

# Effectiveness of the Police Authority's work to provide information to victims of crime

## Summary and recommendations

The Swedish National Audit Office (Swedish NAO) has audited the effectiveness of the Policy Authority's work to provide information to victims of crime. The focus is on whether internal governance and support for how victims of crime are to be informed are effective and whether they are based on appropriate analyses. The Swedish NAO's overall conclusion is that there are several shortcomings that mean the work is not as effective and efficient as it could be. The shortcomings may lead to victims of crime not receiving the information they are entitled to, thus affecting their willingness and possibility of participating in the legal process.

### **Audit findings**

Every year the Policy Authority must inform about a million individuals who are victims of crime of their rights, the support they can receive and how their ongoing cases are progressing. This means that many employees of the Police Authority need to provide information to victims of crime in many different types of situations. If the Police Authority has an effective internal governance and a good support for the employees who are to provide the information, this can have a great impact on the information that victims of crime receive. The Swedish NAO says that the governance should make it clear who should provide information about what, as well as when, how and in what ways. Furthermore, there should be procedures that are adapted to the situations that employees face. There should also be different types of support for employees, such as training, support materials and investigation systems. Common solutions should also be designed to provide information to victims of crime when there are needs that can be jointly managed more efficiently or more consistently.

The inefficiencies largely concern the fact that the Police Authority has given different categories of employees important information tasks that are not adapted to those who are to perform them and that are not matched by good support. The Authority places great importance on employees providing verbal information at the time of registration of a crime. However, the documentation of what information has been provided and interview responses suggests that employees do not provide information to the extent that the Authority has instructed them to.

This indicates that both governance and support need to be developed. Everyone who receives a report of a crime is tasked with providing adapted and sometimes extensive information to a crime victim, which places high demands on the employees' competence. At the same time, employees do not receive the right support in order to inform effectively. The most common way to report a crime is verbally via the Police Contact Centre. However, the Swedish NAO's assessment is that the operators' training in the area is short in relation to the complexity of the task of informing victims of crime. The same applies to civilian receptionists at police stations, who in some cases have no training at all for the task in question. The support given to employees for providing information in connection with registration is not detailed, accessible or adapted to the situation. It may therefore be difficult for employees to know what is and is not important to provide information about. Most of those who report a crime receive a standardised information letter sent to them at the time the crime is reported. The letter is effective in such a way that it is easy to send out and goes to a large proportion of victims of crime. However, the same information is sent regardless of the offence that has been reported or the need for support. The letter can partly supplement verbal information, but not replace it. In addition, there are no clear procedures to provide the information in another way when it is inappropriate to send the letter – for example in cases of domestic crimes or when there are honour-related problems.

After registration of the reported crime, guidance on how victims of crime are to be informed is reduced, and there is less support to employees who are to provide information during the investigation. It is not as clear what information should be provided by whom and when, where and how. This means, for example, that uncertainty may arise in what information has been provided and who will ensure that the victim receives ongoing information. In the worst case, the victim's need for information as the case progresses may be overlooked. The Police Authority also lacks effective ways of meeting some common information needs among victims. This is primarily about crime victims' need to know what happens in their own cases – not least when cases have long processing times. It is also about the fact that the standardised formal information concerning decisions during the investigation can be difficult to understand, which creates the need for further information among those receiving the information.

The Swedish NAO considers that the Police Authority's governance and support for how victims of crime should be given information should be based on analyses based on a) the needs of the victims of crime, and b) common conditions that the employees face when they provide information. The governance and support are based on several types of analysis, although these are in part out of date. Among other things, there is a clear ambition to meet the needs and circumstances of victims of crime. The Police Authority has given different categories of employees clear tasks. However, there is no analysis of the different conditions that affects

employees' ability to perform their tasks in the right way. This may involve, for example, how different situations affect the ability to provide information and whether employees have received relevant training and support. Overall, this can lead to internal governance being poorly adapted and employees not receiving the support they need in order to be able to carry out their tasks.

The audit shows that the Swedish Police Authority has not evaluated important aspects of how the Authority provides information to victims of crime. For example, there is no knowledge of whether the tasks are adapted to the employees who will perform them and if the tasks are matched by good support. There is also a lack of knowledge as to whether there are more information components that the Police Authority could take care of more efficiently with joint solutions. Neither has the Police Authority followed up to what extent and how its own operations actually provide information. This means that the Authority lacks important data to develop its work with information to victims of crime.

In order for the Police Authority's work on information to victims of crime to be more effective, the Swedish NAO assesses that internal governance and support need to be developed in several ways. The Authority should also consider developing more joint solutions for providing information.

## **Recommendations**

The Swedish NAO makes the following recommendations to the Police Authority:

- Regularly follow up and evaluate to what extent and how employees provide information to victims of crime.
- Evaluate whether the employees have the right support. Adapt and develop support to different employee categories' different qualifications.
- Review the training courses for operators at the Police Contact Centre and for civilian receptionists so that they give employees appropriate conditions to be able to carry out their information tasks when a crime is reported.
- Introduce procedures with clear division of responsibilities that ensure that victims of crime receive the information they need throughout the course of the case.