to particular categories of people, e.g. children, the elderly, people with an intellectual disability, and so on. However, some scholars (e.g. (Luna, 2009)) believe that the concept of vulnerability over-simplifies people's lived experiences by assuming that all members of a group are inherently vulnerable, which may not be the case. Additionally, framing vulnerability as an inherent property of a group neglects other situational factors that

might increase vulnerability, such as harmful criminal justice practices. Illustrating this point, Edwards et al. (2012) highlighted the challenges faced by victims with disabilities in the Irish criminal justice system in Ireland. Barriers included a lack of clarity about which agencies are responsible for dealing with victims that have special requirements, limited practical supports (e.g. accessible courthouses), and negative preconceptions about the nature of disability among criminal justice professionals.

Overall though, the literature reveals the importance of accommodating the needs of diverse victim groups within the criminal justice process. To achieve this, jurisdictions have implemented a raft of measures including, in the Irish context, the use of intermediaries, live television links and the removal of wigs and gowns in the court room. In the Victims Charter, criminal justice agencies also promise to treat every victim with dignity and respect (DJLR, 2010). It is important to state that research on the criminal justice experiences of specific victim groups is limited and consequently, the experiences of some victim groups are largely absent from the literature (most notably, people with disabilities, Travellers and the LGBTQI+ communities). Nevertheless, the current review identified 23 studies that explored best practices with regards to: (a) migrants and ethnic minorities; (b) people with mental health issues or disabilities; (c) victims of hate crime; and (d) children and young people.

4.3.1 Migrants and ethnic minorities

Four studies were identified that explored the criminal justice experiences of migrants and ethnic minority groups, including best practices. The first three studies highlight the value of culturally sensitive approaches and outreach mechanisms, while the fourth suggests that holistic responses are required to ensure that migrant victims (legal or otherwise) are protected from adverse legal consequences when they seek help.

Bailey et al. (2015) evaluated Operation RESET, a community-based initiative designed to increase child sexual abuse reporting rates among indigenous communities in Australia. The initiative aims to enhance collaboration and trust through consultation, proactive outreach, capacity building and holistic service delivery. The study found that reporting and arrest rates were significantly higher in Operation RESET communities, compared to non-intervention communities. Clairmont (2010) explored how structural factors – specifically, a legacy of colonialism, racism and exclusion – shaped indigenous victims' engagement with the parole process. Indigenous groups in Canada experience a higher risk of victimisation than the general population but have lower registration and attendance rates at parole

hearings. The study found that some of the issues identified by indigenous victims mirrored those identified by other victim groups; for instance, the desire to feel safe, to be kept informed and to have greater attention paid to their needs. However, their unique social position also generated additional issues that may explain why participation rates are so low. In particular, the legacy of colonialism and racism, compounded by language and cultural barriers, meant that many felt alienated from the criminal justice system. Clairmont (2010) recommended that a culturally sensitive victim strategy be put in place, along with new outreach mechanisms to increase participation rates.

Using a mixed methods approach, Barrett et al. (2014) aimed to discover why Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups in England and Wales reported lower levels of satisfaction with police than other groups. The 45 BME participants who took part in the study identified positive features of policing, citing the role of community police officers, the value of ongoing dialogue and the assistance given by police during the setting up of Neighbourhood Watch Schemes. However, participants also experienced barriers to engagement with police, most notably language barriers. Additionally, young people expressed concern about the practice of racial profiling, which adversely affected their attitudes towards police. Young people felt that they were negatively stereotyped due to their appearance, which left them with a sense of alienation. This is worrying as concerns about institutionalised racism could reduce BME victims' willingness to report a victimisation experience. Barrett et al. (2014) recommended that communication and information provision could be improved by multi-lingual helplines and/or leaflets and the appointment of BME officers who could act as a bridge between communities and the police.

Migrants who become victims of crime face a unique set of barriers within the criminal justice process, which are compounded by their immigration status. Ferreira (2019) studied the experience of intimate partner violence among migrant women in Portugal and found that their immigration status intersected with other circumstances to increase vulnerability. Victims who reported the crime increased the precarity of their immigration status because victims of intimate partner violence in Portugal are required to leave their homes after reporting to police. For migrant women, this often meant leaving employment, which jeopardised their immigration status (the visa system requires applicants to demonstrate that they have the financial means to support themselves). It is important to note though that victims did not perceive any systemic discrimination against them. Interestingly, victims' perceptions of the Portuguese criminal justice system were shaped by criminal justice experiences in their home country. For instance, victims from countries that adopted a

punitive response to intimate partner violence tended to regard the Portuguese response as overly lenient. Despite some differences, the experiences of migrant women dovetailed with the experiences of other victim groups in some respects. Like other victims, the migrant women initially felt supported by police, but satisfaction declined over time due to lack of information or updates. They also tended to be isolated from support services and social networks. Recommendations included introducing culturally sensitive policies and practices; improving information provision; developing professional networks; and changing immigration policy to facilitate victim protection.

4.3.2 People with mental health issues or disabilities

Four studies were identified that explored best practices with regards to victims with mental health issues or disabilities. Turning first to the former groups, Koskela et al. (2016) found that victims with mental health issues experienced mixed responses from police in the UK, but negative experiences (90%) were more common than positive experiences (75%). Victims' positive encounters mirrored those of other victim groups; for instance, they valued being treated with empathy and understanding, feeling heard and being kept informed. They also appreciated it when the police treated their report as a serious matter and acted upon it. However, negative police encounters were perceived to be shaped by prejudices towards people with mental health issues. Some sensed that police attitudes changed once their mental health issue was disclosed, and felt that they were blamed for the offence, patronised and disbelieved. Such experiences intensified the trauma of the offence and many explained that they would be less likely to seek help from police or other service providers as a result.

Victims with physical or intellectual disabilities also face particular challenges in the criminal justice system, leading scholars to recommend the implementation of specialist supports to aid comprehension and participation, situated within a rights-based framework. Edwards (2013) conducted one of the few Irish studies on this topic. Despite using a relatively small sample (n = 13 stakeholders), the study documented the diverse needs and experiences of victims with disabilities. Access to justice for victims with physical disabilities was impeded by 'disabling' physical spaces. Indeed, the study showed that public buildings like Garda stations and courthouses were not always accessible to people with mobility issues. Comprehension difficulties emerged as the primary barrier for victims with intellectual disabilities and made it difficult for them to understand the nature of proceedings. Moreover, Edwards (2013) pointed out that legal identities as defined in disability legislation are based on concepts of vulnerability or incapacitation. This can exacerbate victims' marginality; for

instance, by positioning them as incompetent to testify at trial. (This paper was published before the enactment of the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015). Overall, the author argued for an extension of the disability rights agenda to the criminal justice space.

Spaan and Kaal (2019) explored the criminal justice experiences of people with mild intellectual disabilities in the Netherlands from the perspective of 10 victims and 35 professionals who worked with these groups. The study identified many obstacles within the criminal justice process that prevented victims from fully exercising their rights and obtaining justice. Victims are required to make many decisions during the criminal justice process, but comprehension difficulties meant that victims with intellectual disabilities did not always understand the meaning or consequences of these decisions. By way of illustration, respondents explained that victims are required to notify agencies in writing when they want to avail of particular rights and that these rights are automatically rescinded if notifications are not received within a particular timeframe. The emphasis on written communication is not appropriate for victims with comprehension or reading difficulties. In addition, victims were said to experience difficulties in fulfilling the requirements of the criminal justice process; for instance, they could not always communicate their stories quickly and effectively which could reduce police willingness to proceed with a case. Lastly, it was noted that prejudice and a lack of understanding among professionals created further challenges for victims. Respondents were concerned that they lacked the requisite skills and understanding to interact effectively with such victims. Though supports are available to victims, these are only mandatorily provided to victims of certain offences and are not always sufficient to address their needs. Spaan and Kaal (2019) recommended introducing tailored communication mechanisms for victims with intellectual disabilities as well as training to enhance professionals' knowledge, understanding and practice when working with this victim group.

Lastly, Hughes et al. (2011) conducted focus groups with 25 US-based police officers to gauge their experiences of working with victims with disabilities. Police officers believed such victims were often reluctant to report crimes due to previous negative experiences with police. They acknowledged that these concerns were well-founded as officers were not always sensitive to victim needs (e.g. some misinterpreted symptoms of disability as an unwillingness to cooperate). Officers identified a range of barriers to the investigation and prosecution of crimes against victims with disabilities. For instance, they described the difficulty of establishing whether a victim suffered from a disability; symptoms were not always obvious, and victims were reluctant to disclose out of fear that they would be treated

differently. Intellectual and communication difficulties also meant that a significant amount of time and expertise was required to collect evidence. Moreover, officers were reluctant to record information about disabilities on official reports, both to preserve victim confidentiality and increase the likelihood that prosecutors would pursue the case. However, the lack of recorded information made it harder for other officers to identify and accommodate the victim's particular needs and vulnerabilities. Officers framed these barriers as systemic (e.g. they could not spend sufficient time with victims because of the pressure to deal with cases efficiently) and were careful not to blame victims for their predicament to avoid revictimisation. To improve the experiences of victims with disabilities, officers recommended the recruitment of specially trained officers or civilians who would be equipped to deal with the complex needs of this victim groups; improved relationships between police and community services to ensure that victims received adequate support; and opportunities to build relationships with people with disabilities in non-crisis situations to reduce their fear of reporting crimes to police.

4.3.3 Hate crime

Just one study was identified that focused on the experiences of victims of hate crime. Noting that dissatisfaction levels are particularly high among victims of hate crime, Chakraborti (2018) drew on a range of studies to explore these victims' experiences with the criminal justice system in England and Wales. For the most part, victims' concerns centred on not feeling heard or being taken seriously by police. Delays in case processing, poor communication and complicated procedures also combined to undermine the perceived effectiveness and legitimacy of the system. In fact, one survey found that 58% of victims believed that the police had not recorded the crime against them and just 42% believed that an investigation had been carried out (Chakraborti et al., 2014). To address these issues, the authors recommended that toolkits and evidence-based training programmes be developed to enhance professional responses to hate crime; a national online hub or app be created to facilitate victim reporting and accurate recording of such crimes (for an example, see the UK's online hate crime hub called True Vision at <http://www.report-it.org.uk/home>); and public education be implemented to increase knowledge about these crimes, their impact on victims as well as possible remedies.

4.3.4 Children and young people

Fourteen studies were identified that explored the criminal justice experiences of children and young people. The literature highlighted three themes regarding best practices, namely

the importance of providing: (a) high-quality information and support; (b) coordinated, holistic and multi-disciplinary responses; (c) welfare-focused child protection measures to identify and support children and young people whose victim status is not immediately apparent; and (d) special measures to improve victim's experiences in court.

4.3.4.1 Effective communication, information sharing and support

The first two studies, which focus on child victims of sexual assault, show that the provision of high-quality information and support can help to increase victim satisfaction. Greeson et al. (2014) interviewed 20 adolescent victims of sexual assault about their interactions with police in the US and found evidence of both positive and negative experiences. In most cases, victims felt intimidated by the interview situation and found it easier to discuss the details of the crime when they believed that their emotional wellbeing was being protected by police officers. In particular, victims were appreciative when officers offered them reassurance; employed a personable and conversational interview style (e.g. made eye contact, used a soft tone of voice); conducted the interview at the victims' pace; and checked up on them afterwards. However, a significant number of victims described their interactions with the police as negative, citing officers' uncaring, insensitive and intimidating interview styles. Greeson et al. (2014) suggested that the presence of a victim advocate at this stage of the criminal justice process could help to protect victim welfare. They also recommended that officers be trained to support young victims during police interviews but acknowledged that organisational change may be necessary to ensure that this group of victims is adequately supported throughout the criminal justice process.

Skinner and Taylor (2009) provided further insights into the criminal justice experiences of adolescent victims of sexual violence, this time focusing on the UK context. The study documented high levels of satisfaction among victims and their parents during the initial police contact and interview. In particular, participants appreciated the high level of support and detailed information provided by police as well as the use of a specially equipped forensic examination suite. Young victims were also grateful when given a degree of choice in the criminal justice process, (e.g. they appreciated being permitted to choose whether parents watched the video statements during recordings). However, lack of autonomy was a more common experience, with victims explaining that they were rarely given a choice about whether to give video statements or undergo forensic examinations. Neither were they offered the option of a female doctor, with most examined by a male doctor. Satisfaction rates declined dramatically during the latter stages of police contact, primarily due to a lack of follow-up contact from police. Given the small sample (n=9), it is not clear whether these

findings can be generalised to the wider population of adolescent victims. However, the findings suggest that satisfaction levels could be enhanced by providing victims with sufficient information about the case and a modicum of autonomy in the criminal justice process. Skinner and Taylor (2009) recognised that such reforms require institutional support, appropriate resourcing as well as organisational change.

4.3.4.1.1 Coordinated, holistic and multi-disciplinary responses

The studies discussed in this section focus on the benefits and limitations of coordinated, holistic and multi-disciplinary approaches to child and adolescent victimisation. The most common approach discussed in these studies is the Children's Advocacy Centre (CAC) model, which has become part of the mainstream response to child sexual abuse and maltreatment across the USA. Though individual CACs may adopt different structures, most CACs are staffed by multi-disciplinary investigation teams and interviews are conducted by specially trained interviewers in child-friendly environments. CACs also offer onsite mental health services and referrals to other agencies. US-based research by Jones et al. (2010) highlighted the added value of CACs to the investigative process in child sexual abuse cases. Building on an earlier analysis which found that CAC involvement in the investigative process increased victim satisfaction, Jones et al. (2010) provided a detailed examination of the factors that enhanced or diminished satisfaction among 203 caregivers and 65 young victims. Satisfaction rates among victims' caregivers were high, enhanced by the provision of timely information and emotional support as well as the investigator's sensitivity, interview skills and perceived commitment to the case. Young victims also reported high levels of satisfaction and described feeling 'better' after speaking investigators. They appreciated the child-centred environment in which interviews were conducted, the skills of the interviewer and being provided with clear information. However, a quarter said that they felt worse after speaking to investigators and a third became distressed when asked to repeatedly describe what had happened to them. Jones et al. (2010) recommended that victims and their caregivers be given comprehensive information about the prosecution process, including information about prosecution procedures, explanations as to why cases are dropped and typical prosecution rates. They argued that this will help to manage victim expectations and reduce the disappointment caused by the decision not to proceed with a case.

A number of literature reviews have systematically considered the evidence as to whether CACs improve outcomes for child victims. Herbert and Bromfield (2015) highlighted some modest benefits but concluded that the lack of high-quality research designs preclude a strong endorsement of the model. Most of the studies in the review explored criminal justice

outcomes and there was some evidence that CACs improved case outcomes at earlier stages of the criminal justice process (e.g. arrest and investigation). Herbert and Bromfield (2015) noted that the failure to detect effects at the later stages of the criminal justice process does not necessarily mean that the model is ineffective. Rather, the lack of observed effects may be a methodological artefact (e.g. small samples make differences harder to detect). The authors also expressed concern that the impact of CACs on child or family outcomes (i.e. key CAC goals) is under-researched. A separate review by the same authors examined the impact of multi-disciplinary team-working (MDT) on outcomes for child victims (Herbert and Bromfield, 2019). MDTs were defined broadly to include CACs as well as other multi-disciplinary practice models. The study found similar results to the first review with regard to case outcomes, but also discovered that MDTs increased mental health screening and referrals and improved some procedures for victims (e.g. reduced the number of interviews that a child had to give). Elmquist et al. (2015), who also conducted a systematic review of the literature on CACs, came to a more positive conclusion about their overall utility. The studies included in this review showed that child victims and their families responded positively to the CAC model. However, the research also identified some room for improvement; for instance, better communication to streamline service delivery and strategies to address role conflict (e.g. some staff deal with therapeutic and legal issues simultaneously, which can cause tensions in their work practices).

Turning to a different kind of coordinated approach, Stylianou and Ebright (2018) evaluated the process of setting up a Child Trauma Response Team in New York, which aims to provide a coordinated, trauma-focused and multi-agency response to children and families affected by intimate partner violence. The team begin by reviewing police reports to identify cases of serious intimate partner violence in families with children and then initiate contact with these families to offer trauma-informed therapeutic interventions, victim-centred case management as well as home-based outreach visits attended by police and trauma specialists. The team also conduct safety and risk assessments and provide training to enhance detectives' knowledge about intimate partner violence. During the research interviews, the 12 stakeholders involved in setting up the team elucidated the factors that, in their experience, facilitated successful interagency collaboration. They emphasised the need to co-locate partners in a single space to facilitate a speedy response to victims as well as relationship-building. They also described how structured case review meetings enabled them to jointly discuss cases and strengthen working relationships. Steering committees were regarded as a useful resource in terms of leadership and problem solving but stakeholders found that trust-building at this level was a slow and difficult process.

Stakeholders also stressed that effective interagency working requires partners to remain flexible and open to adapting their work practices to new shared goals and priorities. On this basis, the authors recommended that interagency teams set aside time for relationship-building at the start of the set-up process, ensure that the role of each partner is clearly delineated, create opportunities for dialogue between partners, and develop detailed protocols to ensure that meetings and other activities are clearly structured.

Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs) have already been discussed in the Sexual Violence section of this report, but Campbell et al. (2012b) explored their work in relation to adolescent victims of sexual assault in the US. The authors compared case outcomes at two sites to explore whether SARTs improved the response to adolescent victims of sexual assault. The study found that SARTs, which aim to enhance collaboration between police, prosecutors, victim advocates, medical professionals and counsellors operated differently at each site. While SART members at Site A participated in formal and informal meetings, SART networks at Site B were relatively informal. In addition, most SART members at Site A were also required to participate in meetings organised by the local Child Advocacy Centre (CAC), which focused on responses to child victims. Surprisingly, the authors found that cases involving adolescent victims at Site A were less likely to proceed to a successful conclusion following the introduction of CAC structures in the area. They concluded that the introduction of a CAC diminished SART's impact on responses to adolescent victims because stakeholders' interests and resources were now split between SART and CAC. This example highlights the need to avoid imposing too many coordinating structures on local community work and the importance of balancing the needs of different victim groups.

4.3.4.2 Welfare-focused child protection measures

One issue that has not yet been discussed in this report concerns victims who are not immediately identified as such. Indeed, some types of victims may initially be labelled as offenders, impeding their access to legal and social supports. Gearon (2019) studied a sub-group of migrant victims, namely children who were trafficked to the UK without their consent (n=20). For the most part, children's experiences with frontline professionals were framed in negative terms, with the majority describing how professionals disbelieved them when they explained that they had not consented to come to the country. They also felt that they were regarded by professionals as criminals rather than victims, and some even acquired criminal charges (e.g. carrying false documents). Moreover, the label of 'criminal' meant that children's reports of victimisation were neglected, leaving them at ongoing risk of harm.

Gearon (2019) concluded that child trafficking polices should be refocused towards child protection and welfare and away from criminal justice responses.

Supporting these findings, Fussey and Rawlinson (2017) highlighted the inadequacies of the official responses to child victims of human trafficking in the UK, including under-resourced services, a lack of joined up thinking, and poor outcomes. Their study focused on Romani children who were apprehended by UK authorities during child trafficking operations and repatriated to their home country of Romania. Using a mix of ethnographic observation, interviews and documentary analysis, the study found that official responses usually focused on border security rather than child protection. The children were situated at the boundary between victim and offender and often first came to the attention of authorities after being arrested for criminal activity. Those who were not immediately recognised as victims received no protections or supports and many were released into the care of an adult who claimed to be a family member. These claims could not always be verified due to language barriers and the difficulty of accessing relevant information across borders. As a result, vulnerable children were regularly returned to risky environments. To further complicate matters, victims did not always identify as such, often describing themselves as migrants who came to the UK to improve their economic prospects. These claims were generally interpreted by authorities as evidence of training and coercion by traffickers. However, Fussey and Rawlinson (2017) construed that the failure to respect the child's interpretation of their circumstances was disempowering and oppressive. They suggested further that official responses were coloured by the marginalised nature of Romani people, which caused them to be seen as a security problem rather than as EU citizens availing of free movement to improve their circumstances.

Reid (2010) interviewed criminal justice professionals and found that similar issues are experienced by child victims of domestic minor sex trafficking in the US. This term describes the commercial sexual exploitation of children who are US citizens or lawful residents. The 34 professionals who took part in this study were candid in admitting how difficult it was to identify such victims due to a lack of training. This deficiency was compounded by victims' reluctance to disclose the abuse, a lack of good quality data tracking and the hidden nature of the crime (which mostly takes place in private dwellings). Interagency cooperation was impeded by the different nomenclature used by the agencies that worked with such victims and, worryingly, some of these labels framed the children as 'offenders' rather than 'victims.' For instance, some respondents spoke about child victims who were charged with prostitution and even encouraged to plead guilty in order to accelerate their journey through

the criminal justice system. This practice risked embedding victims more deeply into the criminal justice system, with all the negative consequences that entails. Respondents also believed that the criminalisation of victims undermined victims' trust in the criminal justice system and isolated them from potential sources of support. In addition, the study highlighted a dearth of specialist services for this group of victims. To address these issues, the authors recommended the introduction of enhanced training programmes to ensure that professionals recognise and understand the nature of domestic minor sex trafficking; victim-centred approaches (e.g. the use of special measures such as video links) to protect victims during the criminal justice process; holistic and specialised services to address their complex needs and; better interagency collaboration to ensure victims receive appropriate legal and social support.

4.3.4.3 Special measures in the courtroom

The final two studies explored the experiences of young witnesses in the courtroom, highlighting the need for special measures to protect them during the court process. Gekoski et al. (2016) conducted a rapid evidence assessment of UK literature regarding child victims' experiences with the child protection and criminal justice systems in cases of intra-familial child sexual abuse. The analysis showed that victims' experiences of the criminal justice system were largely negative. At the court stage, few children were offered pre-trial visits or access to other special measures designed to protect the welfare of vulnerable victims during the court process. However, those who were offered access to such measures found them helpful. The failure to provide adequate court supports is noteworthy, as many of the children reported that they were subjected to aggressive cross-examination, which re-traumatised them.

Henderson et al. (2019, Henderson and Lamb, 2019) studied the impact of the special measures introduced under Section 28 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act (1999), which are designed to improve the way that young witnesses are questioned in the English High Court. As part of a pilot study, judges held Ground Rules hearings to impose constraints on the questions that could be posed to young witnesses. The aim was to ensure that young witnesses understood the questions asked and were able to communicate effectively with the court. The analysis showed that children who benefitted from Section 28 measures were asked fewer suggestive or directive questions and more option-posing questions than children who did not have access to these measures. Additionally, the questions posed to children by defence lawyers were simpler and clearer in the Section 28 condition. However, the authors found that 'risky' questions were still posed, albeit in a

closed-ended option-posing format rather than a suggestive format, suggesting that further measures are required to protect young witnesses on the stand.

4.3.5 Older people



The study was found that explored the experiences of older victims in the criminal justice system. Brown and Gordon (2019) used a mix of interviews and focus groups with victims and criminal justice professionals to investigate the experiences of older victims in Northern Ireland. While the experiences of older victims had much in common with other victim groups (e.g. they were frustrated at the lack of information or follow-up contact from police), the study identified some issues of particular concern to this group. For instance, official statistics showed that cases involving older victims were less likely to reach a successful conclusion than cases involving other age groups. The authors suggested that this could be due to the increased vulnerability of older people. Older people with health problems and limited support networks may decide not to participate in the criminal justice process to avoid additional stress. Likewise, the investigative process could be hindered by victims' health issues (e.g. it may be harder to gather evidence from victims with sensory or intellectual impairments). The authors suggested that additional support (whether from a family member or victim support agency) would help to reassure older victims and encourage them to engage in the criminal justice process. Another major issue concerned the identification of vulnerable older victims, an important issue because a designation of vulnerability provides access to enhanced support measures. However, criminal justice professionals explained that they often found it difficult to identify vulnerability in older victims. To compound matters, many victims were reluctant to ask for additional support or self-identify as vulnerable. To address this, the authors recommended training for professionals to improve the identification of vulnerability; clear definitions of vulnerability in the victim literature to help victims determine their eligibility for support; a presumption in favour of the provision of special measures to older victims; and an extension of existing special measures to older victims (e.g. the option of pre-recording testimony).

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to produce a state-of-the-art literature review which consolidated and critically evaluated the current body of evidence on what constitutes ‘best practice’ in victims’ interactions with the criminal justice system. The review focused first on best practices with victims in general, exploring victims’ experiences at each stage of the criminal justice process, namely the initial police contact, investigation, prosecution, trial, sentencing and parole. Next, best practices for victims with specialist needs and experiences were reviewed with a particular focus on victims of different crime types, namely victims of intimate partner violence and sexual violence, and specific victim groups, including migrant and ethnic minority groups, people with mental health issues or disabilities, people who experience hate crime, and children and young people. The conclusion draws the various strands together to provide an overview of best practices for supporting victims through the criminal justice system.

The 136 studies included in the review employed a variety of conceptual definitions, research methods, outcome measures and data sources, and also focused on a wide range of criminal justice sites, practice models, offence types, and countries (see Appendix). The USA was the most common research site (n=68), qualitative interview methods represented the most frequently used methodologies (n=30) and policing was most often the focus of the research (n=52). Despite significant diversity within the literature, six overarching themes were identified: (a) effective communication and information sharing; (b) coordinated, holistic and multi-disciplinary approaches; (c) supportive and victim-centred responses; (d) clearly defined victim participation methods; (e) tailored approaches for victims with specialist needs and experiences; and (f) equal access and enforcement of rights.

5.1 Effective communication and information sharing

Effective communication and information sharing emerged as a major, cross-cutting theme across every stage of the criminal justice process and every victim group. While most jurisdictions acknowledge the need for effective communication and information sharing, research suggests that this is not always achieved in practice (Wedlock and Tapley, 2016). For instance, victims of sexual violence often report a lack of communication, particularly after the initial police contact (Hanly et al., 2009). The current review showed that victims would like to be provided with high-quality information about criminal justice procedures as

well as information about their rights as victims and victim support services. Most importantly, victims appreciate regular updates about their cases, including whether their input was used in criminal proceedings (see e.g. Stretesky et al., 2010, Wood, 2015). The literature suggests that it is not only the nature of the communication that matters, but also how information is communicated to victims. In general, scholars recommend the use of multiple communication strategies; for instance, personal communication, websites, DVDs and leaflets, though personal contact is the preferred method. For instance, Wedlock and Tapley (2016) recommended that a single point of contact (for instance, a victim advocate or another criminal justice professional) be appointed to share accurate and up-to-date information with victims, proposing that the appointee must be readily available to victims and responsive to requests for information. However, personal contact between victims and criminal justice professionals is not always possible due to resource limitations. Accordingly, some jurisdictions are trialling innovative technological solutions to improve communication with victims; for instance, automated notification systems (see e.g. Irazola et al., 2015).

5.2 Coordinated, holistic and multi-disciplinary approaches

Coordinated, holistic and multi-disciplinary approaches emerged as a second key theme and appeared to be particularly important at the reporting, investigation and prosecution stages of the criminal justice process. Such approaches are widely used with hard-to-reach groups, such as victims of sexual and interpersonal violence, to address low reporting rates and high attrition rates. One of the best known examples is the Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) model, which is designed to coordinate legal, medical and other services for victims of sexual violence. In doing so, SARTs aim to enhance victims' help-seeking experiences, case outcomes and the criminal justice response to sexual violence (Greeson et al., nd). Wedlock and Tapley (2016) argued that coordinated approaches may also improve information sharing between agencies and reduce duplication of services. Again, this ideal has proven difficult to achieve in practice, with some studies documenting evidence of professional resistance to interagency working (see e.g. Cole, 2018, Davis and Biddle, 2018, Gaines and Wells, 2017). To facilitate interagency collaboration, evidence suggests that efforts must be made from the outset to ensure that stakeholders are committed to the collaboration and have the resources to take part; that time is set aside for dialogue and relationship-building; that the role of each partner is clearly delineated and; that detailed protocols are in place to make sure that activities are clearly structured (see e.g. Stylianou and Ebright, 2018).

5.3 Supportive and victim-centred responses

The literature suggests that supportive and victim-centred responses from the criminal justice system are important at all stages of the criminal justice process. Criminal justice agencies have traditionally prioritised improvements in case outcomes (e.g. increasing the number of arrests) over victim needs. However, research shows that the treatment received by victims during the criminal justice process is a much more important precursor of satisfaction (see e.g. Elliott et al., 2011). The current review shows that victims want to be treated with care, compassion and respect and to feel that they have been treated fairly by criminal justice professionals (see e.g. Calton and Cattaneo, 2014). Accordingly, scholars recommend that criminal justice professionals incorporate the principles of procedural justice into practice to complement – but not replace – outcome-oriented practices (see e.g. Koster, 2017). Internationally, various legal and policy measures have been put in place to improve the treatment of victims in the criminal justice system. However, research suggests that these measures are not always implemented effectively. For instance, Smith (2018) studied the impact of two special measures – the use of video link evidence and a screen around the witness stand – on the experience of victims at rape trials in England and Wales and found that the measures did not fully protect victims. Video links frequently broke down and the screens only partially shielded victims from view.

5.4 Clearly defined victim participation mechanisms

The third theme relates to best practice with regards to participation, or procedural, rights, which are regarded as more contentious than welfare, or service, rights (Hoyle, 2012). Victim participation mechanisms have been introduced in many countries to give victims a voice in criminal proceedings and enhance their contribution to decision-making. The most notable example is the victim impact statement which allows victims to make statements in court about the harm caused by the offence. Such mechanisms have proved controversial in practice, with some fearing that they may erode defendants' due process rights and undermine the integrity of the legal process (Padfield and Roberts, 2010). Genuine examples of victim participation are however rare, and victim impact statements generally serve an expressive (that is, designed to give victims an opportunity to communicate with the court) rather than an instrumental (that is, designed to impact on sentencing decisions) function (see e.g. Schuster and Proppen, 2010). Nevertheless, research suggests that victims experience disappointment if their expectations of victim participation mechanisms

are not met, highlighting the need to develop clear guidelines around intended purpose, scope and use of victim participation mechanisms (Young, 2016).

5.5 Tailored approaches for victims with specialist needs and experiences

Different victim groups may have very different experiences with the criminal justice system. For instance, the criminal justice experiences of ethnic minority groups may be tainted by a legacy of racism and colonialism (Clairmont, 2010), while victims of intimate partner violence may find it difficult to access support because they are socially isolated by their partners (Ragusa, 2013). The current review highlights the importance of implementing tailored approaches that address the specific needs of different victim groups to enhance their criminal justice experiences. While special measures to protect vulnerable victims in the criminal justice system are increasingly common, there were some particularly interesting examples of best practice in the literature. For instance, some countries have implemented culturally sensitive victim strategies and proactive outreach mechanisms to engage marginalised ethnic minority groups in the criminal justice system (see e.g. Clairmont, 2010). Coordinated community responses have also been established to improve criminal justice outcomes for victims of intimate partner violence through the introduction of specialist police and prosecution units and separate Domestic Violence Dockets at court (see e.g. Regoeczi and Hubbard, 2018). The literature shows that coordinated community responses have mixed results with regards to case outcomes but may enhance victim wellbeing and satisfaction.

5.6 Equal access and enforcement of rights

The final theme concerns efforts to ensure equal access to, and enforcement of, victims' rights. Several victim groups experience unequal access to the criminal justice system, most notably those who are situated at the boundary between 'victim' and 'offender'. For instance, this review identified studies of trafficked children who were initially labelled as 'offenders' (e.g. charged with prostitution or possessing false documents) and thereby denied access to support services (see e.g. Gearon, 2019). Similar difficulties are faced by other marginalised victim groups such as prisoners (Day et al., 2018) and migrants (Ferreira, 2019). The issues faced by these groups are not easily addressed but, at a minimum, additional training would help to ensure that professionals recognise these groups as victims. A related issue concerns the enforcement of rights. Despite a raft of measures

designed to enhance victims' experiences with the criminal justice system, this review shows that victims' rights are not always correctly implemented or enforced in practice. To address this issue, victim advocates have been appointed in some jurisdictions to help victims navigate the criminal justice system and to protect their rights. Evidence suggests that the presence of a victim advocate can help to improve victims' experiences with the criminal justice system. Advocates often assume responsibility for keeping victims informed and providing them with emotional support, freeing criminal justice professionals to focus on the legal aspects of the case. Advocates also act as independent allies for victims, helping them to communicate with criminal justice professionals, and ensuring their rights are respected and their needs are met.

In conclusion, this report has systematically reviewed the current state of knowledge regarding best practices in victims' interactions with the criminal justice system. In doing so, it has highlighted many examples of practices globally that have been shown to increase victim satisfaction, enhance victim wellbeing and encourage victims to participate in, or stay involved with, the criminal justice process. The findings should be of interest to a range of stakeholders including policymakers, practitioners and academics. For instance, the review provides an evidence base that could be used by criminal justice professionals to develop policies and practices that improve victims' experiences within the criminal justice system. Likewise, it is hoped that the findings will constitute a valuable resource for researchers and act as a springboard for future empirical research, particularly on topics and victim groups that are currently under-researched.

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Appendix

Author	Date of publication	CJS site	Location	Sample	Methodology	CASP*
Allen et al	2013	IPV/ Investigation and Prosecution	USA	21 judicial circuits	Case file analysis	9
Anderson	2015	IPV/ Court	USA	62 Criminal court hearings	Court observation	9
Antonsdottir	2018	Sexual violence/ Court	Iceland	35 victim–survivors of sexual violence	Qualitative interviews	8
Antrobus and Pilotto	2016	Investigation and Prosecution	Australia	108 police officers	Randomised field trial	8
Armour and Umbreit	2012	Investigation and Prosecution	USA	39 homicide survivors	Cross-sectional, multisite study - Interviews + psychometric tools + survey	7
Aviv and Weisburd	2016	Policing	Israel	469 victims of crime + non-victims	Survey	8
Bailey et al	2015	Ethnic minorities/ Policing	Australia	135 incidents of child abuse	Comparison prior, during and after intervention - case file analysis	10
Barkworth and Murphy	2016	Policing	Australia	171 crime victims	Survey	8
Barrett et al	2014	Ethnic minorities/ Policing	UK	45 BME participants	User satisfaction data + focus groups + qualitative interviews	6.5

Bechtel et al	2012	IPV/ Investigation and Prosecution	USA	353 state-level IPV cases	Case file analysis	8
Bell et al	2011	IPV/ Court	USA	290 IPV victims	Qualitative interviews + survey	8
Bennett Cattaneo and Goodman	2010	Investigation and Prosecution	USA	142 court-involved IPV victims	Prospective design - survey + psychometric tools	8
Birnbaum et al	2014	IPV/ Court	Canada	21 stakeholders	Case file analysis + observation	5.5
Birnbaum et al	2017	IPV/ Court	Canada	160 files (comparison group) + 53 IDVC cases (intervention group)	Quasi-experimental design	9
Booth	2012	VIS	Australia	18 Supreme court sentencing hearings + 14 victims	Observation + qualitative interviews	7
Booth	2013	VIS	Australia	18 Supreme court sentencing hearings + 14 victims	Observation + qualitative interviews	7
Booth et al	2018	VIS	Netherlands	36 hearings	Observation + qualitative interviews	7
Brame et al	2015	IPV/ Policing	USA	466 cases of misdemeanour criminal domestic violence	Experimental design	8
Brooker and Durmaz	2015	Sexual Violence/ General	UK	25 SARCS	Survey	6.5
Brown and Gordon	2019	Older people/ Investigation and Prosecution	Northern Ireland	31 victims + 8 PSNI + 8 Prosecutors + 2 victim coordinators	Official statistical analysis + interviews + focus groups	6
Button et al	2013	Policing	UK	31 victims + 3 families + 745 victims and families	Qualitative interviews	7

Calton and Cattaneo	2014	Investigation and Prosecution	USA	142 IPV victims	Survey	8
Campbell and Greeson	2013	Sexual Violence/ Policing	USA	172 SARTS	Survey + qualitative interviews	8
Campbell et al	2012b	Children and young people/ Policing	USA	392 cases	Quasi-experimental design	9
Campbell et al	2012	IPV/ SV/ Investigation and Prosecution	USA	352 sexual assault cases	Prospective design - case file analysis	8
Campbell et al	2012	Sexual violence/ Investigation and Prosecution	USA	137 SANE participants + 156 comparison group	Case file analysis	9
Caplan	2010	Parole	USA	820 parole-eligible inmates	Case file analysis	8
Carbone-Lopez et al	2016	Sexual Violence/ Policing	USA	102 women offenders who were victims of sexual assault	Survey	7
Cattaneo et al	2009	Investigation and Prosecution	USA	142 IPV victims	Survey	8
Çelik	2013	IPV/ Investigation and Prosecution	USA	NA	Literature review	7
Cerulli et al	2015	IPV/ Investigation and Prosecution	USA	414 IPV cases	Case file analysis	8
Chakraborti	2018	Ethnic minorities/ Policing	UK	1,106 victims + 50 victims + 1652 victims	Survey + qualitative interviews	7
Cissner et al	2015	IPV/ Court	USA	24 criminal domestic violence courts (9,292 cases)	Quasi-experimental design	8
Clairmont	2010	Ethnic minorities/ Policing	Canada	NA	Qualitative interviews + secondary data analysis	4

Cole	2011	Sexual Violence/ Policing	USA	78 professionals	Survey	9
Cole	2018	Sexual Violence/ Policing	USA	79 professionals	Survey	9
Cross et al	2016	Policing	Australia	80 victims of online fraud	Mixed methods	8
Davies and Biddle	2018	IPV/ Investigation and Prosecution	UK	66 offender files + 5 offender case studies + 26 partner agency members + 18 programme staff	Case file analysis + survey + qualitative interviews	8
Davis	2012	Court	USA	3 Victim Rights Clinics	Surveys	7
Davis et al	2009	Court	USA	8 Victim Rights Clinics	Case study approach - interviews + focus groups + case file data analysis	7
DePrince et al	2012a	IPV/ Investigation and Prosecution	USA	236 IPV victims	Randomised longitudinal design	8
DePrince et al	2012b	IPV/ Investigation and Prosecution	USA	236 IPV victims	Randomised longitudinal design	8
Dichter et al	2011	IPV/ Investigation and Prosecution	USA	15 IPV victims	Focus groups	8
Edwards	2013	Disability/ Court	Ireland	13 stakeholders	Qualitative interviews	5.5
Ekman and Seng	2009	Investigation and Prosecution	USA	53 departments + one onsite observation	Telephone interviews + observation + surveys	6
Ekstrom and Lindstrom	2016	IPV/ Investigation and Prosecution	Sweden	183 police investigation cases	Case file analysis	9.5
Elliott et al	2011	Policing	Australia	110 victims who reported to police	Qualitative interviews	8

Elmqvist et al	2015	Children and Young people/ Investigation and Prosecution	Global	39 articles	Literature review	9
Englebrecht	2011	VIS	USA	44 victims' families, criminal justice professionals and victim advocates	Qualitative interviews	9
Englebrecht	2012	VIS	USA	49 VIS delivered at 19 hearings + 60 trial transcripts + 44 professionals + 28 victims	Qualitative interviews	9
Englebrecht and Chavez	2014	VIS	USA	60 trial transcripts from homicide cases	Qualitative interviews	9
Erez et al	2013	IPV/ Policing	USA	210 victims, offenders, justice personnel and social service providers + 616 service providers	Interviews + web survey	8
Erez et al	2014	VIS	USA	36 legal and allied professionals + 7 victims-turned-activists	Qualitative interviews	7
Exum et al	2014	IPV/ Investigation and Prosecution	USA	891 IPV cases (n = 220 DV unit cases)	Case file analysis	8
Ferreira	2019	Ethnic minorities/ Policing	Portugal	7 IPV victims + 11 professionals	Qualitative interviews	8
Finn	2013	IPV/ Investigation and Prosecution	USA	170 victims + court tracking data	Prospective design - qualitative interviews	8
Friedman and Robinson	2014	Parole	USA	103 parole transcripts	Case file analysis	8

Fussey and Rawlinson	2017	Policing/ Children	UK, Romania, Bulgaria	Police, NGOs (no numbers given)	Document analysis + interviews + observation	6.5
Gagnon et al	2018	Sexual Violence/ General	USA	224 female victims	Qualitative interviews	9
Gaines and Wells	2017	Investigation and Prosecution	USA	44 investigators + 35 prosecutors	Action research - qualitative interviews + surveys	4.5
Gauthier	2010	Investigation and Prosecution	Canada	22 legal professionals	Qualitative interviews	8
Gearon	2019	Policing/ Children and young people	UK	20 young people	Qualitative interviews	9
Gekoski et al	2016	Children and young people/ General	UK	296 papers	Rapid evidence assessment	9
Globokar and Erez	2018	Investigation and prosecution	USA	42 victim workers	Qualitative interviews	6.5
Goodrum	2013	Investigation and Prosecution	USA	32 bereaved murder victims who had contact with prosecutor + 3 victim advocates + 12 legal professionals	Qualitative interviews	8
Greeson et al	2014	Children and young people/ Policing	USA	20 adolescent victims of sexual assault	Qualitative interviews	7.5
Greeson et al	ND	Sexual Violence/ Policing	USA	172 SARTs	Telephone interviews	8
Greeson et al	2016	Sexual Violence/ Policing	USA	172 SART leaders	Qualitative interviews	8
Hamby et al	2015	IPV/ Policing	USA	517 family violence incidents	Survey	8

Hanly et al	2009	Sexual Violence/ General	Ireland	100 victims	Qualitative interviews + surveys	8.5
Henderson and Lamb	2019	Children and young people/ Court	UK	Cases in which Section 28 was (n = 43) and was not (n = 44) implemented	Case file analysis	9
Henderson et al	2019	Children and young people/ Court	UK	cases in which Section 28 was (n = 43) and was not (n = 44) implemented	Case file analysis	9
Herbert and Bromfield	2015	Children and young people/ Policing	Global	27 articles	Systematic literature review	9
Herbert and Bromfield	2019	Children and young people/ Policing	Global	63 articles	Systematic literature review	9
Hester and Lilley	2018	Sexual Violence/ Policing	E/W	15 victims + 14 professionals	Qualitative interviews	9.5
Hicks et al	2017	Sexual violence/ Investigation and Prosecution	USA	40 iCare patients	Case file analysis	7
Holder	2015	Court	Australia	33 victims of violence	Qualitative interview + survey	8
Hughes et al	2011	Disability/ Policing	USA	25 police officers	Focus groups	5.5
Irazola et al	2015	Policing	USA	1,246 service providers + 723 victims	Survey	7.5
Jacobson et al	2015	Court	UK	57 professionals and 90 court users	Qualitative interviews + observation	8
Johnson et al	2014	IPV/ Policing	USA	25 victim advocates	Focus groups	7.5

Jones et al	2010	Children and Young people/ Investigation and Prosecution	USA	203 caregivers + 65 youth victims	Survey	8
Kaufman	2017	VIS	USA	15 trial observations	Ethnographic observation + 5 court transcripts	8
Kirchengast	2014	Court	Australia	142 victims + 19 legal professionals	Survey + qualitative interviews	5.5
Koskela et al	2016	Mental health/ Policing	UK	81 victims	Qualitative interviews	8
Koster	2017	Policing	Netherlands	417 victims	Prospective design - qualitative interviews	8
Koster et al	2016	Policing	Worldwide	15 studies	Systematic literature review	9.5
Kumar	2018	Policing	India	322 victims of theft and burglary	Survey	8
Kunst et al	2013	IPV/ Policing	Netherlands	156 IPV victims	Telephone interviews	9
Lens et al	2013	VIS	Netherlands	170 victims	Survey	8
Lens et al	2015	VIS	Netherlands	143 victims	Survey + qualitative interviews	8
Long	2018	Sexual Violence/ Policing	USA	23 victim advocates	Qualitative interviews	7.5
Madoc-Jones et al	2015	Sexual Violence/ Policing	UK	33 service providers (range of agencies)	Qualitative interviews	7.5
Maier	2014	Policing	USA	40 police officers	Qualitative interviews	9
Mastrocinque	2014	VIS	UK	27,238 incidents	Survey	8
Metzger et al	2015	Policing	USA	12 victims	Focus groups	7.5
Meyer	2011	IPV/ Policing	Australia	29 female IPV victims	Qualitative interviews	8

Miles and Condry	2015	IPV/ Policing	UK	117 in-depth interviews with parents, adolescents, police officers, youth justice workers and expert practitioners	Qualitative interviews	7
Miller	2013	VIS	Canada	37 victims, advocates and criminal justice workers	Qualitative interviews	9
Miller	2014	VIS	Canada	35 victims, victim services workers, and feminist advocates	Qualitative interviews	9
Moffett	2017	VIS	Northern Ireland	27 professionals, incl. judges, defence lawyers, prosecutors	Qualitative interviews	7
Murphy and Barkworth	2014	Policing	Australia	1,204 members of the public (638 were victims)	Survey	8
Murphy et al	2011	Sexual Violence/ Policing	USA	14 advocates	Qualitative interviews	8.5
Myers et al	2018	VIS	USA	142 case files	Case file analysis	6.5
Myhill and Bradford	2012	Policing	UK	NRPP: 6585 + BCS: 46,286	Survey	8
Natarajan	2016	IPV/ Policing	UK	46 IPV victims who were handset holders	Case study + secondary data analysis	5
O'Connell and Fletcher	2018	Parole	Australia	50 parole cases + 157 victims	Qualitative interviews	6
Patterson and Tringali	2015	Sexual Violence/ Investigation	USA	10 nurses + 13 advocates	Qualitative interviews	8
Propen and Schuster	2010	VIS	USA	42 judges	Qualitative interviews	6.5
Ragusa	2013	IPV/ Policing/ Court	Australia	36 victims	Qualitative interviews	8.5

Reed et al	2019	Investigation and Prosecution	USA	26 homicide unit members + 26 co-victims	Observation + qualitative interviews (police) + focus groups (V)	8.5
Regoeczi and Hubbard	2018	IPV/ Investigation and Prosecution	USA	1388 IPV case files	Quasi-experimental	8
Reid	2010	Children and young people/ General/	USA	34 CJS professionals	Rapid assessment - qualitative interviews + case file analysis	8
Richards and Gover	2018	IPV/ Post-sentence	USA	37 victim advocates	Survey	6.5
Richardson	2011	Parole	USA	211 parole hearing transcripts	Quantitative	7
Risan et al	2016	Investigation and Prosecution	Norway	21 investigation leaders	Qualitative interviews	9
Roberts and Manikis	2013	VIS	UK	13,335 victims	Survey	8
Saxton et al	2018	IPV/ Policing	Canada	2,831 IPV victims	Survey	8
Schuster and Propen	2010	VIS	USA	42 judges	Qualitative interviews	6.5
Sherman and Harris	2015	IPV/ Investigation and Prosecution	USA	1,125 victims	Case file analysis	8
Simmons et al	2016	IPV/ Investigation and Prosecution	Global	NA	Clinically focused literature review	7
Skinner and Taylor	2009	Children and young people/ Policing	UK	9 adolescent victims of sexual violence	Qualitative interviews	6.5
Slothower et al	2015	IPV/ Policing	UK	NA	Randomised controlled trial	8

Smith	2018	Sexual violence/ Court	UK	28 rape and sexual assault trials	Court observation	8
Spaan and Kaal	2019	Disability/ General	Netherlands	35 professionals + 10 victims with ID	Qualitative interviews	9
Srinivas and DePrince	2015	IPV/ Policing	USA	236 IPV victims	Qualitative interviews + psychometric tools	8
Stretesky et al	2010	Investigation and Prosecution	NA	37 co-victims	Qualitative interviews	9
Stretesky et al	2016	Investigation and Prosecution	USA	65 cold case homicide co-victims	Survey	9
Stylianou and Ebright	2018	Children and young people/ Policing	USA	12 CTRT stakeholders	Process evaluation - qualitative Interviews	7.5
Sulley et al	2018	Sexual violence/ Investigation and Prosecution	USA	22 victims	Qualitative interviews + focus groups	9
Vidmar and Bajto	2018	Court	Croatia	101 witnesses and supporters	Survey	6
Wemmers and Cyr	2016	Court	Canada	188 victims	Qualitative interviews	7
White et al	2019	IPV/ Policing	USA	72 IPV leaders	Focused conversations	6
Wood et al	2015	Court	UK	7,723 victims and witnesses	Survey	7.5
Xie and Lynch	2017	IPV/ Policing	USA	2,221 IPV victims	Survey	9
Young	2016	Parole	USA	25 parole decision-makers	Qualitative interviews + observation	9

* CASP is not designed to produce a score. This figure represents the number of 'yes' (1) or 'partly' (0.5) answers.



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