

Supplement to the Report on the Independent Review of the Victim Notification Scheme: international models

This is the supplement referred to in Section 32 (Victim Notification Models in other countries) of the Report on the Independent Review of the Victim Notification Scheme.

In order to gain a wider perspective of other models, we contacted representatives of victim notification schemes which operate abroad. We did not conduct a formal research survey, but simply looked for:

- Examples of victim notification schemes in other countries, particularly with similar adversarial judicial systems
- Learning what works well and what does not
- How the needs of victims are catered for in the processes. How victim-centred are they?

We were assisted by Victim Support Europe, who passed on our request to EuroPris - the European Organisation of Prison and Correctional Services and CEP, the Confederation of European Probation. We received a good response from 10 European countries, who provided written information and/or took part in an interview. Contacts outside of Europe included Canada, New Zealand and Australia and written material on the USA was considered. In addition, we consulted officials and the Victims Commissioners for both England and Wales and Northern Ireland.

The details below are a compilation of that information.

Australia: New South Wales

- **Overview**
Information to victims about offender; victims can provide information for consideration as part of parole decisions.
- **Eligibility**
Offender: an adult, serving a sentence in custody or on parole. Victim: direct victim of an offence; an immediate family member of a deceased victim; victim's primary caregiver, if the victim is currently under 18 years or has a legal incapacity. Other individuals may be eligible if their safety may be endangered due to a connection to the offence.
- **How enrolled**
Opt in. Victims can register over the phone or online via an application form.
- **Who operates**

NSW Corrective Service

- **Information provided**
The offender's sentence details; security classification and custody location; if parole is revoked; escape from custody; if the offender dies while serving a sentence; that the offender will be released; that the offender will be considered for parole or unescorted leave (if eligible); and how to provide submissions with regard to parole or unescorted leave.
- **When**
Registration will stay active until the offender finishes their sentence, if the victim requests to leave, the offender dies, is transferred elsewhere or the conviction is quashed.
- **Notes**
Registration ends if a victim makes public, information that has been made available to them as part of the scheme.

Australia: State of South Australia

- **Eligibility**
Victim: someone with physical or psychological injury as a result of the offence; a parent or guardian of a child victim; or an immediate family member where a victim died as a result of the offence. Victims may nominate someone to receive information for them.
- **Who operates**
The Department for Correctional Services (which operates three registers: Victim Register, Youth Justice Victims Register and Forensic Mental Health Service Victim Register.)
- **Information provided**
Details of the sentence imposed; outcome of parole applications or reviews and terms of any supervision orders imposed. Victims are also entitled to make written submissions to the Parole Board.
- **Notes**
Victims are entitled to information about health and welfare services available to support them. Victims also have rights to protection of privacy and from unnecessary contact with the alleged offender. Their rights may also be exercised by a representative of the victim's choosing.

Australia: Victoria

- **Eligibility**
Victim: person who has suffered injury as a direct result of a criminal offence, whether or not that injury was reasonably foreseeable by the offender; a family member of a person who has died as a direct result of a criminal

offence committed against that person; or if a victim is under 18 or incapax, a family member.

- **Information provided**

Support services; possible entitlements; legal assistance; the progress of an investigation and prosecution; court processes; bail applications; key prosecutorial decisions; dates and times of court proceedings; outcome of criminal proceedings and appeal applications; that the safety and welfare of the victim/their family and the victim's views will be taken into account by a court in determining whether to grant bail. Victims are also notified of Parole Board reviews and the requirement of the Board to consider any submission made by a victim about the effect of the offender's potential release on the victim.

- **Feedback and complaints**

In 2015 the Victorian Law Reform Commission reported on the role of victims in criminal justice. It recommended strengthening complaint processes and accountability mechanisms to improve the compliance of investigatory and prosecuting authorities and victims' services with victims' laws and codes of practice, and to provide education and training programmes for lawyers and judicial officers on the role and rights of victims within the criminal justice system.

Canada

- **Overview**

Federal Bill of Rights (2015) enshrined the right to information about how a case is being pursued; right to protection; right to participate and convey views in processes that affect rights; right to seek restitution for losses; and the right to file a complaint if they felt rights had been infringed or denied. All Provinces have own victim's legislation/policies. A federal review conducted in 2020 resulted in recommendations to strengthen the Bill. The Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime (OFOVC) also published, "Information as a Gateway Right" in 2021 examining complaints relating to the Canadian Victim Bill of Rights.

- **Eligibility**

A victim is entitled to information after conviction.

- **How enrolled**

Nova Scotia: VS Programme mandated to provide information & support. Other areas are self-regulated with Corrections or Parole Board. Mainly opt-in. The Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime raised this issue with the Minister of Public Safety, stating that:

"The automatic or proactive registration of victims when a federal sentence is imposed, with an opt-out provision to provide victims and survivors with the personal agency to decide whether registration is in their best interest. I believe this is the most trauma-informed, strengths-based and victim-centred solution to address the significant lack of victim participation in

federal corrections and parole that exists due to the requirement to self-register.”

- **Who operates**

In most Provinces, Corrections. British Columbia has [VictimLink](#).

- **Information provided**

The status and outcome of the investigation into the offence; the date, location and progress of criminal trial proceedings; reviews relating to the offender’s conditional release; about the criminal justice system and the role of victims within the system; services and programmes available to victims; the process of making a complaint.

- **How**

Letter, phone (face-to-face uncertain)

- **Victim support**

Nova Scotia have a victim support program that provides information (re: rights). In British Columbia, a victim can request a support worker. Freephone is available 24/7. A victim can get support throughout process when offender is in custody.

- **Feedback and complaints**

The Victims Bill of Rights ensures a formal complaints process for victims if they believe their rights have been violated. Every federal department, agency or body involved in the criminal justice system must have a complaints mechanism that provides for a review of complaints by victims of infringements or denials of their rights under the Act; has the power to make recommendations to remedy such infringements; and includes an obligation to notify victims of the result of the review of the complaint and any recommendations made. If a victim is not satisfied with the response of the federal institution, they may file a further complaint with the relevant authority. Any victim who believes their rights have been breached by a provincial or territorial department, agency or body may file a complaint in accordance with the laws of the province or territory. A victim has no cause of action or right to damages arising from an infringement or denial of their rights under the Act. Furthermore, no appeal lies from any decision solely on the grounds that a victim’s rights under the Act have been infringed or denied.

Manitoba is the only province which explicitly provides a remedy for breach of a victim’s rights, following the Canadian Victims’ Bill of Rights model of the establishment of a complaint mechanism for victims.

- **Notes**

A Bill proposed in 2019 to allow recourse if rights not respected. Other improvements sought: a single complaints authority, definition of roles and responsibilities, a guarantee of rights/services, and measurable implementation (comprehensive national dataset, consistent reporting, delivery and evaluation of training for all officials working with victims).

Canada (Manitoba)

- **Eligibility**
Victim, or parent or child of deceased victim
- **Information provided**
Information about victims' rights; making a victim impact statement; services available for victims; crime prevention and safety planning; how to apply for court order of restitution; the release from custody of a person charged with an offence; and how to report a breach of a condition of release.

Information about the offender including: if the person is under supervision in the community, the office or agency responsible for the supervision; if the person is subject to a supervision order, the terms and conditions of the order; if the person is in custody, the name and location of the custodial facility; dates relating to the custodial status of the person, including estimated date of release and general destination of the person; and any dates of temporary absences or other types of release; the occurrence of any of the following: the person's escape from custody or otherwise being unlawfully at large, and recapture, the person's breach of a term or condition of a supervision order, and action taken in response; and the person's death; how to obtain assistance to complete a victim impact statement.

The victim may also request to discuss the release of the offender and their opinions can be considered before the release or absence occurs.

- **Feedback and complaints**
Victims have the right to complain to the Director of Victims Services where a victim believes their rights have been breached and to: have the complaint investigated; receive a report from the Director of the investigation which includes steps taken to address the victim's concerns and any systemic concerns raised by the complaint; and comment on the report; make a complaint to the Ombudsman regarding the Director of Victims Services' investigation or report and to have that complaint investigated.

Croatia

- **Overview**
Current service started in 2013 but a new ordinance is currently being drafted. There is a national strategy for victim support involving various ministries. This is a criminal justice scheme only as there is no secure hospital.
- **Eligibility**
Any serving prisoner. All victims can receive information and can opt to receive information on all types of release.
If the victim has a disability or other vulnerability they may identify a supporter. If the victim is a child (up to 18 years) a parent or guardian can receive information. After 18, the victim may opt for that to continue.

- **How enrolled?**
Automatic enrolment.
- **Who operates?**
NGO based within MoJ and Police. There is a protocol for prisons to provide information to the Victim Information Service, usually prior to key dates.
- **Information provided**
Victims will be informed if prisoner is released from 'investigative custody'. Option to receive information about temporary release such as weekend leaves, medical treatment and also escapes. It can be on every occasion if the victim wants it. If multiple temporary releases, if the victim is satisfied that there have been no problems, they can opt not to get information every time. Final release always notified.
Prison informs the victims service of release dates some months beforehand so that the victim can be informed by them.
- **How?**
Telephone or letter if no phone number. If time is short the police will inform the victim and will get a telephone number so the victim service can contact in future.
- **Victim support**
General Victims and Witnesses system was introduced in 2006 as well as specialized services for domestic abuse. Services are based around the 7 county courts. There is a national call centre run by a NGO but based in the MoJ which also funds a national victim support service.
- **Feedback and complaints**
Challenge now is changing from the old system to the new one. The new system allows for victims to be informed of their rights and finding out what information they want. They are planning in the new model to write to victims initially a first and second letter.
- **Notes**
Croatia is a relatively small country (4m) and there are close relationships between staff in key agencies allowing informal as well as formal collaboration. There are close links between prison and probation who also come under the MoJ. The close co-operation with NGOs highlighted. Service available 5 days a week and victims can call any time with questions or concerns. There is also close co-operation with prisons.

In relation to the training required for staff: they must be educated to degree level with degrees in criminology, social work and 4 years relevant previous experience. Recruits are often from social services.

They also have on-the-job training, professional support and supervision and take part in group counselling.

Denmark

- **Overview**
The notification of victims is stipulated in The Danish Administration of Justice Act (2021), Government Order 1134 (2017) and circular letter (2022)
- **Eligibility**
Victim or close relative if the victim has passed away as a result of the crime – in criminal cases which has included violence, psychological violence, stalking, threats or sexual assault and resulted in an unconditional prison sentence.
- **How enrolled?**
By request – Opt in.
- **Who operates?**
Prison and Probation Service/Public prosecutor/Police
- **Information provided**
On first unaccompanied leave, escape, parole, pardon, full release, can also apply if the offender participates in newspaper interview, or television or radio programme.
- **When?**
Only given if the convicted person has been held in prison before the conviction and has not been released during the time from the delivery of the judgement and until its execution.
Notification may be refused, if essential consideration must be shown for the convicted person. A request for notification must be approved by the police commissioner of the place/region where the criminal case has been processed.
- **How?**
Letter. Considering options for digital communication in the future

Ireland

- **Overview**
Run by Prisons under Department of Justice. They appoint a Victim Liaison Officer. Prison Population on day of interview [10.08.22] 4,519. Prisoners with a registered victim: 449.
- **Eligibility**
Any prison sentence (even 1 month) for any offence.
- **How enrolled?**
Opt in. Leaflet given to victim by police. Can telephone, email, write or register on-line (last is most popular). When the VLO receives the application, they

will check that the applicant is the injured party. In the case of murder, the family is asked to nominate one person to receive information. There is discretion to register more than one family member.

- **Who operates?**
Prison service
- **Information provided**
Prisoner movements during sentence
- **When?**
If a prisoner moves (including hospital visits)
- **How?**
Email/ letter/telephone.
- **Victim support**
Details not provided.
- **Feedback and complaints**
Victim can submit a written complaint to prison service
- **Notes**
One VLO with relatively large workload.

Netherlands

- **Overview**
Relevant legislation: Punishment and Protection Act (2021), Victims Rights Act (updated 2022).
- **Eligibility**
Prison sentence, no specific sentence length and now a hospital order.
- **How enrolled?**
Registration – opt out and victims have to say they don't want information at various points (police stage, prosecution, post sentence).
- **Who operates?**
Victim Information now the responsibility of the Central Judicial Collection Agency (very recent change from the Prosecution service). Other arrangements nationally include multi agency groups that cover particular locations which look at victims' needs; Victim Support Panels that invite feedback from victims.
- **Information provided**
Information rights include: Full release (from prison or hospital); Conditional release; Parole; Escape; Measures taken to protect victim's interest;

Representations can be made about conditional release from prison and representations about conditional release of offenders from hospital.

- **How?**

Letters sent. Victims can reply setting out their needs but guidance needed on what is outside of scope (eg they can't oppose conditional release). The letters signpost support but it was acknowledged that this isn't good at connecting victims with support. VSN would prefer to pro-actively contact them. Details about victim information on VSN website and government websites. Police have developed a site with videos to help people who prefer visual media. Also, since 2020, all information provided by police, prosecution, Victim Support Netherlands, the Central Fine Collection Agency and the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund can be accessed on-line in a single central location, *My Case as a Victim*. This provides a timeline of case progression and victims can retrieve messages from various organisations, information on their rights and what assistance is available, and it has frequently asked questions. They log in using their DigiD.

- **Notes**

Staffing – was c5 and with move to Collection Agency will rise to c100 with training on communicating with victims from VSN. Context: The Netherlands has a pop of 17m but has one of the lowest incarceration rates in Europe.

Other issues – prosecution service can levy community sentences for low level crime. In these circumstances victims can't exercise information rights. VSN feel this power should not be used for more serious crimes like assault.

New Zealand

- **Overview**

New Zealand Victim Rights Act (2002). Some rights apply to all victims of crime; others apply only to victims of certain serious crimes and one right applies only to victims of a crime committed by a child or young person. Currently, the process starts with the police.

The NZ Government published a review of victims' policy in 2019 that identified that victim notifications needed urgent attention. Gaps and inconsistencies were identified and instances of victims not being informed about the release of an offender. It was also felt the scheme needed to reach more victims. A service improvement programme, 'Reframe' is underway.

- **Eligibility**

If an offender is serving a prison sentence or Home Detention for higher tariff offences, sexual violence, assault and above. Other community sentences would not be eligible.

An eligibility question they are currently looking at is where the victim has died (not as a result of the offence). The Act would indicate that their close relatives cannot now be on the register. The Victims service is challenging

that on the basis that victim support is provided in good faith and excluding the victim's immediate family is against the spirit of the Act.

An additional aspect in NZ is Maori culture and beliefs. Close family relationships could be regarded as anyone from a related tribe even on the other side of the country.

If the victim is a young person (under 18) their parents or care givers are automatically registered. At 18, the police can contact them to ask them if they want to register independently. Or they can opt to nominate someone, including their parents.

- **How enrolled?**

Opt in but this is being reviewed and an opt out system is being considered.

- **Who operates?**

There are four separate victim notification processes: Police, Department of Corrections, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Immigration. Police are obliged to provide initial information to victims about the information scheme. When a victim passes from the police scheme to other notifications scheme e.g. corrections, they are on a different information system. An early request to register would be returned to the police.

Consideration is being given to a multi-agency hub and to single point of contact that is independent of Crown and the police.

- **Information provided**

When an offender is out on bail; parole; temporary leave from prison; if convicted of breaching any release or detention conditions; has escaped; has died while in hospital or custody; the offender is being considered for a suspension or cancellation of a deportation order.

- **How?**

Digital communications including an app. Victims can choose how and when they get notifications and they can nominate someone to check information coming in for them. Some states have automated victim notification systems or a toll-free number, 24 hours a day where a request can be made for immediate notification about release, escape or transfer. Once this notification is triggered, the system will attempt to contact the victim at the number provided for a designated period.

Letters, telephone and face-to-face meetings also used.

- **Victim support**

A national Victim Support service has offices co-located in police stations across NZ. Police are mandated to refer victims for support either to the national service or other agencies. A more recent development would be a referral by police to an umbrella support organization who would identify an appropriate service for the individual.

- **Feedback and complaints**

Email address that people can write to give feedback. They have a lessons learnt database. For complaints, if a victim believes a government agency or victims' service provider has breached their rights or not fully met their responsibilities under the Code, under Part 3 of the Code, a victim can make a complaint to the agency or service provider. If the victim is dissatisfied with the internal review of the complaint, they can complain to the Office of the Ombudsman, the Independent Police Conduct Authority, the Privacy Commissioner, the Parole Board or the Judicial Conduct Commissioner.

- **Improvement framework**

A service improvement programme, 'Reframe' is underway currently.

- **Notes**

There is a compensation scheme administered by other agencies. For the current police scheme, there are 12 police districts but 1 person with overall responsibility for victim information for the whole country. New field management system and 3-person assessment team with real time information from courts can engage in immediate safety planning as needed. There could be 700-1000 people a week referred to the police scheme.

Norway

- **Overview**

Limited victim notification scheme in place currently.

- **Eligibility?**

Post-conviction scheme. Direct victims or in the case of bereavement, their survivors, meaning spouse, cohabitant, children, parents and siblings.

- **Who operates?**

Correctional Services, who also work with national mediation services.

- **Information provided**

Full release; transfer to probation sentence with electronic monitoring instead of custody; conditional release; day release for education/work; failure to comply with the sentence or license conditions; conditions set for release relevant to the victim or their family; notice can be given if the person changes address during the parole period and it is important for the victim or their family to know this.

- **How?**

National guidelines for notifications last updated in 2018. These include specific guidelines on how notifications should be given and ensuring they have been received. In some cases, police give notifications. Notifications must be made at least 14 days before leave/release.

- **Improvement framework**
Currently looking at ways of improving procedures in relation to victims and the information/services they provide.

Romania

- **Overview**
Procedures in place allowing victims to request information on an offender, supported by the Criminal Procedure Code under which the prison service has a duty to inform a victim of the release date.
- **Eligibility**
Post-conviction
- **How enrolled?**
Opt-in when asked by judicial services.
- **Who operates?**
Prison service
- **Information provided**
Type and duration of sentence; escape; full release; release on any terms including if the prisoner is released before the expiry of their sentence (in that case the victim should be informed by the judicial body which ordered the release); temporary release or activities in the open regime (the police are required to let the victim know).
- **When?**
After sentencing – anytime victim requests information
- **Victim support**
Protective measures in place during investigation as well as court proceedings if the victim is deemed to be in danger

Slovakia

- **Overview**
Victims have the right of access to information relating to the case in which they are a victim. Information is provided in a way that is comprehensible to the victim and varies according to the stage of the criminal proceedings.
- **Eligibility**
Post-conviction. All victims have the right to request information.
- **Who operates?**
Prison service.
- **Information provided**

If an offender is in custody, a victim can be informed of: release from pre-trial detention; escape from pre-trial detention; release from prison; escape from prison; interruption of the prison sentence including early release (most often as a result of conditional release or conversion of the remainder of the sentence to house arrest).

- **When?**
Can be requested throughout criminal proceedings. Information on release/escape is given on the latest day on which the event occurred.
- **How?**
Telephone, email, text message, letter. The court has to have provided the prison service with victim contact details.
- **Notes**
If an offender is released early or the remainder of the prison sentence is converted to a house arrest - where it is not possible to inform the victim in advance without the risk that late information may endanger him/her (especially in cases of domestic violence), the court should notify the victim of the date of the public session at which the early release is decided. Priority is given to victims of domestic abuse.

Spain

- **Overview**
Spanish Government responsible for criminal code and legislation. Spanish Victims Charter draws on EU Directive 2012/29/EU establishing minimum standards on rights, support and protection. In 1984, Catalonia, were the first 'autonomous community' to take up powers relating to prison establishments and enforcement and they became responsible for prisons and community sentences. Later, their Ministry of Justice set up the victim support scheme and the restorative justice programme.

Spain (Catalonia)

- **Overview**
Regional responsibility for victims since the 1980's. Minimum standards in the Victims Charter, including the right to information. Key distinction – domestic or gender violence have a proactive scheme with automatic sign up, more support and more detailed information.
- **Eligibility**
Any crime but more proactive and detailed support for domestic abuse and gender violence where the victims are subject to a Protection Order. There is a co-ordination node in every autonomous community and the Judicial authorities will communicate the imposition of a protection order to the co-ordination node: in Catalonia, the Victim Support Services. For adult victims, 18 plus, though they will support someone 16/17 years of age.

- **How enrolled**

Victims of domestic abuse or gender violence are auto enrolled; other crimes, victim must register. Although, for domestic abuse and gender violence where there is a Protection Order, enrolment is automatic, victims are still asked to sign a form agreeing to receive information.

- **Who operates?**

Oversight by Catalonian MoJ, operated by a victim support service, with a co-ordination protocol with prisons which sets out the procedure and deadlines for transfer of information from prisons to the VSS. VSS can only access the information they need on the prison system.

- **Information provided**

Information about victim's services, scope and duration of the Protection Order (if in place), criminal proceedings, changes to prison status, decisions that may affect the victim's safety, leaves, moves to open prison, probation, conditional release or full release, escape.

- **When?**

Key points in sentence as above.

- **How?**

Initial letter and phone call. Once contact made, the victim decides what form of communications they'd prefer.

- **Victim Support?**

Yes, but more proactive for domestic abuse and gender based violence.

- **Feedback/Complaints?**

Guidance on-line. Can be submitted by phone or email. Also do a Victims Survey.

- **Notes**

Acknowledged that the scheme requiring the victim to register (opt in) has weaknesses (many victims do not know their rights and do not sign up).

VSS also offers restorative justice.

In 2021, victim assistance provided to 14,257 victims, 7,988 with a Protection Order. For other offences, 1374 victims received information. Catalonia has a population of 7.5m with 10 prisons. There are 7 victim support offices. Staff are qualified psychologists, lawyers and social workers with specialist training to work in the VSS.

Sweden

- **Overview**

Has a scheme in place for victims to be notified – the system is generally very victim focused.

- **Eligibility**
custodial sentence and the offender has committed a crime against a victim's life, health, freedom or peace.
- **How enrolled?**
Opt in. This is done in writing.
- **Who operates?**
Swedish Prison and Probation Service.
- **Information provided**
Prison placement, transfer between prisons, leave and other temporary stays away from prison and special preparatory release measures, if an application to convert a life sentence to a fixed-term sentence is made, if the sentence is transferred to another country, conditional release, escapes, absconds, full release.

An exception is if danger to the offender's life/health can be expected. Sweden does not have provisions for making representations to parole hearings. Cases involving domestic abuse are prioritised.
- **Notes**
Acknowledged that the scheme requiring the victim to register may result in victims not knowing their rights and not signing up.

Switzerland

- **Overview**
Article 92a of the Swiss Criminal Code (SCC) allows for information sharing with victims on request. However, not a unified system as it is the responsibility of individual districts of Switzerland to enforce the SCC.
- **Eligibility**
As defined by the Victim Support Act 2007, any victim (or relative) who has been directly affected by a criminal offence to his or her physical, psychological or sexual integrity. Third parties who have a legitimate interest can also access information.
- **How enrolled?**
Opt in - information provided on request.
- **Who operates?**
Individual districts of Switzerland.
- **Information provided**
Duration of the sentence/measure imposed, the institution responsible for execution, the form of sentence if it differs from normal, interruptions and relaxations in the sentence/measure, parole and final release, the reactivation of the sentence/measure, immediate notification of escape and of recapture.

- **When?**
The executive authority decides on the request after consulting the offender. May refuse to provide the information or revoke a previous decision to provide information if the offender's legitimate interests justify this.
- **How?**
Written request.
- **Victim Support**
Victim Support Act (2007) provides advice/emergency assistance, longer-term assistance from counselling centres, cost contributions for longer-term assistance from third parties, compensation, exemption from procedural costs.

UK (England & Wales)

- **Overview**
Victim Liaison Officers operating since 2016. Information, not support role.
- **Eligibility**
Custodial sentence of more than 12 months for violent and sexual offences. If family bereaved by crime, there is some discretion about which relatives can register.
- **How enrolled?**
Automatic referral to Victim Care Unit, VLO contacts victim, explains rights and scheme - can opt out then or at any future time. VLO will carry out eligibility check before contacting the victim to register.
- **Who operates?**
Victim Care Unit, Victim Liaison Officers (recruited by open advert). Aim for victim to keep same VLO.
- **Information provided**
Explanation of sentence, release, temporary release, conditions, parole, recalls, abscond. Victim may make representations about license conditions such as no contact or exclusion zones. Requests for reasonable conditions would be considered such as avoiding release dates so as not to coincide with sensitive dates for the victim such as the anniversary of the offence.
- **When?**
Key points - named VLO for any query.
- **How?**
First communication by letter then a phone call. If the victim wishes to register, a face to face meeting can be arranged, physical location chosen by the victim or can meet on line. There is a protocol for the use of email to non-secure email addresses which includes not using the offender's name.

- **Victim Support**
Will refer to services.
- **Feedback/complaints**
Seek from all but low return rate. Escalating complaints process starting with the VLO.
- **Notes**
There are 42,000 active victims on the national database (set up in 2014) which all VLOs can access. Changes to prisoners' status goes onto a shared system. Timely updating essential. The caseload for each VLO is c200. Offenders are a mix of lifers and short-term prisoners.

UK (Northern Ireland)

- **Overview**
Scheme since 2005. Covers both criminal justice and mental health schemes.
- **Eligibility**
Post-conviction, prison sentence of more than 6 months or community sentence. Victim can appoint a representative to receive information for them.
- **How enrolled?**
Opt in.
- **Who operates?**
Dedicated, co-located multi agency team. Prisons & probation staff. Team have access to relevant organisational databases. There are currently around 500 victims registered.
- **Information provided**
Explanation of sentence, referrals for parole, release, temporary release, license conditions, recalls, help to write representations.
- **When?**
At key points. Victim can also contact a named person on the team at any time with questions or concerns.
- **How?**
Opt in. Weekly list from courts to the team, who will phone victims to explain the scheme and ask if they want to register.

Use of letters, phone, email and face to face. View that letters less effective than personal contact. Simple registration by phone as the team will already have victim information so they only have to provide address and date of birth.
- **Victim Support**
Will provide information and refer as needed.

- **Feedback/complaints**
Each CJ agency has own process. CJ agencies have Victim Champion but role not defined. Evaluation forms are sent out but return rate is low. NI conduct a victims survey.
- **Notes**
Team also involved in Restorative Justice.
Victims Commissioner keen to improve data and benchmark to track progress.

UK (Scotland)

- **Overview**
Scheme established by the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003. Expanded by the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 2015 to cover victims of mentally disordered offenders. Since 2005.
- **Eligibility**
Sentence of more than 18 months, life imprisonment or detention for life; detention without time limit. More limited scheme available for victims of offenders sentenced to fewer than 18 months.

Victims and certain family members where a victim has died. Carers for victims under 12 years old. CORO VNS: victims over 16 years old.
- **How enrolled?**
Opt in.
- **Who operates?**
Scottish Prison Service (SPS) and Parole Board for Scotland (PBS). Scottish Government (SG) delivers the scheme for victims of mentally disordered offenders and individuals released from secure care. Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS), Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS) and Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland (MHTS) also involved.
- **Information provided**
Date of release, death, if transferred outwith Scotland; if escaped; first temporary release; if liable to detention in a hospital.
- **When?**
At key points/when decisions made which give rise to a victim information entitlement.
- **How?**
Primarily letter. Victims may also contact SPS by phone.
- **Victim Support**
SPS and PBS will direct victims to victim support organisations as part of delivering the scheme.

- **Feedback/complaints**
Each CJ agency has own process.
- **Notes**
The VNS is currently subject to minor amendment under the Bail and Release from Custody (Scotland) Bill, which will enable VSOs to obtain information about a prisoner's release as well as or on behalf of a victim or their family.

USA (Federal)

- **Overview**
Under federal law, crime victims are entitled to a range of services. Agencies must: inform a victim of where they may receive emergency medical and social services; any compensation or relief to which the victim is entitled and how to obtain such relief; the public and private programmes available to provide counselling, treatment, and other support to the victim and assistance to contact persons responsible for providing the relief and services outlined above.
- **Information provided**
The release or detention status of an offender or suspected offender; the sentence imposed, including the date on which the offender will be eligible for parole.
After trial, earliest possible notice of the scheduling of a parole hearing; escape, work release, furlough or any other release from custody; death of the offender in custody. General information on the corrections process, including about work release, furlough, probation and eligibility of the offender for each. Also, about the appeals process and related proceedings; parole release and related proceedings; pardon/commutation of sentence and related proceedings; cancelled and rescheduled proceedings; final release from confinement, including from a mental institution; escape and subsequent recapture of offender.
- **How?**
DOJ's Victim Notification System (VNS), bi-lingual in English and Spanish, for federal criminal cases. This is a computer-based system which generates written notifications and victims who receive a special PIN number can obtain automated status information by telephone.

USA (States)

- **Overview**
Most crimes prosecuted under State laws. Most States give victims or their families the right to be notified of important, scheduled criminal proceedings and the outcomes of those proceedings. They also notify victims when hearings have been cancelled and rescheduled.

- **Information provided**

Victims have the right to: attend a proceeding and/or submit a victim impact statement. Can include appeals process and related proceedings; parole release and related proceedings; pardon/commutation of sentence and related proceedings; cancelled and rescheduled proceedings; final release from confinement, including from a mental institution; and escape and subsequent recapture of offender.

Following conviction, most states notify victims of parole hearings or parole release, but only a few notify victims of an offender's pardon or commutation of sentence. Some states notify victims of: the grand jury hearing; probation or parole revocation proceedings; the transfer of a convicted offender to an out-of-state prison facility; and the death of the offender.

- **How?**

Notification of bail release in some jurisdictions requires immediate notice to the victim by telephone, while in others, "notification" may be limited to providing victims with a telephone number to call to find out whether an arrested defendant has been released.

A number of jurisdictions have implemented automated victim notification systems to comply with their victim notification laws. Victims can call a toll-free number 24 hours a day to inquire about an offender's status or register to be notified immediately of an offender's release, escape, transfer, or court appearance. Once notification is triggered, the system will attempt to contact the victim at the number(s) provided and continue to do so for a designated period of time or until the victim answers the call.

- **Victim Support**

General information: notice of the availability of crime victim compensation; referrals to victim services, such as rape crisis centres, battered women's shelters, and general victim service agencies.

USA (California)

- **Overview**

Victims are entitled on request to receive information about an offender's exit from custody, as well as to input into and receive information about parole decisions.

- **How enrolled**

Opt in. Information needs to be requested.

- **Information provided**

About the conviction, sentence, place and time of incarceration, or other disposition of the defendant, the scheduled release date of the defendant, the release of or escape from custody, placement in a re-entry or work furlough program.

Victims can request to be notified of any parole eligibility hearing and of the right to appear, either personally or by other means, to reasonably express the victim's views, and to have their statements considered.