Written evidence from The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Humberside

1. This response has been prepared with a focus on local knowledge, working practices and arrangements, and while it does go some way to addressing the four bullet points of the inquiry, it is primarily concerned with how the MoJ’s restorative justice action plan has been translated into local activity, practice and services. We believe we are better placed to address the inquiry in this way, and less able to comment on how well the Government has implemented their action plan or how it has been implemented nationally.

Progress made by the Government in implementing the Restorative Justice Action Plan 2014, including any changes that have been made to this plan.

2. The Government’s previous action plans have enabled some considerable movement and expansion of RJ services since 2013/14. As part of the grant settlement for victim’s services in 2014/15 and 2015/16 we were allocated £309k to spend on building capacity and capability in restorative justice services. We did this by launching a competitive tender to find an RJ delivery partner who could, initially, help us identify all RJ activity in the area in the first instance, evaluate the quality and consistency of RJ service being provided (by victims support services, NOMS, YOTs, and various other organisations), and provide training and support to those delivering RJ to work towards a consistent, quality mark, level of service.

3. The second element of the contract was to establish an RJ hub which would act as a single point of contact for victims, offenders, and all agencies involved in developing and delivering RJ. The primary aims being to ensure that victims were given easy access to RJ services, agencies (both victim and offender) could work together to ensure seamless and timely referrals into RJ processes, and the RJ provider base could be developed and strengthened by joint investment from other organisations who have a responsibility to commission and provide RJ services, such as the CRCs and NPS.

4. The RJ delivery partner who won the contract and is currently providing these services in Humberside is REMEDI.

5. The Local Criminal Justice Board has a number of sub-groups, one being the RJ Forum whereby those agencies who deliver RJ meet regularly to discuss local developments and delivery, share good practice, problem solve and generally provide support to one another. There is a ‘practitioners group’ sitting below this strategic group, where RJ practitioners can meet and share ideas. Recently the OPCC has produced a template for a multi-agency delivery plan, this practitioners group
(and to a lesser extent the RJ Forum) will populate the delivery plan with actions to meet the aims of the local RJ strategy. The Government’s RJ Action Plan has been circulated among these group members to identify any actions/gaps that can be transferred into our local action plan.

**How the entitlements to restorative justice in the Victim’s Code are working, and their implications for any such entitlements in any future Victim’s Law.**

6. In relation to restorative justice the Victim’s Code is primarily concerned with ensuring that victims (both adults and children) receive information from the local police about RJ and can access safe, good quality, services. Whilst we have ensured that the quality and safety of our local RJ services are of an acceptable standard, by contracting a quality-mark recognised market leader to be our delivery partner, we have been less than impressed by the number of referrals being made into the RJ service by the local police service. This may be due to a number of things, not least a full organisational restructure; however it is disappointing that victims of crime do not seem to be receiving information about RJ services following their contact with the police. Referrals into the service from other agencies, including the local YOTs, NPS, CRCs and prisons outweigh those referrals from the police.

7. REMEDI are capable of providing the entitlements to victims as set out in s7 ch2 (Part A) of the Victim’s Code, we believe that the local police need to do more to inform and refer victims into these services. Whether enshrining these entitlements in law will help to focus the police on delivering against this aspect of the code it is difficult to say, but it would certainly bring the entitlements into sharper focus.

**The impact and effectiveness on the National Offender Management Service’s restorative justice programme to promote the development of victim-offender conferencing.**

8. The NOMS RJ programme was aimed at developing capacity within the probation service and prisons to deliver RJ conferencing. Locally, the programme is now fully integrated within our RJ hub and works very closely with REMEDI who are active within the prisons and NPS picking up regular referrals which they do via the NPS’s victim lead.

9. The original programme was just over two-years in length, and we understand, from REMEDI and the local practitioners, that it did not deliver in terms of the amount of victim-offender conferencing as it was hoped it would. We believe that this is not a failing locally as recent independent research (carried out by the Institute for
Criminal Policy Research) also highlighted fewer conferences as first planned being carried out over the life of the programme.

10. It is difficult to say whether the Government’s RJ action plan could have helped to make the NOMS programme more effective, as one of the main players in the programme – the National Probation Service – has undergone massive organisational upheaval as part of the Transforming Rehabilitation agenda.

11. The Transforming Rehabilitation agenda has created a responsibility on both NPS and CRCs to commission and deliver RJ, and, while both the NPS and CRCs refer into and take advantage of the services provided by the PCC locally through REMEDI, neither organisation has yet contributed financially to the contract. We have recently started discussions with both organisations to encourage their contribution to the REMEDI contract, but, up to now, we have been unsuccessful, despite REMEDI having workers embedded within the CRC here.

The effectiveness of delivery of restorative justice across the range of service providers and funding arrangements, including provisions made by Police and Crime Commissioners, the Prison Service, the National Probation Service, and Community Rehabilitation Companies.

12. The main points here have been touched upon throughout the previous responses. To summarise; the bulk of local RJ work is carried out by REMEDI who are contracted to the Police and Crime Commissioner to deliver and develop local RJ services, working with practitioners from various other agencies. Currently the Police and Crime Commissioner accepts sole responsibility for funding the contract, although we have entered into (largely unsuccessful as yet) discussions with the NPS and CRC (Purple Futures) to secure some funding for the contract for 2016/17 and beyond. If we do not secure contributions from these organisations – who are referring into the service and benefitting from the local activity, support and training provided by REMEDI – we may have to look at a slightly leaner model for the contract for the next, and subsequent, years.

13. This contract is subject to monthly monitoring and performance management where referrals, referral sources, participants, cases, activity and feedback are all measured, we have also invested in some performance and data management software to enable activity reports to be easily produced and scrutinised. These arrangements allow referrals directly from victims and offenders, as well as the CRC, NPS, local prisons, various voluntary and community based projects such as Neighbourhood Networks, YOTs, Victim Support and Humberside Police.
14. As well as RJ conferences the service delivers various options that can be described as restorative processes such as indirect exchanges by letter or verbal, group attendances neighbourhood justice panels and proxy victim workshops.

15. Feedback is sought from both victims and offenders at the conclusion of any restorative activity. The latest monitoring report shows that all offenders questioned stated that RJ had increased their motivation not to re-offend. All those questioned (victim and offender) said they would encourage others to participate in a form of RJ. Participants are also asked to rate their restorative experience form 1 – 10, with 1 being terrible and 10 being the best that could have been hoped for, the current average score for this question is 9.1

16. We are confident that work carried out by REMEDI under our contract is effective, but needs greater referrals from Humberside Police. This piece of work has recently gained momentum within Humberside Police and we are starting to see the early signs of increased referrals from this important source.

17. An element of extra funding for RJ was provided locally by the Rank Organisation during the period 2013-2016, this funded an RJ development worker based within the local Victim Support service, however, this investment did not deliver to expectations with very low numbers of RJ conferences carried out.

13 January 2016