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Vulnerability, Welfare and Risk

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Evaluate the key entitlements for victims as outlined in the Victims'

Code 2015 and discuss how effective are the special measures

designed to help vulnerable people as victims?

Throughout this essay an evaluation will take place involving the key entitlements provided in the victims code of 2015 that victims are provided and furthermore researching and evaluating the effectiveness the methods and measures put in place are when dealing with people in a vulnerable and at risk situation or have had experiences in that area. There will be information on the rise in crime against victims, the victims code of 2015, what the entitlements are and describing how effective these entitlements are for victims in a vulnerable position.

Since the beginning of human life, people have been victimized in many ways. This can range from violent crime, sexual crime, mental abuse and many more ways.

‘Approximately 85,000 women and 12,000 men (aged 16 - 59) experience rape, attempted rape or assault by penetration in England and Wales alone every year; that's roughly 11 of the most serious sexual offences (of adults alone) every hour’ (RCEW, 2022). With such alarming statistics shown above proves how many people are victimized by just one section of criminal activity. With such high victimization rates has come effective victims supporting bodies in place. This is included in the Victims Code, 2015. ‘Violent crimes in England and Wales reached more than 1.77 million offenses, according to police recorded crime statistics, a huge increase of more than 1.1 million when compared with 2012/13, when there were just 601 thousand violent crime offenses’ (Clarke, 2022). These statistics provide the figure of 601 thousand violent crime offenses in 2002 and then compares it to the later recorded 1.1 million offenses committed in 2012/13 and the increase again to 1.77 million in 2021. These statistics prove and factuate the steady rise in violent crime offenses throughout the years.

Another factor requiring urgent attention is the victims' support to help them financially, physically and mentally.

Moving on to discuss and evaluate what measures are in place for these victims and what they are entitled to once becoming a victim of a crime. Every victim is entitled to many methods and ways of support due to the victims code of 2015. (Dignan, 2004). What is the Victims code of 2015? The Victims Code of 2015 ensures that victims of crime should be treated with a professional and formally respectful amount of support which is sensitive and treated to their situation with no discrimination (Strang et al. 2007). The victims are entitled to obtain an appropriate amount of support to help them deal with their situation mentally, physically and financially as much as possible. They will also be protected from re-victimisation in every way possible. There are many parts to the victims code and of which, will be an evaluation of their effectiveness in the supporting of victims and people in a vulnerable position.

Following that, the first part of the victims code is to be able to understand and to be able to be understood. This part included into the victims code of 2015 is vital in the victims response to the support given. If the victim is not understood by a worker attempting to support them, it can prove to be a kick in the morale of the victim and further hurt them mentally (Simmonds, 2013). Evaluating this first part of the victims code, It proves easy to see how imperative this part of the victims code is in dealing with victims. Without understanding comes inefficient and ineffective support and they will be

less likely to cooperate with support if they feel misunderstood as they may feel like they are being brushed past or half-listened to.

Moving on from that, the next part of the victims code includes, having the details of a crime recorded without unjustified delay. What is unjustified delay? Unjustified delay is when a prosecution of a perpetrator is delayed. It rarely occurs that the prosecution service is at fault for unjustified delay however they can be on occasions which will have to be proved further in court. This can result in a victim potentially feeling ignored. (Ditton et al. 1999). If a victim is to receive such a long delay in the dealing of their case, it can open up an opportunity for the perpetrator to reoffend in that time. 'Approximately 90% of those who are raped know the perpetrator prior to the offence' (RCEW, 2022). Such a horrific statistic as shown above further supports the point that the offender potentially reoffending if unjustified delay is displayed in a victims case. If the victim knows of their perpetrator prior to the offense, they will most likely be in close contact through location or social contacts. It is important in the effectiveness of the victims code to ensure that unjustified delay does not occur for the healing and support process to begin for the victim, be that maybe starting a new chapter and moving on from the crime committed to help heal (Rock, 2014).

Next, the victims code of 2015 includes regular updates and information on the crime the victim had reported (Stoup, 2016). This is imperative for the victim to still feel looked after in their case and very important from a mental standpoint for the victim. By giving the victim regular updates and a series of information on the crime reported, the victim

can keep up to date on where the perpetrator stands in the case and what the victim should do next, whether that means to prepare for any court proceedings. Upon evaluation of this chapter of the victims code, it proves vital to provide information for the victim to stay in touch with services dealing with their case such as detectives and prosecution services and any support work provided through entitlements included in the victims code of 2015.

Moving to the next chapter of the victims code of 2015. This chapter of the victims code of 2015 includes the support section. This means to refer to services that support victims and have services and support tailored to your needs. 'Overall, almost a fifth of incidents resulted in the victim wanting support '19 percent of incidents in the years 2008/09' (Freeman, 2022). To provide a victim with the support necessary to help them heal and deal with their on-going case mentally and physically. There is a large amount of services provided through the victims code (Wolhunter et al. 2008). This means that the victims are entitled to services which provide mental, physical and financial support such as CICA. CICA provides support by entitling victims to a sum of money in retribution for the injuries they have received during a crime committed against them. Furthermore, this chapter of the victims code, includes another method of support provided by the victims code. This includes the Victims support organization. Although this organization is an independent organization, they also work closely alongside the police and criminal justice system to provide support to victims under the victims code 2015.

Another foundation working alongside the government in support for victims is the Live Fear Free Foundation. This foundation is a helpline and easy to contact foundation which helps those who have suffered from domestic violence or sexual abuse in the past or present and work with the public to look for signs of such abuse taking place and attempts to reach out to those victims and support them (Cleaver et al. 2019).

It is also important to tailor the support needed to the victim as each case is never the same and everybody is different. This means that the organizations that provide support to victims have to work personally and closely with each victim to tailor to the support that they need to heal. Upon evaluation of this part of the victims code of 2015, It is clear to see how important tailoring needs and providing the correct support to victims really is and how much more effective it can be to the victim when it is provided suited to them at a pace they are ready to move in in their process of healing and dealing with on-going cases (Arora, 2017).

Following that, the next chapter follows on from the financial aspect of the support. A victim is entitled under the victims code of 2015 to receive compensation. This comes in forms such as CICA. CICA, otherwise known as the Criminal Injury Compensation Authority will take many factors into account such as missed work, prevention of education and the extent of any injuries or any factors that affect the mental state of someone and provide a sum of money to help financially recover from these and provide financial support to support the victim in any way the deem necessary with the funds provided. From evaluating this aspect of the Victims code of 2015, financial

support is necessary in the healing process of a victim, especially in the case of a victim missing out on work and wages they would be able to achieve and receive by working prior to an injury (Mawby, 2016). This proves to be effective as the money can also be used to hire an outside counselor or support workers specialized to help victims which are not included as a government organization provided in the stages of support. Money can help the victims pay their rent or bills as they may have lost their money to do so when taking time off work due to being a victim of a crime.

Following on from that, victims are also entitled to provide a victim's personal statement.

'Only one in six victims (16 per cent) said they were offered the chance by police to make a statement for the year ending March 2018' (Victims Commissioner, 2022).

A victim's personal statement is one of the more vital processes for a prosecution service to understand a viewpoint of the victim and for the supporting bodies and organizations to also understand the victim's viewpoint (Roberts et al. 2013). A victim's personal statement will include their take on the crime that had been committed and how it had affected the victim in that moment and the duration after (Roberts et al. 2013). 'The impact of domestic or sexual violence was particularly serious with 40% of women and a quarter of men who experienced this having attempted suicide as a result' (Greenhead, 2022). The victim's personal statement is an effective method of support for some victims of a crime. For some victims it does not work as effectively due to memory loss or fear of re-living the situation may cause further mental distress. Completion of a victim's personal statement can also provide and give information for the detectives to also locate any perpetrators as it can give an insight to the detectives

on the appearance of the perpetrator and the location the crime has occurred in as there may be crucial points for evidence such as a weapon or CCTV. With the provision of a victim's personal statement can bring great evidence as police may be able to locate any witnesses or any further victims from the crime and also get an account from them.

A victim is also entitled under the Victims Code of 2015 to have expenses paid and property returned (Roberts et al. 2013). This can come into play when a person becomes a victim of burglary or theft where they had lost items and belongings and had belongings or property destroyed in the doing so of the crime. This is effective for the victim as they may have not been financially stable before the crime has occurred which would have left the victim even less-stable post-crime occurrence. This can then leave a bad mental state of the victim which would add on to the already present trauma of the crime occurring in the first place. The perpetrator may also be found with items stolen from the victim, leaving the victim entitled to retrieve these items back. 'The Office for National Statistics puts the average cost of a residential burglary in the UK at £3,030' (Jackman, 2022). With such high cost per burglary it can prove to be too expensive for most victims involved. 'In the UK, burglary is one of the most common crimes committed, with one happening every 108 seconds' (CalderSecurity, 2022). This averages out to be around 34 burglaries every hour in the United Kingdom. This equals to £17,307,360 pounds per week on average and just shy of £70 million per month in burglary damage and compensation per month throughout the United Kingdom (CalderSecurity, 2022).

Although it may seem that there have been many entitlements included in the victims code of 2015, there are plenty more entitlements for victims involved. This includes post-trial information such as a verdict and sentence being given to the victim involved. This is very important for the victim as it can help them feel safer, more heard and a realization that they have people there to turn to in difficult times in the future whether they be revictimized or continue to struggle with previous offenses committed against them. 'A child who is abused is at a significantly higher risk of being revictimized in adolescence and/or adulthood' (Ma, 2022). Children who have fallen subject to abuse can experience mental and physical issues in the future. For example, anxiety and depression. This can potentially put the child in the future into a more vulnerable state to only be further victimized in the future. Post-trial information can include whether there is a restraining order in place, the sentence and potentially how much the offender will have to pay you in compensation. There is a scheme put in place by the British government which includes the victim communication and liaison scheme. This scheme revolves around Direct Communication with Victims. This scheme works alongside the CPS, criminal prosecution service, to find an approach to target services for those victims in need and in a vulnerable position. 'We found that the overall timeliness of letters sent out by the CPS has deteriorated, with 65.1% of letters sent in a timely manner' (HMCPSI, 2022). The statistics shown above can show slight effectiveness in this entitlement of the victims code 2015, however not completely effective as it has not been working in a reliable time frame for the victims which can worry the victim in whether he or she will be updated post-trial.

Another chapter entitled to victims due to the victims code of 2015 includes the right to appeal that a victims rights are not being met. 'I have seen excellent examples of work by agencies across the country but it's clear that many victims are still not getting the service they deserve' (Bowcott, 2022). This statement above adds an insight into how victims are treated on occasions and will eventually prove to the public that they may or may not trust the fact they can be supported as victims in the present or the future. This can also eventually lead to less charges being pressed which will further increase the chances of revictimization which is already a problem throughout the United Kingdom. A rise in victimization will only lower public morale and already victimized members of the public into mistrust into the support they are offered as they may feel they are going to be further mistreated (Bowcott, 2022).

Throughout the research and constant evaluation throughout this essay, it proves easy to conclude this essay with clear understanding. From seeing the entitlements in the victims code of 2015, clearly is practices in effective aid for vulnerable people as victims. There are many positive reasons and factual statistics to back up such reasons in why a victim of a crime would look out for support offered. There are many schemes in place and many imperative entitlements for the victims to aid themselves and move forward past being victimized. This includes many ways to find support for post-offences and current victimization issues such as mental health support, physical health support and financial support. Other entitlements include support organizations such as the Live Fear Free foundation which has been helping people who have been subjected to domestic violence and sexual abuse as mentioned above. 'There are some 2.3 million

victims of domestic abuse a year aged 16 to 74' (Gov.uk, 2022). The figures presented above show the 2021 figures for those who have been subject to becoming victims of domestic abuse in the United Kingdom. 'An estimated 7.3% of women (1.6 million) and 3.6% of men (757,000) experienced domestic abuse in the last year (Stripe, 2022). The figures above then show the figures for domestic abuse victims in the United Kingdom in 2020. The amount of people in 2020 affected by domestic abuse equates to 2,357,000 people becoming victims to domestic abuse. This is a small increase from the year before with an increase of nearly 100 thousand more victims. However that is 100 thousand more victims the year before meaning that the support provided from victims of domestic abuse and sexual abuse is not up to standard. In conclusion, from research, the information shows many organizations are working together to all in all help in any way possible. 'Victim Support was the winning bidder and has been awarded grant funding of up to £6.802 million over 2019/20 to 2020/21' (Home Office, 2022). It seems to show that the funding may prove to be low and that the court systems can rarely be the cause for any further mistreatment. Therefore, this leaves room for major improvement in the future of the victims code of 2015 to ensure complete effective and efficient entitlements for vulnerable people as victims as despite how good most chapters are to the victims code, there will always be room for improvement due to increasing amounts of ways people can become victimized in addition to the already increasing figures of victimization.

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