# Best Practices in information and communication with victims in the justice system

Frida Wheldon

Development Director Legal Affairs

Victim Support Sweden



## Victim motivation to engage in criminal justice process

Information about rights

Ability to exercise rights

More satisfied with criminal justice process

Inadequate communication/ information

Lack of trust

Resistance to engage with criminal justice process



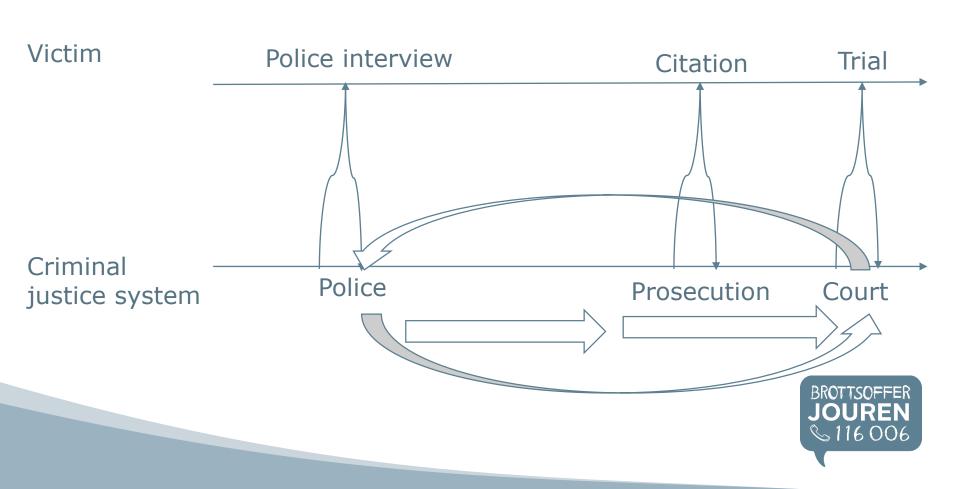
# Victim satisfaction with the information they receive

- Majority of victims today feel displeased with information
- The more rights victims have, the more displeased they are with the information they receive
- Victims are aware that they have rights, but not informed of what they are or how to apply them
- Increased gap between theoretical rights and victims ability to understand and use rights in practice

### Reasons for current problem

- Narrow view on information
  - separate from other work with victims
  - given by police at first contact
- Lack of clear guidance and instructions
- Large staff turnover in police call centres
- Unclear definitions of what should be seen as "case progress"
- Lack of capacity
- No unified case management system across criminal justice agencies

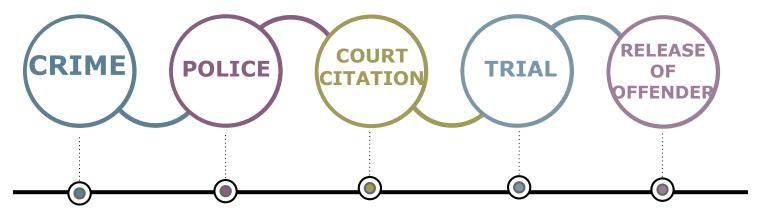
# Criminal justice system interaction with victim



#### **Factors to consider**

- 2012 EU Directive gives victims right to legal aid and support services
- Victims who receive support and/or legal advice are generally more aware of their rights and make better use of those rights
- Providing information as part of support or legal services seems to work better than information in isolation
- Victims feel more informed in countries where they are provided with support services and legal advice, regardless of the routines adopted by the police
- For victims to feel more informed, referral arrangements must be established with support organisations/legal representatives, available for the victim throughout the criminal justice process





#### **SUPPORT**

Support and information to victims of unreported crime

#### SUPPORT /LEGAL ADVICE

Legal representative protect the victim's interest from investigation and throughout the process

#### SUPPORT /LEGAL ADVICE

Explain how a trial works, including victims' rights and role

### SUPPORT /LEGAL ADVICE

Represents
victim's
interest
during trial,
submit
compensation
claim &
explain
verdict

#### **SUPPORT**

Support is offered to victims need long-term support following trial or feeling anxious



#### **Key recommendations**

1. Replace the concept of providing information in isolation with a wider function of support/legal assistance

2. Strengthen the right to legal representation for victims

3. Establish court based support services for all victims (witnesses) called to a justice process

4. Effective referral arrangements



### Thank you

Frida Wheldon

Development Director Legal Affairs

Victim Support Sweden

Frida.Wheldon@boj.se

