The support needs of young victims of crime

A research report

May 2007
The support needs of young victims of crime: a research report

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Thanks also to Victim Support’s Harriet Becher, Helen Mills, Lesley Malone, Brian Butcher, Lorna Vyse and other staff members for their help with the project.
Executive summary

Introduction

In early 2006 Victim Support obtained funding for a research project to investigate the following questions.

- What are the effects of victimisation (including criminal victimisation and bullying) on children and young people?
- What support approaches can help to alleviate these effects?
- How effective are these support approaches?
- What are the implications for Victim Support’s work?

The research will enable Victim Support to identify the effects of victimisation on children and young people and their support needs, highlighting implications and recommendations for Victim Support nationally. The Research Centre was commissioned to explore these issues in a year-long research project.

Methodology

There were two phases to the project. Phase 1 lasted from April to August 2006, and Phase 2 from September 2006 to March 2007. A number of quantitative and qualitative methods were used throughout the research to meet the project’s aims. These included:

Phase 1:
- a literature review
- internet research and telephone interviews with Victim Support staff to map services available, leading to a quantitative data analysis of services
- assessment of evaluations identifying best practice

Phase 2:
- interviews with children and young people and Victim Support staff and volunteers
- an evaluation of learning materials.

The results of the research are published in two separate reports. This report examines the effects of crime and bullying on children and young people and their support needs. It focuses on the literature review and interviews with children and young people. A separate, internal report, The support needs of young victims of crime: implications for Victim Support, focuses on the work of Victim Support with young victims of crime. The report concentrates on interviews with Victim Support staff and volunteers, the service mapping exercise and evaluation of Victim Support’s learning materials.
Conclusions

The literature review and interviews with children and young people reveal the following conclusions.

Being a young victim

- The evidence available suggests that the rate of child victimisation is twice that of adult victimisation.
- Young victims can find it difficult to get recognised as victims.
- Fear of crime does not relate to the likelihood of being a victim.
- Young people may be affected by a crime directly as victims, and/or indirectly through witnessing a crime, or being affected when a friend or family member is victimised.

Effects of crime

- Children and young people suffer from both immediate and longer-term effects of crime, bullying and sexual abuse.
- The additional vulnerability of children and young people, when compared to adults, may aggravate the negative effects of crime.
- Victimisation is associated with adverse effects on both psychological and physical health.
- Victims may think about their experiences at night/when they are trying to sleep.
- Victimisation can affect adolescent development.
- Children and young people who experience crime are more likely to exhibit criminal behaviour later in life.
- Schooling is often affected by criminal victimisation and bullying; young people may have time off school, or may stay inside during breaks.
- However, victimisation may also harden the resolve of young victims and make them want to do well at school.
- The social lives of young people are often affected if they have been the victim of a crime; for example they may not go out because they are scared of meeting the offender(s).
- Victims may become more aware of their personal security (particularly those who have been victims of theft).
- The families of child victims are also often affected by the young victim's experience.

Coping with crime

- Children and young people have different ways of coping with crime, linked to factors such as the crime itself, gender and age etc. For example, boys may be more likely to respond with 'externalising behaviours' such as aggression, while girls may be more likely to tell someone.
• Strategies used to cope may be ‘externalising’ (for example, aggression against others) or ‘internalising’ (for example, self-harm), positive (such as listening to music) or negative (using alcohol or drugs).
• Different people (for example parents, friends and teachers) may be sought out as confidants depending on the type of crime/experience and the perpetrator.
• Many young people believe that they will get a negative response if they tell.
• Many parents and carers help their children to cope with their experience of being a victim of crime, but some may need support in doing this.

Supporting young victims

• The young people interviewed as part of this project, who had used Victim Support, all gave positive comments about the service they received.
• Victims may not feel the need to access support services if they feel they have other forms of support. However, some victims may not access services because they are not aware of them or they do not have enough information.
• Young people and their families appreciate it when organisations such as Victim Support help them to find out what is happening with their cases.
• Young victims of crime and their parents are concerned about two main issues. These are
  o (lack of) communication from schools and the police
  o responsibility – in particular, who is responsible for a young person’s well-being, particularly when walking to and from school.

Recommendations

This research has identified recommendations relating to the practices of organisations which offer support to or work with young victims, including Victim Support.
• Organisations which support young victims need to recognise and respect the different ways in which children and young people respond and cope and make sure that their services can meet this need.
• It is important that services to young victims do not just replicate adult services but address the unique needs of children and young people, and consider both the type of support and the setting of the service.
• Organisations should make sure that they strategically plan their services to children and young people so that the services they offer are appropriate: for example, children and young people should be asked what they want.
• It is important that issues surrounding race, ethnicity, sexuality and disability are taken into account when dealing with young victims of crime so that any particular support needs are considered (eg communication).
• Publicity for support services is of great importance. Not only should the general availability of support be better publicised; so should the details of support services (ie how people can get in touch and the service that is offered).
• Organisations other than the police (such as doctors and women’s refuges) should be encouraged to refer children and young people to support services so that as many young victims as possible obtain the service. This may help larger numbers of indirect victims to get support. (Children supported by these services may not come to the attention of the police.)
• Because so much crime takes place in or around school, it is important for support providers and schools to work together, as so many young people can be reached through schools. (However, this may be difficult as many services face funding and resource constraints and may run risks of raising expectations that cannot be met in terms of service provision.)
• Schools need to make sure that complaints about bullying and crime are taken very seriously, that they have an adequate policy on bullying, and that their position on who is responsible for a young person’s well-being when walking to and from school is consistent (eg when in uniform) and follows Government guidelines.
• Children and young people may need time away from school to recover from the crime. Schools should be supportive in such circumstances, for example with adequate home-working schemes put in place if necessary.
• Professionals working in the criminal justice system should make sure that young people and their families have all the information they need about the help and support available during court cases, something which is expected under the Code of practice for victims of crime and supported by witness care units. This is certainly something that the interviewees have appreciated when it has taken place, and it can alleviate any fears or concerns that young people may have.
• Agencies working with young victims should help them obtain their rights, for example to information about their case.
• It is essential for under-16s to be included in the British Crime Survey and other relevant forms of data collection.
I. Introduction

In early 2006 Victim Support obtained funding for a research project to investigate the following questions.

- What are the effects of victimisation (including criminal victimisation and bullying) on children and young people?
- What support approaches can help to alleviate these effects?
- How effective are these support approaches?
- What are the implications for Victim Support’s work?

The research will enable Victim Support to identify the effects of victimisation on children and young people and their support needs, highlighting implications and recommendations for Victim Support nationally. The Research Centre was commissioned to explore these issues in a year-long research project.
2. Objectives

Victim Support commissioned The Research Centre to:

- carry out a comprehensive literature review of research into the victimisation of children and young people, including criminal victimisation and bullying, assess the effects of victimisation on children and young people, and draw out implications for Victim Support’s practice
- map organisations nationally that provide specialist support to young victims, in particular any Victim Support member charities which provide enhanced young victims services with additional funding
- collect and collate the findings of any evaluations carried out by or for these organisations, identifying good practice
- conduct structured interviews with service delivery staff from these organisations, to find out the exact nature of the support they offer and to identify which support mechanisms are seen as most effective
- conduct semi-structured interviews with children and young people who have been affected by crime, including users of Victim Support’s services and non-users
- carry out a review of Victim Support’s learning materials, to identify the nature of support currently offered by Victim Support
- summarise findings and make recommendations for Victim Support’s practice.

The research concentrates on Victim Support’s service in the community, rather than its Witness Service.
3. Methodology

There were two phases to the project. Phase 1 lasted from April to August 2006, and Phase 2 from September 2006 to March 2007. A number of quantitative and qualitative methods were used throughout the research to meet the project’s objectives. These included:

Phase 1:
- a literature review
- internet research and telephone interviews to Victim Support staff to map services available, leading to a quantitative data analysis of services
- assessment of evaluations identifying best practice.

Phase 2:
- interviews with children and young people and Victim Support staff and volunteers.
- an evaluation of learning materials.

The results of the research are published in two separate reports. This report examines the effects of crime and bullying on children and young people and their support needs. It focuses on the literature review and interviews with children and young people. A separate, internal report, *The support needs of young victims of crime: implications for Victim Support*, focuses on the work of Victim Support with young victims of crime. The report concentrates on interviews with Victim Support staff and volunteers, the service mapping exercise and evaluation of Victim Support’s learning materials.

3.1 Literature review

This report summarises the effects of criminal victimisation, including bullying and sexual abuse, on children and young people. In each of the sections, the literature is grouped into themes. It is important to note that the literature review does not cover all of the available information on the topics, but instead summarises the most relevant and applicable information available to the researcher. Literature was sourced from websites, online libraries and catalogues and printed research reports, journals and books. Appropriate information was relatively easy to find on most topics – Victim Support’s library was a key resource.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the key components of a standard literature search, the elements of which are by no means exclusive and may parallel each other at any given time during the exercise.

![Figure 3.1: Literature search components](image)

The support needs of young victims of crime (May 2007)
3.2 Interviews with children and young people

Face-to-face interviews were carried out with 20 children and young people to better understand the effects of crime on this age group. Due to the delicate nature of these interviews and the potential vulnerability of the participants, interviews were sensitively conducted following the strictest ethical guidelines (see below for more detail). The researcher updated her child protection training to make sure that she was fully aware of current issues, and also participated in relevant training offered to Victim Support volunteers and staff, to enhance her understanding of both victims’ needs and issues and the work of Victim Support. Most of the interviews were conducted in the participants’ homes, although some were carried out at school. If interviews were held in a child’s home, adult family members were at home during the interview (although not necessarily in the interview room).

Participants were recruited in the following way.

- Children and young people who have been victims of crime and who have used Victim Support’s services were contacted through a list provided by Victim Support Norfolk and invited to join the study. Victim Support Norfolk secured the young people’s agreement and parental/guardian consent before passing these details on to The Research Centre.
- Children and young people who have been victims of crime and who have not used Victim Support’s services were contacted through a list provided by Norfolk Constabulary. Norfolk Constabulary wrote to individuals they had identified, inviting them to join the study and requesting permission to pass their contact details on to The Research Centre.
- Children and young people who have been victims of bullying that was not recorded as a crime were contacted through the heads of Norfolk schools. Their names and details were then passed on to The Research Centre, if agreement was secured.

Victims were offered an incentive of a £10 gift voucher to participate in the study. A young person’s information leaflet was produced especially for the project to help young people understand the research (see Appendix 1).

3.3 Informal dialogue

There were instances when individuals answered queries and/or gave their opinion on issues raised during the research, but were not formally interviewed as part of the research process. These opinions have been anonymised and reported where relevant, although not directly quoted.

3.4 Ethical issues

The Research Centre operates under the strictest of democratic principles and is currently accountable to the ethical guidelines of City College Norwich, and before this, Anglia Ruskin University. The research was conducted in line with the latest research ethics guidelines. All data was anonymised for reporting purposes and held under the Data Protection Act 1998. The participants (ie parents, children/young people, staff and other stakeholders) had the
right to withdraw from the project at any stage without prejudice. All participants (including the parents or carers of children or young people who were taking part) were asked for their informed consent, in writing, before any data or quotes gathered through interviews were used for reporting purposes. All interviews were undertaken only after prior arrangements had been made with organisations and participants. Answering a questionnaire, whether orally or in writing, was taken as consent in itself.
4. Literature review

4.1 Introduction

This section reviews key literature and research relevant to this project in order to answer the key question: what are the effects of criminal victimisation, including bullying and sexual abuse, on children and young people? The literature review also examines literature on the support needs of children and young people who have been victims of crime. The sourced literature is very diverse (in both methodology and aim) and for this reason, statistical comparison of data, and critical analysis of research methods, does not take place.

4.2 Background

It is important to understand children and young people’s experiences of crime so that Victim Support’s work with children and young people can be contextualised. This section is divided into two subsections: crime statistics (eg types of crime committed against children and young people), and opinions of the police and the criminal justice system.

4.2.1 Crime statistics

Rate of child victimisation

Currently, there are shortcomings in the system for counting levels of child victimisation; for example, the British Crime Survey, which is the main national source of data on victimisation, excludes under-16s. An independent report carried out for the Home Office (Smith, 2006) and a report by the Statistics Commission (2006) concluded that this should change. Victim Support is raising awareness of the lack of information available on youth victimisation, in partnership with Young Voice, as detailed data collection will help to improve provision of services, in turn improving the support available to young people. This campaign is especially relevant because the safety of children and young people is a major concern of the Government; one of the outcomes of Every Child Matters is for children to ‘stay safe’ (DfES, 2007).  

Available evidence is limited to particular types of crime, but suggests that the rate of child victimisation is twice that of adult victimisation. Home Office statistics for 2003 show that, over 12 months, 35% of 10–15 year olds were victims of personal crimes (theft from the person or other theft of personal property, assault or robbery) compared with only 14% of 26–65 year olds (Home Office, 2003).

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1 The responsibility to safeguard children as part of Every Child Matters falls to a range of agencies including children’s trusts, which have been set up in each area of the UK to bring together services for children under one roof; local safeguarding children boards, which make sure that key agencies work well together (membership includes local authorities, health bodies, the police and other organisations); and the Children’s Commissioners for England and for Wales who also look after the interests of children and young people, working within the Every Child Matters agenda.
Fear of crime

A 2004\(^2\) MORI poll revealed that, in general, girls tend to be more worried about crime than boys, “despite generally feeling safer in school and less commonly being a victim” (p48). The Crimestoppers Youth Survey 2002 also found that girls were more worried about crime than boys. Overall, physical assault is more of a worry to young people than racism or bullying (MORI, 2004).

The results showed that:

Assault

- 47% of students in mainstream education were concerned about the threat of physical attack, although 46% were not.
- 56% of mainstream-based girls were worried about physical attack, compared to 39% of boys.

Bullying

- 35% of students from mainstream schools were afraid of being bullied; 61% were not.
- Girls were more likely to worry about bullying (43% compared with 28% of boys).
- Pupils aged 11–12 were more likely to be concerned about bullying.
- Asian young people were more concerned about being bullied (42%) than black young people (26%) or white young people (35%). However, white students were more likely to be bullied (23% have been bullied).

Racism

- 28% of students at mainstream schools were concerned about racism; these figures almost double for some ethic minority groups.
- Fears of racism declines as pupils get older. (See MORI, 2004, p48–49 for more detailed statistics.)

In general, MORI’s data reveals that:

“… young people’s concerns about bullying, theft, assault and racism have decreased over time, particularly over the last 12 months [2003–2004]. This is true among both pupils in mainstream education and those who have been excluded.” (p49)

While this is the case, the above statistics show that fear of crime is still prevalent and has an impact on the lives of children and young people. And as MORI notes “… fear of crime does not relate to likelihood of being a victim …” (p52).

---

\(^2\) A survey of mainstream pupils aged 11–16 from 192 schools; 4,715 students completed questionnaires in interviewer-supervised, self-completion sessions. 687 young people aged 11–17 who were excluded from mainstream school, and instead attended one of 85 special projects, were also surveyed.
Experiences of crime

Young people in mainstream education were most likely to have been threatened (26%), bullied (23%), have had something other than a mobile phone stolen from them (15%), had something belonging to them damaged or destroyed on purpose (14%), or been physically attacked (13%). Boys were more likely to be the victim of a crime than girls.

While girls were generally less likely to be victims in mainstream schools, MORI’s results show that they were more likely to be bullied (25% versus 20%) (MORI, 2004, p53). Excluded pupils were no more likely to be bullied if they were female rather than male. MORI (p53) also states that white young people in mainstream schools are more likely to be threatened than black and ethnic minority young people; however, it is more likely that young black people will be a victim of theft of something other than a mobile telephone. MORI (p53) also notes that Asian and Afro-Caribbean students are more likely to be victims of racist abuse.

Younger pupils were more likely to be bullied than older pupils, although older pupils were more likely to be threatened, physically attacked, have a phone stolen, or be racially abused (MORI, 2004). However, MORI notes:

“This pattern does not hold for young people who have been excluded. While younger excluded pupils are also more likely to be bullied than those who are older, they are also more likely to be threatened by others.” (p53)

MORI notes that the proportion of young victims in mainstream schooling who reported that the perpetrator was another young person increased between 2003 and 2004 (68% to 74%) (p54). However, young victims in an excluded environment were less likely since 2003 to have been offended against by another young person.

Mainstream pupils were more likely to have been victimised at school, whereas young people who have been excluded were more likely to be victimised in their local area (MORI, 2004). In terms of significance of local area, Wood (2003) found that young people (aged 10–15) who lived in areas with perceived high levels of anti-social behaviour were at increased risk of being victims of personal crime.

Coping with crime

MORI (2004) found that parents (54%) and friends (43%) were the most likely confidants for young people in mainstream education. Telling a teacher (31%) or trying to solve the problem by themselves (26%) were the next most common answers. Girls from mainstream schools were more likely to report an offence than boys (86% compared with 79%) and were also more likely to tell their parents (61% compared with 47%). Boys, on the other hand, were found to be more likely to try and solve the problem themselves (32% compared with 18% of girls).

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3 This report makes a distinction between bullying and being physically attacked or threatened; it is of course possible for bullying to include threatening behaviour and attack.

4 Using a mixture of interviewer-administered and self-completion methods, 10,079 people were surveyed in England and Wales, including 4,576 people aged 10–25. In addition, 1,882 interviews were carried out with people from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups.
The percentage of young people who said that they had contacted a helpline or support service about the crime they had experienced was very low.

- 2% of students in mainstream education and 2% of students who had been excluded contacted Childline.
- 1% of students in mainstream education and 1% of students who had been excluded contacted Crimestoppers (MORI, 2004, p57).

In relation to the above question, Victim Support is not mentioned as a distinct category. (The research was carried out before Victim Support began developing its publicity for children and young people). ‘Other’ is included in the survey categorisation, and answers relating to Victim Support could have been included in this category, although only 2% of mainstream students and 4% of excluded students chose this option (MORI, 2004, p57).

### 4.2.2 Opinions of the police and the criminal justice system

The Crimestoppers survey also asked young people whom they were scared of; interestingly, 8% of the respondents said that they were scared of the police (Crimestoppers, 2002), suggesting that some young people are not just scared of bullies or gangs, but of aspects of the criminal justice system as well.

According to SHAPE (2003, p.3):

> “Children are distrustful of the police and do not report crime for fear of being labelled a ‘grass’ or because they feel that the police will not listen to them.”

In 2003 the Youth Justice Board published Speaking out, a summary of the views of young offenders, victims and parents about the youth justice system. The report says that:

> “Many young offenders thought that the police had negative attitudes towards young people …. Many young people reported having little understanding of what happened when they were arrested and did not understand their legal rights. They felt that when police attempted to improve the situation, information was often given in a childish way.” (Youth Justice Board, 2003, p34)

A 1994 study of the relationship between young people and the police in Edinburgh\(^5\) found that:

- young people’s ‘positive evaluation’ of the police (whether the police had a good understanding of their problems) deteriorated with age
- differences also showed up in terms of gender; a higher percentage of girls thought police understanding ‘very’ or ‘quite’ good compared to boys (54% compared to 44%)
- those with the highest evaluation of the police were young people who had had social contact with the police, but no adversary contact (Anderson et al p128–136).

\(^5\) 892 young people aged between 11 and 15 from four schools in Edinburgh were surveyed, followed by face-to-face interviews and discussions with 120 pupils, on top of a previous study of 250 young people.
Anderson et al. noted young people’s perception that the police could do little to help them and in response they developed their own ways of dealing with crime and managing its impact on their lives.

They also suggest that the perception that some young people have that the police are indifferent to their problems has consequences: the police do not get the information they need about crime, meaning that they may resort to ‘adversarial methods’ (Anderson et al., 1994, p158), and adults (i.e., parents) are not aware of the level of contact young people have with crime.

Anderson et al. (1994, p158) refer to the ‘vicious circle’ effect:

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Victimisation of young people
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Adult indifference  
Police do not take seriously
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Young people's strategies for coping with crime. (cautionary tales, gangs etc)
```

```
Not 'grassing'
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### 4.3 Effects

This section will review key literature surrounding:

1) criminal victimisation other than bullying or sexual abuse
2) bullying
3) sexual abuse of children and young people.

Morgan (1988, p8) suggests that crime involving children can be divided into two broad types:

- physical or sexual abuse by parents, other family members or close associates of the family
- miscellaneous categories of offence – ‘one off’ events perpetrated by ‘outsiders’ – which may be direct and indirect.
Section 4.3.3 looks at the effects of sexual abuse in more detail. Note that for the purposes of this literature review, sexual abuse is treated as a distinct category; other types of abuse (eg familial physical abuse) are included in the criminal victimisation section as a distinct subsection (crime/violence in the home).

### 4.3.1 Criminal victimisation

**Immediate and long-term effects**

Morgan & Zedner’s *Child victims: crime, impact, and criminal justice* (1992), a groundbreaking work in the field of children/young people and crime, notes the following immediate effects of crime on children and young people.

Immediate aftermath of a crime
- physical impact (eg physical injury)
- psychological impact (eg shock)

Longer term effects
- persisting physical effects (eg the continuation of serious injuries, which can be a permanent reminder of the crime)
- persisting emotional effects (eg fear of meeting the offender again)

Morgan & Zedner recognise that most children who have experienced criminal victimisation are affected by it soon after the crime occurs:

“Over 90 per cent of the child victims in the sample were to some degree distressed in the immediate aftermath of the crime ....” (p73)

They also highlight crime-specific reactions in relation to the immediate impact of a crime:

“Other aspects of the immediate impact of crime tend to be related specifically to certain types of crime.” (p63)

For example, a sexual assault may lead to a child or young person feeling violated or dirty, whereas a burglary may leave a child or young person feeling that their personal space has been invaded (Morgan & Zedner, 1992).

**Direct and indirect**

Children and young people can be directly as well as indirectly affected by a crime; they may witness a crime or be affected by its ramifications. For example, they may witness domestic violence or be affected by a crime against a member of their household. Indeed, Quinn DeValve (2005, p72) says the following about victims in general, rather than just child victims.
Quinn DeValve highlights the fact that both ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ victims can be psychologically affected by crime (2005, p72). In fact, she notes that they are ‘equally likely to suffer’ (p72).

All types of indirect crime can affect children and young people; it should not be assumed that a ‘less serious’ crime will have a lesser impact on an indirect child victim. Indeed, as Victim Support notes:

“It is crucial that … ‘indirect’ experiences of crime are not discounted. It may be easier to understand that a child witnessing a homicide or serious assault may suffer from subsequent horror, nightmares and fears than a child whose house has been burgled. However, crime of any sort can represent a loss of control, a threat to the natural order of things, a loss of safety and security.” (Victim Support, 2004, p6)

Young people who have been indirect victims of crime may find it difficult to receive the support that they need. Morgan & Zedner (1992) recognise this.

“Where an offence is committed against a member of the child’s household or against another family member, the child is unlikely to be recognised as a victim in his or her own right. However, their experiences may be such that they ought properly to be recognised as victims. Indeed, very few so-called indirect victims emerged from their experiences wholly unscathed.” (p73)

For this reason, Morgan & Zedner believe that:

“Referrals to Victim Support of child victims from agencies other than the police, such as doctors, schools, women’s refuges, and helplines, should be encouraged. This is because the children with whom they deal often do not come to the notice of the police. This is another reason why close liaison between such agencies and Victim Support is so desirable.” (p187)

Differences between child and adult victims

Reeves (1993, p5) notes:

“The effects of crime described by children are remarkably similar to those observed in adults, with various manifestations of ‘shock,’ ‘fear,’ ‘guilt,’ and ‘anger’ being the most commonly cited. Unlike adults, however, almost all of the effects reported could be broadly described as emotional, with physical, practical or financial problems rarely being mentioned …. More minor crimes also resulted in what might be regarded as a disproportionate amount of distress, had it occurred in adults.”
Reeves goes on to suggest that the ‘additional vulnerability of children’ aggravates the negative effects of crime (1993, p5). She suggests that children’s experiences differ from adults’ in the following ways.

- It is often a child’s first experience of crime; children feel a loss of security.
- Children are often physically more vulnerable; “they are less able to protect themselves”.
- Children may not understand why the crime happened.
- Children may not have the language to conceptualise or explain the crime.
- Children may be confused by the way the criminal justice system works.

Reeves (1993, p6) also says that:

“Other reactions might be described as childhood manifestations of the effects of crime which are all too readily recognisable in adults.”

Morgan (1988, p80–81) notes that children/young people often find it difficult to achieve victim ‘status’ (being recognised as a victim).

“It should be borne in mind that the status of victim has to be ‘earned’ in some way in order to be recognised as worthy of response and action. Validation of the victim status also depends upon the precipitating acts being defined as criminal and sufficient to trigger official action …. The position of children as dependents of others limits their capacity to acquire many kinds of status: there needs to be special circumstances before the ‘adultness’ of the victim status can be earned.”

It is not surprising that children and young people often worry that their complaints will not be taken seriously; their dependent status may result in the crimes committed against them not being ‘seen’ at all.

Children and young people may also worry that they are expressing signs of weakness if they respond emotionally to a crime.

“Victims have a tendency to blame themselves for ‘allowing’ the crime to happen. If adult victims see themselves as weak, imagine the feelings of an adolescent boy who naturally judges himself on how well he measures up to standards of manliness set by society and his peers!” (National Crime Prevention Council, 2003, p9)

Mental and physical health

Victim Support (no date, p5) notes that victims of crime may be affected both psychologically (with emotions such as shock, fear, distress, anger, guilt, a wish for revenge, helplessness, depression) and physically (for example with shakiness, numbness, feeling sick immediately after the crime, flashbacks, disturbed sleep, or physical injuries).
The American Academy of Paediatrics (no date) says that children who are victims or witnesses of violence are likely to exhibit a variety of effects including:

- fear for their safety
- aggression
- depression
- sleeplessness
- psychosomatic symptoms
- eating disorders
- post-traumatic stress disorder
- lowered self-esteem
- withdrawal
- and poor school performance.

The Academy goes on to note that young children can be particularly affected.

“Infants show increased irritability and fears of being alone. Young children may regress developmentally, such as in toileting and language; they may revert to crying, clinging, wetting the bed or getting very frightened.” (American Academy of Paediatrics, no date)

Crime, whether a victim is affected directly or indirectly, can seriously affect a child or young person in this way, something recognised by the Government.

“Indirect exposure to crime can also impede young people’s development and trigger poor mental health. In 2002, Parliament acknowledged the serious impact that witnessing violence can have on children’s health by amending the Children Act 1989 to include witnessing violence within the Act’s definition of harm.” (Smith, 2004a)

Smith (2004a) states that a young person can be helped through trauma associated with crime through independent advocacy and support and care from parents. However, he goes on to note that this issue is not being addressed in terms of service delivery.

“Yet the importance of helping children through the trauma of crime has not yet been fully addressed. Many mental health services focus on offending – either to reduce offending or to support offenders. What is overlooked is the link between youth offending and victimisation.” (Smith, 2004a).

This link is explored in more detail in the next section.
Adolescent development

The US-based National Crime Prevention Council (2003) notes the ways in which victimisation can affect ‘adolescent development’.

Physical development

- Puberty: “Those who have been victimised often are convinced that they are not normal. Victimisation intensifies their feelings of awkwardness and makes them feel even more removed from their peers.” (p9)
- Body image: Early adolescents who have been abused may associate their bodies with the crime. Middle adolescents “may begin to believe that their bodies are ‘only good for one thing’”. (p9)

Adult identity development

- Identity: An adolescent victim may incorporate immediate reactions to the crime into their identity (being tough or feeling weak).
- Autonomy: Adolescent victims may regress to their childhood behaviour (becoming ‘clingy’ with their parents).
- Risk-taking: “Victimisation – particularly repeat or chronic victimisation – can turn normal risk-taking into recklessness.” (p10) The report notes that victimised teenagers are more likely to use drugs, have unprotected sex/sex with lots of partners, commit crimes or attempt/complete suicide.

Victim to offender

Studies have shown that children and young people who experience crime are more likely to exhibit criminal behaviour later in life.

Smith (2004b, p3) notes that being the victim of assault with a weapon and robbery was more “strongly associated with delinquency than were other forms of victimisation” and “being harassed by adults” was also a big factor. Smith goes on to recognise that:

“The more victimisation is repeated, the more strongly it predicts delinquency. Consistently repeated victimisation (without any gaps) predicts delinquency most strongly of all. The most important factors explaining the link between victimisation and offending were getting involved in risky activities and situations, and having a delinquent circle of friends.” (Smith, 2004b, p3)

Exposure to violence, rather than direct victimisation, can also significantly affect young people. Indeed, Hunter (2004)6 suggests that exposure to violence against women and antisocial male behaviour is a significant factor in relation to the aggression of adolescent sex offenders.

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6 The US-based study recruited 157 male participants from public and private institutional treatment programmes for juvenile sex offenders. A social history questionnaire was completed, alongside assessment instruments designed to assess personalities, attitudes and behaviours.
Being a witness of violence has also been shown to be linked to delinquency (Flannery et Al, 1998; Kaufman & Cicchetti, 1989; Kratcoski, 1982; Mouzakatitís, 1981; Prino & Peyrot, 1994).

In relation to violent victimisation, Fagan (2003, p445) states that family, and non-family perpetration, affects the criminal behaviour of victims.

“Both types of violence have an immediate and sustained impact on criminal involvement, although the effect is somewhat stronger for non-family victimisation, and for both types, the relationship tends to weaken over time. In addition, those experiencing both types of victimisation report a higher frequency of offending compared to those experiencing only one type. The findings indicate the need for prevention programs aimed at decreasing the prevalence of adolescent victimisation, as well as intervention efforts to help victims from becoming offenders.”

Victim Support has just completed a study which explores the links between victimisation and offending in more detail. The report will be published by Victim Support’s National Office during summer 2007.

The effect of crime or violence in the home

A study by English, Marshall & Stewart (2003) of children aged six and under suggests that domestic violence indirectly affects child health and behaviour:

“DV [domestic violence] has a measurable and substantial association with caregiver and family functioning, which in turn have a substantial association with child health and behaviour.” (p54)

Thus, violence in the home can have substantial effects, even when the child him or herself is not directly offended against; the effects of domestic violence may be filtered through other members of the household.

Bogel & Little (1998, p31) note, in relation to the work of Jaffe et al (1990), that witnessing spousal abuse (commonly known in the UK as domestic violence) can have the following effects on children.

1. “Boys and girls learn that violence is an appropriate way of resolving conflict.
2. Girls learn victimisation is inevitable and cannot be changed.
3. Children demonstrate physical aggression in peer relationships.
4. Poor school adjustment and learning activities are evident.
5. Children experience inordinate levels of shame.

7 The results were based on The National Youth Survey, “a multicohort panel study of adolescents born in the United States between 1959 and 1965” (Fagan, 2003, p447). The sample, drawn in 1976, of 1,725 young people aged 11–17 were interviewed annually for the first five years and then every three years (three times).
8 The 261 subjects of the research represented a subset of participants from the ‘Longitudinal Studies of Child Abuse and Neglect’ (LONGSCAN) study, a set of five research projects examining consequences of child maltreatment. The data used was obtained from interviews with the primary caregiver and child (when the child was aged four and six), a review of case files and review of teacher reports.
7. Social isolation is commonly experienced because the children demonstrate poor social skills and their parents encourage isolation.

8. Children feel guilty and responsible for the violence.

9. Children experience high levels of fear and anxiety.

10. Children demonstrate distractibility and inattentiveness to academic tasks.”

In a study of US juvenile court records, Herrera & McCloskey (2001) discuss the fact that gender issues come into play in relation to the risk of delinquency among young people exposed to family violence.

“Although boys and girls share similar family risk factors for delinquency, girls are more likely than boys to be arrested for violent offences in the aftermath of child physical abuse. These findings suggest that it takes more severe abuse to prompt violence in girls than is necessary to explain boy’s violent offending.”

In relation to gender differences, Bogel & Little (1998) suggest the following.

- Girls who witness spousal abuse/domestic violence are usually more accepting of violence and passive, whereas boys display physical aggression; this is comparable to physically abused children.
- “Boys who witness spousal abuse but are not abused themselves do not suffer the same kind of psychological damage that the girls who only witness their mothers’ battering or children who are physically abused endure. This may be due to the identification that boys experience with their fathers during the process of gender identity development” (1998, p37); thus, boys may subconsciously identify with their fathers in a household affected by domestic violence.
- With victim-witness children (ie children who are victims of violence at home and also witness it), there is also an apparent gender split; boys are more likely to have problems at school – with language, thinking, concentration and organisation – have more accidents, poor health, less ‘values development,’ and are more likely to be more physically aggressive and have problems with authority (p37).

As noted by Bogel & Little (1998), this backs up work by Jaffe et al (1990), which suggests that the responses of the children of battered women echo the role models provided by their parents.

Coping with crime

Children and young people find a number of ways to cope with the effects of crime. In a study on the effect of violence on young people, Flannery et al (1998, p 43) note the following.

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9 229 children were interviewed about abuse in the family in 1991. Juvenile court records were searched five years later to see what crimes had been subsequently committed by the children.

10 Bogel and Little (1998) examined relevant literature and also examined the transcribed records of 37 children, aged 5–12.

11 Students (from the 1992–1993 school year) in Years 9 to 12 answered questionnaires during a 25 minute class period.
• Young people exposed to high levels of violence at home were not likely to choose to talk to a family member, counsellor or teacher, although the “tendency to do this increased with more home violence”.
• The most popular coping strategies were listening to music, talking with friends, and being by oneself.
• Females were more likely to interact with others.
• Males were more likely to “engage in instrumental activities” such as sport.
• Both genders coped with “exposure to high levels of violence” by becoming angry, drinking alcohol or drugs, and being mean to others.

In relation to gender differences, Flannery et al (1998, p31) also note that:

“Most studies show that males tend to cope by engaging in more instrumental or externalising behaviours, while females rely more on interacting with others in their social support networks or engage in more internalising strategies.”

According to The Royal College of Psychiatrists (2004), girls are more likely to have an eating disorder, cut themselves, or take an overdose as a result of being a victim of crime.

Flannery et al go as far as to say that adolescents exposed to high levels of violence and who use maladaptive coping strategies are “at significantly increased risk for the perpetration of violence and victimisation from violence”. (Flannery et al, 1998, p45)

Interestingly, the behaviour of parents can have a significant effect on the extent to which a child is affected by a crime.

“Where parents themselves were visibly distressed, their children’s reactions were exacerbated. Conversely, where parents were not badly affected or managed to conceal their reactions, the impact on children tended to be lessened.” (Morgan & Zedner, 1992, p73)

4.3.2 Bullying

Mental and physical health

Studies have indicated that victimisation from bullying is associated with adverse effects on psychological and physical health. Indeed, research12 from the Netherlands has shown that:

“Many psychosomatic and psychosocial health problems follow an episode of bullying victimisation …. Furthermore, our results indicate that children with depressive symptoms and anxiety are at increased risk of being victimised.”

(Fekkes et al, 2006)

Child Health Alert notes that it is sometimes difficult to define what comes first: being bullied or a child’s psychological problems (Child Health Alert, 1999).

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12 This was a six month cohort study (autumn 1999) with follow-up measurements (spring 2000). 1,118 children aged 9–11 from 18 schools filled in questionnaires.
Holland Kopasz & Smokowski (2005) report that bullying victims may have difficulty sleeping. They may also think of themselves as failures and/or outcasts. Colman (1997) notes that children harassed at school are more at risk of suicide, and that girls are more likely than boys to think that their lives are not worth living if they are bullied regularly. Ma, Mah & Stewin (2001) also note that the victims of bullies can be seriously affected both mentally and physically and that:

"Victims of bullying in childhood tend to have low self-concept and experience depression in adulthood … They often experience greater degrees of fear, anxiety, guilt, shame, helplessness and depression than children who are not bullied.”
(p251)

Rigby13 (2000) explores the link between being bullied, perceptions of social support and mental health, and says:

“The mental health of young adolescents is related independently to the degree of bullying they experience at school and also to the extent to which these students feel they can rely upon the support of others when they have a serious problem. Students who report being bullied frequently and have low social support appear to be at most risk of poor mental health. However, there was no evidence suggesting that the perceived availability of social support affected frequently victimised students more than others.” (p65)

While the results of Rigby’s study suggest that being bullied and having low social support “may affect the mental health of students independently” , it is considered possible that the two issues are linked as “Children who have little or no support from others are clearly more vulnerable to attack …” (p65).

He concludes that students are at an increased risk of mental illness if they are frequently bullied by other students, especially when they have little or no support (Rigby, 2000).

Rigby also suggests that the impact of low social support and being bullied may have more of an effect on girls than boys.

“A recent study of the reported hurtfulness of aggression by peers directed towards American schoolchildren aged 9–15 years suggests that girls feel more hurt by such aggression, whether it be physical or social, than do boys.” (p66)

He goes on to suggest that for girls it may not be the frequency of the aggression that is important, but rather the nature and also the vulnerability of the person concerned; girls reported that they did not find social aggression less hurtful than physical aggression, unlike boys (Rigby, 2000). Holland Kopasz & Smokowski (2005, p104) suggest that the link between victimisation and ‘internalising disorders’ such as depression is especially strong for adolescent girls and may be linked to eating disorders.

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13 Questionnaires were answered by 450 boys and 395 girls, aged 12–16, from three secondary schools in Australia.
Holland Kopasz & Smokowski (2005) also note that:

- at the age of 23, previous victims “tend to be more depressed and have poorer self-esteem than non-victimised young adults”
- male victims may experience psychological difficulties “such as inhibition with women during adulthood and may have problems in their sexual relationships”
- personal relationships in adulthood may be affected by bullying
- victims of bullying may be overprotective parents, making their children more likely to be bullied themselves (p105).

Thus, bullying can have a long-term effect on the mental and social well-being of young victims.

**Schooling**

Many children and young people who have been bullied at school refuse to go to school and/or develop ‘school phobia’ (Hamilton & Thomas, 2006, p14). In fact, ‘school phobia’ may affect the student even if they change schools.

> “The phobia may extend beyond the original school, and make it impossible for the pupil to be re-integrated into any school environment.” (p14)

Hamilton & Thomas note other factors which may affect the schooling of a young person who is being bullied.

- Parents may be unable or unwilling to send their bullied child to school.
- Schools may not accept bullying as a reason for a young person’s absence, and their work may therefore not be marked or even provided.
- ‘School phobia’ is rarely acknowledged by medical examiners, and students who have missed school may not therefore receive the help that they would if they were absent with another type of illness.
- Local authorities sometimes pressurise parents to make their children return to school.

The above factors therefore indicate that a young person who has been bullied at school may end up feeling pressurised by the school (and parents, local authorities etc.) to reintegrate.

Holland Kopasz & Smokowski (2005) state that victims of bullying may take weapons to school to defend themselves. As noted by Brockenbrough, Cornell & Loper (2002), victims are more likely to do this than non-victims.
Self-blaming and shame

An analysis of calls to ChildLine from victims of bullying suggests that victims often blame themselves for what has happened to them.

“Victims of bullying were prone to see the cause of bullying in themselves, to express the feeling that there is something the matter with them. In some cases children reported that they were called names and saw these names as indicating ‘reasons’ for the bullying.” (La Fontaine, 1991, p13)

Morrison (2006) notes the importance of shame in relation to bullying. While bullies often deny that they have done anything wrong and thus reject feelings of shame, it is often a different matter for those that have been bullied.

“They are caught in persistent cycles of persistent shame through ongoing feelings of disrespect, and disconnection, from others.” (Morrison, 2006, p376)

Morrison goes on to suggest that victims of bullying “sacrifice who they are as individuals to belong and become beholden to the collective”. This then goes on to affect them in negative ways, leading to social withdrawal.

Morrison proposes that ‘shame management’ and restorative justice could go some way towards easing bullying problems in schools.

“Shame acknowledgement can lead to greater integrity of the self and the social world …. Restorative justice, when applied to families, schools, the work place or governance, seeks to reweave the social fabric of individuals’ lives through mechanisms of support and accountability …. A central feature to this process may well be repairing social bonds through effective shame management.” (p389)

This method could potentially help bullies, the bullied, schools and other institutions where children and young people are bullied, and society as a whole.

Racist bullying

Victims of racist, homophobic or disability-motivated bullying may have specific support needs.

In relation to race, Skinner (1996) notes that:

“black parents report the heartbreaking experience of having their young children reject their black skin and cultural characteristics because these are seen by white children as a reason for excluding them from friendship groups.” (page viii)

The Anti-Bullying Network (2006) asserts that:

“Racist violence, harassment and abuse are closely related to, and sometimes difficult to distinguish from, bullying.”

They suggest that racist bullying can range from “ill-considered remarks” which may not be intended to be upsetting, to deliberate physical violence (Anti-Bullying Network, 2006). It is
also important to note that while black and ethnic minority children may be subject to racism, young people from other groups, such as travellers, may also be subject to abuse.

Barter (1999, p1) suggests that the effects of racism are “not necessarily uniform, with minorities being differentially affected and some variation by gender”. In relation to racist bullying within the community, Barter (1999, p3) goes on to say that:

“All discussion on the impact of violence on ethnic minority communities must acknowledge that the fear and anxiety extends far beyond the individual victim and affects the whole community.”

She notes that a racist motivation can transform an incident, which may appear trivial, into something much more frightening for the victim.

The Anti-Bullying Network (2006) says that racist bullying in schools can affect children and young people in the following way.

“Children who experience it have their education disrupted. They may be unable to concentrate on lessons because of feelings of fear or anger. Their self-confidence may be damaged and, as a result, they may not fulfil their potential.”

To counter racist bullying, the Anti-Bullying Network suggests that schools should address issues of racism directly.

“It deserves its own response in schools. We cannot assume that every school which has an anti-bullying policy will deal effectively with all the issues relating to racism. Racist bullying must be explicitly discussed in the classroom and there must be clear guidelines for dealing with incidents.”

**Homophobic bullying**

In a study of homophobic bullying in Calderdale schools, Bridget (2003) notes that homophobic bullying can severely affect young gay people.

- “LGB [lesbian, gay and bisexual] youth have high levels of truancy and school dropout, and low exam results.
- There are greater levels of mental health problems among LGB than heterosexual young people, including school and social phobias, anxiety and panic attacks, suicide ideation and attempts, self-harm, eating disorders, and possibly other mental health problems including schizophrenia.
- LGB young people have higher levels of alcohol and drug misuse than heterosexual young people.
- Teenage pregnancy rates are higher among LGB than heterosexual young people.
- LGB youth are likely to take part in risky relationship/sexual behaviours.
- Victims who are ‘hiding’ are more likely to suffer post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms than those who are ‘out’.
• Victims who experience indirect homophobic abuse are more likely to suffer PTSD symptoms.
• Victims who are receiving support are less likely to exhibit PTSD symptoms.

Rivers (1995) suggests that homophobic bullying can leave long-term scars. Indeed, Trenchard & Warren (1984) concluded that gay and lesbian pupils, as a vulnerable group, had a higher suicide rate compared to the general population.

Bridget (2003) writes that homophobic bullying can be made worse by the fact that for many young lesbian, gay and bisexual people, the realisation that they are gay can be traumatic in itself. Bridget (2003) also suggests that the school environment as a whole is often not helpful to gay students.

> “Because there are no positive images or positive information about homosexuals within school, negative messages about homosexuality go unchallenged. This has two effects: a) it leaves many young LGB people believing the negative messages they pick up from peers, family and the media, and b) it means that young heterosexual people believe these messages and adds to the likelihood of bullying.”

Sometimes children and young people suffer from homophobic abuse when they are not actually gay (eg they are called ‘gay’ as a form of insult). This has a wider impact, on more than just the person being bullied.

> “Homophobic attitudes and language support a culture of aggressively gendered assumptions that may increase the risk of sexist and sexualised bullying generally.”

(Office of the Children’s Commissioner, 2006, p43)

### Bullying young people who are disabled or have special needs

Children and young people who are disabled, or who have special needs or some kind of vulnerability, may also be the subject of bullying. As the Office of the Children’s Commissioner (2006, p44) states:

> “… those with ill-health, disability or visible medical conditions can be twice as likely as their peers to be targets for bullying behaviour.”

Physical disabilities can be targeted in the form of physical bullying. The Office of the Children’s Commissioner (p44) notes that “physical limitations can be exploited ruthlessly, with severe consequences”.

Children and young people with special educational needs may feel the effects of bullying even more strongly than other victims, because they may not have a high level of social confidence in the first place (Office of the Children’s Commissioner, 2006, p45).
The effect on family members

The families of victims of bullying are also often affected by the bullying. Indeed, Ma, Mah & Stewin (2001) say:

“Victims of bullying often bring home their frustrations in school and lash out at their parents who unfortunately are likely [to be] unaware of their children’s victimisation in school … As a result, family relationships are likely to deteriorate.”

(p251)

Thus, bullying may affect more than the direct victim.

Coping with bullying

In a 2004 study14 by Boyle, Hunter & Warden, 78% of victims of bullying or peer aggression (the authors defined bullying as repeated aggression, and peer aggression as non-recurring aggression) said that they had told someone about their problem (p383–384). Most pupils told friends (27%) or a member of their family (28%), a friend and family member (19%), or a friend, family member and teacher (12%). Just telling a teacher was less popular (4%) (Boyle, Hunter & Warden, 2004, p384). Girls were more likely than boys to say they had told someone (86% compared with 64%).

The researchers note that, among both bullying victims and the victims of peer aggression who had told someone about what was happening to them, 24% felt it was the most successful method for "stopping people being nasty to them" (Boyle, Hunter & Warden, 2004, p385). 12% of all those victimised felt that telling someone was the best strategy for "helping them to feel better". More girls than boys gave positive answers in relation to the benefits of telling. Significantly, the researchers note that the results of the study suggest that students are more prepared to seek help "when they see the situation as one in which something can be achieved".

In relation to gender differences and what could be called the telling 'strategy', the researchers said that:

“Girls perceive telling to be a more effective strategy, both in terms of stopping bullying and helping them to deal with their emotions. Future research should examine whether teachers treat boys and girls differently when they ask for help with dealing with aggression, as this may be one reason for their different evaluations of telling. For example, teachers may be more dismissive of boys' feelings than they are girls.” (Boyle, Hunter & Warden, 2004, p387).

It seems that, according to this study at least, girls are more likely to endorse a strategy of social support.

14 In this UK study, 830 children aged 9–14 answered self-reporting questionnaires within a classroom setting.
It should be taken into account that ‘telling’ can have negative consequences, something pupils are aware of. As Oliver & Candappa¹⁵ (2003) note in a DfES report:

“Although it is common for adults to encourage pupils to report bullying, pupils of both age groups [primary and secondary] expressed a preference for ‘sorting it out’ and ‘standing up for themselves.’ Alternative strategies necessarily involve pupils in the dilemmas and consequences associated with ‘telling.’ It appears that, even if pupils decide to ‘tell’ an adult, they are very aware of the gap between how teachers and parents should respond to bullying, and how they actually respond.” (p10)

It is perhaps unsurprising that only 24% and 12% of students respectively gave positive answers in relation to the benefits of telling in the above-mentioned article (Boyle, Hunter & Warden, 2004), and that many students do not tell anyone about what has happened to them. Indeed, this is not helped by the fact that some schools do not accept that there is bullying at their school, and/or that the young person in question has been bullied. As Hamilton & Thomas (2006) state:

“In spite of the strong emphasis placed on the need to address bullying in schools, some Heads still respond to parents by rejecting the suggestion that there is any bullying in the school. It may be alleged that the parent is over-protective, or even a trouble maker. There may be hurtful suggestions that the bullied child is over-sensitive or anti-social.”

They also say that some victims do not tell their parents about the bullying until it is physically obvious, and therefore “the known incidents of bullying in any school are likely to be the ‘tip of the iceberg’”.

### 4.3.3 Sexual abuse

There has been a multitude of research on the effects of sexual abuse on children and young people, much more than on other criminal victimisation and bullying. The following section therefore highlights key research and themes.

#### Mental and physical health

Childhood sexual abuse can severely affect a child or young person’s mental health, something which may continue into adulthood. Shaw (2004) notes:

“There is ample evidence that childhood sexual victimisation is frequently associated with psychological distress which endures and not infrequently continues on into adulthood, associated with a spectrum of internalising and externalising symptoms, trauma-related disorders, and patterns of psychosocial maladaptation.” (p217)

¹⁵ In this UK study, the views of pupils were investigated via focus groups and questionnaires. 12 schools (six primary and six secondary) took part in the research from across the country. 230 pupils were involved in focus groups and 953 pupils answered questionnaires.
Indeed, Carey (no date) states that:

“It is now accepted that childhood abuse and victimisation is associated with higher rates of psychiatric illness.”

However, Carey (no date) also notes that there is debate surrounding the cause and effect relationship of abuse and psychiatric illness.

Childhood sexual abuse has been shown to be related to post-traumatic stress disorder. For example, a study\textsuperscript{16} by Feerick and Snow (2005) revealed that:

- women with a history of sexual abuse taking part in the study reported more “symptoms of anxiety, distress in social situations, and post-traumatic stress disorder”
- women who had experienced attempted/actual intercourse “reported more avoidance than women with no history of abuse and women with exposure only, and more PTSD symptoms than all other groups of women”.

Suicidal behaviour (ie suicide attempts and/or self-harm) has also been shown to be significantly related to childhood sexual abuse. In fact, research has also shown a strong link between childhood sexual abuse and repeated suicide attempts; a study\textsuperscript{17} by Hestetun et al (2004) found that:

“Sexual and physical abuse [make] … independent contributions to repeated suicide attempts when controlling for a wide range of other childhood adversities (parental loss, neglect, antipathy and severe discord in the family). It is also interesting to note that, within the group of repeaters, those who self-mutilate are even more likely to have experienced physical and sexual abuse than non-repeaters and repeaters without self-mutilation.” (p871)

Interestingly, Shaw (2004) goes on to recognise the fact that some abused children do not show evidence of psychological distress. He also notes that:

- 10–25% of victims will have a ”delayed onset of symptoms” (sleeper effect)
- two-thirds of victims “…will have significant abatement of their psychological symptoms in the first 18 months”. (Shaw, 2004, p218)

It is important to recognise that some researchers have indicated that the negative effects of childhood sexual abuse may not be as persistent as assumed by many, and that this conclusion has not been well-received by all. Indeed, Wakefield (2006, p2) notes:

“Research over many years establishes the negative effects of child sexual abuse are not as pervasive, severe and long-lasting as generally assumed. But rather than being seen by victims’ advocates as good news, such research results are met with resistance, anger, and personal attacks.”

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\textsuperscript{16} In this study the relationship between childhood sexual abuse, social anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder was explored.

\textsuperscript{17} In this Dutch study, 74 people (65% female) who had been admitted to hospital after a suicide attempt were interviewed about prior suicidal behaviour and their childhood and family background.
As noted by Wakefield, the long-held belief that all victims of child sexual abuse are seriously affected makes it difficult to present results that suggest otherwise.

Sexual abuse often goes undetected because victims may not exhibit ‘obvious’ physical injuries. However, research has shown that the victims of childhood sexual abuse may suffer from ‘unexplained’ physical pain. These pains have been regarded by many as ‘somatisation’: “the expression of emotional pain … through bodily symptoms” (Nelson, 2002, p.51). However, Nelson notes, long-term damage through undiagnosed physical injury is certainly another possibility.

**Differences between child and adult victims**

Shaw (2004) says that studies of the effects of sexual abuse on children and young people must take into account the fact that the victims are not yet fully developed.

> “While children are generally exposed to the same traumatic happenings as adults, the trauma occurs in a developing child who is in the midst of elaborating an inner representational world, sensual-sexual motivational drive structures, internal mechanisms for regulating affects and impulse, identity formation, and who may be still struggling with issues of separation-individuation.” (p1–2)

Thus, childhood sexual abuse must be understood in the context of child development; while adults who have been sexually assaulted as adults may suffer from similar effects, they are not developing physically and mentally while the abuse is happening in the same way that a child or young person is.

**Sexual development and behaviour**

Finkelhor (1990) suggested, through the four ‘traumagenic’ dynamics model, that reactions to child sexual abuse fall into four categories:

- problems with trust in relationships
- self-esteem
- the sense of being able to affect the world and
- sexuality.

Sexual abuse in childhood can lead to the victim consolidating "sexually sensitizing, abusing behaviours" into their "sensual-sexual drive structure" (Shaw, 2004). Shaw notes that there are three ways in which this can happen.

1. Social-learning perspective: exposure to ‘coercive sexuality’ and patterns of sexuality at an early age may lead to “the internalisation and encoding of certain preferred pathways to sexual gratification”.
2. Developmental behavioral perspective: early ‘aberrant’ sexuality can “alter pathways for sexual gratification”.
3. Psychodynamic perspective: as the sexual abuse experience is associated with a range of affects (eg sexual arousal, sadomasochism, feelings of love etc), these affects may be “encoded unconsciously as one of the preferred patterns of behaviour for sexual arousal and gratification and may be consolidated into the sexual drive structure” (p219).
Therefore, victims of childhood sexual abuse may ‘refer back’ to previous sexually abusive experiences. Research has also shown that sexual abuse in childhood is associated with later ‘risky’ sexual behaviour (Cunningham, Stiffman & Doré, 1994).

Lew (2004, page iii) suggests that survivors of sexual abuse “may find pain easier to experience than pleasure”. Thus, for some people, pain is associated with pleasure and becomes eroticised.

**Male vs female victims**

It is important to recognise the fact that men as well as women can be affected by childhood sexual abuse; there has been much more research on female victims than male ones. Indeed, Walker, Carey & Mohr (2004) note that:

- girls are more likely to develop internalising behaviours (eg depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress) after childhood sexual abuse
- boys are more likely to manifest externalising behaviours after abuse (eg aggression, substance abuse).

In a previous study, sexually abused boys had more emotional and behavioural problems than sexually abused girls (Walker, Carey & Mohr, 2004, p 114).

In contrast to Walker, Carey & Mohr, and their suggestion of gendered internalising/externalising behaviours, Anda et al (2005) suggest that males and females are likely to manifest similar types of behaviours when adults. It would seem that more research on gendered behaviours needs to be carried out before firm conclusions can be reached on this issue. However, it is certainly the case that men may also be negatively affected by childhood sexual abuse; the study18 by Anda et al showed that:

> “The magnitude of the increased risk of alcohol problems, illicit drug use, suicide attempts, marrying an alcoholic, and current marital and family problems associated with CSA [childhood sexual abuse], was similar for both male and female respondents.”

Lew suggests than men who have been sexually abused face ‘particular’ challenges, “including widespread lack of understanding of male victimisation” (page v). They may also “find it difficult to accept the experience as abusive, to disclose that they were abused, and to seek help ...” (Lew, 2004, page v).

He also suggests (page iii) that male survivors of sexual abuse have an ‘abiding’ concern with what is normal, and that gay and heterosexual male survivors of sexual abuse may react in specific ways (page ii).

- Heterosexual men may ask “does the abuse mean I’m gay?”.
- Gay men may ask “is the abuse what made me gay?” and/or “did this happen because I’m gay?”.

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18 In this US study 17,337 adults completed a retrospective survey.
The effect of different types of abuser

It is commonly assumed that sexual abusers are nearly always male; however, females also sexually abuse children and young people.

"Nearly 40% of CSA among men and 6% of CSA among women was perpetrated by a female." (Anda et al, 2005, p434)

Studies have shown that childhood sexual abuse by a woman can have a very serious affect on the victim. Denov (2004) writes, in light of the belief that sexual abuse by women is relatively harmless when compared to the sexual abuse carried out by men, that:

“The vast majority of participants [of the study19] reported that the experience of female-perpetrated sexual abuse was harmful and damaging. As a result of the sexual abuse the male and female respondents reported long-term difficulties with substance abuse, self-injury, suicide, depression, rage, strained relationships with women, self-concept and identity issues, and a discomfort with sex.”

Anda et al (2005) found that sexual abuse perpetrated by a woman on a male child produced a similar risk of negative outcome as abuse perpetrated by a man (p434).

Children and young people may be sexually abused by people other than parents/family members. Certainly, sexual abuse by priests has been well-documented in the last few years; research has suggested that abuse by this category of perpetrator may affect victims in other, more specific ways than those listed above. Indeed, in a 1995 study20 Rossetti (1995) showed that Catholics who had been sexually abused by a priest reported lower levels of trust in Catholic priests, the church as a whole and God, than people who had been abused by adults who were not priests and people who were not abused at all.

The effect on family members

Childhood sexual abuse affects more than the immediate victim: family members can also be seriously affected. As Anderson Jacob & McCarthy Veach (2005) note:

“Research demonstrates that trauma produced a ‘ripple effect’ on all parties who are intimately involved with trauma survivors.” (p284)

The authors also note (p285) that Maltas & Shay (1995) developed a ‘trauma contagion’ model for partners of the victims of childhood sexual abuse.

“Their model has three central components: first, threatened beliefs – shattered assumptions; second, chronic stress; and third, the survivor’s tendency to repeat and reenact aspects of the sexual abuse within a committed relationship, including both victims and perpetrator behaviours.” (Anderson Jacob & McCarthy Veach, 2005, p285)

19 In this US study, seven men and seven women were interviewed. Most respondents had been severely sexually abused by their mothers.
20 Rossetti studied three groups: a) adult Catholics abused by priests when children; b) adult Catholics abused by non-priests as children; c) people who were not abused as children.
According to Anderson Jacob & McCarthy Veach (2005), research also indicates that:

- for male partners of female survivors, themes of sexual dissatisfaction and problems with sexual intimacy are common
- male and female partners of abuse survivors commonly report relationship dissatisfaction
- male partners often support their partners to the detriment of their own needs
- male and female partners have reported increased levels of discontentment.

Research by Dunn et al (2004) shows that childhood sexual abuse has implications for parenting relationships and next-generation child adjustment. Indeed, the researchers note that:

“[In the study21] more total problems, hyperactivity, conduct problems, peer problems, and emotional problems were reported in the children of mothers reporting CSA compared to the children of other mothers.” (p533)

**Victim to offender**

Research has highlighted the link between abuse in childhood and older sex offender behaviour. Indeed Veneziano’s research (2000) suggested a link between childhood sexual abuse and adolescent sex offending, with the offences committed linked to what the abuser had suffered themselves. Muster (1992) notes that:

“While children react to sexual abuse in a variety of ways, one common response is to become ‘sexually reactive.’ That is, they may touch or grab playmates and adults, mimic sex play on younger children (sometimes to the point of penetration), abuse animals, masturbate at inappropriate times and places, and use sexual language to antagonize adults …. When sexually reactive children enter adolescence, precocious sexual behaviour becomes grounds for incarceration and correctional treatment. If juvenile sex offenders are not rehabilitated, they risk going on to become adult child molesters, rapists, or pedophiles.”

Thus, childhood sexual abuse can potentially become a cyclical process.

**Coping with sexual abuse**

As noted above, victims of childhood sexual abuse may exhibit internalising and externalising coping strategies. Research has suggested gender differences in the coping strategies of survivors of sexual abuse.

“Women showed … greater reliance on coping strategies of withdrawal and trying to forget than men.” (Filipas & Ullman, 2005, p779)

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21 In this UK study, 8,292 families completed self-report data.

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Filipas & Ullman also note that:

“Women who delayed disclosure had more PTSD symptom severity, whereas men’s symptoms did not vary by timing of disclosure. It may be that when women delay disclosing, they are engaging in avoidance coping for a longer period of time, which has been shown to be associated with PTSD in past studies.” (p779)

The researchers also note that compared to men, women were more likely to have told someone about their abuse and to have received positive reactions.

The reactions of others can affect the way that a victim may cope, particularly if the victim is labelled as ‘a sexually abused child.’ While this label is essential for child protection and intervention:

“[It may] increase the potential for negative outcomes by triggering various mechanisms of influence that may maintain or exacerbate negative symptomatology manifested by sexually abused children.” (Hansen & Holguin, 2003, p654–665)

Social reactions to child sexual abuse can thus deeply affect the victims of sexual abuse.

### 4.4 Support needs

The following sub-section explores the key support needs of children and young people who have been victims of criminal victimisation, including bullying and sexual abuse.

#### Coping strategies

The above sections have shown that children and young people have varied coping strategies.

- Children and young people have different ways of coping with crime according to factors such as the crime itself, gender and age etc.
- These coping strategies may be positive (eg listening to music) or negative (eg turning to alcohol).
- Strategies may also be internal (eg self-harm) or external (eg aggression towards others).
- Different people (eg parents, friends and teachers) may be sought out as confidants depending on the type of crime/experience and the perpetrator.
- Surveys (eg Oliver & Candappa, 2003) suggest that many children/young people do not tell people about their experiences of bullying; many children and young people believe there are negative responses linked to ‘telling.’

The results of the literature review suggest that organisations which work with young victims need to recognise the diverse responses and coping strategies of children and young people, as well as the fact that while young people may exhibit the same emotional and physical reactions as adults if they have been affected by crime, they are not adults: they may feel much more vulnerable because they are young – in fact, it may be their first experience of crime.
Support services

It is important that support offered to young victims of crime takes account of statutory guidance and good practice guidelines relating to working with vulnerable children and young people. Communicating with vulnerable children: a guide for practitioners (Jones, 2003), was commissioned by the Department of Health. Key best practice points highlighted in the study include:

Developmental considerations

- A child’s age must be taken into account: communication should be kept within a child’s ‘range of abilities’ (p17).
- ‘Free recall,’ rather than specific questioning, is more likely to encourage children to remember events accurately (p17).
- Use non-leading questions and remain neutral, but not indifferent.
- Language should be simplified and the practitioner should monitor the child’s level of understanding.

The child’s psychological condition

- A child’s psychological condition can affect communication.
- The gender of the practitioner may need to be considered.

Diversity and difference

- Organisations should make sure that an appreciation of race, culture and language naturally permeate “all aspects of professional practice and the agency in which practitioners operate” (p53).
- Organisations should have male and female interviewers from the different cultural backgrounds in their area available.
- Issues of language need to be taken into account, as well as issues of culture, religion and cultural heritage.
- Dolls and drawings should reflect diversity (including disability).

Successful communication

- Core skills/qualities needed by practitioners identified by Jones include: listening to the child; conveying interest; emphatic concern; understanding; warmth; respect; capacity to manage the assessment; awareness of the transaction between interviewer/child; self-management; technique.

As suggested above, it is important to note that it is not just issues surrounding race, ethnicity and sexuality that should be taken into account when dealing with young victims of crime. Jones (p55) notes that children who have impairments that affect their communication may present particular difficulties for practitioners because they can be more difficult to communicate with. It is very important that practitioners rise to the challenge of communicating effectively, as “children with some degree of impairment or disability are more vulnerable to victimisation.”
Practitioners communicating with disabled children\textsuperscript{22} must be made aware of “the total situation of the disabled child” (Jones, 2003, p60) in order that their personal circumstances can be taken into account. In general, issues of ‘difference’ (whether race, sexuality, disability etc) should be addressed by practitioners at a relatively early stage in order that the “child is worked with in a respectful manner” (p49).

Institutional and community strategies are important in the support of children and young people who have been victims of crime – for example, school bullying strategies and crime reduction plans, which take into account young people’s needs and opinions. Indeed, in 2001 the NSPCC concludes that of a sampled number of crime and disorder strategies produced by crime and disorder reduction partnerships, many of the strategies combined or equated issues to do with young people’s safety to the problem of reducing juvenile crime (NSPCC, 2001). As Nacro (2003, p3) notes, this “misunderstands the pattern of child victimisation”. The NSPCC report recommends that young people need to be consulted and prioritised, their vulnerability must be addressed and their needs must be taken into account (NSPCC, 2001).

In relation to bullying, the DfES (no date) notes the importance of schools taking the problem seriously:

“All schools should treat bullying seriously and take steps to combat it promptly and firmly whenever and wherever it occurs. From September 1999, head teachers of maintained schools have been under a duty to draw up measures to prevent all forms of bullying among pupils.”

The DfES highlights the importance of listening to young people when it comes to bullying (Oliver & Candappa, 2003), as did the Office of the Children’s Commissioner:

“Children and young people must be actively involved and engaged in seeking solutions to bullying and their ideas must play a significant part in shaping bullying interventions. Children also need to be involved in the development and evaluation of anti-bullying programmes and approaches.” (Office of the Children’s Commissioner, 2006, p88)

This is something which applies to young people and crime in general. If appropriate preventative and support strategies are in place, young victims may be much better placed to recover from their victimisation.

4.5 Literature review conclusions

The literature review process has shown that there is not as much literature available on the effects of bullying on children and young people as there is on the effects of criminal victimisation (in general) and sexual abuse; literature on the effects of sexual abuse on children and young people is more plentiful.

\textsuperscript{22} As noted by Jones (2003, p55), this term covers a wide range of impairments, including learning difficulties, sensory and communication impairments and physical disability.
The literature review has revealed that fear of crime does not relate to the likelihood of being a victim. Available evidence suggests that the rate of child victimisation is twice that of adult victimisation; however, young people aged under-16 are not currently part of the British Crime Survey.

Children and young people suffer from both immediate and longer term effects of crime. They may be directly and/or indirectly affected by a crime, with factors such as type of crime and gender affecting their reaction. Crucially, the additional vulnerability of children and young people, when compared to adults, may aggravate the negative effects of crime.

Victimisation is associated with adverse effects on psychological and physical health. Indeed, children and young people who experience crime are more likely to exhibit criminal behaviour later in life. Schooling is often affected by criminal victimisation and bullying; young people may have time off school if they have been a victim.

Children and young people have different ways of coping with crime, relating to factors such as the crime itself, gender and age etc. Strategies may be externalising or internalising, and positive or negative. Different people (eg parents, friends and teachers) may be sought out as confidants depending on the type of crime/experience and the perpetrator; but many young people believe there are negative responses to telling.
5. Interviews with children and young people

5.1 Introduction

This section analyses the in-depth semi-structured interviews carried out with children and young people, and seeks to further understand the effects of crime and bullying on this age group and identify their support needs.

5.2 Interviews

Interviews were carried out with 20 children and young people aged between 9 and 18. The interviewees came from three groups.

- Children and young people who had used Victim Support’s services, recruited through Victim Support (seven interviewees)
- Children and young people who had not used Victim Support’s services, recruited through the police (seven interviewees)
- Children and young people who had been bullied, recruited through schools (six interviewees).

The bullying victims may have reported their experiences to the police. See Appendix 2 for more detailed information on the interviewees.

The following section explores the opinions of the young victims on issues such as the effects of crime, support needs and opinions of Victim Support. Occasionally the victims’ parents commented during the interviews; where relevant, these comments have also been included. All of the interviewees had been victims of crime within the last year.

5.2.1 Effects

This subsection explores how the interviewees felt about what happened to them, immediately after the crime and more recently, and the ways in which their lives were affected (negatively and positively).

It must be recognised at this point that many of the young people affected by crime recruited via Victim Support and the police were victims of crime at school, on the way to or from school, or by someone from or linked to their school. Therefore, many of their experiences are similar to those of the victims recruited via schools (ie people who are categorised in this research as being bullying victims). The difference in this research between someone classified as a bullying victim and someone classified as being a victim of a crime may simply be that the bullying victim did not go to the police.

Sentences in bold in the following sections indicate comments that have been made by the researcher during interviews.
Effects immediately after the crime

Unsurprisingly, the interviewees’ reactions to their crimes were specific to each individual concerned. Some were seriously affected, others less so. Some recovered very quickly, others are still recovering. It should be borne in mind that the types of crimes the interviewees experienced differed in seriousness and this may have affected their reactions.

Some victims of course suffered physically and were actually hurt by the perpetrator of their crime:

“I had to be taken up to the hospital and have x-rays and CAT scans, and all this other stuff and it took me about three months to recover.”

Or, they may have felt ill afterwards as a result of the crime.

“How did it make you feel immediately after the crime?
I was actually sick.
Why do you think that happened?
I don’t know, I think I just got really distraught.”

Many were shocked by what had happened to them.

“How did it make you feel immediately after the crime?
You sort of go into a state of shock, not just because you are worried about what’s happened to your body but more worried about why this person has done this to you. Really you can’t figure it out ‘cause your mind is all over the place, just like why did this just happen?”

Others were very angry.

“I was angry and really upset but I had to hold it in for assembly because I was around so many people. Then I just told a teacher afterwards.”

“Anger, frustration, rage, apart from lately I’ve found a way to stop me releasing these expressions out physically. I create a little diversion in my head or I’ve found a way to take a hit without having to take so much damage. If I didn’t create a diversion in my head I would most likely gather all my strength and beat the hell out of them.”

Many were worried that something would happen to them again.

“Well I thought about it a little bit. I was kind of like ‘Oh God what about if I see them again’, you know?”

Depression or feelings of sadness set in for some victims, sometimes quite quickly after the crime.

“I got quite depressed and didn’t want to go to school …. I didn’t have many friends and I wasn’t very popular at the time, and it just made it even worse, what had happened. It just made me not want to go at all.”
Some victims appeared to blame themselves for what had happened to them.

“When it was happening, I just felt like really bad as if I was doing something wrong. It was as though I couldn’t get anything right.”

**Long-term effects**

Many victims were no longer affected by what had happened to them when they were a victim of crime; either they did not regard the crime as a serious one (eg a mobile phone theft in one case) or they had recovered (physically and/or mentally). However, this was less true for the bullying victims who were interviewed, whose experiences were long-term (ie they were continually bullied over a sustained period of time, or they were bullied more than once) rather than isolated incidents.

Some victims experienced long-term health issues: for some, this was due to an extensive physical injury which occurred during the crime (eg they needed a long recovery period due to the seriousness of the crime), and for others, their emotional health had affected their physical health.

“I went to the doctors to see if they would give me any tablets. They said no so I’m having tablets that are called Kalms. They’ve got natural stuff in them to help me go to sleep because I need to go to college and stuff. I have been so knackered at college.”

“I still look over me shoulder now and feel really jumpy and I’ve bags under my eyes. I need to get more sleep, it’s just the lack of sleep really.”

Some victims remarked that they think about what happened to them when they are trying to go to sleep or are sleeping.

**“Do you think about it at all?**

*Sometimes when I go to sleep. If I get a headache I just remember.”*

**“Do you think about it when you’re going to bed or sleeping?**

*If you count nightmares about it, then yeah.”*

Stress was an issue for some victims.

“When it started happening I got a lot more uptight. Before it was happening I used to be really laid back but since I have been really stressy…. Yeah I get pushed to the edge.”

Many victims became more of aware of their personal security (particularly those who had been the victim of theft).

**“Does it make you think about your security more, how you act in public?**

*Yeah, not to use it [a mobile phone] in such public areas or when I’m by myself. And to make sure I’ve got my bag under my arm more and having people around me and how close they are, like on lifts and things like that.”*
Some of the interviewees do not actually like to talk or think about what happened, or have learnt not to as a coping mechanism.

“I try and forget about it as much as I can. Because there’s no point trying to go over things that have happened already and what’s already been dealt with.”

Effects on relationships

The interviewees were asked whether or not what had happened to them had affected their relationships with a) their parents/carers, b) their siblings and c) their friends.

a) Parents or carers

Unsurprisingly, the stress that some of the interviewees felt, affected their relationships with their parents.

“Yes … they said I was a lot more stressed towards them and I snapped at them a lot more.”

Many of the interviewees received great help from their parents/carers after they had been the victim of crime or bullying. Parents and carers had different tactics; some made light of the incident (eg joked about what had happened) to help their child recover.

“How about your mum and your step dad, how did they help you deal with what had happened?
They just … my step dad was quite funny actually. He got in the car, on the way home and went ‘ha, ha, ha, your first shiner!’
And how did it make you feel when he said that?
It just made me giggle.”

Others talked about what had happened with their child in great detail in order to aid the recovery process.

“Did they help you to deal with what had happened at all?
Yeah, yeah, my mum has always been very supportive and helped me to talk through things. If I’ve needed to talk through things she’s always there.”

Others did not feel that they received the help that they needed from their parents/carers.

“My mum and dad refused to talk about it and I go to school and all I got was a negative attitude from everybody.”

b) Siblings

As with parents and carers, some brothers and sisters were a great help to their siblings, often intervening if their sibling was being bullied or if they were the victim of a crime (particularly if the crime was connected to school). However, this sometimes had negative consequences.
“She [the sister] often said things to the people who were not that nice to me. Those people said ‘Oh, you can’t fight your own battles; you have to get your sister.’”

Some siblings were unfortunately not much help.

“I’ve got one brother who teases me rotten about it and it doesn’t help matters.”

The sister of an interviewee born to non-British parents helped her sibling in a practical way, although this did not always have a positive outcome.

“And did your sister help you at all to deal with what happened?
Well, she knows how to speak English.
Oh OK. Do your mum and dad not know how to speak English then?
Not very well.
Well as your sister can do that, how does she help? Does she go and speak to anyone or …?
Yeah, she like goes to their house and says ‘Why did you do that for?’ and they sometimes say, ‘You [with a reference to the victim’s nationality] need to go back to your own country’ and then when we walk away they start calling us names.”

c) Friends

Many young people relied on their friends as confidants after their negative experiences.

“There were times when I saw my friend X because I didn’t have anyone to fall back on at school because I go to drama class on Saturday and Sunday and I felt like them and X were my only two friends.”

However, some young people who were the victims of bullying were actually bullied by their supposed friends.

“And how about your friends at school? Do they know what’s been happening to you?
Yeah. That boy who I said a minute ago, and there is another boy who helps me. He’s the one who told me who smashed the window. His name is X. And I like him sometimes but he sometimes bullies me.
Does he? What does he do?
He like chases after me.
And does he join in with the other people when they say things to you?
Yeah, sometimes. And, like once, X smashed his head and he said like I did.
And how does that make you feel, when one moment he’s nice to you and then…?
Well I sometimes feel there’s no point having him as your friend when he’s going to use me.”
One young victim was keen to stay away from friends, in case this led to repeat victimisation.

“I don’t go round my friends … [and] risk it might happen again. If word goes round the school that I started going round, then eventually it would reach the ears of some unwanted persons and they would try and intercept.”

For others, their friends tried to remove themselves from the situation.

“People were trying to keep out of it as much as possible and I didn’t have that many friends as people were like ‘Oh, hi’ and then they would go and that’s it.”

Interestingly, one young victim believes that they gained more friends because of what happened to them.

“Did what happened affect your friendships at all?
No, it didn’t affect anything like that, apart from after that people have been taking me a bit more seriously. And ever since then I have been making more and more friends even with the ones that really got under my nerves.

So do you mean you have gained more friends since the incidents? Why do you think that is?
‘Cause now they know that even after two full sized man blows, which should normally have knocked me out, I’m still standing, still in one piece, didn’t even fall back ….”

Trust in general became a big issue for many victims.

“I won’t trust anybody anymore. Just trusting someone myself is a big deal now. Making new friends I can’t deal with. I’ve got two friends who I slightly trust and even then I’m guarded.”

**Effects on schooling**

Many of the interviewees missed school immediately after their crime because they were emotionally and/or physically affected by what happened to them.

“I had about five weeks off school, to recover both physically and mentally ‘cause after that you don’t really feel like going outside much. It took a while.”

One victim of bullying seems to have been especially affected, with their experiences permeating their everyday school experience.

“At my last school I stopped going for a while. Whenever I had a bad day I would stay at home and calm down but when I had finished at that school, I hadn’t been to school before I came here for about three months.”

“What I’ve been through in my last school I get constant flash backs and I could stand there for 15 minutes. I can do nothing, not respond to anybody, and end up somewhere and not realise how I got there. It’s scary when I do that, I have to say. It scares my friends.”
Another student was advised by her college to take a break from education, something which seems to have actually made the college experience more daunting.

“\textit{I missed out on a bit of college because X said I should come back after Christmas. X said that because I wouldn’t be able to concentrate and I’d just be worrying constantly about things, so he gave me the time off and when I came back after term that’s when it all went downhill for me. I was interrupting lessons, I was just not buckling down because I just hadn’t been there for so long, I was finding it hard to get back into the routine of school.”}"

Some victims of bullying ended up wanting to stop attending their school altogether.

“\textit{Sometimes I don’t want to go to school but I have to.”}
\textit{What made you decide to stay at your current school?}
I was being forced to stay by my parents.”

Some students affected by bullying or crime linked to school have altered their behaviour as a result of what happened to them. For example, they may get a lift to school rather than walking.

“I have to have a taxi pick me up now because my mum wrote a letter about it.”

Or they may stay inside during break times.

“\textit{When you were still at school did you still go out at lunchtime or did you stay in or did it not affect you at all?}
It was only the last three months of school, because it was only the second half of that that we were allowed to go out, but it was only towards the end of that when I started to go out, down the shop and that, but normally I’d stay in school because I felt a bit safer in than I did outside.”

Some young people who were the victims of bullying found it hard to cope in lessons.

“I found it a lot harder to concentrate on everything. Once I looked out of the window and one of the girls was out there and that made me want to cry and be upset with anger ….. Yeah, part of my brain was always on that and the other part was like, when do I get to see my friends again and be with my friends?”

“I do sometimes walk out of lessons when it gets too much and then I go to the office.”

One student suggested that their school did not fully support them, in practical terms, when they were forced to take time off school due to physical injury.

“\textit{OK, you said you had five weeks off school; did that affect your school work at all?}
At the time yes, because I took two hefty coursework-based subjects … so I missed a lot on the course work and it took me a long while to catch back up. I had little work sent home but there was a lot I couldn’t do because of limitations. At the time my computer didn’t have the software I needed ….
And did the school suggest installing that on your system ….}
They did, but that was towards the end, that was the week before the Easter holidays – no, half term holidays – the last ones before this one that I’m now coming up to, they said to me that they could send and get a license for you to have it if you are going to have any more time off but I was already planning to come back after the half term, so it was a bit late really.”

Two young people stated that the bullying they had experienced had actually hardened their resolve and made them want to do even better at school. One said:

“I’m not one who wants to miss out on a good piece of education over some miserable little idiot who can’t find something better to do.”

Effect on social life

Lots of the young people interviewed altered their social habits after they were the victim of a crime.

“I didn’t really like going outside … I didn’t really trust the outside world that much either. So it kind of had a very negative effect. It took a while but in the end I managed to slowly get out and about ….”

Many were scared that they would meet the perpetrator(s) of their crime.

“I didn’t go out a lot afterwards …. A couple of months, bit longer … ‘cause I was scared he was going to be there.”

“I don’t remember the last time I went out with my mates. I was meant to go out this weekend but I changed my mind because whenever I go I see people from my last school and I can’t cope. I end up having a panic attack and doing something I regret.”

Others went out but were still worried.

“I went out the same amount but I felt like I wanted to hide away. If I saw the people, I wanted to look away from them.”

5.2.2 Support needs

This sub-section explores how the interviewees were supported: by Victim Support, where applicable, and by schools, the police and families.

Once again, sentences in bold in the following sub-section indicate comments that have been made by the researcher during interviews.

Telling, and responses

The interviewees were asked whom they told about their crime. The first person victims confided in obviously depended on the circumstances of the incident; some young people
told teachers because they were at school when they were a victim of crime, others their parents or friends.

Parents were an obvious choice for young victims to speak to about what happened to them; many of the interviewees found their mothers and fathers to be very supportive.

“We did talk about it because I got quite emotional, so my mum had to let us have a word about it. She said it was all forgotten about now, in the past. Let’s start a new life.”

“She used to talk to me about it a lot because she was bullied at school …. She said to me, I know that you probably feel as though life is not worth living but you have to remember that so many people care about you. Just having my family there really helped me.”

However, as noted above, some parents were not so helpful.

Some young victims of crime/bullying at school or college confided in teachers or other members of staff. Some teachers and staff members really helped their students.

“How did your teacher help?
She was really good about it because we had an appointment on Friday afternoon, last lesson, for all of last year. It really helped me because I felt that I could really open up to her and that I could tell her pretty much anything I needed to …. If a problem comes up then I will go to her because I know I can trust her.”

“Well X I speak to and asked if I should carry on and he said to never ever quit. He was my tutor so he knows it’s been hell. Y, I tell her stuff and she sees me crying and stuff just comes up.”

Other students were unimpressed with the way they were treated when they confided in teachers/members of staff.

“If they didn’t see anything, then they normally take the other kid’s side ‘cause I am the tallest kid in year eight and most of the year nines; there’s only five or six that are actually taller than me in year nine.”

In fact, many of the young people interviewed (and their parents if present) mentioned that they were unhappy with the way that their school supported them. This is explored in more detail below.

The interviewees spoke to other people as well. Indeed, one young person confided in their martial arts instructor.

“Because I do self defence, he said I’m allowed to do self defence if anyone attacks me, but I didn’t know I was allowed to do that.”

Some young people told the police what had happened to them. Many of the young people were very happy with the support they had from the police immediately after the incident, although others were not.
“Yeah, she came and took a statement. She was fine, but when I was at the shop and they came over, they started asking, sort of treating me like I’d done something wrong. Started asking questions, what did I do, ‘What did you do to provoke him,’ like I’d done something … I was getting a bit pissed, because I hadn’t done anything to him, and he kept having a go at me really.”

“I was just going to leave it but the police said they were pressing charges. Because I didn’t really get a choice about it …. Yeah, I didn’t really get a chance to say whether I wanted to press charges against him or not. They just went ahead and pressed charges …. Once they started I weren’t really that bothered. I’d have left it if they hadn’t gone straight ahead.”

One bullying victim was worried that by telling someone about what was happening to them, it might actually make the situation worse.

“I’m scared it might make it worse. I still don’t think I would have got anyone else involved because at the end of the day it’s my last year and if stuff starts going bad now, I wouldn’t know what to do.”

Support received: other than Victim Support

The interviewees were asked their opinion of the help they received from people and organisations other than Victim Support.

As noted above, many students and parents said that they did not receive enough help from their school, particularly with respect to who is responsible for a student when they are travelling to or from school. Indeed, one parent said:

“I think the school should be made more aware of what is going on ‘cause they tend to think, ‘cause it is off the property, it’s not their problem whereas in fact until they get home they are still under school jurisdiction.”

Many students had the same kind of complaints.

“What do you think? That the school could have done more to help? I reckon it was their responsibility, the school’s, to get [me] home. ‘Cause if I got run over they’d be like fair enough, you got run over, your fault, ain’t it?”

“The school could have done a bit more support now and then because a lot of the time they are saying while we are in school uniform we are their responsibility, apart from when they just don’t follow that up. Some think we are not taking any part in this ‘cause we are not on school grounds.”

Many young victims felt that their teachers did not pay enough attention to their complaints.

“No, the teachers weren’t really very good. No one really took much notice. It happened and one of my teachers didn’t even tell my mum or anything. I had the last lesson off because it happened at lunch time, and I just came home and had to tell my mum myself. My sister was at school at the time, and I asked to talk to
her, because I was so upset, but they wouldn’t let me see her. So they weren’t very helpful.”

“I just went to sit in the room. They didn’t help me. It was a Year 10 girl that had been naughty and had got sent down there. She was the one who wrote my statement for me. She was just another student. I had to explain what happened and she wrote it down. So the teachers couldn’t even be bothered to do it themselves – they got a pupil to do it.”

Some interviewees were unhappy with the support they received from the police. Indeed, one parent present for their child’s interview felt that the police paid more attention to the perpetrators of the crime than to the victim.

**Parent:** “Well I thought it was very poor that she was offered no information about it. She was quite shaken up. It was quite a bad attack for a person of her age. I thought the police should have done more but there again it’s not their job. It’s easy to say this and that. But I think, yes, there should be more help for cases like that involving children. There always seems to be more help for the person who done it rather than the person they done it against!”

And some young victims noted:

“They seemed helpful but they took forever, and they like took six months, until they actually came round again … and double check my statement or something … I think they should have done things quicker.”

“We had two lady police officers come round. They took the initial details but then the person that took the case on, PC X might be the name, she then went on leave to some place for a week and my case got pushed under a load of papers and that, and we rang back up again one evening about two weeks after the initial statement had been taken and we had an officer from X police station and he came round and he took another full statement and that kind of thing ….. It was quite bad really ’cause we thought they were chasing up other details ….”

The interviews suggest that there are two main issues which young victims of crime and their parents are concerned about: one is (lack of) communication, the other is responsibility (ie who is responsible for a young person’s well-being, particularly when walking to or from school).

**Support received: Victim Support**

Those young victims who had used Victim Support’s services were asked their opinion on the service they received.

All of the young people were generally very happy with the service that they received from Victim Support. For example:

“Yeah [I am happy with the support given], because the police didn’t really help at all, did they? They didn’t even tell us what was going on. Victim Support was telling us what was happening ….. All I got off the police was one letter saying they’d
actually finished the case. He [the volunteer] kept telling us what was going on through the case …. No, that was fine, because he just kept us informed about what was going on, otherwise we wouldn’t have had a clue.”

However, one young person admitted that they were not fully comfortable using Victim Support because they were confiding in somebody that they did not know.

“Did you feel comfortable, a bit embarrassed… [using Victim Support]?
Not comfortable comfortable. Slightly comfortable.
Why do you think that was?
Because talking to a person but not family.”

Some suggestions were made as to ways in which the service could have been improved. One parent thought that Victim Support could have found out more information about how the case was progressing.

“Is there anything you think Victim Support could have done better to support you, the family or X?
Parent: Maybe find out more because obviously with the police dealing with them … of course now we have a good inspector that keeps us updated, but when PC X, he obviously done his job, but we never knew when they was arrested or if she was being held and going into court or if she was being let out and that’s what we needed to know….”

Another parent stated that they could have been contacted sooner (they were not contacted for two weeks). Plus, they were not contacted at all following a previous incident.

Parent: “We’d had an incident the year before, so we applied for somebody to come that time and nobody actually came. So we kind of dealt with that. But when that happened [the second crime], that kind of pushed him over the edge. So it was like we need [help].”

Why Victim Support was not used

The interviewees who did not use Victim Support were asked why this was the case. In some instances, people did not receive any information about it. Some people did not feel the need to use it because they felt they had adequate support.

“After I got my police statement through in the post, some leaflets came through with it for Victim Support …. I didn’t really feel the need to use them but it was nice to know that they had put them in, in case I had been affected by it.”

Others did not want to use it for other, negative, reasons.

“Do you think someone your age would think Victim Support is a good idea, or would you rather talk with your family and friends?
Just talk to family and friends.
Is there a particular reason for that?
I don’t really trust other people, ‘cause they sometimes tell other people.”
“Do you think that Victim Support is something your friends would find useful?
No.
Do you think it’s just not your thing?
No, it might be a posh boy thing like people who go round and do your homework.”

Information about Victim Support has clearly not reached some children and young people.

“When I first heard, it was Spanish to me!”

“Well I think I’d heard the name but I didn’t really know what it was.”

In fact, of the police-sourced interviewees asked this question, five out of six young people had not heard of Victim Support. Of the bullying victims, three out of four victims had not heard of the service.23 However, some of the interviewees indicated that they would have used Victim Support if they had been aware of it.

How young people would like to be supported

The interviewees were asked their opinion on how Victim Support should support young victims of crime and bullying. The interviewees had varying opinions on how they would like to be supported. For example, some would prefer to be supported in a group (eg if they were bullied at school).

“I think group support sessions would be quite good because they have those little meetings for like alcoholics and stuff. I think it would have been quite good for people that have been bullied or victims of crime to just sit and talk to each other about what they have been through.”

Others in a one-to-one setting:

“One-to-one, because if it was in a large group of people you might feel embarrassed.”

Some students stated that support sessions at school, whether one-to-one or in a group, could be problematic.

“If you get seen going to one of these sessions and people know about it, it’s just going to cause you so much more problems. I mean I didn’t speak to X until I saw her at the bus stop one day and that was after the French lesson and that’s the only time I spoke to her because, if anyone had seen me come up here, it would have caused me so much more hassle and I would have had so many more problems. That’s why I was just keeping shut and seeing her on the side.”

23 As the interviews were semi-structured with guiding topics rather than fixed questions, some students were not asked this question. (It depended on the lines of questioning being pursued and the time available for interview.) Plus, some of the interviewees were too young to be able to fully comprehend this line of questioning.
“Yeah, I think that would be a good idea in younger schools but I don’t think in high school it would work so well. We’ve had things like that … that just sort of went belly up in the first few months ‘cause no one went to it. It soon gets shunned by the ‘cool’ people and they soon say peer counselling, not going to that, then no one goes to it, well maybe a few people but in the end those things tend to get knocked out.”

**Preferred features of volunteers**

Many of the young victims gave their opinion on the type of volunteer they would like to speak to if they used Victim Support (either for the first time or again) – specifically, the age of the volunteer. Many of the young people said that they would like someone close to their own age.

“Yeah, I did think that maybe someone younger because they can realise the way things are in schools and stuff.”

“Probably someone around my own age, a bit older. Not too old – there’s not such a gap then.”

However, not all of the interviewees felt this way.

“Well personally I’ve always been alright with talking to people of an older age and I had absolutely no problem talking to X [the volunteer].”

**Preferred setting for support**

The interviewees’ opinions were sought on where they would like to be supported. Some of the interviewees thought that support sessions at school were a good idea. As one student said:

“**Do you think they should have a Victim Support type person in the school to help out?**
Yeah, they should, because teachers, it just seemed that the teachers were unsympathetic, that they didn’t really know what they were talking about.”

This said, some students were keen to point out that school-based support needs to pay attention to the issue of anonymity.

“I think it would probably have to be run after school, sort of like a phone call line like ChildLine or something like that, where you can ring up and be anonymous, stuff like that. Rather than having a room to go to because people can actually see what you are doing.”
“How about, sometimes Victim Support goes into schools and does drop-in sessions … Is that the sort of thing you would use at all?

We’ve got something like that already.

You have? Would you use that?

No … You’d go in there and other people would be like ‘Oh, look, you’ve been in there’ and they’d take the mick out of them even more.”

Indeed, many of the young people interviewed were more comfortable being supported at home.

“I was happy for it to be at the house because then I’m here with my mother.”

“If something really bad happened, it would probably be at home, ‘cause if you were at school you’d know you’d only be allowed in there for a couple of hours at most, then you would have to go back to your lessons. And if you go back in tears, like if you were getting bullied, you’d be bullied even more.”

However, one young victim of bullying thought that support at home could potentially be problematic as well.

“Yeah well, for me it would be OK because I live in a really secluded little part and no one would notice what’s going on, but for some other people it might not be, because they live really close to amenities.”

One mother suggested that youth groups would be a good support mechanism.

**Parent:** “The only other thing I can think of is kind of like a youth club thing, where they could get kiddies of a certain age group together, where they could openly discuss, and not make them feel so isolated like it’s only happening to them. Obviously the [Victim Support] lady said ‘You’re not my only child who has been through this, I deal with quite a few things like this’. But I think until they actually see another kid their own age, one-on-one, someone the same age, and they can actually … they tend to believe it more when it’s coming off someone the same age.”

### 5.3 Interview conclusions

The interviews with children and young people suggest that the following conclusions can be made about the effects of criminal victimisation and bullying on children and young people.

In support of the literature review, it is clear that young victims may be affected by crime immediately after the incident and in the long-term, with the type of crime experienced having a possible impact upon the way a child or young person is affected. Indeed, the interviews highlight that while young victims may go through similar experiences, they have individual reactions; as just one example, some young interviewees wanted to react physically to what had happened to them, whereas others wanted to fade into the background and forget their experiences altogether.

Travelling to and from school (and also sometimes within the school itself) can be a time of risk for children and young people. Indeed, schooling is often affected by criminal
victimisation and bullying; young people may have time off school, or may stay inside during breaks. However, victimisation may also harden the resolve of young victims and make them want to do well at school. The social lives of young victims may also be affected; they may not go out because they are scared of meeting the perpetrator(s). In addition to this, victims may become more aware of their personal security (particularly those who have been the victim of theft).

As noted previously, victimisation affects psychological and physical health. Indeed, victims may think about their experiences at night or when they are trying to sleep.

Families and friends can be affected by the criminal victimisation and bullying of children and young people. Many parents and carers help their children to cope with their experience of being a victim of crime, but some may need support in doing this.

In terms of support, the young interviewees who had used Victim Support all gave positive comments about the service they received. Of the young people who did not use Victim Support, the most common reasons given for this were either that they felt they had adequate support already and therefore did not need to use it, or that they were not aware of the service.

The interviews point to two main issues that concern young victims of crime and their parents: one is responsibility, in particular, who is responsible for a young person’s well-being, especially when walking to and from school, the other is (lack of) communication from schools and the police. Indeed, it is clear that young people and their families appreciate it when Victim Support volunteers help young victims to find out what is happening with their cases.

When it comes to provision of information, the police must make sure that the Code of practice for victims of crime is followed, which sets down the obligations of criminal justice agencies to provide information to victims about the progression or otherwise of a criminal case within specific time scales, including information about arrests, court cases, and the reasons for decisions taken (Home Office, 2005). The Government addressed the issue of off-school pupil behaviour in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (with the regulations coming into effect from April 2007); the Act provides a new statutory power to discipline, giving greater clarity on the school’s power to discipline pupils off and on school premises. It is essential that these guidelines are followed, alongside the acknowledgement and implementation of school-specific good practice.
6. Conclusions

The literature review and interviews with children and young people reveal the following conclusions.

Being a young victim

- The evidence available suggests that the rate of child victimisation is twice that of adult victimisation.
- Young victims can find it difficult to be recognised as victims.
- Fear of crime does not relate to the likelihood of being a victim.
- Young people may be affected by a crime directly as victims, and/or indirectly through witnessing a crime, or being affected when a friend or family member is victimised.

Effects of crime

- Children and young people suffer from both immediate and longer-term effects of crime, bullying and sexual abuse.
- Factors such as the type of crime and gender of the victim influence the way a child or young person may be affected. For example, boys may be more likely to respond with ‘externalising behaviours’ such as aggression.
- The additional vulnerability of children and young people, when compared to adults, may aggravate the negative effects of crime.
- Victimisation is associated with adverse effects on both psychological and physical health.
- Victims may think about their experiences at night or when they are trying to sleep.
- Victimisation can affect adolescent development.
- Children and young people who experience crime are more likely to exhibit criminal behaviour later in life.
- Schooling is often affected by criminal victimisation and bullying; young people may have time off school, or may stay inside during breaks.
- However, victimisation may also harden the resolve of young victims and make them want to do well at school.
- The social lives of young people are often affected if they have been the victim of a crime; for example they may not go out because they are scared of meeting the offender(s).
- Victims may become more aware of their personal security (particularly those who have been the victim of theft).
- The families of child victims are also often affected by the young victim’s experience.
Coping with crime

- Children and young people have different ways of coping with crime, linked to factors such as the crime itself, gender and age etc. For example, girls may be more likely to tell someone.
- Strategies used to cope may be ‘externalising’ (for example, aggression against others) or ‘internalising’ (for example, self-harm), positive (such as listening to music) or negative (using alcohol or drugs).
- Different people (for example parents, friends and teachers) may be sought out as confidants depending on the type of crime/experience and the perpetrator.
- Many young people believe that they will get a negative response if they tell.
- Many parents and carers help their children to cope with their experience of being a victim of crime, but some may need support in doing this.

Supporting young victims

- The young people interviewed as part of the project, who had used Victim Support, all gave positive comments about the service they received.
- Victims may not feel the need to access support services if they feel they have other forms of support. However, some victims may not access services because they are not aware of them or they do not have enough information.
- Young people and their families appreciate it when organisations such as Victim Support help them to find out what is happening with their cases.
- Young victims of crime and their parents are concerned about two main issues. These are
  - (lack of) communication from schools and the police
  - responsibility – in particular, who is responsible for a young person’s well-being, particularly when walking to and from school.
7. Recommendations

This research has identified recommendations relating to the practices of organisations which offer support to or work with young victims, including Victim Support.

- Organisations which support young victims need to recognise and respect the different ways in which children and young people respond and cope and make sure that their services can meet this need.
- It is important that services to young victims do not just replicate adult services but address the unique needs of children and young people, and consider both the type of support and the setting of the service.
- Organisations should make sure that they strategically plan their services to children and young people so that the services they offer are appropriate: for example, children and young people should be asked what they want.
- It is important that issues surrounding race, ethnicity, sexuality and disability are taken into account when dealing with young victims of crime so that any particular support needs are considered (eg communication).
- Publicity for support services is of great importance. Not only should the general availability of support be better publicised; so should the details of support services (ie how people can get in touch and the service that is offered).
- Organisations other than the police (such as doctors and women’s refuges) should be encouraged to refer children and young people to support services so that as many young victims as possible obtain the service. This may help larger numbers of indirect victims to get support. (Children supported by these services may not come to the attention of the police.)
- Because so much crime takes place in or around school, it is important for support providers and schools to work together, as so many young people can be reached through schools. (However, this may be difficult as many services face funding and resource constraints and may run risks of raising expectations that cannot be met in terms of service provision.)
- Schools need to make sure that complaints about bullying and crime are taken very seriously, that they have an adequate policy on bullying, and that their position on who is responsible for a young person’s well-being when walking to and from school is consistent (eg when in uniform) and follows Government guidelines.
- Children and young people may need time away from school to recover from the crime. Schools should be supportive in such circumstances, for example with adequate home-working schemes put in place if necessary.
- Professionals working within the criminal justice system should make sure that young people and their families have all the information they need about the help and support available during court cases, something which is expected under the Code of practice for victims of crime and supported by witness care units. This is certainly something that the interviewees have appreciated when it has taken place, and it can alleviate any fears or concerns that young people may have.
- Agencies working with young victims should help young victims obtain their rights, for example to information about their case.
- It is essential for under-16s to be included in the British Crime Survey and other relevant forms of data collection.
8. References

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Standard children’s information booklet

Produced on two sides of A4 paper, folded. Note that the content of the booklet changed according to how the young people were contacted and who contacted them.

**Being a Victim of Crime**

How did you feel after your crime?

What did you think of your support?

We want to know what you think!

Who did you go to for help?

Turn the page for more information...

Victim Support
Helping people cope with crime
CITY COLLEGE NORWICH
My name is Donna and I work for The Research Centre at City College Norwich. Victim Support has asked me to find out how young people feel if they have been a victim of a crime. I would like to talk to you - read on to find out what the project is about!

We are giving £10 gift vouchers to people who take part!

What is the project about?
Victim Support wants to find out:
- How crime and bullying affect children and young people
- How children and young people would like to be supported if they are a victim of crime
- How well current support works
- Whether Victim Support needs to change the way it works with children and young people.

What would I have to do?
I would like to ask you a bit about what happened to you and how you felt afterwards. You won’t have to talk about anything you don’t want to.

Where will we meet?
You can decide. I can come to your house and speak to you, or you can come to a Victim Support office. Your parent, carer or another adult will need to be around as well - but they don’t have to be in the room with us unless you want them to.
How long will it take?
Probably about an hour, depending on how much you want to say!

How will you remember our conversation?
I will record you on a digital recorder. If you ask me not to record something I will not record it.

What will happen to what I have said once our chat is over?
I will write about what you have said in a report and I may quote you as well, but no-one will know it is you - I will not use your name.

Will other people be told about what I said?
Not unless you tell me something about someone being harmed. Even then, I will speak to you first.

Do I have to take part?
No. You do not have to take part. You can also stop our talk when you like and you will not get into trouble.

Do I have to do anything before the interview?
No, you do not need to do anything at all.

What do I do if I want to take part?
If you do want to take part, you or your parent/carer should tell Lorna Vyse from Victim Support. She will call you in the next few days to discuss this.
Thank you for reading this leaflet!

Please call Donna Smith on 01603 773215 if you have any questions, or Lorna Vyse (Victim Support Norfolk) on 01603 619376. If no-one answers, leave a message and we will get back to you.

You can also email: d30smith@ccn.ac.uk

or write to:
Donna Smith
The Research Centre
City College Norwich
Ipswich Road
Norwich
NR2 2LJ.
Appendix 2: Victims’ experiences

This appendix briefly explores the interviewees’ personal data, such as crime type and age, in order to contextualise the data analysis as a whole. The victim story information is disaggregated to make sure that the interviewees cannot be identified through any of the personal information.

Victims supported by/sourced from Victim Support

- Crime type: two common assault/battery cases; four ABH (actual bodily harm) cases; and one personal property (mobile phone theft) case. Two incidents (one common assault/battery case and one ABH case) took place in school.
- Age of victims (at time of interview): nine, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, and 18 (although 17 at the time of the crime).
- Gender of victims: two females and five males.
- Ethnicity of victims: none of the interviewees were from an ethnic minority.
- Location: three interviewees were based in the Norwich branch, two in East North and two in West South.

Victims not supported by Victim Support/sourced from the police

- Crime type: four assault cases; three theft cases.
- Age of victims (at time of interview): 13, two 14 year olds, and four 15 year olds.
- Gender of victims: three females and four males.
- Ethnicity of victims: none of the interviewees were from an ethnic minority.
- Location: one interviewee was based in the East North branch, three in Norwich and three in West South.

Victims of bullying/sourced from schools

- Crime type: all of the victims had been bullied at school.
- Age of victims (at time of interview): two ten year olds, two 13 year olds, 14, and 16. The youngest two interviewees were based at a primary school, and the older students at a high school.
- Gender of victims: three males and three females.
- Ethnicity of victims: the parents of one of the interviewees were ‘White Other’.
- Location: four students were based in the area covered by the Norwich branch and two in the West South branch.