

Crimes against older people

Research commissioned by Her Majesty's Inspectorate
of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

BritainThinks

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1. Executive summary

1.1. Background to the research

In 2019, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) commissioned BritainThinks to undertake qualitative research with older victims of crime living across England and Wales.

This piece of research was an integral part of the HMICFRS and Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPPI) joint thematic inspection of crimes against older people, to provide a greater understanding of older people who have been a victim of crime and their experience of the Criminal Justice System. Specifically, the research aimed to understand older victims' experiences of reporting a crime, the initial police response, and the investigation process.

The findings of this qualitative research reflect the views of 31 older victims of crime.

1.2. Summary of the research findings

1. Older victims of crime are a diverse audience with varied communication and support needs.

- Two key factors, age and the existence of an active support network, impacted participants' experiences, communications preferences, and the support they required from the police.
 - Health and a general sense of slowing down physically and mentally could impact participants' ability to deal with challenges. This audience can also describe a heightened awareness of their own vulnerability due to their age.
 - Older participants were more likely to have diminishing social circles and support networks, which can change significantly through bereavement or spouses moving into care homes.
- The majority of participants did not recall being asked questions that would help identify any potential vulnerability as an older victim of crime. Being aware of older victims' diverse needs and identifying how this group might therefore be more vulnerable, could improve the quality and reception of the police response.

2. Older victims in the sample described a perception that the police are over-stretched and under-resourced.

- This lowered participants' expectations of the police response they might expect to receive. Crucially, this can also impact how likely participants to report a crime in the future.

3. Experiences of reporting a crime and the initial police response varied widely between participants.

- Individual reporting officers' manner and tone played an important role in participants' experiences and levels of satisfaction with the reporting process.
- At the initial report, few participants remembered being asked questions that would help identify any vulnerabilities, for example their age, health conditions and whether they lived alone.

4. There appeared to be low levels of referral and signposting to support services at any point in the reporting process.

- This left some participants feeling unsupported and overwhelmed.
- While some participants felt they might not have taken up an offer of support, all participants felt this would be a useful addition to the service they received from the police.

5. Participants' experiences of the ongoing investigation process were often characterised by a lack of communication.

- Consistency in the police point of contact and the information provided by officers, was a crucial factor influencing overall satisfaction with the initial police response.
- Experiences of Action Fraud¹ tended to be positive, although participants were sometimes confused about the role of Action Fraud and their relationship with the police.

6. When and how participants' case outcomes were communicated varied widely across the sample.

- Being unaware of the status of their case outcome and whether it had been closed or not was one of the most common outcomes experienced by participants.

¹ [Action Fraud](#) is the UK's national reporting centre for fraud and cyber crime where members of the public should report fraud if they have been scammed, defrauded or experienced cyber crime in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

- The format and the timings of the communication had a significant impact on participants.
 - For example, participants who received notification of their case outcome by text felt this to be informal, cold and impersonal and expressed a preference for more traditional forms of communication.
 - Participants who received notification of their case outcome 'out of the blue', or a while after the crime happened, described finding this confusing and unsettling.
- Few participants' cases went to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). Those that did experienced mixed levels of information and communication throughout the process.

7. Being a victim of crime often had a great and long-lasting impact on participants. For some, it led to a heightened sense of fear and an increased awareness of their own vulnerability.

- Both the type of crime and participants' individual circumstances influenced the extent and nature of the impact this experience had on their lives.
- In addition, the overall level of satisfaction with the police response had a real impact on how protected and supported participants felt and whether they would report future instances of crime.

1.3. Conclusions

This research has highlighted the specific ways in which older victims of crime can be particularly vulnerable. Firstly, older participants were more likely to have diminishing social circles and support networks, which can change significantly through bereavement or spouses moving into care homes. Secondly, poor health and a general sense of slowing down physically and mentally that can come with increasing age could have an impact on participants' ability to deal with challenges.

As a result of these two factors, participants could feel more isolated, more vulnerable, and more likely to feel they would benefit from additional support and communication in the event of experiencing a crime. Being more consistently aware of older victims' needs and identifying potential vulnerabilities, especially related to the existence of a support network and health conditions associated with ageing, could therefore improve the quality and reception of the police response. Given the diversity of this audience, it is important for questions to be asked about older victims' specific personal circumstances, rather than making assumptions about the response needed based on their age alone.

Additionally, the expectations participants had of the police response, and their satisfaction with that response, could also depend on the type of crime experienced, and their personal assessment of the severity of the crime.

This research has identified five further learnings for police forces when communicating with older victims of crime as a more vulnerable audience.

These are:

- **The importance of timely communications.** This includes receiving regular updates and a timely notification of case closure and outcomes. Regular updates, even if there is nothing new to report, can reassure older victims that the police are continuing to take their case seriously and are actively investigating to find the suspect.
- **Prioritising consistency in messages.** Throughout their interactions with the police, participants valued consistency in the messages and information that was given to them. When this does not happen, it can lead to a confusing and overwhelming experience.
- **The benefit of a single, designated point of contact.** One point of police contact provided participants with reassurance that the case was being taken seriously and made the police response feel personal.
- **The preferred format of contact is varied, but more traditional forms of communications are felt to be more appropriate.** Participants' expectations of the format of communications were often linked to how serious they perceived their case to be. At the reporting stage, in minor cases such as attempted burglary, communication over the phone was felt to be appropriate, while for other cases an officer attending the scene in person to take a statement was expected. During the investigation process and for notification of the case outcome, participants expected to receive communication over the phone or by letter. Any form of notification via text message was poorly received by this audience and led to dissatisfaction with the police response.
- **The importance of referral and signposting to support services.** While not all participants felt they needed additional support, having the option to access this was important and had a significant impact on the victim.

2. Introduction

2.1. Background to the research

In January 2019, HMICFRS commissioned BritainThinks to undertake qualitative research with older victims of crime living across England and Wales. This research was commissioned to understand the views and experiences of older people who are the victim of a crime and provide a voice to this vulnerable victim population.

The research was an integral part of the [joint thematic inspection of crimes against older people](#) conducted by HMICFRS and HMCPSI.

2.2. Research objectives

The research aimed to understand the experience older victims of crime have of the police response they receive, as well as their experiences with the wider Criminal Justice System. As part of this, the research objectives included:

- Understanding older victims' experiences of reporting a crime, including:
 - When did victims first recognise that what they were experiencing was a crime? How did they feel about this?
 - Did victims receive help or support to identify the crime and encourage reporting to police, and why?
 - What, if anything, was a barrier to reporting the crime? Were these barriers real or perceived?
 - What support, if any, did older victims have in reporting the crime?
- Understanding older victims' experiences of the initial police response, including:
 - What responses do they remember receiving from the police service when they first contacted them?
 - How did they feel the police responded to their initial contact?
- Understanding older victims' experiences of the investigation, including:
 - How did they feel in relation to a) the timeliness of responses and b) the extent to which they were kept updated?
 - What experience did they have of any advice and/or referrals e.g. to support services?

- If applicable, what experiences did they have of the prosecution process?

This research is qualitative. It is based on the responses of the 31 research participants. As such, the research findings reflect their perceptions, feelings and attitudes, rather than reflecting the views of all older victims of crime.

2.3. Methodology

BritainThinks conducted 31 in-depth interviews with older victims of crime living across England and Wales.

Fieldwork was conducted between February and May 2019, across six regions (as shown in Figure 1). Participants were recruited from a mix of urban and rural surrounding areas to ensure good coverage across England and Wales.

Figure 1: Table outlining research fieldwork locations

Region	Fieldwork locations
South East	London, St Albans and Slough
East	Cambridge
East Midlands	Nottingham
West Midlands	Birmingham and Coventry
North West	Blackpool and Colne
Wales	Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil

A free-find approach to recruitment using a network of specialist qualitative research recruiters was implemented. Recruiters were embedded in local areas and communities, mostly utilising face-to-face recruitment methods.

All participants were recruited and took part in the research on the basis of informed consent. As part of obtaining informed consent, participants were informed about their rights, the purpose of the study, and an overview of what the research procedure would involve.

As a potentially vulnerable audience, where desired, carers, close friends, or relatives were involved in deciding whether to participate in the project and they could accompany participants during the interview. Participants were also provided with a 'comfort letter' with contact details of the both the project teams at BritainThinks and HMICFRS to provide reassurance of the validity of the research. On completion of the interview, participants were provided with the contact details of local support services.

Please note that to protect the identity of participants who have taken part in the research, pseudonyms have been used throughout.

2.4. Sample overview

BritainThinks conducted 31 in-depth interviews with older victims of crime living across England and Wales. Participants were recruited to reflect a spread of victim experiences by age, geographical location and type of crime experienced. For the purposes of this research, older victims were defined as victims of crime aged 65 and over. All participants were recruited to have been a victim of a crime that happened within the last 18 months.

An overview of the participant sample is provided in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Table summarising participant sample

Age	15 participants aged 65–69 12 participants aged 70–79 4 participants aged 80+
Gender	20 female participants 11 male participants
Location	19 participants living in urban areas 12 participants living in rural areas
Type of crime	7 theft 4 burglary 4 robbery 6 financial fraud 3 harassment or domestic abuse 4 criminal damage 3 abuse (physical or emotional)

2.5. Report structure

This report summarises the research findings. The report has five sections, summarised below:

Chapter 3: The context: victims' experiences and expectations of the police

- This chapter provides an overview of the context of participants' experiences of the Criminal Justice System including analysis of their vulnerability and overarching perceptions and expectations of the police.

Chapter 4: Victims' experiences of reporting a crime

- This chapter includes how participants made the decision to report a crime, their experiences of reporting a crime and the initial police response they received.

Chapter 5: Victims' experiences of the police investigation

- This chapter focuses on participants' experiences of the police investigation, including any communication and contact they received. It also examines experiences of Action Fraud for victims of financial fraud.

Chapter 6: Case outcomes

- This chapter explores the range of case outcomes experienced by participants and their levels of satisfaction. It also outlines experiences of the CPS.

Chapter 7: The impact of the crime and the police response

- This chapter outlines the impact that being a victim of crime had on participants, in relation to the crime itself and the police response.

3. The context: victims' experiences and expectations of the police

3.1. Chapter overview

This chapter focuses on the context in which participants' experiences are situated. This includes vulnerability, the impact of experiencing a crime, and general perceptions and expectations of the police.

3.2. Older victims and vulnerability

Circumstances, attitudes and experiences varied greatly across the older victims consulted in this research in relation to being a victim of crime.

This research highlights the importance of understanding victims' individual circumstances when delivering a police response.

There are two key factors that could have an impact on participants' vulnerability, needs and experiences of the police:

- age of the victim; and
- existence of an active support network (friends, family, formal carers).

3.2.1. Age of the victim

In this research, older victims of crime have been defined as victims aged 65 and over. Broadly the needs, experiences and perceptions of the police response received were found to vary greatly between participants typically aged around 65–70 and those typically aged around 80 and over.

Participants aged 65–70 were less likely to describe themselves as vulnerable. While they still reported being impacted in some way by being a victim of crime, the impact tended to be less severe for this group. Many were still in full-time employment, which enabled them to 'concentrate on other things' and 'move on' from the experience. This meant that they were less likely to require additional support from the police.

"I was able to get on with it pretty quickly – luckily I'm still working part-time so I threw myself into work. Some of my colleagues were quite worried about me when they heard what had happened though."

(Older victim of physical assault, 68, urban)

Case study: Eric, 65, victim of verbal abuse, urban

Eric is an active cyclist. One day he was almost knocked off his bike by a speeding driver. When he then caught up with the car and challenged the driver, the driver verbally abused him and threatened to hurt him.

Shaken by the incident, Eric immediately called 101 as he was concerned that the driver could be a danger to the public. He was impressed with the police response both initially and a day later when they called him back to update him on the case and ensure that he was OK.

Eric does not describe himself as being particularly impacted by the incident, which he describes as 'minor'. He has also discussed what happened with friends, family and colleagues, which he feels has helped him to put it behind him.

"I feel the police have done everything they can and by telling me they are keeping it on file, I can report anything else I may see."

By contrast, participants aged 80 and over tended to describe how being a victim of crime had a greater impact on them. Two important themes emerged from interviews with these older participants:

1. This group were facing a number of changes in their lives. For example, some found their social circles and support networks changing significantly through bereavement or spouses moving into care homes. In addition, their health and a general sense of slowing down physically and mentally impacted on their ability to deal with challenges.
2. As a result of the crime they experienced, some participants aged 80 and over described a heightened awareness of their own vulnerability due to their age. This led to several participants feeling unsafe as a result of being a victim of crime.

This group were more likely to require signposting to additional support services as well as in-person communication from the police.

Case study: Lilian, 80, victim of criminal damage, urban

Lilian is 80 and lives in the North of England with her husband. Last winter, they heard loud thuds at their window one evening. Snowballs had been thrown at their house, a day after they attended a funeral and while they had friends visiting.

The incident scared Lilian and her husband and made them feel victimised. The couple called 101 after being advised to do so by a neighbour. The operator reassured Lilian that she had been right to call the police and asked how old Lilian and her husband were. They were visited the following afternoon by two officers to check they were OK, and again the following day. On the Monday, a police van parked at the end of her lane and an officer was warning children of their behaviour.

The thorough response helped the couple to feel more secure in their home, and they did not receive any trouble following this.

“She made me feel better, she said she’d keep an eye on the place. She made it very clear she wouldn’t take any bother if it happened again.”

“On the Monday, she came again in a huge police van and parked there, and from then on we haven’t had any issues.”

3.2.2. Existence of an active support network

Having an active support network was an important factor in helping participants manage their experience of being a victim of crime. Participants described relying on others, such as family, friends and neighbours, to varying degrees, for example:

- Being encouraged to report the crime to the police. In some instances, neighbours prompted participants to recognise that they were the victim of a crime and to report what had happened to the police. In other cases, particularly for victims aged 80 and over, family members provided vital support in getting in touch with the police on their behalf.
- Supporting the victim through the reporting process, helping them to give their statements to the police (for example, prompting any details that they had forgotten to mention in the report).
- Supporting the victim to manage the immediate and longer-term impacts of the crime. For example, helping to purchase and install security equipment (e.g. cameras, locks, panic alarms) and providing emotional support.

“The only reason we made a report is because our neighbour heard what had happened and came round to see us. It was June [my neighbour] who told us to go to the police.”

(Older victim of attempted burglary, 76, urban)

“It was reassuring that someone [my neighbour] was there for me, she came round as soon as I told her what had happened. I know the police were there for me but they don’t know me and she does, it was just nice that someone was there looking after me... [I’d tell someone else to] have someone with you that you know when you report it because if you forget something they can say ‘what about so and so’. I think that’s so important.”

(Older victim of physical assault, 81, urban)

By contrast, participants living alone, or who had less contact with family and friends, were more reliant on the police response to provide support, for example, face-to-face reporting and advice for preventing something similar happening in future.

“I saw him [the suspect] in the pub so I called 101. It took about 10 minutes to get through and they then told me that they were busy and that they wouldn’t come out. I had identified who it was and nothing else has happened. It’s frustrating, it’s making me nervous but I still have to get on with my life, there’s no point being worried all the time... I haven’t got family in the area.”

(Older victim of theft, 66, rural)

Case study: Aruna, 70, victim of burglary, urban

Aruna lives alone since her husband passed away. Her children all live nearby, and they take it in turns to call her daily.

Late last year, she was staying in hospital overnight after having eye surgery when her house was burgled. Her son discovered that the crime had taken place when bringing her home from the hospital. Aruna was in shock and still recovering from her operation, so her son took responsibility for calling the police. Aruna speaks English as a second language and is less confident communicating with people she doesn’t know.

The police came to Aruna’s home to take a statement and were followed by a forensics officer the next day. One of Aruna’s children made sure that they were with her during each of these visits to help her make her statement, translating where necessary.

Aruna’s family have since installed security equipment to try and prevent another burglary from happening and to try and make Aruna feel safer at home.

3.3. Perceptions of the police and expectations for police response

Participants frequently described a belief that police forces across England and Wales are under-resourced and, as a result, over-stretched. For many, this impression comes from:

- The prevalence of media coverage about reduced police funding and resources, coupled with reports of rising crime rates – especially violent crimes.
- Not seeing police officers ‘on the beat’ in their local area. Many felt this used to be a more common sight, with participants describing a view that the police were more effective in the past.
- Being aware of other crimes taking place in their local areas through friends, family and acquaintances contributed to the perception that crime is on the rise. Hearing examples where the police response was felt to be lacking – such as it taking a long time for officers to arrive at a crime scene, or a successful prosecution not being reached – also contributed to this perception.

This view – of the police as under-resourced and over-stretched – had an impact on participants’ expectations of the police response, as outlined below.

- **Participants’ expectations of the police response they would receive.** Participants reported having low expectations of the police’s ability to respond to the crime they had experienced. This did not mean that they were satisfied if these low expectations were met – several participants described feeling disappointed, but not necessarily surprised, when the police were not able to respond.
- **Participants’ reduced likelihood of reporting a crime.** In several cases, participants thought the police were likely to have higher priority cases and they did not want to ‘bother them’. Generally, participants felt the police had ‘more serious’ crimes and challenges, such as knife crime, to focus on.
- **Participants post-rationalised the police response they received.** In several cases, participants who were unsatisfied with part of the response they received (for example, not having an officer take a statement from them in person, or not receiving updates on their case as frequently as they desired), tended to attribute this to ‘the system’ overall rather than blaming local police forces or individual officers.

“All the crimes, the young crimes, they have to deal with them with the people with drugs and knives. So, I understand they can’t come out to a thing like a car going... But one call to come and see me and make sure I’m alright. It’s not quite the same on the phone. Face-to-face they can tell what kind of person you are and how you’re doing, and they can reassure you. They did reassure me on the phone, but it would have been better in person.”

(Older victim of theft, 75, rural)

3.3.1. Impact of location on older victims’ expectations of the police

Participants in more rural areas thought local police stations were likely to be served by a very small number of officers, reducing their expectations of the police response. In addition, these participants often reported being a long distance from their nearest police station and they worried the police would not be able to respond quickly to an emergency.

“Police stations are closing down all over the area. There is no police station here [rural Cambridgeshire] any more. If I was attacked, a police car would have to come from 30 miles away in Cambridge... We don’t really have policing here anymore.”

(Older victim of online abuse, 65, rural)

For participants in urban areas, the police seemed more physically accessible, with police stations closer by. However, these participants did still feel the police in their areas were over-stretched and assumed they would have more ‘more serious’ crimes to respond to.

“It did make me feel better knowing there was a police station on my road. It’s only a five-minute walk so I went there to make the report.”

(Older victim of financial fraud, 67, urban)

3.3.2. Impact the type of crime experienced has on older victims’ expectations of the police

The type of crime experienced – and how ‘serious’ this crime was perceived to be – had an impact on participants’ expectations of the police response they received, as well as their overall experience of being a victim of crime.

Participants who felt their crime was ‘less serious’ did not necessarily expect the police to prioritise their investigation or to successfully prosecute the perpetrator. However, in cases where participants perceived their crime to be ‘more serious’ – including instances of financial fraud, physical assault and harassment – participants were more likely to feel that their crime should be prioritised by the police.

Regardless of the perceived severity of the crime experienced, participants expected to receive communication from the police updating them on any progress, and providing them with information and support when needed.

Older victims of theft, burglary or criminal damage

Participants who had been the victim of theft or burglary often perceived themselves to have experienced a 'lower priority crime'. This was particularly true where:

- participants felt it would be difficult for the police to identify a suspect; or
- nothing valuable was taken, or property wasn't damaged.

In these cases, participants had lower expectations of the police response, for example anticipating telephone communication, and not expecting the police to be able to identify a suspect. In some instances, participants were hesitant to report these crimes to the police.

"I didn't think I should contact the police because there are more serious crimes being committed. They weren't going to find the person who did it, they were long gone!"

(Older victim of attempted burglary, 76, urban)

However, expectations of the police response changed where theft or burglary was viewed as more serious, for example:

- The victim felt there was plenty of evidence or opportunities to identify a suspect (for example, CCTV footage, finger printing).
- When expensive items were taken.
- When the victim was very shaken by the experience and upset about the intrusion on their personal space.
- When the victim felt the crime fits a wider pattern of crime happening in their local area.

In these cases participants expected officers would take a statement in person and conduct a thorough investigation.

"I was really crying on the phone and felt like they could have been more sympathetic... After the initial call I was left feeling like maybe I shouldn't have called in the first place. I didn't feel reassured at all."

(Older victim of criminal damage, 65, rural)

Older victims of physical assault

Participants who experienced physical assault felt this was a serious crime and expected the police response to make them feel like they were being treated as a priority as a result.

This included officers attending the scene quickly, taking a statement in person, and providing them with a named police contact to remain in touch with.

Older victims of financial abuse

Participants who had experienced financial abuse, especially involving what they felt to be a larger amount of money, felt this was a very serious crime. They therefore expected to receive a considered response from the police, with regular updates about the investigation, so they could feel confident that the police were doing everything they could to try and recover their lost money.

Participants who had experienced fraud also reported having a strong emotional response to the crime. These participants described feeling 'stupid' or 'ashamed', often blaming themselves. In a few instances, participants reported feeling so ashamed that they tried to hide the details of the crime from their family and friends.

"I didn't want to talk about it, because I'm a fool. I can't believe I did it!"

(Older victim of fraud, 77, urban)

Older victims of emotional abuse, including stalking and harassment

The small number of participants who experienced stalking and harassment expected a very supportive response from the police, including a named contact and the choice of a female or male officer.

This group reported a difficulty in identifying that they were experiencing a crime and knowing whether or not to report it to the police. As a result, the initial response that they received from the police was very important – they required a level of reassurance that they were being taken seriously and that they had done the right thing in reporting.

3.4. Key conclusions and implications from this chapter

This chapter has highlighted the fact that older people are a diverse audience. In particular, two key factors can have an impact on victims' experiences, communication preferences, and the support they require from the police. These are:

(a) The age of the victim, with those aged 80 and over typically being more likely to require additional support.

This audience were often facing a number of changes in their lives – social circles and support networks had often changed significantly and increasing age resulted in poor health or a general sense of slowing down physically and mentally – which had an impact on participants' ability to deal with challenges. Participants aged over 80 were more likely to require signposting to additional support services as well as in-person communication from the police.

(b) The existence of an active support network.

Participants living alone, or who had less contact with family and friends, were more reliant on the police response to provide support, for example, through face-to-face reporting and advice for preventing something similar happening in future.

This chapter has also illustrated the perceptions participants held about the police and how this can have an impact on their expectations of the police response. Police forces were described as under-resourced and over-stretched, and many participants did not expect the police to respond to the crime they experienced. However, expectations of the police response also depended on the perceived severity and 'seriousness' of the crime experienced.

4. Victims' experiences of reporting a crime

4.1. Chapter overview

This chapter considers participants' decision-making processes around reporting a crime and the factors that encouraged or discouraged them from doing so. It also examines perceptions and experiences of the reporting process, as well as the initial police response received.

4.2. The decision to report a crime

Most participants had no difficulty in identifying that a crime had taken place and found making the decision to report quite straightforward. Many said their first instinct was to call the police to report the crime and felt comfortable making this decision independently.

"I was 100 percent sure about reporting to the police. I spoke with my wife and she totally agreed with me."

(Older victim of theft, 67, urban)

Some participants needed to be encouraged to make a formal report to the police. Any reluctance to report tended to be from those who felt their case was 'less important'. This encouragement came from two main sources:

1. Family members: Some called their children initially, who were then instrumental in the reporting process (in some cases, making the report on their behalf).

"It was my son that found my house had been burgled first. I was just about to come out of hospital so he called them for me and gave them the details."

(Older victim of burglary, 70, urban)

2. Neighbours: Some described neighbours encouraging them to report the crime. Advice from those who are seen as well-connected or 'active' in the community, for example, Parish Council or Neighbourhood Watch members, was described as being particularly useful.

"I rang Mr Walsh. He's on the PCC, and he told me to ring 101. I rang him because he walks round with his dog and he checks to see if everything's OK, he knows what's going on. He told me to ring 101 which I did."

(Older victim of criminal damage, 80, rural)

An example of local support services involvement in this decision making was also provided by one participant:

“I went to Age Concern, who are just down the road. I was so upset, I was crying. I know they help people with their benefits so I thought they might be able to give me some advice, and they encouraged me to go to the police. So, I did.”

(Older victim of financial fraud, 67, urban)

Participants who were victims of harassment or domestic abuse found it very difficult to recognise that they had been a victim of a crime. This, combined with the highly personal and sensitive nature of the crime, meant that reporting to the police could be a major decision, and one that took a significant amount of time and consideration to make.

Case study: Doris, 66, victim of harassment, urban

Doris made a report online to an informal reporting service for harassment which she found through her local police force. A call back followed shortly after and confirmed that her experience classified as harassment. This then gave Doris confidence in her claim and encouraged her to take things further.

“It was on a Saturday night, and I just decided to do it when I saw this thing that said you could report it online with an email. It came up as a name, Helen, she was the person. It was like a chatline sort of thing. I just sent her the details. Then, she rang me back almost straightaway and said, ‘Yes, this is obviously harassment’.”

Some participants had a report made on their behalf. This tended to be when:

1. The older victim felt unable to make the report themselves.

Some participants described feeling very overwhelmed and upset as a result of the crime they experienced and asked their children or a family member to make the report on their behalf, as they did not feel capable of doing so.

2. The older victim was unable to make a report as a direct result of the crime they had experienced. This was particularly the case for participants who experienced physical abuse. In these cases, it was witnesses who reported the incident to the police.

Case study: Cathy, 68, victim of physical abuse, rural

Cathy was the victim of assault when someone got into her car and started attacking her in a hospital car park. Two witnesses saw this happening and called the police, staying with Cathy until the police arrived and giving witness statements.

“They took statements from the two witnesses and told me they would call by my house later that evening to carry out a full interview. I was so shaken, so I drove to my daughter’s house to ask her if she could attend the interview with me in the evening.”

4.2.1. Deciding how to report

Some participants were unsure where they should make a report, or who they should report to. This was particularly the case when reporting over the phone.

Many participants were hesitant about calling 999, especially for those who felt their crime ‘wasn’t an emergency’, for example theft or burglary.

Some participants used 101 to report. Most were not familiar with this option for reporting a crime and were either told to call 101 by a 999 operator or were recommended to do so by family or friends.

“I’d seen adverts on TV saying to call 101 instead of 999 if it isn’t an emergency.”

(Older victim of criminal damage, 65, rural)

“My neighbour told me about 101 – I wouldn’t have called it otherwise. But I’m pleased I know about it, and I’d call that number in the future. They were very helpful.”

(Older victim of attempted burglary, 76, urban)

A small number of participants called their local police force directly, often finding this number online. Participants who felt the crime they had experienced was ‘less urgent’ were more likely to feel this was the most sensible course of action.

Participants were less likely to consider making a report in person at their nearest police station, especially those living in rural areas, where the closest station could be located some distance away. A few participants reported additional concerns about making a report in person. These were:

- uncertainty of when a police station is open; and
- entering a police station could be intimidating.

“I didn’t want to ring 999 because it wasn’t serious enough, but I didn’t know the local number either. That’s why I went over to the station, but it was closed.”

(Older victim of theft, 75, rural)

“The hardest thing was to go to the police station, because I hadn’t done anything wrong, so I felt weird going to the police.”

(Older victim of financial fraud, 67, urban)

4.3. Making a report

Most participants reported the crime over the phone. Most described positive experiences of calling both 101 and 999, with calls usually answered quickly and the details of the crime taken in a calm, polite and professional manner. Some participants referred to the care and sympathy with which their call was taken and were made to feel that it was worth reporting and would be taken seriously.

However, others using the phone described a more difficult experience, either having to wait a long time to speak to an operator or reporting officer or having to call back more than once before getting through. Having to wait or being placed on hold had a negative impact on participants’ experiences of reporting.

“I didn’t know about calling 101 until [my neighbour] Neil said that was what we should do. He told me not to hang up, as they could be a while answering. The first time we called 101 they weren’t as quick to answer as the second time. Maybe we had to wait about a few minutes – but I expected them to just pick up the phone!”

(Older victim of criminal damage, 80, rural)

“When you do report you just end up waiting on the phone for three quarters of an hour and when you get through, they haven’t got a clue what you’re talking about.”

(Older victim of criminal damage, 68, rural)

“I think nobody would like it, would they, if they had just received some news that they’d just been burgled and then they’re just waiting to speak to someone for ages. I just think you’re already feeling that something serious has happened, you feel that you need someone to care and you feel as though you can’t even speak to anyone, if you can’t even speak to the police.”

(Older victim of burglary, 75, rural)

There were a small number of cases where participants felt they were 'rebuffed' or spoken to brusquely over the phone. This had a very negative impact on them. Examples were provided where participants reported feeling like they had been 'told off' for calling 999, or that they were made to feel that their case was not worth reporting to the police.

Case study: Sylvia, 74, victim of robbery, urban

Sylvia had an expensive necklace with sentimental value stolen from her, whilst wearing it. She called 999 alone whilst still crying and finding it hard to stop. The response she received surprised and upset her further as she was told that 'it was not an emergency' and that she needed to call another number. She felt like she was being told off and that she was 'given a lecture'. She was sobbing during this call and found it hard to speak. She then called 101.

Sylvia managed to get hold of her daughter, who on hearing what had happened she rushed to be with her mother. From then on, her daughter took over the reporting and contact with the police.

"I was very upset and was unable to stop crying. I felt like I was wasting their time. In my eyes it was a crime, but in their eyes it was unimportant."

A small number of participants chose to report at their local police station. As with reporting over the phone, experiences were largely positive, although again, having to wait before speaking to a police officer had a bearing on perceptions of the police and levels of satisfaction with the response received.

Regardless of reporting method, most participants consistently identified the reporting officers that they dealt with conveyed a professional manner, providing a high level of service.

4.3.1. Crime Reference Number

In all cases, participants were given a Crime Reference Number (CRN) during or following the initial report. The majority were expecting to be given something of this nature to show the case had been 'logged', with many aware that they would need this for insurance purposes, for example in the case of theft or burglary.

However, for those who were less familiar with what a CRN is, and why a victim of crime is given one, there was some confusion. A small number of participants took receiving a CRN as evidence that their crime was being investigated, which was not always the case.

“I got another text which had my crime reference number. I was then able to get on with my insurance claim, but in terms of any investigation, I had no idea what was going on behind the scenes, if anything at all.”

(Older victim of theft, 65, rural)

4.3.2. Identifying vulnerability of older victims

Most participants could not remember being asked questions that would have helped identify any vulnerabilities when making the initial report, even if these questions were asked by the police. Some participants were living on their own (or were alone at the time of reporting the crime), and several of these participants felt that this should have been considered by the police.

Similarly, those who were older (typically aged 80 and over) or who had additional physical or mental health issues felt that this was not checked and then factored into the police response. Being disabled or having a physical or mental illness appears to play a significant role in both the initial experience and the lasting impact of the crime on the victim.

“My son was in shock and was stammering, and I said he needed to calm down and that I was going to phone the police. I’d seen adverts on TV saying to call 101 instead of 999 if it isn’t an emergency, but when I spoke with her, she asked me how old I was and whether I was alone, and said that because I was with my son, I wasn’t vulnerable and said that officers can’t be everywhere.”

(Older victim of criminal damage, 65, rural)

In the very small number of cases where participants were asked if there were any circumstances that might make them more vulnerable, this was positively received.

“On the phone they did ask how old we were, and we said we were in our 80s. They asked me if I was on my own, and I told them I wasn’t.”

(Older victim of criminal damage, 80, rural)

4.4. The initial police response

Participants described experiencing a variety of police responses after reporting the crime.

Face-to-face visit from the police

Participants responded very positively to face-to-face visits from a police officer, particularly at this early stage of the process. These participants were more likely to feel supported and reassured, viewing this as a sign that the police were taking their case seriously.

Those who received a face-to-face visit from the police and had a statement taken praised the way this was done calmly and methodically by officers. This was read back to them to make sure the police officers had taken down the details correctly and reflected their experience of the crime. This was seen as a sign the police had listened to their account of the crime and paid close attention to their version of events.

Similarly, participants responded well to police officers coming to check for evidence, particularly in the event of burglary or theft, looking for CCTV footage or sending a forensic team to take fingerprints. For many, this was proof that the police were 'doing their job' and provided reassurance that the police were doing everything they could to solve the crime.

As with the reporting process, participants consistently identified the police officers they dealt with as providing a high level of service. Several participants described the police going 'above and beyond' to make them feel as comfortable as possible.

"She [the police officer] made me feel better, she said she'd keep an eye on the place while we were away on holiday and told us she'd watch our house. She made it very clear she wouldn't take any bother if it happened again."

(Older victim of criminal damage, 80, rural)

"They couldn't have done any more. They knocked on doors that night, looked at the camera and they passed that information on to me very quickly because on the Monday they came to do the fingerprints. I had various phone calls, they were very helpful."

(Older victim of burglary, 68, rural)

Ongoing updates from the police

After reporting their case, some participants were told that the police would be in touch with more information or would share an update on their case when they were able to do so. Often this was in the form of a phone call.

In some cases, participants were given names of individual police officers who were dealing with their case, and a phone number that they could call. However, often no indication was given of the timescale for this response, resulting in uncertainty of the next steps. This was heightened when the participant felt uncomfortable asking the police officer questions or for further clarification.

Case closure

A few participants were told when reporting the crime that there was not sufficient resource to deal with their case. Although deeply frustrated by this, participants tended not to be hugely surprised at this outcome, given their perceptions of the police being under-resourced and over-stretched.

For more information on case closures, please see Chapter 6.

4.4.1. Consistency in approach

Some participants did note inconsistencies between the information they were given when originally reporting the crime and subsequent actions. For example, a small number of participants were told to expect a visit from a police officer or a phone call after making their report which did not take place. Often, no explanation was given for this, leaving these participants confused and overwhelmed with the police response.

4.4.2. Information about support services

A very small number of participants were asked if they would like any additional support or were given information for support services. Where this happened, it was felt to be beneficial.

However, some participants felt this offer of support was more of a 'formality' and it was not always made clear why this information would be useful or relevant to them. In some cases, the onus was felt to be on victims to reach out for support. Participants felt they might have been more likely to take up this support if they had been contacted directly.

“What I can't understand is that you've got to make an appointment with victim support. I was told that from a friend who was a police officer and who now works for victim support.”

(Older victim of theft and physical abuse, 66, urban)

“Because of how bad the initial call was, I didn't really want to engage with any of the support services.”

(Older victim of vandalism, 65, rural)

Case study: Eva, 70, victim of financial fraud, urban

Eva experienced financial fraud. She was told by the reporting police officer to get in touch with Victim Support or support services. However, Eva did not ring Victim Support for the following reasons:

- She felt like she would be ‘one of many’ and would be unlikely to receive specific or tailored support.
- She didn’t want to have to keep ‘re-telling’ the story of the crime to different people.
- It wasn’t made clear how exactly they would help (beyond helping her manage the money she has left).
- She felt that psychological support would have been more appropriate but wasn’t made to feel that Victim Support could offer this.

“I didn’t know what they could do to help me. I just wanted my money back.”

Most participants were not offered or signposted to any additional support services after making the report to the police. Although they could see a clear benefit to being offered this information and support, some participants (typically those aged 65–70) often viewed a referral to help and support services as being most beneficial to those who were older, more vulnerable or who had experienced more ‘serious’ crimes.

“When you think, some people suffer from very serious crime, elderly ladies being attacked, but he didn’t hurt me. I suppose it’s good it’s offered, maybe some people would want it. I’m not badly off here. I am quite a strong-minded person.”

(Older victim of theft, 76, urban)

While some participants felt they might not have taken up an offer of support, all felt this would be a useful addition to the service they received from the police, particularly at this early stage in the victim’s journey.

“We didn’t receive any kind of victim support letter. What would have been good would have been a letter from the police explaining what things we can do to protect ourselves and letting us know about the common scams that are going around at the moment. For a long time, I thought I was the only one that had fallen for something like this, but then I started talking to people at church and our friends, and I realised that wasn’t the case. Talking about these things is very good. Having a place where you can not only warn other people but also talk about these things would really have helped.”

(Older victim of financial fraud, 70, rural)

Where offered, sign-posting to additional advice and support was very important to victims of domestic abuse. However, due to the specific nature of the crime experienced, there was some opposition to being labelled or referred to as a ‘victim’ – and for these participants there was some hesitancy in engaging with any material that insinuated or assumed they were.

4.5. Key conclusions and implications from this chapter

This chapter highlighted participants’ experiences of the reporting process, from the decision to report to the police response received.

While experiences of making a report were generally positive, there were some cases where participants felt it was difficult to contact the police, or felt their case wasn’t taken seriously when they did report.

Five key factors could have a significant impact on participants’ experiences of the reporting process and the police response they received:

- Low awareness of reporting through 101 or directly to a police station, which could make the process of deciding to report harder, particularly if participants expressed a reluctance to call 999.
- The role, manner and tone of individual police officers was very important.
- Being asked specific questions when reporting the crime to identify vulnerabilities, for example age, health conditions and whether they lived alone.
- A lack of signposting to support services at any point in the reporting process, which left some participants feeling unsupported and overwhelmed.
- Consistency between communication and action by the police.

5. Victims' experiences of the ongoing investigation

5.1. Chapter overview

This chapter focuses on experiences of the police investigation. It explores participants' views of the communication and contact they received as part of this process. It also examines the experience of Action Fraud for victims of financial fraud in the sample, detailing levels of satisfaction with this service as well as the impact this has on victims.

5.2. Receiving updates

Few participants received updates during the investigation process. Amongst these, there was a range of experiences in terms of:

- how frequently updates were shared with participants;
- the quantity and consistency of the information included in any updates;
- the format in which any updates are shared; and
- the number of different points of contact.

As with the reporting process, where updates were provided, participants were quick to praise the manner and professionalism of police officers they met or spoke to during the investigation. This often contributed to participants feeling supported and reassured.

5.2.1. Frequency of updates

Participants' experiences of the ongoing investigation process tended to be characterised by a lack of communication.

Most participants received little or no information from the police during the investigation. Their only contact with the police was reporting the crime and, for some, when the police decided to close the case (for more information on case outcomes, see Chapter 6). For the most part, participants did not know what the police were 'getting up to', or whether they were making any progress investigating their case. This led several to assume their case had been closed, long before the police confirmed they were not continuing with the investigation.

While few participants were surprised by the lack of communication received, all were disappointed with this. For many, this lack of contact contributed to lower levels of overall satisfaction.

“I think it was bad that we didn’t hear from the police after the incident happened. It’s all to do with the lack of letting you know what’s going on, if they could have just kept us involved, we would have felt so differently.”

(Older victim of theft and physical abuse, 86, urban)

A small number of participants felt they were kept updated as their case progressed and were given a good sense of the investigation. This contributed to a positive experience of the police response, with participants feeling better supported overall. However, these updates could still be sporadic and unexpected, which some found unsettling.

Above all, participants wanted communication to be consistent, with updates being shared when promised even if there is no progress to report. For example, a participant was told they would receive a minimum of one email a month – arriving on the last Thursday of each month – with an update on their case. These emails were not consistently received which made it harder for them to keep track of the progress of their case.

“You’re so vulnerable – you’re hanging on to every word the police say. So, it’s very stressful when you then don’t hear anything.”

(Older victim of financial fraud, 70, urban)

Case study: Eric, 65, victim of verbal abuse, urban

The day after Eric reported his crime, a police officer called him back and informed him that they had checked the CCTV, but the incident was out of shot. They said they were keeping the vehicle details on record in case it formed part of a bigger picture. They asked how he was and said they would be sending a letter with advice about who to contact if he needed help. Eric welcomed receiving a call rather than a letter as it allowed for dialogue.

“I’m pleased they rang me up as it enabled me to ask questions and also to reassure them that I was alright, and I thought it was a nice touch given the fact that it was a relatively minor thing.”

Less than a week after the incident he received a letter as the caller said he would – this he saw as simply a ‘back up’ to the phone call. The letter was from the local police force with an advice leaflet from Victim Support. He felt no need to take up emotional support, but he appreciated the gesture and felt that it suggested that they cared.

Case study: Cathy, 68, victim of physical abuse, urban

Cathy was attacked in a hospital car park. While she was very satisfied with the reporting process and the initial police response, the lack of communication in the investigation process left her feeling upset and disillusioned with the police.

After taking her statement, the next update Cathy received on her case came nine months later when a letter arrived through the post. The letter asked her if she would like the police to continue with their investigation and allow them to make further enquiries. Cathy was confused – she thought this was already ongoing – and felt this response had come out of the blue. She felt that enough time had passed for her to ‘get over it’ and didn’t want to get re-involved in the case; she no longer wished to prosecute the suspect and felt that, after that length of time, it was unlikely the police would be able to successfully prosecute.

5.2.2. Format

Updates were usually communicated over the phone, by letter or over email. In addition, a few participants had one or more face-to-face visits from police officers.

The preferred format of police communication appears to be linked to the perceived severity of the crime. Generally, in less severe crimes, a letter was the preferred mode of communication, with participants appreciating receiving information in hard copy format. Continued face-to-face updates and communication over the phone was felt to be appropriate for more serious crimes. However, it is important to note that participants tended to be more focused on receiving *any* communication, over the format of that communication.

In the small number of cases where participants received updates about their investigation by text message, this was felt to be an inappropriate way for the police to communicate with older victims of crime.

Case study: Irene, 68, victim of burglary, rural

Irene had her house burgled and lots of jewellery with sentimental value was stolen. It came at a sensitive time; her husband had been diagnosed with terminal cancer and had been moved to a respite care home days earlier. She therefore felt very vulnerable and found the incident deeply upsetting.

Irene made a report to the police as soon as she came home and realised her house had been broken into. She called various family members at the same time, and they all came very promptly. She felt the two police officers who attended were 'amazing'. Irene described them as incredibly kind, supportive, helpful and reassuring. One of them told Irene that they had received specialist training on responding to this type of crime and was able to give her advice on how to protect her home from further incidents.

Over the next few weeks, Irene received regular contact from the police, by email, by letter and over the phone as well as an additional face-to-face visit from an officer who came to collect photos of the items which had been stolen. Irene felt they left no stone unturned and that she was reliably informed of any progress – and even when there was nothing new to report.

5.2.3. Point of contact

In the few cases in which it happened, a single, designated police contact during the investigation process was very helpful. These participants felt they were 'up to speed' with the investigation, and the approach felt more personal and better tailored to them. It helped participants feel the police were supportive and trying to mitigate the impact of the crime.

Some participants were in contact with multiple officers, which they found frustrating and upsetting having to repeat information about their case.

Many participants were quick to praise the manner and professionalism of police officers they met or spoke to during the investigation process. However, this experience was not universal. For example, one participant was visited by a police officer who was out of uniform, which took them by surprise and made them slightly suspicious. They felt that, as an older victim, the formalities of uniform and the tone and language used by the police was critical in inspiring confidence and trust.

“When I was younger, you used to go the GP and they were there in a white coat. Now, you don't know who the doctor is! I'd never seen a police officer out of uniform before.”

(Older victim of financial fraud, 70, urban)

Some participants also commented on the fact that police officers referred to them by their first name, which in some cases felt over-familiar and informal, particularly where they weren't asked if they were comfortable using first names.

Case study: Eva, 70, victim of financial fraud, urban

Eva invested her savings in an asset management firm that ended up putting her money in a Ponzi scheme.

She was given a specific contact to speak to which made her feel more comfortable – she didn't like the thought of having to keep explaining the details of the case to different officers. She was also very pleasantly surprised when that police officer rang her, unannounced, every so often to see how she was, and regularly reminded her about support services and information available to her as a victim of financial fraud.

Case study: Roy, 65, victim of theft, rural

After receiving no support services information from the police after the theft of his caravan, Roy researched rural crime online and came across a body set up recently in his area to provide support to victims in rural areas that experience crime. He found an email address and phone number of the leading officer for his county and tried to contact him to see if he had any advice on how he might be able to better understand who had stolen the caravan.

He emailed and called several times all with no response, and left voicemails on the officer's phone over the course of two weeks. A few weeks later, he received an email back from the officer he had tried to contact who told him that all the information he needed was online. Roy found this very frustrating as he felt he had gone to great lengths to try and get hold of the officer as he felt he would have been able to provide valuable advice and support for victims of rural crimes in particular.

5.4. Experiences of Action Fraud

Participants of financial fraud were generally referred to [Action Fraud](#) by a reporting police officer.

Experiences of Action Fraud were largely positive, with participants finding Action Fraud representatives to be clear and polite on the phone. For example, in one case, a member of Action Fraud staff followed up with one participant, sharing a survey to understand the impact of the crime on them as an older victim. This made the participant feel that Action Fraud were interested in the case and wanted to make sure their response had been adequate.

“Sometime later and I can’t remember how long, I had a letter from Action Fraud and they were doing a review on how older people coped with financial fraud. I had to fill in a questionnaire as to how it had affected me.”

(Older victim of financial fraud, 80, urban)

However, there was confusion about the function of Action Fraud. Amongst participants who had experienced financial fraud, there was an understanding that contacting Action Fraud served to simply ‘log’ their case. As a result, participants could be confused as to who was responsible for investigating or overseeing their case.

“The fact is, is that it seemed like you just report it to someone and that someone is just recording it. They said they wouldn’t follow up on the phone numbers that I gave them which I didn’t really understand.”

(Older victim of financial fraud, 70, rural)

While a few participants took it upon themselves to try and prevent further instances of fraud – for example, by cancelling cards, changing passwords or updating their personal details – some felt that they would have appreciated additional support and advice from the police or Action Fraud on how to protect themselves against any future fraudulent attacks.

5.5. Key conclusions and implications from this chapter

Participants’ experiences of the ongoing investigation process were often characterised by a lack of, or very little, communication from the police.

Experiences of Action Fraud tended to be positive, although there was some confusion over their role in the investigation process, and their relationship with the police.

Preferences for police communication throughout an investigation were:

- **Receiving regular updates on their case, even if there is no concrete progress.** This reassured participants that the police were continuing to take their case seriously and trying to solve the crime.
- **Consistent communication.** Some participants expressed frustration at receiving a flurry of communication, followed by ‘radio silence’, or not receiving updates when promised.
- **A single point of contact during the investigation process.** Participants with one key police contact felt reassured that this officer was ‘up to speed’ with the details of the investigation, delivering a more personal and tailored service.

- **Preferences for communication throughout the investigation process were dependent on the severity of the crime.** In minor to moderate cases, a letter is seen as the preferred mode of communication, but face-to-face updates and communication over the phone was felt to be appropriate for more serious cases. Any communication by text message was felt to be inappropriate and described by participants as feeling cold and informal.

6. Case outcomes

6.1. Chapter overview

This chapter focuses on the case outcome. It explores how participants were notified of the outcome, exploring perceptions of the content, format and timing of these communications as well as general satisfaction with how their case was handled. This chapter also includes experiences of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

6.2. Experiences of case outcomes

Participants' experiences were categorised into five different outcomes:

1. Case immediately closed after reporting the crime

A small number of participants were told that their case would be immediately closed, without investigation. Often this happened when they reported the crime.

Participants were often surprised at the speed with which their case was closed, particularly if they had expected the police to investigate the crime. This view depends on the crime:

- Financial fraud and identify theft: participants had very little to no expectation that a suspect would be identified or charged. They assumed there would not be enough evidence for the police to follow up.
- Burglary, robbery, theft, physical abuse, and emotional abuse: expected to be investigated due to the existence of physical and biological evidence, including fingerprints, footprints or CCTV footage. In these instances, being told that the case was being immediately closed was frustrating and disappointing.

“They just texted me to say my case was closed. I just got a cold hard text message.”

(Victim of theft, 65, rural)

2. Case closed following a police investigation, without a suspect being identified

The level of investigation and length of time that had passed before case closure in these cases varied. Some participants were told that their case had been closed after several interactions with the police for example, being given updates on the investigation, even if the police were unable to make much progress, whilst other cases were closed after what seemed like very little investigation.

Participants who did not expect the police to be able to make much progress on their case but were kept up-to-date nonetheless were generally understanding of having their case closed and felt that the police had done all they could. This outcome had very little impact on the victim and their experience or feelings towards the case. Participants who had lower expectations of the police response, but who were *not* kept informed throughout the investigation process, were not dissatisfied with the service they received, but did feel less supported or reassured by the police response. In some cases, these participants described feeling less likely to report a crime in the future.

Participants felt their case was inappropriately closed when they had expected the police to take action, were unaware of the action undertaken by the police, or felt that the action that the police had taken was insufficient. Some of these participants felt that the police did not do everything they could have to investigate and resolve the case. These participants were often disappointed in the police response.

“Two or three weeks after the theft, I got another text to say the case had been closed as they had no leads to follow... I hadn’t had any other contact with the police during that time and since I received the text with my crime reference number... It didn’t really surprise me that they closed the case without doing anything, but it was disappointing that £30,000 wasn’t enough to make them care... I feel like the police were not interested in my crime and it just wasn’t important to them.”

(Older victim of theft, 65, rural)

3. Suspect being identified by the police, but no further action taken to resolve the case

In a very small number of cases, participants reported that, although a suspect was identified, no further action was taken to resolve the case. In these cases, it was often not made clear to participants why the police were unable to continue to prosecution. This left these participants feeling confused and dissatisfied with both the case outcome and the police response. This was amplified where the police did not deliver this information sensitively.

“The officer said he wouldn’t pursue the chap because the suspect would lose his job. He really didn’t seem to want to take it anywhere. We just couldn’t fathom why.”

(Victim of stalking and harassment, 65, rural)

4. Suspect found, and case taken to prosecution

A small number of participants reported that a suspect had been identified and that their case was taken to the prosecution stage.

More information on experiences with the Crown Prosecution Service is detailed in section 6.4.

5. Unclear on the final outcome

Various participants reported not knowing what the outcome of their case was.

In some cases, participants described communication from the police which might have been notifying them of their case being closed. However, the communication did not explicitly refer to case closure. Others reported not receiving any such communication from the police.

Being unclear about the outcome of their case had relatively little impact on participants who felt their case was lower priority, those who were not expecting their crime to be resolved, and for those who felt the crime had relatively little impact on them.

“I just presumed it was closed... I didn't really expect to hear anything else because there was so much going on and because so many cars had gone it was a big job on their hands... Maybe if the situation had been more personal, like a house broken into, then yes I would have expected something.”

(Older victim of theft, 75, rural)

However, some reported it would have been reassuring to know whether the investigation was open or closed as this helped them move on with their life.

“I don't know the official status, but I am pretty sure it will be closed – it would be quite nice to know whether they had given up on it fully.”

(Older victim of burglary, 75, urban)

“All these lower profile cases are getting ignored, my case wasn't high profile enough. Some cases take higher priority than others, like mine, it didn't involve money. Nothing worked well, he's still walking around as far as I know and he hasn't been put into court.”

(Older victim of theft and physical abuse, 66, rural)

Some participants were frustrated by not knowing the outcome of their case, especially where there was an expectation the case would be resolved and where the case had significant impact on the victim. These participants were often left feeling dissatisfied with the police response, with some finding it difficult to move on with their life.

6.3. Communicating case outcomes

Participants reported differences in the format and timing of communication they received to notify them about their case outcome, as well as the content of information shared by the police.

6.3.1. Format

Some participants received a text to inform them of their case outcome, whilst others received this information either by letter or over the phone.

Those who received a text message generally felt that this was an inappropriate way to communicate this update; texts felt 'cold' and too informal, leaving participants feeling that the police did not care about them or their case. This also prevented them from asking any questions about the case or the outcome.

"I had nothing until the text message which told me they were going to wind up the enquiry... When someone has entered your property illegally, that upsets you. I was quite deflated. I thought, it doesn't tell me what they've done in the meantime in the weeks since the report, they've just said they can't find the culprits. I felt quite let down."

(Older victim of theft, 67, urban)

In contrast, participants who received a phone call informing them that their case would be closed felt this was an appropriate communication method. Being able to have a conversation with the police was appreciated, as participants could ask questions and the police could reassure the victim. Even in cases where participants perceived both their case and the impact of that case on them to be relatively minor, a phone call was very much valued.

6.3.2. Timing

Generally, participants were satisfied when hearing about their case closure in a relatively timely way, which was felt to be within 2–3 weeks after their last point of contact with the police. Participants who had been told about case closure several months after their last point of contact with the police felt that the information came 'out of the blue' and were quite taken aback. These participants were often left questioning why they had not received any updates beforehand, and many had assumed the police had stopped investigating and had closed the case already.

"I was a bit shocked that the police called right out of the blue, I presumed they had forgotten about me or that there wasn't enough evidence."

(Older victim of theft and physical abuse, 86, urban)

6.3.3. Content of information received

Some participants were asked for their permission before the police closed the case, whereas others were told this was going to happen.

Where permission was sought, participants reported feeling pleasantly surprised. This made them feel as if they had a say, that the police cared about their opinion, and that they were being listened to.

“It was perhaps six weeks to two months when they called us asking if we would agree or approve of them closing the case... They phoned just to see if we were happy with them closing the case, I suppose it was good they gave us the choice...”

(Older victim of burglary, 76, urban)

A small number of participants also reported receiving an overview of the police investigation at the same time as being informed that their case would be closed. This information was greatly appreciated. Knowing exactly what the police had done before closing their case often made participants more accepting that their case was going to be closed.

6.4. Experiences of the Crown Prosecution Service

There were a small number of cases in the sample where suspects were identified and there was sufficient evidence for the case to go to prosecution. Experiences with the CPS varied amongst these participants depending on their level of engagement with the CPS process and the information they received about it.

Some of the participants whose cases did go to court described feeling very removed from this process. This was sometimes out of choice, with participants describing a reluctance to get involved with the prosecution process and ‘re-live’ the incident by attending the trial, or for personal reasons. However, some participants were not aware their case had progressed to prosecution and were only notified once the suspect had been formally charged.

Case study: Edward, 72, victim of physical assault, urban

Following the investigation, Edward was informed by a phone call from a police officer that the suspect had been positively identified, arrested and charged. Whilst he was surprised to hear from the police, and happy to receive the update as he had assumed the case had been closed, he did not recall receiving any information about the specifics of the trial or the final outcome.

Despite being given the update over the phone by a police officer, he felt uncomfortable asking questions about the trial, and therefore feels he has been left with unanswered questions.

“I didn’t set out to ask such questions. In fact, when the police talk to you like that, you don’t want – I don’t want to ask too many questions. As long as they’re happy, I’m happy.”

A small number of participants with experience of the CPS were more engaged with the process.

These participants received a notification that their case was going to court by letter or by phone. This information was clear and informative, focusing on the practicalities of the prosecution process for example, where and when the trial was going to be taking place.

“At that point, it all felt out of my control. I wasn’t engaging with it very deeply and I didn’t want to see him again but the correspondence itself included practical details, like details of the venue, how to get there and the timings.”

(Victim of financial fraud, 70, urban)

No participants attended or testified at the trial for their cases. One participant remembered being given the option of attending, but decided not to, as they felt uncomfortable facing the suspect and seeing them try to defend their actions. Others were offered the chance to have a statement read in court, which they accepted. As none of the older victims in the sample attended their trial, they were unable to comment on whether special measures were offered as part of this process.

“Since I wasn’t going to go myself, I was given the opportunity for a statement to be read out on my behalf, but I’m not sure if this was actually done or not.”

(Victim of financial fraud, 70, urban)

The notification of the trial outcome included a brief account of the verdict reached and, where relevant, the length of prison sentence given.

Case study: Irene, 68, victim of burglary, rural

In February 2018, Irene came home with her granddaughter to find that her house had been burgled. She first called her son, before calling the police on 999 to report it. Irene described the two police officers that attended the scene as incredibly kind and understanding. Different police officers visited her several times throughout the following week, and two days after the burglary, forensics also came to take fingerprints.

Six months later, Irene received a call letting her know they had arrested the suspect. Over the phone, Irene was asked if she would like to testify in court and chose instead to have a statement read out on her behalf. Following the court case, Irene was notified by letter that the individual had been sentenced to five years in prison. She was subsequently told that she would also receive compensation, which she was very pleasantly surprised by.

Irene felt that fact that there was a conviction played a significant part in her being able to process and move on from the crime. While she was satisfied with the prosecution process, she felt that it would have been helpful to be given more information about the process of the trial itself – perhaps even a transcript – to understand how the final judgement was reached, and if the suspect made any statements or shared any responses to questions.

“He’s in prison at the moment, and recently I had a phone call from someone at the police saying that I’m going to get some sort of compensation. I mean, that is amazing!”

6.5. Key conclusions and implications from this chapter

This chapter outlined the outcomes participants experienced. The impact the delivery of the final case outcome can have depended on:

- **How the outcome is communicated.** Being informed about their case being closed by text was felt to be inappropriate. In contrast, participants who received a phone call notifying them of their case outcome tended to feel more positive about the police response overall.
- **When the case outcome is communicated.** Participants were frustrated when more than a few weeks had passed between previous contact and being notified of their case closing. This lack of communication can lead to confusion of the case status.

- **The content of communications around case closure.** Participants reported feeling more positive about the police response when they were asked if their case could be closed – rather than being told this was happening.

7. The impact of the crime and the police response

7.1. Chapter overview

This chapter explores the impact of being a victim of crime on participants. This includes examining how factors such as type of crime and individual circumstances had an impact on participants' experiences, including how safe they felt and their subsequent likelihood to report a crime.

7.2. Impact of the crime experienced

A range of impacts were described by participants, including; financial, physical, psychological, or emotional. These impacts were felt in both the short and long term.

“I do still get quite nervous if I see people walking around or near my car. Sometimes I lock myself in the car, just in case. I'm much more wary – and I don't like coming into London because I hate being in crowded spaces.”

(Older victim of physical abuse, 68, urban)

The impact of a crime on an older victim was generally influenced by two main factors:

1. The type of crime experienced.
2. The victim's individual circumstances.

7.2.1. The role of the type of crime experienced

The type of crime that participants experienced could influence or amplify the impact of the crime.

Participants who had been the victim of theft, burglary, robbery or criminal damage described experiencing:

- A financial impact of the crime: Items being stolen, paying for replacement goods and fitting security measures.
- A psychological impact: Invasion of private space. This was heightened by the sense that they had been specifically targeted due to their age.
- A physical impact: Sustaining injuries that have made daily life more difficult.

“They were looking for money and jewellery, they took all my good jewellery. The most upsetting thing was that they took my husband’s wedding ring. My husband’s stuff, watches, cufflinks, all sentimental stuff. It was horrible. Horrible.”

(Older victim of burglary, 68, rural)

Participants who had been the victim of physical assault described experiencing:

- A physical impact of the crime: Experiencing severe and enduring pain and injuries.
- A psychological impact: Flashbacks, trauma, the fear of reprisals.

“I don’t open the door to anyone now. I always had the doors open in the summer. It’s changed me a lot... I’m certainly more cautious.”

(Older victim of physical abuse, 81, urban)

Participants who had been the victim of financial abuse and fraud described experiencing:

- A financial impact of the crime: Inability to recover the money or loss of savings (e.g. by working).
- A psychological impact: Shock, anger, shame and embarrassment.

“Not being able to do anything about the money that you’ve lost makes it much harder to get over.”

(Older victim of financial fraud, 70, urban)

Participants who had been the victim of emotional abuse, including domestic abuse, stalking and harassment, described experiencing:

- A psychological impact of the crime: Scared to leave their house, fearful of future reprisals, especially in cases where a suspect was not prosecuted or charged.
- A financial impact: Relocating.
- A physical impact: Physical injuries.

“Every day when I go out, I look right, I look left. I’m watching. My car locks as soon as I get in it, in case he creeps up behind me, but he could be round any corner. My rape alarm is always with me.”

(Older victim of domestic abuse, 65, urban)

7.2.2. The role of individual circumstances

As outlined in Chapter 3 of this report, participants' individual circumstances could have a big impact on their experience of being a victim of crime.

Age of the victim

Younger participants typically reported their crime having less of an impact on them and their daily life compared to those aged 80 and over. This younger group were often still very active, with many in full-time employment. Throwing themselves into their daily lives was a coping mechanism described by many of these participants, helping them move on from the emotional impact of being a victim of crime.

By contrast, those typically aged 80 and over did not have the same opportunities to distract themselves. These participants described constantly reflecting on the crime, leading them to feel upset and more nervous about future incidents.

“We’ve installed security cameras so if something similar happens again, there’s a chance of identifying the perpetrator. I’m frightened that something else might happen... it just upsets me when I think about it.”

(Older victim of criminal damage, 80, rural)

Case study: Eddie, 72, victim of physical assault and attempted robbery, urban

Eddie was walking home from playing football when a man came up from behind him and swung towards his jaw attempting to steal his bag. His glasses were knocked off and so he couldn't see well, but he grabbed onto what he could of the perpetrator and had his neck in his arm. This scared the perpetrator and he backed off and ran away.

Once he arrived home, Eddie felt shaken up and sat down to have a cup of tea. He said he would have happily moved on and wasn't planning to report the incident until he told his son that evening what had happened. His son convinced him to report the incident as it was possible the man may have done this to other people, and Eddie was surprised at how interested the police seemed to be in taking down all the details the next morning. Eddie gave his jacket to the police and had DNA taken from his fingernails which proved to be a success. This pleased Eddie, as he felt useful to have helped potentially identify a criminal.

Although the incident didn't have a big impact on Eddie emotionally, he mentioned avoiding certain roads at night. However, for the most part, he has moved on and doesn't feel like the crime has affected him in other ways.

Case study: Evelyn, 86, victim of robbery and physical assault, urban

Evelyn had been out to do her daily shopping and had arrived back to her sheltered housing apartment. She was getting her keys out of her bag when a man shot past behind her, stealing her bag and knocking her forcefully to the floor. She lay on the floor for an hour before two police officers came to her assistance. It is unknown whether they had passed her by chance or whether a neighbour had seen her from inside and called the police.

She went to hospital and stayed overnight, but once back home, her daughter noticed that she was falling over frequently, she was aggressive, and didn't want to do anything, include eat. Her daughter researched these symptoms and took her back to the doctors where it was concluded she had suffered a brain haemorrhage, something the doctors at the hospital had not done scans for.

She stayed in a care facility for seven weeks over Christmas, having many visitors which she does not remember, and upon leaving, could no longer walk on her own. Her daughter now visits her every day to help her with basic tasks around the house, and she still feels considerable resentment towards the man that carried out the attack. She is afraid to play with her grandchildren and will not pick them up out of fear of dropping them.

Existence of an active support network

The existence of an active support network influenced the impact of being a victim of crime for these participants. Those with a close network of family and friends around them tended to describe feeling safer and better supported in the aftermath of experiencing a crime. Being able to talk about their experiences with people close to them also helped them process their experience. Those living alone, or who were more socially isolated, tended to report feeling the impact of their crime for a longer period.

“If you haven't got family and you're on your own at my age, then something like that does make a difference.”

(Older victim of theft, 75, rural)

7.3. Impact of the police response

The police response to the crime could have a significant impact on participants and their satisfaction with how the case was handled in two key ways:

- Their feeling of safety.
- Their likelihood to report future crimes.

7.3.1. Participants' feeling of safety

Participants who were satisfied with the police response often reported feeling safer. This positive response was characterised by satisfactory levels of communication, information being provided, and professional and engaged police officers. This resulted in participants being reassured, informed on how to help prevent further incidents of crime (if appropriate) and how to access additional help and support. This group were more likely to feel they were taken seriously by the police, and as a result felt protected and supported by the police.

On the other hand, participants who reported being less satisfied with the police response often did not feel protected and supported by the police, reducing how safe they felt. Negative experiences were characterised by little communication and individual police officers perceived to be unprofessional, disengaged, and uncaring. These participants were more likely to report not knowing what happened to their case resulting in them feeling unnerved and distressed.

“They came that day to make sure we were OK. I know they are busy, the police. And then when they came the next day as well, we were really surprised. I thought the police response was good – it felt like they were checking up on us. It felt like someone was caring about us. It makes it feel better when there's someone like that about.”

(Older victim of criminal damage, 80, rural)

7.3.2. Participants' likelihood to report future crimes

Participants who felt satisfied with the police response were very likely to report future crimes and would encourage others to do so. Some participants who were dissatisfied with the police response were also very likely to report future crimes to the police. Even if they did not expect much from the police response in the future, they still felt it was the right thing to do. Often this related to the perceived importance of reporting crimes to ensure national crime statistics were accurate.

A small number of those who were unhappy with their experience of the police response reported being unlikely to report a crime again. These participants felt nothing was done in response to their report and saw no point in reporting in the future. In their view, reporting to the police had been a waste of time and they did not want to be disappointed again.

Case study: Pauline, 65, victim of domestic abuse, stalking and harassment, urban

Pauline has been suffering with the after-effects of an abusive relationship with her ex-partner for the past few years. There have been numerous occasions where she feels the police have let her down, especially during an occasion where her ex-partner cornered her in a park in an attempt to steal her dog and cause her upset. The police arrived after onlookers pinned the ex-partner down after witnessing the event, and instead of apprehending the ex-partner, the police let him go and made Pauline walk back home alone.

She felt incredibly let down by the police response, as she had made many reports to the police regarding their relationship in the past. Other instances of the abuse that Pauline had received included receiving 50 threatening emails, physical assault, and stalking and harassment. Despite being told by numerous officers that stalking was an offence they took seriously, she felt as though no action was ever taken.

As a result of this, Pauline feels as though she has lost complete faith and trust in the police, and that on each occasion they failed in protecting her. She reported that if her ex-partner were to contact her again, she would not reach out to the police and would try to handle the situation herself.

7.4. Key conclusions and implications from this chapter

This chapter highlighted the impact that both the crime and the police response can have.

Being a victim of crime can have substantial emotional, physical and financial impacts. Individual circumstances, particularly age and existing support networks, could further influence the extent and nature of the impact of the crime on participants. The significant, and often varied, impact of crimes on participants highlights the need to understand the context of older victims' lives and the different characteristics of vulnerability to be able to deliver a satisfactory police response.

This chapter has also highlighted the impact of the police response can have on how safe participants felt and the likelihood they would report crimes in the future.

8. Conclusion

In understanding the experiences of older victims of crime, this research has highlighted the diversity of this victim group and the ways in which participants could be particularly vulnerable. Specifically, participants with diminishing support networks and changes in mental and physical health associated with increasing age could feel more isolated, more vulnerable, and more likely to feel they would benefit from additional support and communication in the event of experiencing a crime.

As a result, establishing a detailed understanding of older victims' vulnerability as part of the initial report is key in creating a tailored assessment of the response and support required. In cases where participants were asked questions that identified certain vulnerabilities, they described the significant impact this had on them, both in terms of managing their experience of the crime and their views of the police response. These participants felt the police were listening to them, had identified their needs, and had better supported them as a result.

Overall, participants viewed police forces across England and Wales as under-resourced and over-stretched. As a result, they did not expect the police to always respond promptly or successfully investigate their crime, especially if participants felt their case was 'less serious' and less of a priority. Being dissatisfied or disappointed by the police response can have a significant impact on victims' daily lives and their views of the police. This can then have an impact on how safe, protected and supported participants felt.

The research has identified a set of learning points for communicating with this victim audience. These are:

- **Identifying the potential vulnerability of this audience.** Older participants were more likely to have diminishing social circles and support networks, which can change significantly through bereavement or spouses moving into care homes. Poor health and a general sense of slowing down physically and mentally can also have an impact on participants' ability to deal with challenges. Being aware of this audience's specific needs could improve the quality and reception of the police response.
- **The importance of timely communications.** This includes receiving regular updates, even if there is nothing new to report, and a timely notification of case closure and outcomes can reassure older victims that their case has been taken seriously.
- **Prioritising consistency in messages.** Older victims value consistency in police communication, information and actions to prevent a confusing and potentially overwhelming experience of the Criminal Justice System.

- **The benefit of a single point of contact.** One point of contact can provide reassurance the case is being taken seriously and make the response feel more personal. It also prevents victims repeating the details of their case, which some participants found traumatic.
- **The preferred format of communications is varied – with the exception of text messages.** Preferred communication methods are linked to perceived severity and impact of the crime. At the initial report, phone contact was appropriate for less severe cases. Investigation updates and notification of case outcome was expected by phone or letter. Any form of notification via text message is poorly received.
- **The importance of signposting to support services.** Not all participants felt they needed additional support but having the option to access this was important. When signposting to support services, it was important the type, level and benefits of support were clear.

9. Appendix

Case study: Older victim of domestic abuse, stalking and harassment

Pauline is 65 years old and lives alone in her home in a small town. She has three daughters, one of whom lives close by, as does her father whom she visits and cares for regularly. She works in administration and really enjoys her job.

Two years ago, Pauline's relationship with her partner of around ten years deteriorated, with Pauline having regular panic attacks and trying to leave him on several occasions. When Pauline left for the final time, she went to live in a women's refuge. Following their separation, Pauline's ex-partner became increasingly abusive on the phone, as well as sending threatening emails. He also managed to take over £15,000 from Pauline's bank account. Pauline blocked his phone number and email address, changed her own phone number, changed her car and moved to a different part of the country. However, the abuse continued. He managed to source her new contact details and he continued to threaten her. At one point, he followed and cornered Pauline in a local park, trying to snatch her dog from her. These incidents happened across an 18-month period.

Pauline first decided to contact the police when her partner was sending abusive and threatening emails. Over the course of the rest of the incidents, Pauline spoke with many different police forces spanning multiple counties (as she moved to a different part of the country), all of whom reassured her that domestic abuse, stalking and harassment were serious offences and that they would take the case very seriously. At one point she was told to let the police know if the abusive emails had started again. When the emails did start again, she contacted the police, spoke to a different officer, and found the response to be unsympathetic and unhelpful. Throughout her experience, Pauline also received various phone calls from different officers asking her to re-explain incidents, which she found to be traumatic and frustrating. Whilst she found some officers were kind and understanding, she felt that others were aggressive and unsympathetic. When her ex-partner cornered her in the park, witnesses restrained him and the police were called. When the police arrived, Pauline found the officers to be brusque and unkind and was disappointed when her ex-partner was released without any further action, and she was left to walk home by herself.

Pauline's experience has had a significant impact on her daily life, including having to move house twice and changing her car and phone numbers on several occasions. The incidents have also had a significant impact on her emotionally, and she described feeling nervous both in her home and when she leaves.

Case study: Older victim of financial fraud

Charles and Julia are 70 and 67 years old and moved into their home over 20 years ago. They like living in the area and being close to their grandchildren, who they see regularly and often babysit. They are both enjoying their retirement; Julia is a keen gardener, while Charles enjoys driving his classic cars. Whilst working, Charles was a magistrate and since retiring, has taken up being a witness support.

In early 2018, Charles was out of the house when Julia received a call on the landline from who she thought was TalkTalk, their network provider, who were calling to help them install new software on their router. Julia was on the phone for most of the day, and towards the end of this process, the caller said that money would be transferred to the couple as compensation for the inconvenience. However, the caller then told her that they had accidentally transferred an incorrect amount, and that Julia needed to transfer it back. In the end, Julia transferred nearly £7,000. The couple first realised that they had been defrauded when they called their bank after the phone call ended. They were told no money had gone into their account that day that matched what they had been told on the phone. In addition, their bank told them that as the money had been transferred out of the UK, it was irretrievable. Charles and Julia also contacted TalkTalk to see if they could help explain the situation, only to be told this was out of their hands and that they needed to contact the police.

After calling 101, Charles was on the phone for about two minutes to an officer who politely informed him they would need to call Action Fraud. Shortly after, they made a call to Action Fraud and reported the crime. Charles gave all the details they had including the landline number they had called on and the name of the company that had received the money. Action Fraud thanked them for calling, and Charles was told the crime would be logged but that Action Fraud was not responsible for investigating or retrieving the money. Later that week, Charles received another call from the same fraudster and told him to call back in fifteen minutes due to having guests at the house. In the meantime, Charles called 101 again and explained that the fraudsters who stole his money would be calling back and asked whether they could intercept the call or help to identify where their money was. They were told this was not possible although were not given reasons why.

The couple felt confused by the role of the police and Action Fraud, and the responsibility of each organisation. Although police officers had been polite, they felt like they had been let down by the police not being able to step in, and that Action Fraud had let them down as they didn't appear to play any active role in finding out where their money had gone.

Julia was going through chemotherapy at the time and Charles commented that the incident made her feel even more ill. Julia was upset during the interview and still felt a great sense of guilt at having fallen for the scam, and described herself as feeling ashamed.

Case study: Example of police not identifying older victims' vulnerability

Vera is 75 years old and lives alone in a small, rural town. She has two daughters, as well as several grandchildren and great-grandchildren. During the week Vera enjoys going into town, and at weekends she likes going on trips with her daughters.

In summer 2017, Vera had gone to the pub to meet a friend at around 7.30pm. She had driven in her car, and as soon as she got out, she noticed two young men standing on the opposite side of the car park by their car smoking and watching her. They followed her into the pub and sat at a table close-by without buying any drinks, which made Vera suspicious. As she went to leave the pub, she noticed that the two men had continued to follow her, then driving behind in a blue car. As she approached her home, they followed her down her cul-de-sac which made her increasingly nervous. She got out of her car and rushed inside, ensuring she locked everything behind her, and drew the curtains. The next morning, Vera opened her curtains to see that her car was no longer there.

Vera called the police immediately. During this initial contact with the police, a polite and sympathetic officer gave her a crime reference number and Vera was told she would have to wait for any further information due to there being several other similar incidents in the area. Later that afternoon, she received a call from the police letting her know that her case was in a queue, as around eight cars had been stolen the night before. She was given a direct phone number and was told she should call every few days for updates. Vera was pleased with the level of information provided and the manner of the police officer she spoke to. She also very much appreciated having a direct phone number and being able to speak with the same person. Following various updates, Vera was informed two weeks later that her car had been found but that it was no longer roadworthy. However, she does not recall receiving any information about the case closure.

Vera reported feeling considerably shaken by the crime, and was especially unnerved by the idea that the men had followed her home. The incident had also brought back episodes of anxiety that she had suffered from in the past. The fact that she was living at home, by herself, heightened her anxiety and contributed to her feeling unsafe. In the weeks immediately following the incident, Vera was very agitated when driving. After around six weeks, she described her shock and nerves slowly getting better, though she commented on still feeling very wary when out of the house.

Although the police officers she spoke to were polite and friendly, she does not recall being asked about whether she lived alone, or about her age. Overall, Vera felt it could have been useful for the police to have understood more about her circumstances and would have appreciated a face-to-face visit, which would have helped to reassure her and provide more effective support.

Case study: Experience of an older victim aged 80+

Evelyn is 86 and lives alone in a sheltered housing complex in the outer suburbs of a big city. She has children, grandchildren and several great-grandchildren, all of whom live in the local area and who visit regularly. Her husband, who passed away several years ago, worked in the Metropolitan Police Service for 30 years, and before retiring, Evelyn worked in the local Post Office for 28 years. She is well connected with her local community and knows many people in the area.

One afternoon in November 2017, Evelyn had been out to do her daily shopping. Upon arriving back to her flat, she was getting her keys ready to go inside when a male figure rushed past her, stealing her handbag, and pushing her forcefully to the ground. She was hurt and was unable to move or shout for help. She lay on the ground outside for at least one hour until two policemen came to her assistance. She wasn't sure if a neighbour had seen her and called the police, or if the officers happened to be in the area. The police officers called an ambulance for her. Evelyn described their response as fantastic, with the police officers placing their coats over her, making sure she was comfortable and reassuring her.

Following the incident, Evelyn's daughter started to notice significant changes in Evelyn, noticing that she had become physically weaker as well as noticing substantial changes in her personality. Evelyn then entered a care facility for seven weeks over Christmas to help rehabilitate from the crime. Eventually, 3–4 weeks following the incident, Evelyn was diagnosed with a brain haemorrhage, which she had suffered as a result of falling during the crime.

Evelyn did not hear from the police again, until she received a phone call to her landline around nine months after they took the initial statement. This call shocked her, and its purpose was to let her know that her case was still open and that it was now with the Crown Prosecution Service, an advancement she was unaware of. This phone call was the last time she heard from the police. A number of weeks after, her daughter was asked by a friend in town whether they knew the perpetrator had received a suspended sentence. The family also then saw the case being publicised in local papers along with the outcome, though this was never formally communicated to Evelyn by the police.

Evelyn describes the crime as having had a life-changing impact on her, both physically and mentally. As a result of the severity of the assault, Evelyn can no longer walk on her own and uses a frame. Evelyn's daughter now visits her every day to help her with the majority of tasks. She does not go out alone and relies on her daughter to take her out. Following the incident, Evelyn reported that most of the other women in the same sheltered accommodation residence will also no longer go out alone. Mentally, Evelyn described herself as having lost all her confidence, and commented on how she is now scared to even pick up her grandchildren as she is afraid of dropping them.

Case study: Positive impact of the police on an older victim

Irene is 68 years old and lives alone in her bungalow in a small rural town. She is now retired and lost her husband last year to cancer. She has her two daughters who live close by, along with her four grandchildren, and has a large close-knit family. She has many friends in the local area with whom she meets up regularly. She enjoys going out to the theatre with them, and on trips to new places such as National Trust properties.

In February 2018, while her husband was receiving treatment for prostate cancer, he went into a hospice for a short while. One evening, Irene was babysitting at her son's house when she returned back to her home along with her eldest granddaughter to find the house lights on, her blinds down, and the gate wide open. Irene and her granddaughter were incredibly upset and scared as they did not know if the burglar was still inside her home. She first called her son, and then called the police on 999. Sentimental belongings had been taken, including her husband's wedding ring, expensive watches and diamond jewellery, and a substantial amount of money. With her husband away and poorly, Irene felt particularly vulnerable and felt very distraught by the incident.

The police arrived within ten minutes of her 999 call and Irene described the two police officers that attended the scene as being incredibly kind and understanding. Two days after the burglary, forensics attended her house to take fingerprints and throughout the week police officers visited her several times, once to take a statement, and on other occasions to knock on the doors of neighbours to ask if they had any information or CCTV footage. On each occasion, Irene described the officers as fantastic and she was particularly impressed with how thorough the police response was. One officer in particular visited Irene several times and created a rapport which Irene valued, and she also received several phone calls from the police station with updates on her case.

Six months later, Irene received a call letting her know they had arrested the perpetrator. The police then called to ask Irene whether she would like to testify in court. Not feeling able to face the emotional turmoil that this would bring, Irene declined the officer and instead was asked if she would like them to say anything on her behalf. Following the court case, Irene was informed by letter that the perpetrator had been sentenced to five years in prison. She then received a phone call and letter outlining that she would receive compensation for her losses. She has since received a cheque for £400 and has been told she will receive further amounts as the perpetrator's assets are sold off.

Irene felt that the crime has had relatively little negative impact on her and her daily life and feels like the outstanding police response played a key role in being able to cope with what had happened, and to move on with her life.

Case study: Experience of a ‘younger’ older victim of crime

Mabel and her husband are both 66 years old and live on their narrowboat in the North of England. They have six children, three of whom live close by and three of whom live further away. Both retired, they occupy their time by visiting their children and babysitting, shopping in the local town, and Mabel volunteers weekly at a local café which supports the homeless.

One evening in Spring 2018, Mabel and her husband moored their narrowboat alone in an isolated area due to a broken lock. The next morning, after having stayed in a hotel, they got a call from their son-in-law who had turned up to carry on painting their boat. He informed them that the windows had been smashed and the front doors had been pulled apart with their belongings clearly disturbed.

Mabel called the police immediately and was kept on hold for quite some time before being able to report the burglary. Once they got through to the police, the couple felt very satisfied with the manner in which they were spoken to, and they were also very pleased that they were told someone would be coming out to visit them. Following this call, they promptly made their way down to their boat to find a police officer already there, having cornered off the crime scene. There was also another note on their boat from a police officer that had visited at a previous point which listed contact details asking them to get in touch. The police officer at the scene was described as being very concerned, polite and respectful. He offered them the option to have fingerprints taken, which Mabel declined as she felt the damage caused and their belongings stolen did not warrant this, and she did not want to waste police time. After they turned down the option to have the forensic team come out to their boat, they did not hear from the police again. With the value of the damage to their boat not being too costly, the couple said they did not have any expectations that they would hear from the police again.

Mabel and her husband did not feel that they were significantly impacted by the crime. However, Mabel’s husband does now worry more about Mabel staying on the boat alone overnight, and both reported feeling more careful and more worried on the canals following the incident.