A chance to think again?

An evaluation of the Victim Awareness Course pilot

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Declaration: I confirm that, except where indicated through the proper use of citations and references, this is my own original work. I confirm that, subject to final approval by the Board of Examiners of the Institute of Criminal Justice Studies, a copy of this Dissertation may be placed upon the shelves of the library of the University of Portsmouth or made available electronically in the Library Dissertation repository and may be circulated as required.

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the introduction of a victim awareness course, which has been designed as a rehabilitative and educational option for low level offending dealt with by use of a conditional caution or penalty notice for disorder. The study sought to determine the extent to which the course was successfully introduced in a single police force area over a 14 month period. It aimed to identify strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement in the course from the perspective of police officers, offenders who attended the course, victims and the course provider. Key to the study was an understanding of the concept of empathy and the extent to which this could be developed through a single three hour course. The research was undertaken by means of non-participant observation, interviews and questionnaires, based upon a literature review which highlighted both the key concepts and methodological issues associated with such evaluations. This approach enabled a thematic analysis of the key findings and suggested further avenues for research.

The study showed, in line with much of the literature in this field, that determining the extent to which re-offending can be reduced by means of a single intervention is problematic. Whilst indicative results suggest that the aims and purpose of the course were well understood by all parties, it was less clear if offending behaviour would be altered by the course alone. The absence of a clear and definitive outcome in relation to recidivism is countered by results which suggest a growth in empathy and an understanding of the consequences of the offending behaviour, with a consequent self-defined determination to desist from further crime.
Considerable recognition is due to a number of people for their assistance in undertaking this dissertation.

First and foremost, my huge thanks and love to Mike, Ben and Daisy, who lived in a slightly chaotic household for many months and who, throughout my MSc., supported me through late nights, fractured weekends and frayed tempers.

Sally Maund and her colleagues in the Hampshire Victim Support office administered the course questionnaires to VAC attendees, patiently sent me relevant documentation and answered numerous e-mails. Ben Belstone and Sim Mitchell enabled me to attend several Victim Awareness courses to develop appropriate questions to ask, gain a greater understanding of the course content, provide feedback on the early drafts of the questionnaires, and to have had the opportunity to view the courses.

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# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Charts and Tables</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research aim</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research objectives</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 1: Literature Review</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key concepts</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restorative Justice</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical perspectives</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key emergent themes</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settings and sample</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodologies adopted</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of course or intervention and delivery mechanisms</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodological issues</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 2: Background and initial introduction of the Victim</strong></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness Course in Hampshire</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course introduction</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course content</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Methodology</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-participant observation</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaires</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offender questionnaires</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim questionnaire</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary data collection</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical considerations</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Chapter 4: Research Findings | 31 |
| Administration, attendance and communication | 31 |
| Attrition data | 32 |
| Perceived purpose of the VAC | 35 |
| Impact of the VAC | 38 |
| Potential improvements to the course and its implementation | 41 |

| Chapter 5: Discussion | 43 |
| What is the VAC trying to achieve and is it succeeding? | 43 |
| What are the success factors in implementing a community based victim awareness course? | 45 |

| Conclusions | 48 |
| Were the research methods used able to elicit the main issues? | 48 |
| What conclusions can be drawn from the research? | 48 |
| What are the implications for further research? | 49 |
### Appendices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>VAC participant pre course questionnaire</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>VAC participant post course questionnaire</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Victim questionnaire</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Information sheet – for victims</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Information sheet – for officers</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Information sheet – for VAC participants</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Interview guide for police officers</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Interview guide for Victim Support staff</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Interview guide for Deputy PCC, Hampshire</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Research ethics submission</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Demographic breakdown of VAC attendee data</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### References

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Bibliography

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bibliography</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## List of Charts and Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chart/Table Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chart 1: PND and CC referrals received from Hampshire Constabulary</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chart 2: VAC attendance rates by PND and CC</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 1: Theoretical underpinning for the components of the VAC.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2: Information received from Victim Support</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3: Perceptions of course content by disposal type</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4: Impact of the VAC on attendees views</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Glossary

*Conditional Caution (CC):* introduced as part of the Criminal Justice Act 2003, a conditional caution allows an authorised person (normally a police officer) to give a caution with one or more conditions attached. Failure to adhere to the conditions can result in criminal proceedings.

*Penalty Notice for Disorder (PND):* established under section 6 of the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001, a PND enables police officers to administer an alternative disposal option for low level, anti-social and nuisance behaviour. Unlike conditional cautions, they do not require an admission of guilt.

*Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs):* PCCs were elected in November 2012, replacing Police Authorities as the responsible body for oversight of the work of the local constabulary. PCCs are directly elected and have a wider role to bring together local community safety and criminal justice partners.

*Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC):* in order for the PCC to be able to undertake their duties, they are supported by a team of staff known as the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC). The OPCC is a non-political, impartial organisation, and the number of staff employed varies from OPCC to OPCC.

*Restorative Justice (RJ):* ‘Restorative justice is a process whereby all parties with a stake in a particular offence come together to resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of the offence and its implications for the future’ Marshall (1996 pg. 37).

*Victim Support (VS):* is an independent charity established to support victims of, and witnesses to, crime in the UK.
Introduction

Alternative, non-penal and diversionary approaches to dealing with low level offending are far from new. However, at a time of considerable public sector resource constraint, initiatives that are both cost effective and deliver the desired outcome (or have the potential to do so) gain a greater prominence and therefore a greater drive exists for them to be explored. It has been suggested that there is increasing evidence that diversionary schemes are less expensive than more established routes and thus, it is argued “there seems little reason to abstain from adopting a strategy that is more effective than traditional processing and considerably cheaper” (Wilson and Hoge, 2013, p. 514).

The Victim Awareness Course (VAC) was initially designed in 2012 as one such non-penal diversionary scheme. It was described as being an “educational and rehabilitative option for offenders who have committed low level crime and who have been diverted from court by the police through the issuing of a PND or attendance on a course has been specified as an element of a Conditional Caution” (Victim Support, 2014).

At the time of developing the research proposal for this dissertation, the VAC was being piloted within a single police force, with the intention of working with other police forces and Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to roll it out across England and Wales. In mid-2014, the decision was made to begin marketing the course with other police forces and initial discussions were begun between Victim Support and several police forces to develop the VAC further. At that time however, there had been no evaluative study of the VAC and to date, this research forms the principal study on the subject.

The current focus, led by the College of Policing, on determining ‘what works’ in policing and the wider criminal justice service suggests the need to try and determine the extent to which the VAC reduces re-offending or increases empathy. This dissertation is not designed to provide a definitive or even semi-definitive answer to this question. The piloting of a small scale programme
within one non-metropolitan police service over the course of fourteen months cannot meet such an objective. Rather, it seeks to give an indication of the views of those involved and suggests conditions in which such a course can be successfully introduced and embedded.

**Research aim**

This research is designed therefore, to evaluate, explore and critically examine the introduction of the Victim Awareness Course (VAC) within two cities in the area policed by Hampshire Constabulary.

**Research objectives**

In order to meet this aim, the following research objectives have been identified:

- To determine the extent to which the VAC fits within the body of literature on the victim awareness/educational models of crime reduction, and academic perspectives on the development of empathy and social cognition;

- To identify strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement in the course – both from a process and content perspective;

- To provide an initial indication of the extent to which the course appears to work from a course provider, victim, police and offender perspective.

This study will seek to meet these objectives through the following chapters:

Chapter one will review the literature on victim awareness courses and what they seek to achieve. It will look at the academic theories which underpin the development of such courses, examine evaluations of other victim education courses and critique the methodological approaches taken, in order to inform the approach taken in this dissertation.
Chapter two will provide the immediate context to the development of the VAC, through a short overview of the use of out of court disposals such as Penalty Notices for Disorder and Conditional Cautions, and an explanation of the introduction of the VAC in Hampshire.

Chapter three will detail the methodology used to undertake the study, the reasons why such a methodology was chosen and discuss the strengths and limitations of such an approach.

Chapter four will detail the findings of the research from the perspective of the course attendees, victims, Victim Support policy leads and trainers and the police officers responsible for making referrals onto the course.

Chapter five will discuss the implications of such findings and detail the necessary success criteria for the VAC to be implemented in an organisation.

Finally, the dissertation will draw evidence based conclusions from the evaluation and discuss possible further evaluative options as the course develops and become more embedded.
Chapter 1: Literature Review

Since the 1970s there has been a growing body of academic literature seeking to take account of how the impact of criminal behaviour on the offender, the victim and wider society can be addressed other than through the penal system (Braithwaite, 1989; Campbell and Retzlaff, 2000; Marshall, 1999; Strang and Braithwaite, 2001). More recently, a nascent series of policy developments considering different approaches to low level crime have been introduced (Criminal Justice and Police Act, 2001 and Criminal Justice Act 2003; Home Office, Department for Constitutional Affairs & Attorney General’s Office 2006; Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders [LASPO] Act, 2011). Such developments in custodial and non-custodial settings have taken a number of forms; from community activities and restorative justice conferences, to educational courses and victim empathy courses with a number encompassing elements of all of these and with a wide range of varying objectives.

As will be discussed in this chapter, many of these developments had as an objective a restorative justice element; seeking to repair broken relationships and concentrate on the harm done (Calhoun and Pelech, 2010). Other developments and recent literature have concentrated on the need for the offender to develop some form of empathy with the victim, and thus, it is argued, reduce recidivism (Devroey, 2003; Jackson, 2009; Jolliffe and Murray, 2012).

The purpose of this literature review is two-fold:

- to consider and critically evaluate the available research and evidence on courses being run as part of alternative approaches for low level crime; and
- to help place the VAC within a body of literature which will assist in understanding why it has been developed in its current design. These courses are also known in the literature as educational awareness,
victim awareness or victim impact courses (terms which will be used interchangeably in this review).

The review will consider the available theoretical perspectives and key concepts which underpin the thinking behind the development of victim awareness courses before examining the evaluations undertaken on such courses, identifying gaps in evidence and providing a critique of the various methodological approaches taken.

Academic literature purely on victim awareness courses – either as part of a custodial or non-custodial approach to offending - is limited. The available literature and evaluative assessments are closely interlinked with a wide range of other approaches (diversionary schemes, treatment programmes and restorative justice programmes) in a range of settings (young offenders’ institutes, prisons and probation). In order to bring a wider perspective to the debate, these will be discussed in outline as well.

**Key concepts**

Schemes to divert offenders from future crime encompass a “wide range of program [sic] components and general interventions - from recreation, advocacy and resource-brokerage to vocational or educational and group or individual counselling” (Campbell and Retzlaff, 2000, p. 58). Many however share the same basic intention; to find alternative means of dealing with low level offenders, or to seek specific outcomes. For example, victim awareness courses established by the Oxford Youth Offending Service (OYOS) were specifically designed to make offenders who had committed assaults, empathetic towards their victims as part of an attempt to make them accountable for their actions. The programme included visits to a local Accident and Emergency department and then a local centre for those with brain injuries sustained as a result of a violent assault (Wallis, McLellan, Clothier and Malpass, 2013). Evaluations of the OYOS programme indicated a 80% increase in empathy and “a positive impact on re-offending” (Wallis, 2014, p. 93)
**Empathy**

As alluded to above, in examining the available literature on the victim awareness and other educational courses, empathy is widely discussed by a number of academics. Attempts to develop empathy amongst offenders can take place through educational or victim awareness courses either as part of pre-release programmes from prison (Hall, 2013) or in the form of alternative non-custodial disposals (Calhoun and Pelech, 2010).

The reviewed literature indicates that there are varying definitions and descriptions of empathy (Jackson, 2009; Marshall, Marshal and Serran, 2009; Burrows, 2013). Victim Support refer to empathy as a ‘theory of mind’ and the definition used by them (see Table 1 in chapter two) is very similar to that of Jackson who suggested the most appropriate definition to be “the ability to place oneself in another’s situation and comprehend his or her experiences” (Jackson, 2009, p. 8). In contrast, Burrows considered that definitions of empathy can become easily confused with those of sympathy. In seeking to clarify the meaning of the term, she makes a distinction between “affective empathy” and “cognitive empathy” (Burrows, 2013, p. 386); the former being an emotional response to the emotions displayed by another, and cognitive empathy suggesting the ability to understand others’ thoughts and feelings. Such discussions regarding empathy can be seen as being directly related to work on moral reasoning and the work of Kohlberg (cited in Palmer and Hollin, 1998).

Criminologists see in both immature moral reasoning and lack of empathy, influential arguments which seek to explain the causes of criminal behaviour (Joliffe and Murray, 2012; Palmer and Hollin, 1998). Joliffe and Murray argue that there is considerable overlap between empathy (or lack of it) and other factors associated with criminal behaviour such as poor social cognition. They note that the relationship between criminal activity and lack of empathy is “seductively simple” (Joliffe and Murray, 2012, p. 63) in that people are more likely to offend when they cannot appreciate the impact of their behaviour on others; in other words, they lack the social reserve experienced
by those with more developed levels of empathy. Blasi (cited in Palmer and Hollins, 1998) found there to be an association between the absence of moral reasoning and criminal behaviour, a finding which was replicated in Palmer and Hollin’s (1998) own research which found that male offenders in particular tended to concentrate on the risk of getting caught and not on the impact that their behaviour might have on others.

By contrast, Wallis (2014) argues that not all those with low empathy are offenders and neither do all offenders have low empathy. He considers that a loss of empathy can be short lived and that triggers for such a loss include drunkenness, tiredness, stress or boredom. When people are in such states of mind Wallis argues, their attention is far more on themselves than others. Such a state, he indicates, may last after any crime committed as people seek to avoid the consequences of such action. He makes a case, as do Calhoun and Pelech (2013), for the careful use of victim empathy work to encourage offenders to reflect upon their behaviours and develop greater insight into the impact of their actions on others. Indeed, Wallis believes there to be a “convincing argument” (Wallis, 2014 p. 95) for mandatory victim awareness courses for all those who show little understanding for the consequences of their behaviour. In attending such courses, it is suggested offenders thus assume a degree of responsibility for their own actions. Such an assumption of responsibility for crime is associated with the development of empathy and between empathy and reduced re-offending. (Calhoun and Pelech, 2013).

As will be discussed later in this review, there is though, only limited evidence for any direct correlations to be drawn between the development of empathy and reduced levels of reoffending (Joliffe and Murray, 2012; Burrow, 2013; Wallis, Mclellan, Clothier and Malpass, 2013). Equally, victim awareness courses are not seen as being part of restorative justice. However, Wallis (2014) argues that altering the mind-set of the offender may enable them to consider the victim in a different light which makes the concept of restorative justice more acceptable.
**Restorative Justice**

Restorative justice (RJ) is “a peculiarly imprecise and contested concept, which makes it hard to define, analyse and evaluate” (Dignan, 2007, p. 309). This perceived lack of an agreed working definition of the concept is a view supported by Shapland and colleagues; “RJ is an ‘umbrella concept’ sheltering beneath its spokes a variety of practices…. with no universally acclaimed definition” (Shapland, Atkinson, Atkinson, Colledge, Dignan, Howes and Sorsby, 2006, p. 506). In its most basic form restorative justice initiatives seek to bring offender and victim together so that the offender can understand the impact of their crime on the victim. Both Putniņš (1996) and Dignan (2007) considered that for an approach to be considered part of restorative justice, the victim has to be actively involved in the process. Victim awareness or educational courses are thus not part of the restorative justice suite if they do not involve the linking of victims and offenders from the same case.

By such definitions, a victim impact course in which one victim will possibly speak to many different offenders may therefore not be considered to be restorative justice. However, Dignan (2007) suggested that victim impact courses might have some restorative justice elements; for example, a problem solving orientation, the principle of inclusivity in taking account of the varying parties affected by the crime, and a non-coercive approach to the process. He went onto suggest that not all restorative justice approaches are even victim focused, arguing that “some may be more offender focused by seeking to (re) integrate them as law abiding members of the community” (Dignan, 2007, p. 311). Marshall (1999) also acknowledged that many of the principles lying behind restorative justice are shared with victim impact courses. These include the prevention of re-offending by integrating offenders into the community, making offenders take responsibility for their actions and the avoidance of the crime escalating through the criminal justice system with all the cost and time implications inherent in such a move. Indeed, Strang and Braithwaite (2001) argued that restorative justice can be seen as part of a continuum from punitive court measures to community based mediation.
Several of the courses run and examined as part of the literature review found that the participation of victims (or more often, a ‘victims’ voice’ from a victim support or advocacy charity) to help offenders understand the impact of their crimes was a key component of the course (Putnins, 1996; Gaboury, Sedelmaier, Monahan and Monahan, 2008; Crew and Johnson, 2011; Devroey, 2003; Jackson, 2009; Wallis, McLellan, Clothier and Malpass, 2013).

**Theoretical perspectives**

The theoretical underpinning for diversionary or non-custodial schemes, and for victim awareness programmes within such schemes, appears to lie primarily if not exclusively, in a number of distinct but related areas, notably labelling theory, differential association theory, reintegrative shaming and restorative justice.

Key influences in developing the restorative justice approach which are cited in the literature include Braithwaite and Zehr (Wilson and Hoge, 2013; Jackson, 2009; Marshall, 1999). Zehr’s work was concerned with a means by which offenders could become aware of, and then assume responsibility for, the impact that their offence had on victims. A limitation of his initial work was that it was concerned purely with mediation as a means of making amends for harm done by offending (Marshall, 1999).

Making offenders aware of the impact of their offence, and the impact it has on others in ways other than mediation, fits with the victim awareness / educational model of crime reduction. However, rather than such courses being delivered by professional bodies (such as the prison service or probation officers or third sector organisations), Braithwaite anticipated that such work would be undertaken by local citizens. He argued that offenders should be shamed into regretting their offence, and that it was an appropriate and necessary condition of a low crime society for the offenders to be made to feel guilt for their offence (Braithwaite, 1989). When members of the community played both an active role in shaming offenders and in their subsequent reintegration into the community, crime levels would be reduced (Braithwaite, 1989).
He suggested that offenders made choices (albeit limited choices in many instances) whether or not to commit crime in the full knowledge that many of their fellow members of the community neither shared nor approved of their behaviour and activity. By informing offenders of the “justifiable resentment” (Braithwaite, 1989, p. 10) that the community felt towards the offence and the offender, offenders may choose to alter their behaviour and become reintegrated into society. He made a clear distinction between reintegrative shaming and stigmatisation which tended to lead to individuals becoming more, rather than less, alienated from society and choosing a more socially deviant lifestyle. Stigmatisation is closely linked with labelling theory which details the negative impact of labelling offenders as criminal or young offenders as delinquent. This, Wilson and Hoge argue, suggests and creates an expectation of increased criminal behaviour (Wilson and Hoge, 2013).

Differential association theory intimates that “antisocial attitudes and behaviour are learnt through the social learning process” (Wilson and Hoge, 2013, p. 499) and by associating with other like-minded individuals whose behaviour does not fit in with societal norms may consider themselves to have been labelled as deviant or anti-social. Victim awareness courses have a key role to play in helping offenders become reintegrated into society and avoid becoming labelled as criminals who perceive that the societal expectation on them is to continue to commit criminal or deviant acts (Wilson and Hoge, 2013).

**Key emergent themes**

**Settings and samples**

Evalutative studies of victim impact courses or trials of awareness initiatives were widespread in the literature. Most refer to youth offending (Wallis, McLellan, Clothier and Malpass, 2013; NACRO, 1997; Australian Institute of Criminology, 2002; Smyth, 2011), with more limited studies of diversionary educational schemes or victim awareness type courses for adults. Where such studies were undertaken, many did so within the confines of prison settings and penal institutions (Hall, 2013; Gaboury, Sedelmaier, Monahan and
Monahan, 2008; Campbell and Retzlaff, 2000; Devroey, 2009; Putniņš, 1996; Jackson, 2009; Villettaz, Killias and Zoder, 2006). The number of subjects (be they individuals who volunteered to take part in the study, or, for secondary research, the number of records that could be utilised) varied greatly from 23 individuals (Putniņš, 1996) to 5,865 (Campbell and Retzlaff, 2000).

**Methodologies adopted**

The type of research design used varied from experimental or quasi-experimental evaluations of interventions (Villettaz, Killias and Zoder, 2006) to questionnaire based evaluations (Calhoun and Pelech, 2010), or analyses of secondary data (Gaboury, Sedelmaier, Monahan and Monahan, 2008; Campbell and Retzlaff, 2000). In some of the literature reviewed, the methodologies used to evaluate the interventions were not made clear (Astbury, 2008; Wallis, McLellan, Clothier and Malpass, 2013).

**Type of course or intervention, and delivery mechanisms**

The type of course evaluated was equally disparate. In some instances, the victim awareness course consisted of 12 hours over a three (Putniņš, 1996), four (Devroey, 2003) or ten (Gaboury, Sedelmaier, Monahan and Monahan, 2008) week period with guest speakers from emergency services, victims and others involved in the aftermath of crimes. In a number of instances, courses were run by third party agencies (either third sector voluntary agencies, and sometimes victim, charities or private contractors) whilst in others, the courses were run by in-house staff (for example probation or prison wardens).

**Findings**

There is limited evidence that the various initiatives undertaken were successful. This was seen as being both as a result of methodological limitations and shortcomings as well as lack of success criteria or ability to distinguish between the various confounding variables. In much of the literature there was limited acknowledgement that the diversionary schemes or educational courses actually met the aims. It was also acknowledged that the aims of the course were not always clearly specified at the outset. Strang and Braithwaite noted that there was only limited evidence that restorative
justice actually reduced crime. However, what evidence there was, was “suggestive of positive rather than negative progress” (Strang and Braithwaite, 2001, p.3). Work by Putniņš also indicted a positive outcome with the victim impact programme being evaluated having had a positive impact on socio-moral reasoning (the specific focus of the study) which in turn is associated with (though not tested by the study) a reduced risk of re-offending (Putniņš, 1996).

A meta-analysis undertaken by the Australian Institute of Criminology, which focused on youth justice issues, including victim awareness type programmes, found that overall, those programmes which contained multiple elements - such as mentoring, educative components and skills development - were most successful. However, what was not clear from the meta-analysis was what the success criteria of each of the multiple element programmes were.

Few studies reviewed for this dissertation could be found to have concentrated on reasons for the success or failure of the programmes. This noticeable gap is corrected by Astbury (2008) who undertook an evaluation of an offender programme within a penal setting in Australia. He posits however, that the findings could be transferrable to community based programmes, and argued that programmes delivered in community settings tended to be more effective than those delivered in penal settings “because new skills can be applied in real world situations” (Astbury, 2008, p. 33).

According to Astbury four key factors influenced the success or otherwise of an offender educational course; firstly, the extent to which participants have the motivation to change their behaviours, attitudes and knowledge. Secondly, he argued that a ‘one size fits all’ approach to a victim awareness course may fail to take into account motivations to commit crime which may differ by age, gender and/or ethnicity. Thirdly, he stressed the need for effective staff practice, training, supervision and recruitment noting the fundamental need for sufficient skill and experience in working with offenders and having “professional values such as empathy, tolerance... flexibility and a firm but fair approach” (Astbury, 2008, p. 37). The final key component for
a successful course to be run related to the programme itself – it should be based on sound theoretical principles, have realistic goals, be cost effective and introduced at a relatively stable period in the organisation.

**Methodological issues**

An emergent theme from the literature found in meta-analyses (Australian Journal of Criminology, 2002; Villettaz, Killias and Zoder, 2006; Jolliffe and Murray, 2012; Wilson and Hoge, 2013) as well as within individual studies (Gaboury, Sedelmaier, Monahan and Monahan, 2008) was the lack of “tangible measurable components and outcomes” (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2002, p. 42). There was an acknowledged need for stronger research designs without which it was difficult to determine if the success criteria had been met (Wilson and Hoge, 2013).

Equally, the differing methodologies used to evaluate programmes created some degree of challenge in determining the relative merits of each programme. An examination of 35 studies noted that most of the studies did not have a comparison group nor provided an analysis of any changes (in empathy) that may have developed as a result of the intervention (irrespective of what the intervention was) (Jolliffe and Murray, 2012).

This finding strongly supports that made by Sapouna, Bisset and Conlong (2011) who undertook a systematic review of what works in preventing reoffending. This showed that some criminal justice interventions (covering range of interventions from bail supervision to employment programmes to cognitive behavioural programmes) are linked with reductions in reoffending. Crucially however, they argued that such a correlation should not be misconstrued as causality:

> in the vast majority of cases, it is not possible to say whether the effect of reduced reoffending was directly caused by a particular intervention. The primary reason for this is that most evaluations of criminal justice interventions, especially in Europe, use, in the best of cases, vaguely defined or loosely comparable comparison groups, and in the worst, no comparison group at all (Sapouna, Bisset and Conlong, 2011, p. 36).
The utilisation of data not specifically collected for research purposes also creates methodological challenges. Gaboury, Sedelmaier, Monahan and Monahan (2008) found that the inconsistencies between the disciplinary classifications used by the prison and that used by the researcher made it more challenging to assess the impact of the victim awareness programme being evaluated.

Many of the evaluations were unable to show any long term effectiveness for the programme(s) under scrutiny. In a number of cases this was explained by the lack of clear follow up criteria (Marshall, 1999; Australian Institute of Criminology, 2002). For those programmes seeking to measure the recidivistic impact of their intervention, this potentially made the study of less value. Payne (2007) indicated that the considerable variety of methodological approaches taken, based on the sample (which may differ by crime type or location), or the ‘indicator events’ (which could be either self-reported offending or police, court or prison data) made it very difficult to determine the efficacy of a programme; “what policy makers would like to measure often bears little resemblance to what researchers are able to measure, given the limitations on appropriate data and available information” (Payne, 2007, p. vii).

Dignan (2007) supports this contention, arguing that it is the diversity of schemes, and the context within which such schemes operate, that hampers work to evaluate the courses and processes and assess the benefits of the programmes.

**Conclusions**

The inter relationship between many of the concepts discussed in this review, coupled with the methodological difficulties in being able to assess the extent to which the varied interventions have worked, render any firm conclusions problematic.

Although discussing restorative justice (in its more narrow definition) and not victim impact courses specifically, Calhoun and Pelech (2010, p. 32) observed that:
Interventions provided by restorative justice programmes are typically time limited and narrow in scope. At the same time however, they are held up to incredibly high standards – expected to considerably reduce recidivism, provide healing to victims and enhance community safety.

The VAC evaluation detailed in this dissertation shares many of the same features and shortcomings as those studies reviewed as part of the literature review. An appreciation of (and thus an attempt to avoid) the difficulties in designing a robust, rigorous study to evaluate the course described in Chapter Two were constrained by a number of practical considerations and limitations as detailed in Chapter Three.
Chapter 2: Background and initial introduction of the Victim Awareness Course in Hampshire

Background

Under the Criminal Justice and Police Act (2001), penalty notices for disorder (PNDs) were created both to give police officers a fast alternative to court in dealing with offending that was either low level or anti-social in nature, as well as to provide a “swift and simple method of deterrence” (Ministry of Justice, 2014b, p.4). Two years later, as part of the Criminal Justice Act (2003), conditional cautions (CCs) were introduced. Like PNDs, conditional cautions offered the opportunity to make a proportionate response to low level crime, and, the Ministry of Justice believed, “for offenders to be diverted at an early opportunity into rehabilitative services, thus reducing the likelihood of re-offending” (Ministry of Justice, 2013, p. 4).

Where either a PND or conditional caution has been issued, the police officer needs to have had evidence that the offence has been committed and that the evidence is sufficient for a charge to be made. However, the handing out of a PND does not require an admission of guilt, which is required for a conditional caution. Other differences exist between the two disposal types; notably that the offender has to agree to the caution and the conditions attached to it, and appreciate that failure to meet the conditions will result in prosecution for the original offence. The conditions attached to the caution need to relate to some rehabilitative measure (such as a victim awareness course, drugs or alcohol course) reparative activity (for example, repairing the damage caused – either directly or indirectly) or a financial penalty.

Both PNDs and conditional cautions form part of the current suite of out of court disposals which are widely seen as an important means of freeing up court time for the prosecution of more serious offences as well as offering quicker, effective justice for the victim (Victim Support and Making Justice...
Work, 2012; Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses, 2014). The desire to provide victims with swifter justice was echoed by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Hampshire in his 2013-2017 Crime Plan. The PCC had as his priorities, the need to reduce re-offending, to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in local communities and “to place victims and witnesses at the heart of policing and the wider criminal justice service” (Hampshire Police and Crime Commissioner, 2013).

**Course introduction**

In seeking to help address the PCC’s priorities, it was agreed between Hampshire Constabulary and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), that a Victim Awareness Course (VAC) be piloted by Victim Support in two of Hampshire’s cities (Portsmouth and Southampton). The VAC had been designed and developed by Victim Support in 2012/2013 with the aim of developing a range of “offender centric products available to adults that will be used as educational and rehabilitative short courses” (Masters, internal Victim Support documentation, 2013). The aim of the course was to educate offenders and assist them to develop an empathy with victims and consequently, break their offending behaviour. The VAC was offered to offenders either as part of a conditional caution or as a lower cost alternative to a PND, or more recently, as a community remedy (introduced during the research period under the 2014 Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act). [Only one VAC referral has been issued in Hampshire as a community remedy to date and is thus not incorporated into this study].

Close working relationships between personnel in Hampshire Constabulary and the OPCC made it initially easier to introduce the course, which was supported by senior personnel in both organisations. A dedicated ‘single point of contact’ (SPOC) was established within the Constabulary to introduce the course, brief officers, develop appropriate communication material and act as the liaison with the Deputy PCC who was heavily involved in the initial introduction of the VAC. The three hour course was introduced into Hampshire at the end of 2013, but the first numerically viable courses were undertaken in early 2014, with the emphasis being placed on offenders who
had committed retail theft, criminal damage, public order offences, anti-social behaviour or assault. Courses were held on a weekday evening or Saturday morning in the premises of the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service, which were seen as cost effective, neutral locations.

Throughout the research period, the structure and administrative elements of the VAC became more developed. Course attendees were initially able to pay for the course in cash on the day, but by the late summer of 2014 became required to pay in advance of attendance (both to reduce attrition and to prevent the holding of large cash sums at the outset of the course). At the same time, as detailed in the following section, the theoretical underpinning of the course material was more explicitly linked to particular exercises undertaken during the VAC.

In the early autumn of 2014, changes in personnel within the Constabulary, at both practitioner and strategic levels, and a period of considerable uncertainty and reorganisation as the Constabulary undertook a major restructuring programme, resulted in fewer referrals to the course. This reduction applied to both PND and conditional caution referrals, with the decline being particularly marked for conditional cautions. As can be seen from Chart 1(below), in March 2014, 19 conditional caution referrals were received by Victim Support. By September 2014, there were consistently fewer than five referrals. On completion of the fieldwork for this dissertation in May 2015, monthly conditional caution referrals remained low which, as will be detailed in Chapter 3, had an impact on the research.
Chart 1: PND and CC VAC referrals received from Hampshire Constabulary by Victim Support

The course content included an initial exercise, designed as an ice breaker, in which small groups of attendees were asked to rank a series of offences from least to most serious. The purpose of this exercise was to show how alternative perspectives caused others to have differing views on the seriousness or otherwise of the type of activities for which the attendees were on the course.

The remainder of the course consisted of a series of short scenario based exercises where attendees were required to consider who the victims were and what the impact of the crime might have been upon them from a financial, practical, behavioural or physical perspective. Attendees (ranging in number from three to 15) undertook the scenario based work in small groups.

Source: Victim Support data
Attendees were then required to consider their own case from similar perspectives, including the degree to which they were responsible for what had happened, the extent to which members of the public would consider them to be accountable for what had happened, and to reflect upon what other decisions they could have made. In the latter few months of the research period, a final session was introduced onto some courses enabling attendees to consider whether they might wish to write a letter to the victim, as part of Victim Support’s tentative steps towards the introduction of a restorative justice element into the VAC.

Briefing material produced by Victim Support for a ‘train the trainers’ event indicated that the course content had been progressed through the interlinkage of a number of theories; moral reasoning, ‘theory of mind’, desistance and self-determination theory. Table 1 below summarises the key components of each of the theories that were utilised to develop the course.

**Table 1: Theoretical underpinning for the components of the VAC**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Component</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moral reasoning</td>
<td>A process by which an individual tries to determine the difference between right and wrong in a personal situation, using logic. It suggests that people make decisions by determining the morality of an action and weighting that against the consequences of such an action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory of mind</td>
<td>The means by which most humans understand the mental states, differing desires and feelings of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desistance theory</td>
<td>Congruent with the principles of the VAC, desistance can either be seen as a total cessation of criminal activity, becoming a ‘changed character’, or as a ‘break’ - a crime free gap. In the VAC this was articulated through elements such as recognising and developing individual strengths, relationship building and developing social and human capital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Motivation theory</td>
<td>A focus on internal rather than external sources of motivation, allowing individuals to feel competent, connected to others and autonomous, enabling them to become “self-determined and intrinsically motivated” (Victim Support, 2015)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Internal Victim Support documentation, ‘Train the Trainer’, 2015.
As shown in the preceding chapter, these, or related theoretical perspectives, lie behind many of the educational or awareness courses designed to enable offending behaviour to be addressed either in a community or penal setting. However, the extent to which any evaluation of the courses referred to in Chapter One were able to measure or robustly consider the linkage between these theoretical perspectives and the desired outcomes of the course, is arguable. This dissertation has attempted to design the research to consider such linkages between the theoretical underpinnings of the VAC and the desired outcomes. Chapter Three details the methodology used to do this.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Literature reviewed in the Chapter One has indicated some of the difficulties in determining whether victim awareness courses work and the need for follow up research that is both comprehensive and has well-articulated criteria for success.

As indicated in the Introduction, this study is a single ‘snap shot in time’. It does not seek to provide a definitive view on whether the VAC leads to re-offending. Instead, the principle objectives of this study are:

- to identify strengths and areas for improvement in the course - both from a process and content perspective;
- to provide an initial indication of the extent to which the course works from a course provider, victim, police and offender perspective; and
- to consider the extent to which the aims of the course (articulated by Victim Support as being to educate offenders and assist them to develop an empathy with victims and consequently, break their offending behaviour) are being met.

The approach adopted for this study to meet these objectives could be described as ‘real world’ research, defined by Robson as an “applied research project ... [which is].... typically small in scale and modest in scope” (Robson, 2011, p. 3). Hakim (2000) described research which seeks to look at policy rather than theoretical research, as research which is “ultimately concerned with knowledge for action” (Hakim, 2000, p. 4). Such policy or real world research, as opposed to theoretical research, has a number of distinguishing characteristics; it is often descriptive and “maps out the landscape of a problem, issue or topic” (Hakim, 2000, p. 4) and it is more likely to be multi-dimensional, with a greater likelihood of using mixed method approaches in order to obtain a holistic overview of a subject or policy area (Hakim, 2000; Robson, 2011; Bryman, 2012).
In studying a pilot scheme shortly after its inception to meet the objectives outlined above, with the multi-dimensional approach that this requires, a number of factors needed to be considered in determining the most appropriate methodology:

- What methods would best enable an examination of the development of the course and its roll out?
- Who are the appropriate stakeholders and key individuals or groups whose views need to be gained?
- How best might their views be elicited?

This chapter details not only the methods used and the respondents whose views were sought, but also examines the practical issues the research prompted and whether (and if so, how) these were overcome.

**Stakeholders**

In examining the Victim Awareness Course, consideration was given to Hakim’s (2000) view that policy research is more often associated with seeking the view of people on the basis of their role rather than as private individuals. For this study the views of three groups of people needed to be sought:

- those who had developed, then introduced and implemented the course in Hampshire. This included implementation, policy and training personnel from Victim Support, the deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire and the police officers responsible for administering the VAC as an alternative to a PND or as part of a conditional caution;
- those who attended the VAC as an alternative to a PND or as part of a conditional caution (referred to throughout this dissertation interchangeably as either course attendees or offenders);
- those victims of crime in whose case the offender had attended a VAC.
Research design

A “multi-strategy design” (Robson, 2011, p. 161) or multiple (or multi) methods approach was employed. Unlike a mixed methods approach in which the researcher “mixes (or integrates or links) the two forms of data concurrently by combining them (or merging them), or sequentially by having one build on the other, and in a way that gives priority to one or to both” (Creswell, 2011, p, 271), a multi methods approach utilises differing research methods within the same study to collect data but without the findings necessarily being combined or triangulated for the purposes of corroboration (Bryman, 2012, p. 46).

The evaluation of the VAC combined qualitative and quantitative methods as well as consisting of both primary and secondary data collection. The research was undertaken through a combination of short questionnaires, face to face semi structured interviews and non-participant observation. Secondary data was collected from Victim Support records to be able to determine how many offenders were referred during the research period and the degree of attrition from referral by the police to course attendance.

There were several reasons for adopting this approach to the primary research. Firstly, the explorative nature of the research mean that non-participant observation of several VAC sessions combined with semi structured interview guides allowed issues to emerge and interviewees to express their views on areas of the VAC which were still in development. This was particularly applicable to the interviews conducted with the policy developers within Victim Support and the deputy PCC. In both these cases a semi structured approach enabled a differing and flexible amount of time to be given to specific topics dependent on the exact contribution made by the interviewee to various aspects of the course development (Robson, 2011; Bryman, 2012).

Secondly, and for far more prosaic reasons, when approached, potential Victim Support, OPCC and police officer respondents expressed far greater interest in exploring their ideas and development of the course in an interview
than completing a questionnaire which gave them less scope to articulate their views. Moreover, within Hampshire, a recent spate of questionnaires to police officers had exhausted good will to complete surveys, with a consequent decline in response rates irrespective of the subject matter.

Questionnaires were administered for two groups however; offenders who attended the VAC and the victims of crime in whose case the offender attended a VAC. In both cases, consideration had been given to undertaking interviews and making the whole study more of a qualitative exploration of the development of the VAC. However, a questionnaire based approach was adopted for two main reasons.

Firstly, initial face to face approaches by the researcher to offenders attending an early VAC elicited little interest in taking part in a face to face (or telephone) interview. The reasons for this varied from embarrassment at being on the course and the wish not to dwell on it any further, to a perception that the researcher would feed back any negative comments to the course administrators and the police (despite assurances to the contrary), to a lack of interest in having any further to do with the course other than completing it in order to fulfil the conditions of their PND or CC. This reluctance negated the ability to adopt a qualitative approach.

Secondly, Victim Support were interested in gaining a quantitative understanding of the views of course participants to assist in any potential roll out of the course to other police services, and discussed the possibility of surveying the population of course attendees. As part of the agreement between Victim Support and the researcher to gain access to the course setting (for the non-participant observation) and to the course participants, it was agreed that two short questionnaires would be administered to all participants immediately prior and immediately post the course.

All course participants were invited to complete the questionnaires on the basis that there were no research or methodological grounds for inviting some but not others to complete the survey. At the outset of the research, and in the early stages of the course implementation, it was unclear how many
courses would be run or how many offenders there would be throughout the research period (April 2014 to June 2015). This was an additional reason why it was appropriate to gain the views of all participants - to ensure sufficient responses to identify strengths and areas for improvement in the course and determine the impact of the course upon those who attended it.

**Non-participant observation**

Non-participant observation was undertaken for two purposes. Prior to developing the participants’ questionnaires, it was to better understand the course subject matter, the way in which the course was structured and run and to try to gain an understanding of the extent to which offenders were willing to take part in the research and in what way. This phase of the non-participant observation helped inform the subject matter and length of the questionnaires.

Subsequently, the purpose of the non-participant observation was to gain a better insight into the views of the course participants on the course itself and the processes surrounding their attendance, which were articulated during coffee breaks and occasionally, at the outset of the course.

Five courses in total were observed over a fourteen month period (including one training course at which no offenders were present but which was undertaken to show other police forces how the course was run and to give them an understanding of the material and its delivery). This extended time period also allowed an insight into the development of the course and the incremental changes made.

**Questionnaires**

**Offender questionnaires:** The questionnaires were piloted on three courses following two of the non-participant observations sessions, and completion of the pilot questionnaires was observed by the researcher on a third non-participant observation session. A number of amendments were made following the first two non-participant observation sessions and examination of the returned questionnaires (looking at the questions which were not
completed or evidently misunderstood). Respondents were unwilling or, in some cases unable (due to low literacy levels) to complete any open ended questions asking for their views on potential course improvements. Virtually all open ended questions were thus removed and replaced by closed questions. Key amongst the post course closed questions asked was the use of a ‘victim concern scale’ (VCS). The VCS had been developed by Clements, Brannen, Kirkley, Gordon and Church (2006), and permission was sought and obtained from Clements to replicate the VCS in this study.

In order not to appear off putting or too time consuming, the questionnaire length was confined to two pages (see Appendices 1 and 2). Despite having made the questionnaires as ‘user friendly’ as possible, throughout the research period, a substantial proportion of respondents failed to complete one or more questions on either the pre or post course questionnaire.

Concerns expressed by the course developers and trainers that the questionnaires would not be completed unless undertaken in the classroom proved to be well founded. In addition to the immediate pre and post course questionnaire, a three month follow up questionnaire was also developed to be sent to the course attendees by Victim Support on behalf of the researcher. Of 35 follow up questionnaires sent out in three tranches, three responses were received (a nine percent response rate) before being discontinued six months into the study. By contrast, although it was stressed that completion was voluntary, the provision of the questionnaire in the course setting resulted in an approximately 71% completion rate, with 120 questionnaires being completed at both the pre and post course stages. Although completed anonymously, the pre and post questionnaires were linked for analytical purposes.

**Victim questionnaire:** The sample for this aspect of the research was those individual victims whose case had been dealt with by way of a conditional caution (and thus who should have been aware by the police of the condition being set). The purpose of the questionnaire was to ascertain the extent to which they were involved in the decision making process, and their views on the suitability of the course as an alternative disposal in their case. It also
sought victims’ views on preferred alternatives to the VAC in instances where this was not deemed by the victim to have been either a suitable or appropriate outcome.

Victims in whose case the offender was given a PND were excluded from the sample on the grounds that they were unlikely to have been informed of the sanction being applied and thus unable to comment on the suitability of, or process issues relating to, the VAC. For similar reasons, the sample excluded cases where the crime had been committed against a business or retail outlet (mostly shop theft) and the victims details were recorded as the name of the outlet without any named individual contact details being given, irrespective of whether the offender was issued with a PND or CC. Both the questions asked and the author’s previous experience of extremely low response rates from postal questionnaires to establishments without a named individual, coupled with the lack of a named individual to whom to send any questionnaire, made seeking the views of these victims inappropriate.

Consideration was given to conducting telephone interviews with victims, but this would have required the researcher being given direct access to contact details of the victim from Hampshire Constabulary. This was seen as problematic and, without the prior consent of the victims (which would have been too resource intensive for this study), in potential breach of the Data Protection Act. Although the researcher is employed by the police force area, access to victim contact details for the purpose of the VAC research lay outside their ‘day job’ and thus would be seen as ethically and legally inappropriate.

A short questionnaire and accompanying explanation of the research and the VAC (see Appendices 3 and 4) was therefore provided to Hampshire Constabulary. This was sent, on behalf of the researcher, to eligible victims whose full contact details were recorded by the police. A reply paid envelope to the researcher care of the University of Portsmouth was included.

As will be detailed in Chapter Four and has been referred to in Chapter Two, the implementation of the VAC within Hampshire resulted in considerably
more PNDs than CCs being issued. The sample for the victim questionnaire was thus substantially more limited than originally anticipated. Sixty two questionnaires were sent out and nineteen returned – a 31% response rate.

**Interviews**

Contact was made with the twenty officers who, according to internal Constabulary records, had administered a VAC as an alternative to a PND or as part of a CC. Approximately half of these officers stated that they had only issued one or two PNDs or CCs and felt unable to comment or make a valid contribution to the study. Replies were not received from six officers.

Semi structured interviews were therefore conducted with four police officers who were responsible for issuing multiple PNDs and CCs in the two cities, Portsmouth and Southampton in which the VAC was originally piloted in Hampshire (see Appendix 7 for the semi structured interview guide).

Five additional semi structured interviews were undertaken. Two were conducted with Victim Support staff - the policy lead and the key trainer and course developer and a third with the contractor responsible for rolling out the VAC into other police force areas. A short interview was conducted with the Constabulary lead for out of court disposals, as well as with the deputy Police and Crime Commissioner whose interest in placing victims at the heart of the criminal justice system and seeking to reduce re-offending was instrumental in the course being piloted in Hampshire.

**Secondary data collection**

Data was obtained from Victim Support who were responsible for administering the course on behalf of Hampshire Constabulary as well as running the training. Offender details were passed from the police to Victim Support who contacted and booked offenders on to the course and who were responsible for informing the police if offenders failed to attend.

These data were analysed to determine the attrition rate, number of re-bookings required and the percentage split between those referred with a caution or PND.
**Ethical considerations**

The study was conducted in accordance with the British Society of Criminology Code of Ethics (BSC, 2006). Consent was sought from all potential participants at the outset of the research (see Appendices 4, 5 and 6), with covering letters explaining the purpose of the research and the voluntary nature of participation in the study.

In undertaking the research, there were a number of ethical considerations to be addressed prior to seeking consent from the University of Portsmouth Ethics Committee, which are outlined below.

The primary ethical concern related to the fact that the author was wearing a number of ‘hats’ in the collection of the primary and secondary data. In addition to being an MSc student at the University of Portsmouth, the author of this dissertation is a serving member of Hampshire Constabulary staff. She was approached to undertake an evaluation of the VAC by the Hampshire deputy Police and Crime Commissioner. In conjunction with Victim Support, it was agreed that the data collected for the evaluation could form the backbone of the dissertation, separate to and independent from any evaluative report written for Victim Support. In addition, with the consent of the Constabulary, payment was made to the author by Victim Support to undertake the VAC evaluation and provide a separate written report. This had the potential to pose some issues were the findings of the research in any way contentious.

Related to this was the need for an ethical wall to prevent the researcher directly accessing the crime records pertaining to the case for which the offender was required to attend the VAC. Victim details were thus accessed by the Constabulary’s research manager, with the full and explicit consent of the relevant authorities within the organization and anonymized prior to being saved on the researcher’s personal computer.

A more detailed description of these issues can be found in Appendix 10.
Chapter 4: Research Findings

As indicated in Chapter Three, research was undertaken with course participants, victims, police officers and those responsible for the development and implementation of the VAC in Hampshire.

The findings from this research are presented thematically, taking into account the views and opinions of both interviewees and survey respondents, supported by findings from the non-participant observation where appropriate. The demographic breakdown of course participants is summarised in Appendix 11.

Administration, attendance and communication

In seeking to determine the efficacy of the VAC from a policy perspective, the practical administration of the course was taken into account. Thus all those with whom research was conducted were asked, from their differing perspectives, to comment upon the extent to which the course administration was effective and efficient. The need for a detailed understanding of this aspect was twofold:

Firstly, from a police perspective, officers indicated that a course which is complex or time consuming to administer becomes less attractive compared to other out of court disposal options;

Secondly, in order to try and ensure attendance on the course, Victim Support wished to make clear the purpose of the course and ensure that the joining instructions were comprehensive and easy to understand. Therefore in addition to the questions asked of course attendees, some analysis of the data held by Victim Support on course attrition was undertaken.

The two police officer interviewees working within custody noted that the ease with which referrals onto the VAC could be made resulted in it being a more attractive option than some other potential disposal types (for example an alcohol awareness course). The ease was partly due to the simplicity of the
forms created by Hampshire Constabulary and partly due to the fact that all administration of the course was undertaken by Victim Support. It was favourably contrasted to the drugs awareness course which is also run in parts of Hampshire where custody officers need to book offenders on the course themselves, with the attendant paperwork and administrative requirements.

The police officers interviewed had universally favourable views on the ease of administering the course, with comments such as “it’s so simple that adding to it in any way would only make it more complicated” (officer three), “it’s speedy, it’s efficient and easy to administer, it’s ideal” (officer four) and “don’t let anyone with three stripes get hold of it and complicate it for their careers” (officer one). The ability to ‘cut and paste’ the wording of the caution from the supporting materials available on the intranet, straight into the actual caution was seen to save time, and ensure a consistently accurate caution was given.

Given the reduction in resources experienced by Hampshire Constabulary (in line with all police forces) since 2010, the fact that the majority of the administrative processes were carried out by Victim Support was also seen to be beneficial.

**Attrition data:**

Attrition between referral to the VAC by the police officers and attendance on a course is shown in Chart Two on a month by month basis (note that no course was run in April 2015, and in October 2014 and March 2015, there were no conditional caution referrals – the 0 given in the table for these months does therefore not refer to zero attendance).

According to these data derived from internally held Victim Support figures, average attendance on the courses between January 2014 and May 2015, was eight people. However, the data in Chart Two shows the considerable variability between 28% and 100% for PND attendance and between 38% and 100% for conditional cautions. The variability in attrition for conditional cautions is greater which is partially reflective of the lower numbers of conditional caution referrals.
As can be seen, a greater proportion of those with conditional cautions attend the course. PND non-attendance makes the offender liable for the full £90 PND fine. However, failure to attend a VAC having been given a conditional caution will result in a breach of the condition and referral back to the police for potential prosecution for the original offence. It is hypothesised that this may ultimately prove to be more of an ‘incentive’ to attend the course.

Chart Two also shows the slight upward trend in attendance. As noted in Chapter Two, throughout the 14 month research period, the structure and administrative elements of the VAC became considerably more developed. The shift from payment on the day of the course to payment in advance in late summer 2014 may have had some impact on overall attrition rates.

**Chart 2: VAC attendance rates by PND and CC**

Those required to attend the VAC were asked a small number of questions on the information they were given in advance - either by the police or Victim Support. In 41% of cases, those required to attend a VAC indicated that the police officer who dealt with them explained what the course was about. There appear to be some differences according to the type of disposal, although these
are not statistically significant. Whereas 55% of those who received conditional cautions indicated that they had received an explanation from the police officer, this was the case for 29% of those who had received a Penalty Notice for Disorder (PND).

These differences between PNDs and CCs do not extend to the information they received from Victim Support, where there was considerably more homogeneity between the disposal types, with less than five percent difference between the PNDs and conditional cautions for all three questions shown in Table Two.

**Table 2: Information received from Victim Support**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did the joining instructions you received make clear:</th>
<th>Where the course was being held</th>
<th>How long the course would last</th>
<th>What the course would be about</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can’t remember</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding. Missing cases have been excluded from the table.

Table Two shows that the joining instructions issued by Victim Support were widely seen as clear, with 89% of course attendees knowing where to go and 96% knowing how long the course would last for. There was slightly less clarity on what the course would contain, with almost a quarter (24%) being uncertain what the VAC was about. This finding is possibly unsurprising given that the police officers interviewed all felt that they would have benefitted from more information about the course themselves – both to inform offenders and victims. That officers perceived they did not know a great deal about the course content can in part be attributed to the incremental
development of the VAC over the period of this study, described in Chapter Two.

Three of the four officers interviewed felt that whilst the information they had received (via a face to face briefing or information placed on the intranet) had been useful, it had been insufficiently detailed which limited what they could tell both offenders and victims about the course. Data from the victims’ survey supports this. Although 90% of victims (n=19) were aware that the offender in their case was getting a conditional caution, less than half were involved in deciding on the conditions to be attached to the caution (37%), or were informed what the VAC was about (47%). Forty two percent of victims stated that the police did not tell them and a further 11% were unable to recall what they had been told.

**Perceived purpose of the VAC**

As outlined in Chapter Two, the VAC was designed to be a short rehabilitative course, intended to increase offender empathy with the victim and in so doing, offer an opportunity for the offender to consider the triggers for the behaviour which led to their offence, with the ultimate aim to reduce re-offending. Both police officers and victims were asked for their views on the purpose of the course and the extent to which they perceived such aims could be met.

As indicated above, all the police officers were entirely supportive of the course for its ease of administration. In addition, they were supportive of the ability the course gave them to attach what they perceived to be a “meaningful” (officer one) condition to the caution; “if we explain it properly, it does show we are trying to do the right thing by both parties” (officer one). The course was seen as valuable by the police officer interviewees in part due to the time delay between the offending behaviour and the course, in that it extended the time period in which the offender was required to reflect on their actions. In the experience of officer three, many, though not all offenders sought to “reconfigure” (officer three) the events of the offence and subsequent arrest “to the extent that apparently they should never have been arrested at all as they’re innocent” (officer three). In the view of this officer, a course six to eight
weeks later gave them the opportunity to rethink their behaviour with a group of people and course trainer who would not excuse their behaviour in the way that friends and family might.

There was more scepticism as to whether the VAC would result in a reduction in re-offending. In part this related to the referral criteria for the course itself. The need for offenders to admit their guilt, and show some degree of remorse coupled with the fact that it is not deemed suitable for ‘serial’ offenders, suggested to two of the officers that it may not have a direct impact on the likelihood of re-offending: “for some, the very fact they’ve come to our attention at all means they never will again” (officer four). None of the officers interviewed however, saw this as being the primary aim of the course. For some it related to the ability to reduce pressure on the court system, for others, it was more about showing the victim that “the police will not always act like a wet lettuce” (officer two) and take action that appears to have “more teeth” (officer two) than a simple caution. Equally, for three of the four officers interviewed it was primarily related to the need to show offenders that their actions have an effect on victims that the offender may not have ever considered.

Victims, when asked what they perceived the purpose of the VAC to be, had a wide variety of answers, ranging from acting as a deterrent to further criminality (expressed by two respondents) to an understanding of the impact of their behaviour (six respondents) to an uncertainty of the impact it would have (five respondents) to the view that it would have no impact at all (six respondents).

That having been said, 11 of the victims stated that they were content with the offender in their case having been sent on the VAC. Some suggested alternative outcomes that they would have wished for such as a face to face or written apology or court appearance. These findings mirror those found by Victim Support and Make Justice Work (2012) which concluded that “victims are broadly open to the use of community sentences and the principles that undermine them but there is a lot to do before they see them as an effective

The variety of answers expressed by victims regarding the purpose of the course were roughly mirrored by those attending the VAC, as seen in Table Three. On attending the venue and prior to the course beginning, attendees were asked what they thought the VAC would cover. Whilst some indicated that they had no idea, there was a wide variety of answers to the free text question (completed by 48% of respondents). A few respondents indicated that they didn’t feel they had done anything wrong and thus shouldn’t be on the course (n=10), whilst a number of others indicated that they knew what they had done was wrong and didn’t feel the course would teach them anything they hadn’t already learnt by themselves (n=six). By far the most common responses however, related to the need to learn from their mistakes and how not to offend again, to be taught how to make better decisions, to learn to deal with anger issues and the impact that their behaviour had upon others, or to achieve some form of ‘closure’ on the incident or crime that had led them to having to attend the VAC (69% of those answering the question). Those who attended the course having received a conditional caution were more likely than those receiving PNDs to consider that they would have to explain and atone for their crime, as can be seen from Table Three.

Table 3: Preconceptions of course content by disposal type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement with the statement:</th>
<th>Conditional Cautions</th>
<th>PNDs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'll have to explain what I did</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'll be told why crime is wrong</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'll be made to feel guilty for what I did</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That I will be helped to understand the impact of my behaviour on others</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That I will be helped to understand how to change my behaviour in future</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding. Missing cases and those replying ‘don’t know’ have been excluded from the table.
Impact of the VAC

Non participant observation showed that there was a palpable sense of relief amongst many attendees when told that they would not be asked for the reason why they were required to attend the course, nor give their names nor indicate any degree of guilt. Interestingly, during the duration of the courses observed, several attendees did choose to indicate the reasons why they were there and the extent to which they felt their attendance on the course was justified.

The courses observed by the researcher were run by trainers with differing backgrounds – some were Victim Support staff and others were contracted staff with a variety of backgrounds, for example, ex-police officers. It is beyond the scope of this study to determine the extent, if any, to which the background of the trainer has an impact on the way in which the course was run, or indeed, the impact of the trainer on the course dynamics. Any further research on the VAC may benefit from an exploration of the interaction between the trainers and attendees and the impact that their varying backgrounds has on this dynamic. However, what was clear from the current research was that it was essential that attendees appreciated the reasons for their presence on the course and were receptive to the course aims. This appears to have been best achieved by ensuring a careful balancing act between the course being seen as an educational opportunity and it being a punishment for having committed a crime. In the words of one trainer “you’re here to learn and to reflect, but if anyone behaves like a donkey, I’ll send you back to the police” (VAC trainer).

Several attendees felt that other consequences of their behaviour had been “enough punishment and some” (VAC course attendee); for example spending a night in a cell and having to explain their absence from work or home to an employer or partner, the cost of having to take a day off (often unpaid) in order to attend the course or the travel costs incurred to reach the course venue (in some cases, from other parts of the UK outside Hampshire).
One of the group activities undertaken in the courses observed sought to enable attendees to justify their actions at the time of the crime. A wide variety of reasons were given, ranging from “I was drunk” to “I was angry – I’ve got a lot going on in my life” to (in instances of assault) “I had no option – I needed to defend myself”. When discussed as a group it was recognised that in most instances, the only ‘excuse’ a victim might accept related to issues of mental ill health. These findings parallel those of Wallis (2014), detailed in Chapter One, who noted that loss of empathy can be short lived and may be related to drunkenness, stress, tiredness and boredom – which mirror many of the reasons given by the VAC attendees.

Whilst accepting that the loss of empathy shown by the VAC attendees may have been temporary, the course aimed to reinforce the consequences of such a loss of empathy. The post course survey therefore sought to determine the extent to which the course (and by extension the trainer) had instilled in attendees the impact of their actions upon others – not just the victim or witnesses, but a wider ripple effect on families, colleagues or other employees (in the case of retail crime). As can be seen from Table Four, approximately nine in 10 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the course had helped them to understand the impact of crime (90%) and how it might affect the victim and others (91%). Over three quarters (77%) indicated that they now tried to imagine the victims’ perspective on crime. These findings correlate both with the view expressed by some victims that the course might help them to understand the impact of their crime, and with the ‘theory of mind’ theoretical underpinning of the course referred to in Chapter Two.

There was however, considerably less agreement with the statements specifically related to their specific crime. For example, just over half (53%) agreed that they put the victim and those close to them “through a lot”, and less than two thirds (59%) agreed that they felt it was important to make up for what they did.

There was some variation in the extent to which restorative justice elements were introduced into the courses observed. In one observed course, attendees were asked what they could do to “put things right” and asked to consider
what they would say to their victim if they met. This aspect was not present in two of the other courses subsequently observed, though was discussed at the training course to introduce other police forces to the concept of the VAC. From a victims’ perspective, those victims who did not feel that the VAC was an appropriate disposal were asked if they felt a face to face or written apology would have been preferable to ‘put things right’. Noting that 11 of the 19 respondents were content to see the offender in their case attending the VAC, of the remaining eight, five would have liked to have had a face to face or written apology.

Table 4: Impact of the VAC on attendees views

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement with the statement:</th>
<th>Strongly agree / agree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree / disagree</th>
<th>Don’t know / not sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know the incident was my fault</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tried to understand the victim better by imagining how things look from his/her perspective</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wish I had never harmed the victim</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think it’s important to make up for what I did</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I put the victim and the people close to him/her through a lot</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I can say “it’s over now, I can leave it behind”</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It helped me understand the impact of crime in general on the victim</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It helped me think about how my behaviour affects others, not just victims</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It helped me think about how the victim might feel as a result of my behaviour</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding. Missing cases have been excluded from the table.
There are no statistically significant differences to any of the above statements findings by gender, disposal type or past offending behaviour.

In seeking to determine whether the course might have an impact on recidivism, attendees were asked if they felt attendance on the course would result in them behaving differently in future. The results appear encouraging, with 70% stating that they would definitely behave differently and a further 20% indicating that they may do so. There are no statistically significant differences in response to this question based on gender, age, past offending history or disposal type. It is acknowledged however, that the setting in which the attendees were completing the course, and the (unjustified) concern expressed by some that their responses could be linked back to them, may have resulted in a response bias to this question.

Unsolicited comments on a number of questionnaires indicated that some attendees did not feel that the course would make them behave differently as they had already taken steps to address their offending behaviour. This echoes the view expressed by some police officers, suggesting that the course may act as a reinforcement of the need to change behaviours but may not be the primary motivating factor.

**Potential improvements to the course and its implementation**

As referred to above, from an administrative perspective both officers and course attendees felt that few improvements could be made. More information on the course content was requested by officers, and whilst victims were not given the opportunity to indicate if they would have preferred more information, less than half (48%) actually knew the offender in their case was being sent on a VAC, suggesting that more information would be appropriate and better enable victims to be involved in having a voice in the criminal justice system.

Finally, course attendees were asked for their views on potential improvements. Of the wide variety of opinions expressed, the two most frequent responses related to having a course run nearer to home (in part this is related to the course being piloted in two cities but available for referral for
offenders from all parts of Hampshire) and to hearing the views of victims more directly (supported by 34% of respondents).
Chapter 5: Discussion

In any analysis of whether a victim awareness course works, and is appropriate for the crime type and circumstances, there are numerous aspects to take into consideration. Many of those pertinent to the VAC were discussed in the literature review, and will now be revisited in light of the research findings from the previous chapter.

What is the VAC trying to achieve and is it succeeding?

In the project initiation documents developed by Victim Support, and as outlined in Chapter Two, the course was designed to be “offender centric” (Masters, internal Victim Support documentation, 2013), educational and rehabilitative. In this, illustrated by the literature review in Chapter One, the VAC lies firmly within a well-established set of schemes whose primary purpose is to find less expensive and alternative means of dealing with low level offending behaviour. There is considerable current interest in, and attention being paid to, how out of court disposals can assist in making offenders take responsibility for their own actions, become aware of the impact of their behaviour and thus become less likely to re-offend in the future.

Both out of court disposals per se and victim awareness courses more specifically (whether used as part of out of court disposals or not) are seen as a means of reducing re-offending. Indeed, according to one influential source “OOCDs can often represent an effective response to offending that can focus on the needs of the victim” (Home Affairs Select Committee, 2015).

Ultimately therefore, the measure of success must be whether or not the VAC, like other victim awareness style programmes, reduces re-offending. However, within the limited scope, remit and timescale available to undertake a Masters dissertation, it has not been possible to provide definitive, quantifiable outcomes relating to recidivism. In this, the study shares the same
shortcoming as other evaluations which lack a long term follow up of effectiveness (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2002).

The absence of any such definitive outcome does not mean however, that comment cannot be made on other perceived measures of success. In both the available literature and Victim Support’s own course development material, it has been recognised that there is a clear relationship between the absence of empathy and criminal activity. The VAC thus attempts to help those attending the course develop such empathy and is so doing reduce the likelihood of re-offending. Course attendees are clearly made aware of the purpose of the course and in their own view do believe it have had an impact, with, as previously noted, survey results showing that 70% of offenders indicating that they would definitely behave differently and a further 20% stating that they may do so.

Throughout the course, it is made clear to attendees that they have a high degree of self-control over their behaviour, actions, decision making ability and capacity. Such self-control does require individuals to be equipped with the skills to enable them to evaluate a situation, to consider and then alter their behaviour (Day, 2011). Victim Support’s offender rehabilitation training manager believed that the strength of the course lay in being able to “freeze the five seconds of decision making that it took to commit the criminal act and replay it and learn from it over three hours” (Victim Support interviewee). Social problem solving skills per se are not however, taught on the course, nor are attendees equipped by the course to deal with problems that may arise from their everyday situations (be this substance abuse, mental ill health, domestic circumstances etc.)

Arguably, the teaching of such skills lie considerably beyond the remit of what can be taught in a three hour course, and outside the remit of a single course provider. Course materials provided by Victim Support signpost attendees to other support agencies who may be better able to assist with other factors arguably impeding the ability of attendees to desist from crime. The purpose and remit of the course provider, Victim Support, is, as the name suggests, to offer support to victims of crime, and are thus well placed to help develop an
understanding of the impact of the crime on victims. In this it can be argued that the research shows the course is meeting its objective with 90% of respondents indicating that they understand the impact of crime on the victim, and that they are able to consider how the victim might feel as a result of their behaviour.

**What are the success factors in implementing a community based victim awareness course?**

In the literature reviewed as part of this dissertation, few studies paid attention to the factors which enable a victim awareness course to be implemented successfully. The underlying background factors relating to course development, staffing, administration and clarity of purpose all have a part to play in enabling the course to achieve its aims. As discussed in Chapter One, Astbury (2008) noted that there were four key elements to determining whether or not a victim awareness course could be implemented successfully. Consideration has been paid to each of these in varying degrees in relation to the VAC.

The willingness and motivation of the offender to alter their behaviour is a primary factor. In this dissertation study, course attendees were asked what they hoped to get from the course. Although open ended and thus affected by the unwillingness of attendees to answer non ‘tick box’ questions, many of the replies given suggest that the desire to better understand their actions and what impact it might have had, was upper most in the thoughts of attendees. They therefore began the course with this consideration in mind and this could arguably have impacted (positively) on their willingness to take away the messages being given by Victim Support.

Astbury (2008) also indicated that for a course to be successful, it needed to take into account the differing motivations to commit crime, and the extent to which demographic differences (age, gender and ethnicity) were taken into consideration. The evaluation did not address motivation to commit crime, but demographic differences were considered in developing the evaluation materials. Analysis of both the pre and post course surveys by age, gender
and self-admitted previous offending was undertaken. No statistically significant differences in responses were found.

Consideration was also given to the nature and type of staff employed to undertake the courses. Analysis of responses by trainer was not initially considered or undertaken. The pilot implementation of the course meant that in the early stages, the course was developing incrementally and it was subsequently considered that it would not be possible to determine the extent to which differing answers were dependent on the course material, administration, setting or trainer. Astbury (2008) highlighted the importance of staff having the empathy, tolerance and flexibility to run the course. These aspects were discussed with the Victim Support rehabilitation training manager in interview. Whilst the subject matter of the course was deemed less important, in line with Astbury (2008) the interviewee was firmly of the view that course trainers need to have the skills to alter behaviour and attitudes, to be non-judgemental and empathetic.

The final factor mentioned by Astbury and which has been considered in this evaluation, related to the theoretical underpinning of the course, the realism of the programme goals, its cost effectiveness and introduction at a relatively stable period in the organisation. It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss elements of cost effectiveness (Victim Support wishing to retain responsibility for such commercially sensitive information). However, as noted in Chapter Two, the theoretical development of the course progressed throughout the research period enabling a clear sense of direction and purpose to be embedded. Such theoretical underpinning was linked to the course goals and the clear purpose behind the exercises undertaken. In referring to the stability of the organisation at the time of introducing the course, Astbury’s research did not consider the situation in which more than one organisation could potentially be involved in the implementation.

Although Victim Support’s organisational structure was relatively stable throughout the research period, that of Hampshire Constabulary was less so. Coalition government driven austerity measures and a substantial reduction in budget had a clear impact on the police. Necessary and wide ranging
organisational change, shifting structures and large scale staff movement (at both a tactical and strategic level) all had a part to play in the reduced referral rate to the VAC in the summer and autumn of 2014. It is also debatably the case that the lack of dedicated resources for the implementation of the VAC (once the SPOC had gone on maternity leave) and staff movement into different roles partially explains officers’ limited ability to provide clear and comprehensive course descriptions to either offender or victim.
Conclusions

Were the research methods used able to elicit the main issues?

The previously discussed time and resource limitations have precluded any research on recidivism. Equally, attempts to garner a course attendee perspective three months after attending the course met with very limited success. The ability of this study, therefore, to provide any analysis on the impact of the course other than in its immediate aftermath, is questionable.

The purpose of the evaluation was however to identify strengths and areas for improvement in the course implementation and to provide an initial indication of the extent to which the course worked from an offender, victim, police and course provider perspective. The methods used were appropriate, it is argued, for the scale of the research and the resources and time available in which to conduct it, and enabled some clear conclusions to be drawn.

What conclusions can be drawn from the research?

From a tactical policing perspective, the administrative ease, simplicity and intuitive appeal of the course make those who are aware of it, keen to refer low level offenders on to the course. Strategically, the course is in line with the desire of Hampshire’s Police and Crime Commissioner and with central government thinking both to make cautions more meaningful and impactive on the offender (as outlined in the 2013/2014 consultation on out of court disposals, Ministry of Justice [2014a]), and to provide a new way of delivering justice for victims.

Few conclusions can be drawn from the limited research into the views of victims however. There was considerable variability between those who had been informed about the course and those who had not, those who felt it would make an impact, and those who were uncertain and between those who would have liked the offender in their case to have been given an alternative disposal and those who were content with the VAC as an outcome.
The results from the surveys of course attendees are largely positive, as detailed in Chapter Four, and suggest that there is merit in continuing to develop, evaluate and roll out the course elsewhere in England and Wales. Consideration could be given to the inclusion of a more direct ‘victim voice’ within the course, as suggested by 34% of course attendees. This need not be the attendance at the course of a victim. Victim Support interviewees suggested that the variety of crime types committed would potentially serve to make some attendees feel that a single victim wasn’t relevant to their case and thus enable them to dissociate with the message being given. Rather, a short series of audio or visual clips could be shown, as was done in one of the training courses attended by the researcher.

**What are the implications for further research?**

Whilst, according to the literature, there is little robust evidence that diversionary, victim impact courses can be proven to lead to a reduction in reoffending, other factors can be considered. As discussed in the Introduction, evidence suggests victim impact and other schemes designed to divert offenders from crime may be a less expensive route to take than other criminal justice pathways (Wilson and Hoge, 2013). Continued research, with clear and explicit success criteria and an open acknowledgement of limitations - both for the intervention and for the evaluation – needs to occur so that, over time, a clearer understanding of the impact of victim awareness courses and their ability to rehabilitate offenders, is developed.

In line with several of the meta-analyses and individual studies referred to in Chapter One, it is therefore recommended that any future research adopts one of two alternative approaches. With the imminent roll out of the VAC to other police forces and an attendant increase in referrals and potential course attendees, future evaluations have the opportunity to follow a larger cohort, over a considerably longer period of time. A large enough sample tracked over the course of two to three years (a period of time suggested as appropriate by the Australian Institute of Criminology [2002] p. 42) could provide some measure of re-offending behaviour. Consideration would still need to be paid, however, to the possibility that low level first time offenders may have been
put off crime by factors other than the course (peer/family disapproval, employment implications, greater self-generated awareness of the impact of their behaviour, to name a few).

It is for this reason that a second alternative research approach could be considered. The running of a sufficiently large control group of low level offenders receiving PNDs or conditional cautions but not referred to the VAC would better allow for any ‘VAC specific’ impacts to be identified. When combined with a long term follow up, this could be a more powerful research design along the lines mooted by many of the authors referred to in Chapter One.

Finally, any future research would benefit from a more nuanced and in depth study of offender motivation and understanding of their expectations of the course content and personal outcome and of the views of victims (both quantitatively and qualitatively). This would require additional resource but could add greatly to the development of community based victim empathy courses for low level offending at a time when fewer resources are available to adopt traditional approaches.
Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions, and **none** of your individual answers will be shared with Victim Support or anyone else. I would just be very grateful for your open and honest answers.

1. Have you come on the course today as:
   - Part of a conditional caution from the police
   - Instead of a ‘penalty notice for disorder’
   - I am not sure why I have been asked to come on the course

2. What was the reason you received either a PND or a conditional caution?
   - Shoplifting / theft
   - Anti social behaviour
   - Criminal damage
   - Public order offence
   - Assault
   - Other

3. Did the police officer who dealt with you explain what the course was about?
   - Yes
   - No
   - I can’t remember

4. Did the joining instructions you received make clear:
   - Where the course was being held
   - How long the course would last
   - What the course would be about
   - Yes
   - No
   - Can’t remember

**PLEASE COMPLETE THE QUESTIONS ON THE OTHER SIDE**
4. What would you like to get from the course today?

5. Do you think the course will cover any of the subjects listed below? (please tick all that apply)
   - That I will have to explain what I did and why
   - That I will be told why crime is wrong
   - That I will be made to feel guilty for what I did
   - That I will be helped to understand the impact of my behaviour on others
   - That I will be helped to understand how to change my behaviour in future

6. If none of the options given above describe what you think the course will be about, please can you say what you think the course will cover?

7. Thinking about why you have been asked to go on the course, please can you say who the victim was in the crime you committed? __________________________

8. Are you: Male ☐ Female ☐


10. Please tick the box which you think best describes your situation:
    - I have never been in trouble with the police before this course ☐
    - I have been in trouble with the police a few times but nothing serious ☐
    - I’m often in trouble with the police & have been arrested on several occasions ☐

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THE QUESTIONNAIRE
Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions, and none of your individual answers will be shared with Victim Support or anyone else. I would just be very grateful for your open and honest answers.

1. Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Don’t know / not sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I know the incident was my fault</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tried to understand the victim better by imagining how things look from</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>him/her perspective</td>
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<tr>
<td>I wish I had never harmed the victim</td>
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<tr>
<td>I think it’s important to make up for what I did</td>
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<tr>
<td>I put the victim and the people close to him/her through a lot</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel I can say “it’s over now, I can leave it behind”</td>
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<tr>
<td>It helped me understand the impact of crime in general on victims</td>
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<tr>
<td>It helped me think about how my behaviour affects others, not just victims</td>
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<tr>
<td>It helped me think about how the victim might feel as a result of my</td>
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<tr>
<td>behaviour</td>
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</table>

PLEASE ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ON THE OTHER SIDE
2. Did the course help you think about the behaviour that led you to being here today?

- Yes - completely
- Yes - a little bit
- No, not really
- No, not at all

3. Did the trainer make you feel:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcome</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Relaxed</td>
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<td>Guilty</td>
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<td>Ashamed or embarrassed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supported</td>
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4. Thinking about the whole course, from what you were told by the police, to the joining instructions to the actual course today, how do you think it could be made better? (you can tick more than one box)

- If it was shorter
- If it was longer
- By hearing the views of victims affected by crime
- If there was more work to be done on our own
- If there was less work to be done on our own
- If it was held in a different location

(Please say where and why)

Other

5. Thinking about the reason you are here today, do you think you will behave differently as a result of the course?

- Yes - definitely
- Yes - maybe
- No – probably not
- No – definitely not
- I am not sure

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THE QUESTIONNAIRE.
Dear

I would be very grateful if you could spare me a few moments of your time.

I am an MSc student at the University of Portsmouth and, as part of my degree, I am undertaking some research for Hampshire Constabulary. Please be assured that I have not been given direct access to the details of your crime. I have supplied the letter and questionnaire to Hampshire Constabulary who are sending this out on my behalf.

I understand from the police that you were a victim of crime recently, and that the offender in your case was given a conditional caution by Hampshire Constabulary. One of the conditions imposed on the offender was that they were required to attend a Victim Awareness Course.

Hampshire Constabulary is currently piloting the Victim Awareness Course as an option for some offenders. They have asked Portsmouth University to seek the views of everyone involved to evaluate this initiative.

The Victim Awareness Course (VAC) is a three hour course for attendance by offenders who have committed theft, criminal damage, public order, or assault offences or involved in anti-social behaviour (ASB).

The aim of the course is for offenders to reflect on the impact of their crime. The topics covered in the course include:

- Understanding how people react when they have been a victim of crime, including the emotional, behavioural, physical, social, financial and practical effects it can have on the victim;
- Getting the offender to reflect on the ways that are used to justify criminal behaviour and for them to understand their own attitudes in relation to this;
- Enabling offenders to consider the impact of their behaviour on victims of crime;
- Thinking about the reasons why they committed the offence.

I would be extremely grateful if you could spare a few minutes to complete the short questionnaire sent with this letter, so that your views, as a victim of crime, can be taken into account. There is a pre-paid envelope enclosed to return the questionnaire.

Thank you very much.

Yours sincerely,

Clare Simkin
1. Please tick to indicate the kind of crime that you were a victim of.

- Theft
- Criminal damage
- Assault
- Anti-social behaviour
- Other

2. Did you know the offender before the crime was committed?

- Yes – very well
- Yes - a little bit
- No – not at all
- I’m not sure

3. After the crime, did the police let you know that the offender was being given a conditional caution?

- Yes
- No
- I can’t remember

4. Did the police involve you in deciding the conditions being placed upon the caution?

- Yes
- No
- I can’t remember

5. Was the concept of a Victim Awareness Course (VAC) explained clearly to you?

- Yes
- No
- I can’t remember

PLEASE TURN OVER AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ON THE OTHER SIDE
6. Does this description of the Victim Awareness Course match what you were told by the police?

Yes – completely □ yes – mostly □ No, not really □
No, not at all □ I can’t remember □ I wasn’t told about the VAC □

7. Please tick the boxes which best describe your views of the Victim Awareness Course (you can tick more than one box)

I think it will help deter them from committing further crime □
I think it will help them understand the impact of crime on the victim □
I don’t think it will make any difference to their behaviour at all □
I am not sure what difference it will make □
Other ____________________________________________________________ (please specify)

8. Were you content with the offender in your crime being sent on the VAC?

Yes □ No □ I’m not sure □

9. If you said No to Q. 8, what alternative do you think would have been an appropriate punishment in your crime? (please tick all the options which apply)

To have apologised to me face to face □ To have paid a fine □
To have apologised by writing to me □ To have had to go to court □
Other ____________________________________________________________ (please specify)

10. Are you: Male □ Female □


45 – 54 □ 55 – 64 □ 65 + □

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. PLEASE RETURN IT IN THE PRE-PAID ENVELOPE PROVIDED.
Study Title: An Evaluation of the Victim Awareness Course.

We, Portsmouth University and Victim Support, would like to invite you to take part in this research study. Before you decide, we would like you to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please ask us if there is anything that is not clear.

What is the purpose of the study?

Victim Support has been running Victim Awareness Courses (VAC) in Hampshire for just over a year.

The VAC is an educational and rehabilitative course designed and delivered by Victim Support for attendance by offenders who have committed a crime against you. Victim Support would now like to provide this course in other parts of England and Wales.

As part of my MSc dissertation, I am working with both Portsmouth University and Victim Support to get the views of people involved with the course. We want to ask all those involved in the process whether it meets their needs, and what their views on the course are.

Why have I been invited?

We understand that you were recently the victim of crime. The individual or individuals who were responsible for committing the crime have been required by Hampshire Constabulary to attend a Victim Awareness Course, as part of the Conditional Caution they were given.

Do I have to take part?

We appreciate the distress caused to many people by being a victim of crime, and would like to stress the entirely voluntary nature of your participation in this study. It would be enormously helpful if you did agree to take part. As we explained earlier, this course is the first of its kind in the
country, and we would really like to know your views on it; to see how it can best meet the needs of everyone involved. If you agree to take part, we will then ask you to sign a consent form.

What will happen if I take part?

We would like you to complete the short questionnaire attached with this letter.

Please give us your honest opinion – there are no right or wrong answers. Simply tick the boxes which most closely match your views on the questions being asked, and where we ask you to write in your views, rather than just ticking a box, give us as much detail as you can.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

As we explain below, you will not be identified by name to either Portsmouth University or Victim Support. We are asking for a short period of your time to help us with this study, but you are free at any point to pull out.

We would like to be able to quote from anything to say to us. You will not be identified by name in any of the research.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Victim Support really want to make this course the best it can be. One of the ways they can do this is by getting the views of victims on what they were told about the course, what they know about it and their views on the concept of an educational course for the offender in their case.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Yes. As the researcher conducting the study, I will know who completed which questionnaires. I will not be sharing this information with anyone unconnected with the research.

If you join the research, it is possible that some of the data collected will be looked at by authorised persons from Victim Support or Portsmouth University to check that the study is being carried out correctly. Anyone looking at the data will have a duty of confidentiality to you as a research participant and we will do their best to meet this duty.

Once you have completed the questionnaire, the information from them will be stored electronically and securely on the researcher’s password secured computer. Throughout this period, you have the right to check the accuracy of data held about you and correct any errors. You will not be identified by name in any report written.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should ask to speak to the researcher (Clare Simkin) or their supervisor (Dr Nathan Hall), who will do their best to answer your questions [please see the contact details at the top of this sheet].

If you are still unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this by contacting the University of Portsmouth Complaints Officer on 02392 843642 or by email at complaintsadvice@port.ac.uk
What will happen to the results of the research study?

The information you give will be reported in my dissertation which will be submitted to Portsmouth University in the summer of 2015.

The results will also be reported to Victim Support in mid-2015. At this point, the report is owned by Victim Support and it will be their decision whether they wish to publicise or publish any of the findings.

If you wish to see a summary of the research findings, with the permission of Victim Support, there will be a summary sheet made available with the key findings which can be sent to you electronically if you let us know you would like this at the time of taking part in the research. This sheet will be available once the dissertation has been submitted and marked by the University of Portsmouth.

You will not be identified in the report for Victim Support or the dissertation, or any subsequent publication.

Who is organising and funding the research?

Victim Support are sponsoring and paying for the research to be undertaken. This means that they are meeting the travel and printing costs of the researcher, and making a contribution to the researcher’s university fees. The University of Portsmouth is also sponsoring the research by supervising it and ensuring that the research is carried out ethically and professionally.

Who has reviewed the study?

Research in the University of Portsmouth is looked at by independent group of people, called an Ethics Committee, to protect your interests. This study has been reviewed and given a favourable opinion by the Institute of Criminal Justice Studies Ethics Committee.

Further information and contact details

I hope that this information sheet has provided you with all the information you need. If you would like to know more or have any queries about the research, please contact Clare Simkin.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet. I very much hope you will spare the time to take part in this research.
Study Title: An Evaluation of the Victim Awareness Course.

I am a serving member of police staff who, as part of my MSc dissertation, is working with both Portsmouth University and Victim Support to get the views of offenders who attend the VAC, victims where the offender in their case has been required to attend a VAC, and police officers who have made the VAC part of a conditional caution or offered it in place of a PND.

We, Portsmouth University and Victim Support, would like to invite you to take part in this research study. This research has been approved by, and has the full support of, Hampshire Constabulary. Before you decide, we would like you to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear.

What is the purpose of the study?

Victim Support has been running Victim Awareness Courses (VAC) in Hampshire for several months. They would now like to provide this course in other police forces in England and Wales.

The overall purpose of the study is to evaluate the initial rollout of the course.

The specific purpose of this part of the research is to determine your views on the communication and publicity around the course, your understanding of, and views on, the course itself, what improvements could be made and whether you consider it to meet the needs of everyone involved.

Why have I been invited?

We are asking all Hampshire officers who have issued a conditional caution or PND for the VAC if they would be willing to take part in the research. The greater the number of officers whose views we are able to get, the more likely it is that we will be able to improve the course and ensure it is becomes an established element of out of court disposals.
Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide to join the study. It would be enormously helpful if you did agree to take part. As explained earlier, this course is the first of its kind in the country. Victim Support and Portsmouth University would really like to know your views on it; to see how it can best meet the needs of everyone involved. If you agree to take part, we will then ask you to sign a consent form.

What will happen if I take part?

If you agree to take part, there are two aspects we would like your help with.

1. Take part in a short interview (lasting no more than 20 minutes) with the researcher, in duty time at a time and location of your convenience.

2. You will then be asked to complete a short questionnaire to be sent to you electronically via your work e-mail address. This will take no more than 5-10 minutes to complete.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

You will not be identified by name to either Portsmouth University or Victim Support. We are asking for a short period of your time to help us with this study, but you are free at any point to pull out.

We would like to be able to quote from anything to say; either in the questionnaire or the interview. You will not be identified by name in any of the research.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Victim Support really want to make this course the best it can be. One of the ways they can do this is by getting the views of those who have experienced it – ensuring that anyone who comes on the course in the future gets the most value from it and finds it as educational an experience as possible.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Yes. As the researcher conducting the study, I will know who completed which questionnaires and took part in the interviews. I will not however, be sharing this information with anyone unconnected with the research, or with colleagues in the Constabulary except in an anonymised form.

If you join the research, it is possible that some of the data collected will be looked at by authorised persons from Victim Support or Portsmouth University to check that the study is being carried out correctly. Anyone looking at the data will have a duty of confidentiality to you as a research participant and we will do their best to meet this duty.

Once you have completed the questionnaire, the information from them will be stored electronically and securely on the researcher’s password secured computer.

Throughout this period, you have the right to check the accuracy of data held about you and correct any errors. You will not be identified by name in any report written.
What will happen if I don’t want to carry on with the study?

If you wish to withdraw at any time, you can do so. If you chose to withdraw before the questionnaires or interviews have been analysed, your data will be removed from the study and deleted from the computer, and any paper questionnaire will also be destroyed.

Once the questionnaire data has been analysed it will be impossible to withdraw your personal contribution, and extremely difficult to remove your contribution made through the interview. Please remember that your data will be reported in confidence and all your information will be held confidentially.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should ask to speak to the researcher (Clare Simkin) or their supervisor (Dr Nathan Hall), who will do their best to answer your questions [please see the contact details at the top of this sheet].

If you are still unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this by contacting the University of Portsmouth Complaints Officer on 02392 843642 or by email at complaintsadvice@port.ac.uk

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The information you give will be reported in my dissertation which will be submitted to Portsmouth University in the summer of 2015.

The results will also be reported to Victim Support in mid-2015. At this point, the report is owned by Victim Support and it will be their decision whether they wish to publicise or publish any of the findings.

If you wish to see a summary of the research findings, with the permission of Victim Support, there will be a summary sheet made available with the key findings which can be sent to you electronically if you let us know you would like this at the time of taking part in the research. This sheet will be available once the dissertation has been submitted and marked by the University of Portsmouth.

Who is organising and funding the research?

Victim Support are sponsoring and paying for the research to be undertaken. This means that they are meeting the travel and printing costs of the researcher, and making a contribution to the researcher’s university fees. The University of Portsmouth is also sponsoring the research by supervising it and ensuring that the research is carried out ethically and professionally.

Who has reviewed the study?

Research in the University of Portsmouth is looked at by independent group of people, called an Ethics Committee, to protect your interests. This study has been reviewed and given a favourable opinion by the Institute of Criminal Justice Studies Ethics Committee.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet. I very much hope you will spare the time to take part in this research.
April 2014

Study Title: An Evaluation of the Victim Awareness Course in Hampshire.

We, Portsmouth University and Victim Support, would like to invite you to take part in this research study. Before you decide, we would like you to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please ask us if there is anything that is not clear.

What is the purpose of the study?

Victim Support has been running Victim Awareness Courses in Hampshire for just over a year. They would now like to provide this course in other parts of England and Wales. As part of my MSc dissertation, I am working with both Portsmouth University and Victim Support to get the views of people involved with the course. We want to ask what parts of the course work, where and how it can be made better and whether it meets the needs of everyone involved.

Why have I been invited?

We are asking everyone who attends a Victim Awareness Course if they would be willing to take part in the research. The more people whose opinion we can get, the more likely it is that we will be able to improve the course and ensure we get it right.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide to join the study. It would be enormously helpful if you did agree to take part. As we explained earlier, this course is the first of its kind in the country. Victim Support and Portsmouth University would really like to know your views on it; to see how it can best meet the needs of everyone involved. If you agree to take part, we will then ask you to sign a consent form.
What will happen if I take part?

If you agree to take part, there are a number of different things we would like your help with.

1. You will need to complete a short questionnaire just before the Victim Awareness Course which will be given to you as you arrive at the course which needs to be completed before the course starts.

2. You will then be asked to complete another, equally short questionnaire as soon as the course is finished and before you go home.

The questionnaires will be numbered so that we are able to link your answers before the course with your answers after the course, and link this with the offence that led you to being on the course.

Each of the questionnaires will take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

What will I have to do?

Please give us your honest opinion – there are no right or wrong answers. Simply tick the boxes which most closely match your views on the questions being asked, and where we ask you to write in your views, rather than just ticking a box, give us as much detail as you can.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

As we explain below, you will not be identified by name to either Portsmouth University or Victim Support. We are asking for a short period of your time to help us with this study, but you are free at any point to pull out and not take part in the next stage of the research.

We would like to be able to quote from anything to say to us. You will not be identified by name in any of the research.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Victim Support really want to make this course the best it can be. One of the ways they can do this is by getting the views of those who have experienced it – ensuring that anyone who comes on the course in the future gets the most value from it and finds it as educational an experience as possible.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Yes. As the researcher conducting the study, I will know who completed which questionnaires, and this information will be linked to the offence which caused you to come on the course. I will not be sharing this information with anyone unconnected with the research.

If you join the research, it is possible that some of the data collected will be looked at by authorised persons from Victim Support or Portsmouth University to check that the study is being carried out correctly. Anyone looking at the data will have a duty of confidentiality to you as a research participant and we will do their best to meet this duty.
Once you have completed the questionnaires, the information from them will be stored electronically and securely on the researcher’s password secured computer. No names will be stored alongside your answers, and all information identifying you will be held on a separate computer in the Victim Support offices.

Throughout this period, you have the right to check the accuracy of data held about you and correct any errors. You will not be identified by name in any report written.

**What will happen if I don’t want to carry on with the study?**

The research will be most useful if you can take part in all three stages. If you wish to withdraw at any time, you can do so. If you chose to withdraw before the questionnaires have been analysed, your data will be removed from the study and deleted from the computer, and any paper questionnaire will also be destroyed.

Once the data has been analysed it will be impossible to withdraw your personal contribution. Please remember that your data will be reported in confidence and all your information will be held confidentially.

**What if there is a problem?**

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should ask to speak to the researcher (Clare Simkin) or their supervisor (Dr Nathan Hall), who will do their best to answer your questions [please see the contact details at the top of this sheet].

If you are still unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this by contacting the University of Portsmouth Complaints Officer on 02392 843642 or by email at complaintsadvice@port.ac.uk

**What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The information you give will be reported in my dissertation which will be submitted to Portsmouth University in the summer of 2015.

The results will also be reported to Victim Support in mid-2015. At this point, the report is owned by Victim Support and it will be their decision whether they wish to publicise or publish any of the findings.

If you wish to see a summary of the research findings, with the permission of Victim Support, there will be a summary sheet made available with the key findings which can be sent to you electronically if you let us know you would like this at the time of taking part in the research. This sheet will be available once the dissertation has been submitted and marked by the University of Portsmouth.

You will not be identified in the report for Victim Support or the dissertation, or any subsequent publication.

**Who is organising and funding the research?**

Victim Support are sponsoring and paying for the research to be undertaken. This means that they are meeting the travel and printing costs of the researcher, and making a contribution to the
researcher’s university fees. The University of Portsmouth is also sponsoring the research by
supervising it and ensuring that the research is carried out ethically and professionally.

Who has reviewed the study?

Research in the University of Portsmouth is looked at by independent group of people, called an
Ethics Committee, to protect your interests. This study has been reviewed and given a favourable
opinion by the Institute of Criminal Justice Studies Ethics Committee.

Further information and contact details

I hope that this information sheet has provided you with all the information you need. If you would
like to know more or have any queries about the research, please contact Clare Simkin.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet. I very much hope you will
spare the time to take part in this research.
Purpose of the interview: to better understand the issues pertaining to the police role in the VAC, prior to developing a questionnaire for all officers involved.

Background (ice breaking)

- Name, role and current station of officer
- Years of service and previous roles

Communication

- What information were you given on the VAC, and by whom?
- What other sources of information, if any, have you been made aware of in relation to the VAC?
- Was there any other information you had access to / would have liked to have access to, persons you were able to speak to / would have liked to be able to speak to etc.?
- As you know the VAC is being piloted in Hampshire prior to a possible national roll out. In terms of communication, and making officers aware of the course, can you suggest any improvements that could be made to the approach Hampshire has taken, or is has Hampshire got it about right?
- How would you ‘sell’ the VAC to other officers?

Administration and process issues

- How many VACs have you issued, for what sorts of crime, PNDs / CCs? etc.
- Ease of administering the VAC as a conditional caution / PND
- What issues have you encountered in the administration / issuing of the VAC?

Suitability of the VAC

- Do you feel the offences for which a VAC can be offered / given are about right?
- If not, what other offences should be included or current ones excluded?
• What criteria do you apply when deciding if a person is suitable for a VAC? (previous offending behaviour, attitude in custody, nature of offence, mitigating circumstances etc.)
• How do you come to that decision? (issues re discretion, experience of officer, ease [or otherwise] of administration, attitude of offender, RJ / victim involvement etc.)
• If the VAC were not available as a condition for CCs, what other conditions might you apply in the same circumstances?
• To what extent do you involve the victim (for CCs) in the decision making process about the caution? (more detail needed)
• How do you explain the VAC to victims?
• What have the victims’ views been on the VAC as a condition? (NOT on the caution itself.) *(need to link this to officer experience and the number of VACs issued)*
• In your professional opinion, what impact do you think the VAC will have on re-offending?
• What do you think are the benefits (to the offender, officer and victim) of the VAC?
• Can you see any issues / areas for improvement with the VAC?
Appendix 8: Interview guide for V.S. staff: Development Officer and policy lead

**Study Title:** An Evaluation of the Victim Awareness Course.

**Purpose of the interview:** to better understand the development of the VAC, the thinking behind it, the changes and development of the course over the past 12 months, and key implementation lessons to be learnt.

**Role and background of interviewee** – relevant experience for development of VAC.

**Development of the course** – why, how, thinking behind it, how does it fit with VS’s articulated role: “The role of Victim Support is to represent the views and interests of victims and some witnesses to the government and other stakeholders, in order to influence policy and practice. We have a clear vision and purpose, which plays an integral role in establishing Victim Support as a strong voice for victims and witnesses, and the world’s best victims’ charity” (taken from: https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research 1/5/15)

Does the course draw more on a Personal, Interpersonal and Community Reinforcement model (ie one in which the theory of criminal behaviour suggests that individuals have a high degree of control over the their behaviour and the paths they chose to take) or on alternative criminological theories which place more emphasis on social structures - where they live, job stability etc, or situational contexts - presence or absence of children, responsibilities etc, and habitus - with whom they socialise etc.?)?

**Development of the course in Hampshire**

- How this the course changed over the last 12 months – what lessons are there to be learnt for (a) the nationwide roll out (b) the development of other VAC type courses?
  - Probe: subject matter, manner of delivery, interaction with offenders, type and experience of trainers, logistics (eg admin, payment of fees, late arrivals etc.), interaction with police services
- Can you see any issues / areas for improvement with the VAC?
- Impact of the VAC on development of VS thinking on such community based courses
- In your professional opinion, what impact do you think the VAC has had on the offenders / course participants?
- What impact do you think it will have on re-offending?
- What do you think are the benefits (to the offender, police service and victim) of the VAC?
Appendix 9: Interview guide for Deputy PCC, Hampshire

Study Title: An Evaluation of the Victim Awareness Course.

Purpose of the interview: to better understand the development of the VAC, the thinking behind it, the changes and development of the course over the past 12 months, and key implementation lessons to be learnt.

Role and background of interviewee – relevant experience for / interest in development of VAC. How got involved, why?

Development of the course – What was the thinking behind the development of the course – theoretical and practical?

Does the course draw more on a Personal, Interpersonal and Community Reinforcement model (ie one in which the theory of criminal behaviour suggests that individuals have a high degree of control over their own behaviour and the paths they chose to take) or on alternative criminological theories which place more emphasis on social structures - where they live, job stability etc, or situational contexts - presence or absence of children, responsibilities etc, and habitus - with whom they socialise etc.)?

Hampshire’s involvement - why consider Hampshire suitable for introduction? What was the mechanism for introduction – into PCC’s office and then into Constabulary? Were there any potential conflicts of interest between role as deputy PCC and involvement with VS?

Who were the gate keepers / blockers and conversely who were the advocates / supporters - in PCC’s office and Constabulary? What lessons do you think can be learnt from its introduction and any initial teething problems?

Development of the course in Hampshire

- How this the course changed over the last 12 months – what lessons are there to be learnt for (a) the nationwide roll out (b) the development of other VAC type courses?
- Can you see any issues / areas for improvement with the VAC?
- In your professional opinion, what impact do you think the VAC has had on the offenders / course participants (which term does interviewee think is best)
- What impact do you think it will have on re-offending?
- What do you think are the benefits (to the offender, police service and victim) of the VAC?
ICJS Ethics Self-Assessment Form

Introduction

All research involving human participants, animals and/or sensitive data undertaken by students and staff must receive a favourable ethical opinion before it can be undertaken and, if appropriate, subsequently used for publication.

The completion of this ICJS Ethics Self-Assessment Form is the start point for applying for favourable ethical opinion and as such it is a record of the ethical considerations that have been addressed in planning the research proposal.

The ICJS Ethics Self-Assessment Form has 4 sections, all of which must be completed.

Section 1: Student details and proposed research topic
Section 2: Preparation; and details of ethical issues identified in the proposed research
Section 3: Ethical Narrative
Section 4: Ethical Opinion Outcome Record

A copy of this completed Self-Assessment Form should be supplied with your research proposal. It will then be passed on to your dissertation supervisor.

You may not proceed to data collection until you have received a favourable ethical opinion.

Section 1: Student details and proposed research topic

Student name: Clare Simkin

Student number: UP714336
Proposed research topic:

A chance to think again?
An evaluation of the Victim Awareness Course pilot.

Section 2: Preparation and details of ethical issues identified in the proposed research

1. Student has read the British Society of Criminology ethical guidelines. www.britsoccrim.org/codeofethics.htm
   Yes [ X ] No [ ]

2. Student has participated in research ethics sessions (lecture/seminar/workshop/other online or face to face activity) provided by their programme of study.
   Yes [ X ] No [ ]

3. Will the research involve the collection and analysis of primary or secondary data?
   Primary data Yes [ x ] No [ ]
   Secondary data Yes [ x ] No [ ]

Note: Secondary data is data that has already been collected by other researchers or an organisation for another purpose. Data may be in the public domain or available under the Freedom of Information Act (2000).

If ‘No’ to both parts of Q3, go to Q16.

If ‘Yes’ to both or either parts of Q3, go on to answer ALL of the questions on the following pages.
4. Does proposed research involve face-to-face contact with members of the community (including professionals and those held or 'looked after')?  

Yes [x]  No [ ]

5. Is access to personal or confidential data sought?  

Yes [x]  No [ ]

Note 1: This question applies to both primary and secondary data.

Note 2: You should be aware that privileged access to contact details or information as a result of a professional role, links to a host organization or personal association is considered to be ethically problematic and arrangements should be made for third party anonymised access.

6. Are you aware of the need to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of research participants?  

Yes [x]  No [ ]

7. Are there potential risks (to you and/or research subjects) in the research?  
(If ‘Yes’, then specify these risks in the spaces provided.)

Physical risks – to participants  
Yes [ ]  No [x]

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Physical risks – to yourself  
Yes [ ]  No [ x]

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Psychological risks – to participants  
Yes [ ]  No [x]

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Psychological risks – to yourself  
Yes [ ]  No [ x]

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Compromising situations – to participants  
Yes [ ]  No [x]

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Compromising situations – to yourself  
Yes [ ]  No [ x]

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
8. Do you believe you need to deceive research subjects? (e.g. by not being clear about the purpose of your research)

   Yes [ ]    No [ x ]

9. Is there any likely harm to participants involved in the research?

   Yes [ ]    No [ x ]

10. Is participation in the research entirely voluntary?

    Yes [ x ]    No [ ]

11. Have you considered how you are going to obtain informed consent from research participants?

    Yes [ x ]    No [ ]

12. Is there any potential role conflict for you in the research?  

    Yes [ x ]    No [ ]

    **Note:** Role conflict is defined as any contact with a participant who knows you (the researcher) in another capacity. Commonly this is a professional capacity.

    As a member of Hampshire Constabulary staff, many of the police officers whom I will be asking to take part in the research, know me through my professional capacity. The ‘dual hatted’ nature of my role as academic researcher is acknowledged and made explicit in the information sheet being provided to all police officers asked to take part.

13. If you are using secondary data, is the data available in the public domain?

    Yes [ ]    No [ x ]    Not using secondary data [ ]

    If “No”, please explain:

    - how you have access to the data:

      I have access to the data as a member of staff of Hampshire Constabulary. I have sought and obtained specific consent from the Evidence Based Policing Strategic Board which approves and oversees access to the relevant data sources. This research has been approved of both the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire and the Chief Constable of Hampshire Constabulary through his delegated authority to the Evidence Based Policing Strategic Board.

    - the arrangements you have made with the host organisation/holder of the information to receive the data in an anonymised state which conforms to the Data Protection Act (1998)

      The data requested from Hampshire Constabulary pertains to the offence for which the individual was required to attend the Victim Awareness Course.
As a member of Hampshire Constabulary staff, I am fully aware of the requirement of the Data Protection Act, and the obligations this places upon me. I will be storing the non-anonymised data on a secure Hampshire Constabulary computer and only transferring the data to my personal computer once it has been anonymised by me, and the process over seen and approved by the Constabulary’s Academic Research Manager (a member of the Strategic Evidenced Based Policing Board whose approval has been obtained for the research).

14. If access to data outside of the public domain is proposed, have you consulted with your data protection officer?  
  Yes [X]  
  No [ ]

15. Are there any other data protection issues?  
  Yes [ ]  
  No [X]

16. Are there any other potential sources of ethical issues or conflict in the proposed research (e.g. political considerations, sensitivity of the topic, reputational issues for researcher, participants and/or host organisation)?  
  Yes [X]  
  No [ ]

If ‘Yes’, then specify these risks

I am a member of Hampshire Constabulary staff closely associated with evidence based policing and academic research. I am normally a member of the Strategic Evidence Based Policing Board which approves requests from university students to conduct research within the Constabulary. On this occasion, I submitted the required Constabulary documentation and absented myself from the meeting at which this was discussed.

I am also receiving payment from Victim Support to undertake the evaluation of the VAC, the primary data from which I am using in my dissertation. I was approached to undertake the evaluation by the Hampshire deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, and in conjunction with Victim Support, it was agreed that I could utilise the data in support of my dissertation, separate to and independent from any evaluative report written for Victim Support. I have received written consent from Victim Support, which is submitted to the Ethics Committee with this self-assessment form.

I confirm that:

- the information provided is a complete and accurate record of my plans at present;
- I have read and understood the process for obtaining a favourable ethical opinion as contained in the document: ‘How to Apply for Ethical Review’; and
- I shall resubmit an amended version of this form should my research alter significantly such that there is any significant variation of ethical risk.

Signed: Clare Simkin  
Student
Section 3: Ethical Narrative

In your ethical narrative, you should address and fully develop your responses to any ethical issues that you have identified from your Self-Assessment Form as requiring further consideration.

In addition your ethical narrative should address the following issues:

- Sensitivity of research topic
- Permission from host organisation/s. You will require written authority from the host organisation/s agreeing to allow your research to be conducted. This means you must write to the host organisation/s (using UOP logo and contact details) and set out the risks and costs (use of office time, professional time, reputational issues, access to staff, internet, etc.) associated with your research activity.
- Reputational issues – for the university/researcher/host organisation/s
- Anonymity and confidentiality
- Data protection and storage
- Role conflict
- Access to privileged data and privileged resources – and action to mitigate risks and concerns arising from accessing this type of data
- Risks posed by research - to participants and researcher
- Ownership of research data

The ethical issues posed by this research fall into four main areas:

**Permission from host organisation(s):** explicit permission has been requested and received from both Hampshire Constabulary and Victim Support. Letters providing their consent and agreement are submitted to the Ethics Committee alongside this form.

**Conflict of interest:** as a serving member of Hampshire Constabulary staff and through my payment by Victim Support for the evaluation of the VAC, as well as an MSc student at the University of Portsmouth, I am wearing a number of ‘hats’ in the collection of the primary and secondary data. It is possible therefore, that there may be a conflict of interest if the research findings suggest that the VAC is not a success. I have been explicit in my discussions with both Victim Support and Hampshire Constabulary to state that I have an ethical responsibility to report the findings accurately.

**Access to privileged data and privileged resources – and action to mitigate risks and concerns arising from accessing this type of data:** the data requested from Hampshire Constabulary pertains to the offence for which the individual was required to attend the Victim Awareness Course. This will be provided to me in a non-anonymised format in order to enable me to link it with the questionnaire responses obtained from the VAC attendees. The resources do not exist within the Constabulary for anyone to do this on my behalf.

As a member of Hampshire Constabulary staff, I am fully aware of the requirement of the Data Protection Act, and the obligations this places upon me. I will be storing the non-anonymised data on a secure Hampshire Constabulary computer and only transferring the data to my personal computer once it has been anonymised by me, and the process over seen and approved by the Constabulary’s Academic Research Manager (a member of the Strategic Evidenced Based Policing Board whose approval has been obtained for the research).

Misuse of Constabulary data is a dismissible offence and given my professional capacity, there would be no advantage to be gained by the misuse of the data. In addition to the submission to the Strategic Evidenced Based Policing Board, I have submitted a ‘business interest form’ to the Professional Standards Department of the Constabulary detailing the data to be utilised in support of my dissertation and for the purposes of the Victim Support evaluation.
Ownership of data: the ownership of the data collected from the Victim Awareness Course attendees resides with Victim Support. It has been formally agreed that I can utilise all anonymised data in support of my MSc. dissertation.

As detailed in their letter attached to this submission, Victim Support have requested that they have oversight of any publishable research prior to any commitment being made to publish; "We would wish to see her dissertation as part of her undertaking to conduct this work and would ask that the publication of any paper based on her research is considered by Victim Support before any commitment is made to publish".

This may be problematic dependent on the research findings. Victim Support is very keen to roll this course out across the country to other police service areas, as there is a commercial incentive for them to do so. Although acknowledged in meetings that an open commitment to accurate research findings is vital, the risk does remain that issues could arise if the findings are not favourable.

Section 4: Ethical Opinion Outcome Record

This section will be completed by the ICJS Ethics Committee for: Undergraduate, Masters and DCrimJ (Professional Doctorate) [Stage 2,1, ART] research proposals and therefore this document must be included in the Ethical Bundle when it is sent for ethical review to Jane Winstone (icjsethics@port.ac.uk)

A copy of the outcome of ethical opinion will be sent to the student who is responsible for providing this to the dissertation/research supervisor. A copy will also be kept on record by the ICJS Ethics Committee.

Please note: PhD candidates will be notified of a favourable ethical opinion in a letter from the Faculty Ethics Committee (FEthC) which will include a REC number. (For further details of this see the document: ‘How to Apply for Ethical Opinion’ – Stage 2: The process for applying for ethical opinion.)
*The ICJS EC default position is to reserve the right to refer any research proposal to the Faculty Ethics Committee where the proposal poses ethical issues beyond its remit to form an opinion upon.

Date complete ethical bundle received fit for review:
…………27.3.14…………………………

Date reviewed: ..................24.4.14……………………..

Signed: ......................Jane Winstone............................. (Chair: ICJS Ethics Committee)

Section 4 (continued):

Comments to Support Ethical Opinion Outcome Record

We apologise for the delay in responding to your submission. Staff sickness has taken its toll on turnaround times. I am pleased to attach a provisional favourable ethical opinion. I have spoken with your supervisor this morning and we agree that, to ensure ethical compliance throughout the research process, he will have oversight of the following additional requirements:

1) The issues around potential role confusion/conflict to be monitored on an ongoing basis and referred back to the ICJS Ethics Committee as appropriate

2) That an additional statement on all documentation be included to the effect that the information gathered for research purposes can not be used for staff performance or human resources purposes

3) That the raw data belongs to the researcher/university of portsmouth and can not be provided to the host organisation prior to anonymisation and analysis

4) That disclosure of unprosecuted offences will not be sought and the researcher will, through written and verbal communication, actively seek to prevent and pre-empt this during information gathering

5) Any behaviours disclosed which are deemed to be risky will be appropriately reported. The participants must be made aware through written and verbal communication that this is one of the limits of confidentiality and anonymity.
I do hope the research goes well. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further support.

Kind regards

Jane Winstone

Chair: ICJS Ethics Committee
### VAC attendees

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<tr>
<th>Reason for attendance on the course</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
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<td>47</td>
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<td>PNDs</td>
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<td>51</td>
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<td>35 - 44</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public order offence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anti-social behaviour</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Criminal damage</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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Percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

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<td>42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Been in trouble with the police a few times previously</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Been arrested on several occasions</td>
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<td>101</td>
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Percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding.
References


Crew, B. K., & Johnson, S. E. (2011). Do victim impact programs reduce recidivism for operating a motor vehicle while intoxicated? Findings from an outcomes evaluation. Criminal Justice Studies, 24(2), 153-163


Bibliography


Gaboury, M. T., & Sedelmaier, C. M. (2007). Impact of crime on victims (IOC) curriculum development project: Final evaluation report. *Unpublished manuscript, University of New Haven, West Haven, CT*


