

STRATEGIC POLICING AND CRIME BOARD

22 January 2019

Police and Crime Plan Priority: Supporting Victims of crime

Title: Victims Services in West Midlands

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Purpose of the report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide members of the Strategic Police and Crime Board (SPCB) with an update on the work undertaken by PCC funded victim services and how the OPCC has continued to work towards priorities outlined in the Police and Crime Plan 2016-2020.

Background

2. The landscape of victim services has changed over the recent years as central government moved towards devolution of services to a local level to allow for more tailoring of services to meet the needs of communities and investment in local voluntary and community sector.
3. This is part of wider efforts to ensure that victims are at the centre of the criminal justice system. The forthcoming update to the Victims' Code, announced in the

Government's Victims Strategy¹, should allow victims to have clearer expectations of criminal justice agencies so that services can be better tailored to individual need.

4. Responsibility for providing, or arranging provision of, the majority of emotional and practical support services for victims of crime in the West Midlands transferred to PCCs with the introduction of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2014. A grant is received each year by each PCC from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) with which to provide victims services. The allocation is based on population data. At a national level, the Ministry of Justice continues to commission a witness service, a homicide service, support for victims of human trafficking, services for victims of rape through national rape support centres, some national telephone helplines and other support for victims of domestic and sexual abuse. The MoJ are currently working with a small number of PCC offices who are piloting the commissioning of rape services until 2020 with the intention of devolving local responsibility to PCCs.
5. Delivering comprehensive services to victims across a large geographical area, with diverse communities, such as the West Midlands is not without challenge, not just in terms of coverage but also in terms of the spectrum of victim which we need to respond to. In order to target resources where they are needed most the West Midlands PCC created a Victims Commission in January 2015.
6. The Victims Commission advises the PCC on the provision of specialist services and aims to ensure that:
 - Services have a positive impact on victims by improving their circumstances around coping with the effects of crime and recovering from the harm they have experienced
 - The victim experience is simplified and improved and their voice is put both at the heart of the service and delivery
 - Victims know what to expect at every stage of their journey. Build a culture of ownership for victim care by the voluntary and community sector and partners so that victims experience quality support from the first point of contact
 - There is robust needs assessments, processes and referral mechanisms, ensuring that victims have access to appropriate support, including those victims who choose not to report to the police
 - There are improved outcomes for victims.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/victims-strategy>

7. The priorities for victims services are set out in the Police and Crime Plan and were informed using intelligence from the West Midlands Police Strategic Assessment, Local Police and Crime Plans, local consultation, consultation with victims of crime and the West Midlands wide consultation process. The priorities are:
- First contact, assessment and referral service
 - Domestic abuse
 - Sexual abuse
 - Hate crime
 - Female genital mutilation (FGM)
 - Forced marriage and honour based violence
 - Modern slavery
 - Support services for children and young people
 - Fatal road traffic collisions
 - Child sexual exploitation.

Overview of services funded in 2018/19

8. West Midlands PCC received a grant allocation of £3,329,897 from the MoJ for 2018/19. There is currently an overspend of £57,944 against this allocation but this is based on funds carried forward from other 2017/18 budgets.
9. Victims Commission and Victims Fund allocation against priorities is summarised in the Table 1 below. A full breakdown of funding allocation is detailed on the Record of Decisions section of the PCCs website². Please note that each project is allocated against a primary priority but many of these overlap. For example, the initial contact, assessment and referral contract includes provision for children and young people and for victims of hate crime and the rape and serious sexual offences provision includes child sexual exploitation.

Table 1

² <https://www.westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk/transparency/record-of-decisions>

	Victims Commission (£)	Victims Fund (£)
Initial contact, assessment and referral	998,920	
Restorative Justice	272,514	
Domestic Abuse	884,304	113,147
Rape and Serious Sexual Offence	248,426	20,000
Hate Crime	0	0
Female Genital Mutilation	84,035	0
“Honour Based Violence” and Forced Marriage	38,000	0
Modern Slavery	265,686	19,632
Children and young people	0	19,233
Fatal Road Traffic Collisions	17,455	17,501
Child Sexual Exploitation	0	0
Other	147,867	6
Staffing and commissioning	172,600	0
Total	3,129,807	258,034

Overview of service delivery April-Sept 2018

10. Providers who are funded by the PCC are required to supply the office with monitoring information to allow us to review the delivery and outcomes of the services and ensure the services we fund are providing high quality services to victims and delivering value for money. This is particularly challenging in an environment where resources are limited and demand substantial.

11. PCCs are also required to supply the MoJ with monitoring information under the grant conditions between PCCs and the MoJ.

12. The information below summarises the services delivered in the first half of this financial year:
- more than 35,000 new referrals into PCC victims services were received, with the police being the main source of referrals
 - victims were supported across the full range of crime types with the most common being Violence Against the Person following by Theft
 - more than 9,000 victims were offered and received some form of support from the services
 - for those for whom outcomes data were available the vast majority showed improvements across the four MoJ outcomes: improved health and well-being, better able to cope with aspects of everyday life, increased feeling of safety, better informed and empowered to act.

Key developments 2018/19

MoJ Monitoring Framework

13. In 2018/2019 the revised MoJ Performance Outcomes Framework for Victims Services was launched nationwide and in order to align our monitoring requirements with these changes the OPCC has worked with service providers to deliver a substantial redesign of monitoring forms and data collection tools. This work is ongoing as we try to balance the need to provide accurate and sufficient information to the PCC and MoJ without overburdening providers.

West Midlands Restorative Justice (RJ) service – Remedi

14. Restorative justice brings together people harmed by crime or conflict with those responsible for the harm, to find a positive way forward. It gives victims the choice and the chance to tell offenders the real impact of their crime, get answers to their questions and ultimately get an apology. Restorative justice holds offenders to account for what they have done. It helps them understand the real impact, take responsibility, and make amends, which in turn helps the victim to cope and recover from the crime.
15. Following extensive consultation work, detailed in January 2018's report to SPCB³, the PCC ran a procurement exercise for the delivery of a West Midlands wide RJ programme.

³ <https://www.westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk/media/476148/7B-SPCB-23-Jan-2018-Restorative-Justice.pdf>

16. Remedi were awarded the contract in 2018 and service mobilisation continues at pace, with the support of West Midlands Police. The service will be a partnership approach with a Restorative Justice Hub that deals with both crime and non-crime cases. Mobilisation is currently under way, with the go live date of the 1st February 2019.
17. Remedi will act as a single point of contact to ensure that the RJ service is effectively and efficiently delivered across the entirety of the force area. Since being commissioned they have been building awareness and understanding of RJ and its potential benefits amongst our partner agencies and the communities that we serve.
18. The RJ service is accessible to all victims. The nature of the offence does not, in isolation, preclude someone from engaging. All restorative processes are subject to a trained facilitator being assured of the motive behind the desire, the willingness and free informed consent of the victim to take part and a robust assessment to ensure there is no further risk of re-victimisation. Individuals are given sufficient information on what RJ is and its potential benefits to enable them to make a free and informed choice about whether they would like to engage in the process. The expectations of all potential participants are managed to minimise the risk of further harm being caused.
19. The service offers the full range of restorative interventions, from direct restorative conferencing / face to face contact, to indirect processes, such as shuttle mediation and the exchanging of letters between parties.
20. Within the first year of operation Remedi will formulate two service user groups; one for victims and one for offenders. They will commence with a victims group and ex-service users will be invited to form this group meeting on a minimum quarterly basis. The purpose of this group will be to enable Remedi to directly scrutinize the delivery of services and to discuss potential service developments.

Honour-Based Abuse and Forced Marriage development work

21. Over the last 12-18 months the OPCC has been moving towards a commissioning model which harnesses the expertise of local community organisations in tackling hidden crimes such as FGM, Honour-Based Abuse and Forced Marriage. This move has been driven by the acknowledgement that there are a number of community organisations responding to victims within local communities who may not find it appropriate to approach larger organisations for support.

22. The PCC is committed to working with these agencies supporting a community led response to such crime types.
23. A scoping exercise has taken place to identify which community agencies are working in this area and the nature of their support services to victims. The purpose of this work is to build stronger links with community organisations and to develop capacity enabling such organisations to be competitive against larger organisations in receiving OPCC funding.

Future plans

Victims Strategy

24. Published in September 2018, the cross-government Victim's Strategy outlines a series of measures "intended to provide greater, more effective responses to victims of crime" including streamlining contact and integrating services for victims navigating the complex criminal justice process. The Strategy outlines the need for professional, targeted victims' services that quickly identify victims' needs, meaning that services are targeted at those who most want and need them. It calls for the improvement in victims' interactions with the criminal justice process by reducing the number of different people the victim has to engage with.
25. There are implications for change in priority areas and also scope for new priority areas to emerge following the publication of the Victim's Strategy. The changing nature of crime is discussed throughout the Victims' Strategy and these spikes in certain types of crimes are bringing with them new pressures in the type of support required by victims.
 - High harm violent crime - There has been an increase in high harm violent crime such as knife crime and acid attacks, with these types of incidents being most notable in the West Midlands, London and Essex. These incidents do not only require specialist medical support but ongoing practical and emotional support, perhaps in the form of Independent Violence Advocates.
 - Victims of cyber-crime - Fraud can have a profound emotional and psychological impact on a person, therefore a sympathetic response when reporting and/or seeking support as well as clear information on all services available is important to victims.
 - Technology - Technology is playing a much greater role in the act of stalking and emerging crimes such as 'upskirting' and 'revenge porn'. These crimes can fall under sexual and/or domestic violence and therefore a call for more awareness

raising and training on responding to these particular types of harassment is imminent.

26. In the next few months the OPCC will be reviewing the West Midlands Victims Strategy to ensure it aligns with national and local priorities. The Victims Commission will contribute to influence these priorities and make recommendations regarding priorities for funding and allocation of funding as we move into 2019/20. As part of this work we have started to explore the potential of an Honour Based Abuse and Forced Marriage Consortium which delivers a more coordinated response to victims of such crimes.
27. We will also work with the Victims Commission to ensure that the victims voice is heard, and that the concerns of victims of crime the Commission members support are articulated and we can be confident that we are working from a strong victim-centred approach.
28. We will also be engaging with West Midlands Police and others to contribute to efforts to strengthen the Victims Code and improve measurement of compliance against the Code.

First contact, assessment and referral

29. Since 2015 the West Midlands PCC has commissioned the services of Victim Support to provide the first contact, assessment and referral service for victims of crime in the West Midlands. This service is at the centre of the provision for emotional and practical support to victims and survivors.
30. In order to inform future service provision, 2Novate, were invited to conduct a 'Health Check' of the service with particular regard to the following key question; 'Does the current service have the potential to meet or exceed the vision and aims of the Police and Crime Plan during the current grant period?'
31. The report makes a number of recommendations future service provision. The OPCC will review these, in consultation with Victims Support and West Midlands Police, before submitting advice to the PCC.

Male victims of domestic abuse

32. We know that domestic abuse is often a hidden crime that is not reported to the police, which is why the estimated number of victims is much higher than the number of incidents and crimes recorded by the police. While 1 in 6 men will experience domestic abuse at some point in their lives, only 1 in 20 will ever seek any help, according to charity ManKind Initiative. Men who experience domestic violence can often be worried about the stigma attached to being domestically abused as a male, with a reported 52% of men not wanting to leave an abusive relationship because of embarrassment and not wanting report to the police or seek support⁴.
33. Other barriers for males seeking support can include the fear of being accused of being a perpetrator, and the fear of not being believed, as the social narrative is to see men as the 'protector', not as the victim.
34. According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales 1 in 3 victims of domestic abuse are male (ONS). In 2016/17, 13 men died at the hands of their partner or ex-partner⁵.
35. 13% of men who are rough sleeping are doing so due to partner abuse (86% of all rough sleepers are male) and male victims (39%) are over three times as likely as women (12%) not to tell anyone about the partner abuse they are suffering from⁶.
36. The OPCC is looking at opportunities in the West Midlands to address this hidden crime and to recognise the importance of making support for male victims of domestic abuse a priority going forward.

Allocation of the Victims Fund 2019/20

37. We will continue to work with community organisations in order to build stronger links. This includes capacity building of the voluntary sector working with victims of crime to enable them to apply for Victims Fund.
38. Victims Fund application will open on 1st February and will close on 18th March.

⁴ http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/28618/12/Thesis%20Kevin%20Hogan_ProfDoc_final%20approved%20version.pdf

⁵

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2018#main-points>

⁶ <https://bit.ly/2FebdcP>

Victims and Witnesses Delivery Group

39. The OPCC will be supporting and coordinating the work of a new Victims and Witnesses Delivery Group which reports to the Local Criminal Justice Board. The first actions for the Group are to collate information from different agencies detailing their compliance with the Victims Code and challenges to measuring compliance. This work will be used both to support each other to improve compliance with the Code and also to contribute to national work to strength the Code and improve monitoring of compliance.

Victims Panel

40. We are exploring the possibility of forming a Victims Panel to contribute to the work of the Commission and Delivery Group. The Panel would ensure that the victims' voice is represented and help improve our understanding of victims experience/journey to across the criminal justice system and in terms of support received and to make improvements to deliver the best possible service to victims.