

MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate use

VICTIM SUPPORT CALLS FOR VICTIMS AND WITNESSES OF CRIME TO TAKE PART IN FOCUS GROUPS IN LANCASHIRE

Victim Support will be running focus groups and interviews with victims and witnesses of crime in Lancashire over the next three months as part of a national project to raise awareness of important local issues facing victims and witnesses.

The Victim Support 'victims' services advocates project' will involve talking to victims and witnesses about their experience of crime and finding out what services are available for them across England and Wales. Local victims' services advocates employed by the charity will produce local reports on their findings. These will be used to raise awareness of important issues affecting victims and witnesses and to make sure that each new police and crime commissioner has victim and witness issues on their agenda when they are elected in November 2012.

Kev Walsh Victims' Services Advocate for Lancashire and Merseyside is looking for victims and witnesses of antisocial behaviour, domestic abuse, sexual assault and hate crime to take part in local focus groups or individual interviews. Victims must have experienced the crime within the last two years and not currently be involved in criminal justice proceedings or a court case relating to the crime.

Kev explained the importance of giving local victims and witnesses a voice:

"We are asking local people to take part in this important project to represent the needs and views of people who have experienced crime throughout Lancashire. We want to find out how people have been treated as a victim or witness by the police and criminal justice system and if they have found suitable services to support them through a difficult time in their lives"

Victim Support will be holding focus groups across Lancashire over the next three months.

If you are interested in taking part in a one of the focus groups or arranging an interview please contact: Kev Walsh on 01772 256005, email kevin.walsh@victimsupport.org.uk or visit www.victimsupport.org.uk for more details.

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Notes to editors:

1. Victim Support is the national charity for people affected by crime
2. The VSA project is a Home Office funded partnership between Victim Support and the Commission for Victims and Witnesses. The aim is to prepare for the incoming police & crime commissioners who will be elected in November 2012. There are 22 VSAs across England & Wales covering all police force areas. They have been in contact with providers of services for victims and witnesses in each area to understand what services exist. They now want to hear from service users, to better understand what people actually need from services after a crime
3. Police and crime commissioners will be publicly elected individuals that replace police authorities from November 2012. For more information visit <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/police/police-crime-commissioners/>

4. Victim Support has trained staff and volunteers giving free and confidential information, support and practical help to anyone affected by crime, whether or not it has been reported and regardless of when it happened.
5. The national charity also runs the Witness Service and the Victim Supportline. Our website can be accessed at www.victimsupport.org.uk
6. Victim Support offers help and support to over 1 million people every year.

For more information contact:

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