





# West Midlands Victim Services

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## **Executive Summary**

### INTRODUCTION

Since 2015 the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) has, through a grant, commissioned the services of Victim Support (VS) to provide the Contact, Assessment and Referral Service (the Service) for victims of crime. This service is at the centre of the provision of emotional and practical support to help victims and survivors cope and recover from the impact of the crime.

In order to inform future commissioning, 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?'

### METHODOLOGY

To develop an insight in to the Service the approach was based on a range of activities:

- An understanding of the relevant local issues, priorities and quality measures agreed with the OPCC.
- A 360° Service Delivery and Performance exercise with partner organisations.
- Telephone and face to face interviews with key leaders from the OPCC, Victim Support local and national management team and staff.
- The collation and evaluation of responses to a suite of key performance questions and indicators.
- The analysis of the annual performance reports and outcomes reported by the Service to the OPCC.
- The development of a value for money profile based on cost per victim and overall service capacity.

It should be noted that access to the Service and service users has been limited by the facing unexpected non-disclosure and GDPR requirements and exacerbated by additional delays arising from staff leave and sickness.

### **INSIGHTS**

Service user feedback indicates that Victim Support is providing a service that exceeds the expectations of many and was considered by most victims to be extremely effective in helping them cope and recover from the impact of the crime their experienced.

Over the life of the Service there have been frequent attempts by the OPCC to secure the quality and in depth understanding of the outcomes delivered by the service.

the new approach.	

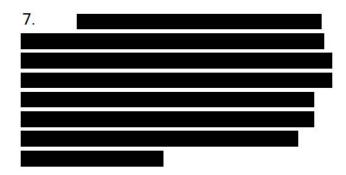
However, there are still some inherent barriers to comprehensive and effective service provision in

### Recommendations

- VS should maximise the strength of its brand and national capability to raise awareness of the service and the 'VS offer' to ensure that victims, survivors and other victim support providers understand what services are available, how to access them and the benefit they bring.
- 2. VS should develop and build more effective working relationships with other victim service providers, underpinned and enabled by joint working protocols and wherever possible, co-location. This would enable better coordination of support, minimise duplication, create opportunities for referrals between organisations and provide a more seamless journey for victims.
- 3. VS Performance reporting and outcome monitoring of must be consistent and clearly reflect the aims and objectives of the PCC. Data should be provided to the PCC in a manner that meets their needs and VS should strive to ensure that outputs reported are understood and reflect the outcomes expected of the service. The service reflects the service user experience using case studies and testimony however they should also place an emphasis on demonstrating how they have achieved the required outcomes for as many victims as possible, bridging the gap between referrals and support provided.



- 5. VS, the force and the OPCC should jointly develop an action plan to address and improve the quality and accuracy of the data being supplied to VS by the force. This would help ensure that victims that need support are contacted by VS and have a more in-depth assessment of their needs completed.
- 6. VS should use the benefit of its market share, data and learning to build a value for money profile that will enable the PCC to benchmark against other areas and reassure the community that the commissioned services are in fact providing value for money.



As a matter of urgency prior to recommissioning the Service for 2019-20 the OPCC should explore, develop and consider a range of alternative approaches and models. There are a growing number of victim service models that have developed since 2015 and a body of evidence on 'what works' when supporting victims and survivors of crime. Developing a more bespoke approach to meet the needs of victims in the West Midlands would encourage innovation, drive out inefficiencies and provide a catalyst for leadership and culture change that would deliver a more effective and seamless journey for victims and survivors.

## Introduction

# 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?'

Since 2015 the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) has, through a grant, secured the services of Victim Support (VS) to provide the Contact, Assessment and Referral Service (the Service) for victims of crime. This service is at the centre of the provision of emotional and practical support to help victims and survivors cope and recover from the impact of the crime.

In order to inform future commissioning, 2Novate, were invited to conduct a 'Health Check' of the service to inform the current contract management arrangements and future commissioning options.

### **METHODOLOGY**

2Novate undertook the following activities to deliver the aims of this project:

- Initial and follow up meetings and discussions with OPCC staff to develop an understanding of the relevant local issues, priorities and quality measures, which were agreed with the OPCC.
- We conducted a series of telephone and face to face interviews with key leaders from the OPCC, local and national Victim Support staff.
- In addition, we reviewed and evaluated responses to a suite of key performance questions and indicators.
- Conducted a 360° Service Delivery and Performance exercise with partner organisations.
- Collated and analysed feedback from victims of crime who have been supported by the Service.
- Undertook an analysis of the annual performance reports and outcomes reported by the Service to the OPCC.
- Developed a value for money profile based on cost per victim and overall service capacity.

At the heart of this project was the agreement that the author was impartial and independent, this was underpinned and acknowledged during discussions with the Chief Executive Officer of Victim Support, Diana Fawcett. It was recognised that the author has the benefit of many years of experience in the field of victims services and comes with a unique insight into policing and having led and supported the design, development and implementation of victim services in many areas across the country.

At the outset it was anticipated that the project was to be completed within an 8-week timescale however it was met with a degree of trepidation by the local Contract Manager. This was followed

by a period of negotiation to agree the parameters of a Non-Disclosure Agreement prior to any in depth examination of the service or discussion with staff. Delay was further exacerbated by the holiday period and VS staff sickness.

### CONTEXT

West Midlands Police & Crime Commissioner has, since the move from national to local commissioning of victim services in April 2015, secured the services of Victim Support to meet the requirements of its Ministry of Justice Victim Services Grant. This approach was in common with many other areas who, at the time were faced with a very limited evidence base to inform commissioning and in effect only one established service provider in Victim Support. Since 2015 the victim services landscape has developed and there is an established body of evidence that can enable commissioners to consider a wider range of options and make more informed decisions.

It was clear from the meetings and discussions with the OPCC staff that was a strong desire to ensure that the Service provided the best possible support to as many victims as possible. There was also a need to understand if the service was providing value for money and that the PCC could have confidence in the service in terms of service provision, its performance, its capacity and capabilities.

The OPCC is supported by the Victims Commission and this provides a strong foundation on which to inform and shape victims services in the area with a real focus on placing victims and survivors at the heart of the process. The Victims Commission act as an advisory body for the PCC and is a cornerstone of the PCC Victims Strategy. All commissioned providers funded by the PCC are represented on the Commission providing the opportunity to draw on their specialist knowledge and experience in a consultative environment.

West Midlands Police is the second largest police force in the country, covering an area of 348 square miles and serving a population of almost 2.8 million.

The region sits at the very heart of the country and covers the three major centres of Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton. It also includes the busy and thriving districts of Sandwell, Walsall, Solihull and Dudley. Leisure, retail and conference amenities, together with Premiership and Championship football teams, attract millions of visitors annually.

The West Midlands is an area rich in diversity, with 18 per cent of its population from ethnic minority backgrounds.

An average of 170,000 motorists travel through the region daily, making its motorways some of the busiest in Europe.

Against this backdrop, the force deals with more than 2,000 emergency calls for help every day, as well as patrolling the streets and responding to incidents 24-hours-a-day, seven days a week.<sup>1</sup>

The level of victim-based crime in the force is in line with the national average of 0.06 per person<sup>2</sup> which leads to approximately 168,000 victims of recorded crime per annum.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> https://www.west-midlands.police.uk/about-us/our-force

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/peel-assessments/peel-2017/west-midlands/

### **LOCAL ISSUES AND PRIORITIES**

Based on the discussions with OPCC staff and a review of the quarterly performance reports provide by the Service the issues and priorities identified were:

o Primarily the PCC was seeking assurance that the Service was sufficiently flexible and

0	responsive enough to meet the needs of victims of crime whilst providing value for money. Understanding the Data -

# **Feedback from Partners**

What do Partners Say?	A 360° Service Delivery and Performance exercise was conducted with partner organisations.
'Raising their profile to wide range of people and give out better understanding on their works'.	The OPCC wrote to service providers across the area and invited them to complete a short survey and participate in a telephone interview with the author to build an insight of the Service from a partner organisations perspective.
	WHAT DOES THE SERVICE DO WELL?
	VS do a good job of acting as a central point of contact and making referrals into specialist services.
	The Service responds wells to victims with empathy and information.
	WHAT COULD THE SERVICE DO BETTER OR MORE OF
service, improve the offer for vice between organisations.	VS should seek to enhance their profile and relationships with the network of victim support services to promote their ctims of crime and improve partnership working and referrals
between organisations.	
	RVICE PROVISION, WHAT IMPACT DO THEY HAVE ON WHAT ARE VS DOING TO ADDRESS THESE?

# WHAT SHOULD BE DONE DIFFERENTLY? What do Partners Say? Service providers felt that the OPCC had a role to play in clarifying the landscape of victims support services to ensure that victims requiring specialist support were directly referred to the most appropriate organisation based on their needs. VS have the potential, as the 'gateway service' to improve the provision of information for victims so victims have as wide an understanding as possible of the support available to them. This would ensure that victims receive support throughout their criminal justice journey from all the agencies commissioned to support victims of crime. SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

# **Feedback from Victims of Crime**

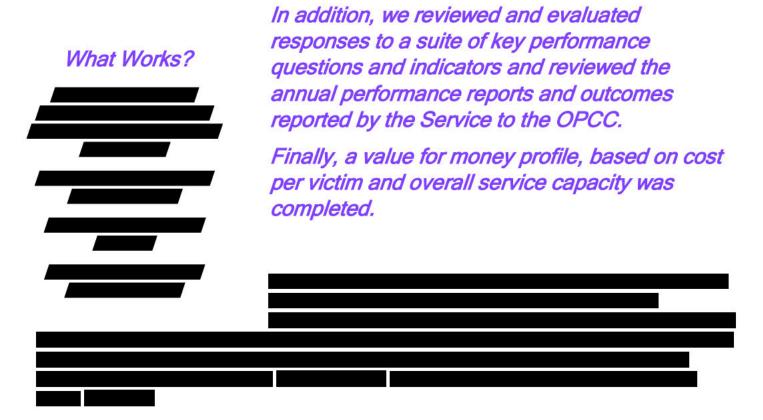
Collation and analysis of feedback from victims of crime who have been supported by the Service.	What do Victims Say?
Victim Support were invited to provide the details of a cohort of victims who had been through their service to enable a series of telephone interviews. However due to concerns arising from changes to Data Protection legislations pre and post GDPR they instead identified and secured the consent from a group of victims who had been supported after the 25th May 2018. This cohort of victims were invited to complete an online or written survey and if they wished take part in an interview with the author.	
WHAT ASPECTS OF THE SERVICE WERE PARTICULARLY GOOD?	
WHAT ASPECTS OF THE SERVICE COULD BE IMPROVED?	
QUANTITATIVE DATA SUMMARY	

What do Victims Say?	
	SUMMARY

 $<sup>^3 \ \</sup>text{http://victimscommissioner.org.uk/app/uploads/2014/10/What-works-in-supporting-victims-of-crime.pdf} \\ \textbf{11}$ 

### **Service Review**

We conducted a series of telephone and face to face interviews with key leaders from the OPCC, local and national Victim Support staff.



### WHAT WORKS IN SUPPORTING VICTIMS OF CRIME?

In 2016 The Victims Commissioner, Baroness Helen Newlove, published what is widely considered to be the current benchmark in terms of What Works. Within that she identified four key elements or hallmarks of an effective victim support service, defining 'What Victims Needs'.

Timely and accurate information and effective methods of communication with victims, both in delivering information and listening to their needs. The basic provision of timely information can assist victims in coping with the impact of victimisation. A lack of information can only act to aggravate these symptoms and in many cases can result in victims disengaging with the criminal process and withdrawing their co-operation.

<sup>4</sup> http://victimscommissioner.org.uk/app/uploads/2014/10/What-works-in-supporting-victims-of-crime.pdf

 $<sup>^{5}\</sup> https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/739193/victim-strategy.pdf$ 

The quality of service that victims get from criminal justice professionals and associated agencies is often a more important factor in victim satisfaction than the outcome of their case.

Procedural Justice - perceptions of fair treatment, including knowledge of and access to entitlements, increases victims' perceptions of legitimacy and aids compliance.

Co-located multi-agency partnership working across statutory and voluntary sectors can provide effective support for victims in terms of information sharing. It can assist in reducing the duplication of tasks, so that the process is less confusing for victims.

Finally, quickly identifying victims' needs means that services are targeted at those who most want and need them. Victims will benefit from having a single point of contact or advocate, a trained professional with good knowledge of the criminal justice system, and the compassion and empathy to provide moral support. This is an effective way to provide victims with the combination of both information and support required to help them regain a sense of autonomy, which the crime has taken from them.

HOW WELL DOES THE SERVICE MEASURE UP TO THIS BENCHMARK?	
VS have at their disposal a raft of information and materials that is of benefit to victims of crime. The advantage of its national infrastructure and corporate brand means that victims can rightly expect the information to be accurate and accessible. VS make use of a range of methods to communicate with victims; telephony, letters, emails and texts.	7 
VS have an online presence with links from both the OPCC and Force Websites direct to their local page within the VS national website.	<b>y</b>

As can also be seen in the feedback from both victims and partner organisation the quality and consistency of communication is an area for improvement.

However, 'Procedural Justice' extends beyond a single provider and victims want to be treated fairly and benefit from access to their entitlements at every step of the way. VS do not have access to information regarding a specific case and must rely on what they are being told by a victim to develop an understanding if they have been treated properly throughout by all agencies involved. Therefore, without a more in-depth examination of the service one cannot be assured that this hallmark is being met and as a result victim satisfaction may suffer.



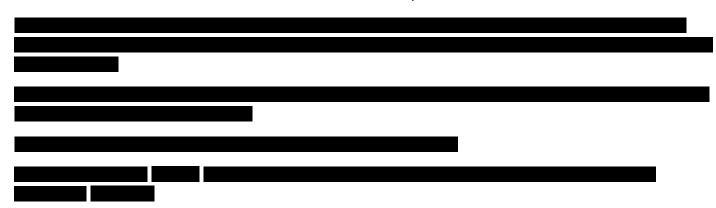
### WHAT INSIGHTS CAN BE DRAWN FROM THE DATA?

Over the past three years the OPCC have been provided with a range of different data, presented in different formats and using changing terminology. It is suggested that this has always been in response to requests from the OPCC and there is some strength to this argument.

To enable an element of comparative analysis VS were invited to provide specific data across the last 5 quarters starting in April 2017 to the end of June 2018. (See Appendix A)

West Midlands Police undertake an initial victim needs assessment at the point that the crime is reported. This is rare but effective practice and reflects a key entitlement within the Victims Code of Practice<sup>7</sup>. Based on this assessment, the relevant crime information and victim details are sent daily to the Service by way of an Automated Data Transfer (ADT).

It is estimated that between 20-30% of victims of crime have specific needs arising from the impact of the crime which are not met at the time of the initial report<sup>8</sup>.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Cambridgeshire Victims Hub - Victim Care Coordinators, October 2014

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Part A, Section 1, Para (i) Sub Section 1.1. Code of Practice for Victims of Crime 2015

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> 2Novate Demand Modelling

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Each case represents an individual victim

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Vulnerable, Intimidated or persistently targeted and victims of the most serious crime. (e.g. Violent Crime).

### **ASSESSING NEEDS - ATTRITION RATE**

To effectively deliver victim support services it is crucial to understand what a victim needs, in term s of emotional or practical support, to help them cope and recover from the impact of the crime they have been affected by. This process, known as a Needs Assessment, is a requirement under the Victims Code of Practice and should be conducted as soon as possible after a victim is first contacted by the Service.

As is often the case, the challenge for any service provider is contacting the individual victim and this difficulty is often exacerbated by poor data quality.

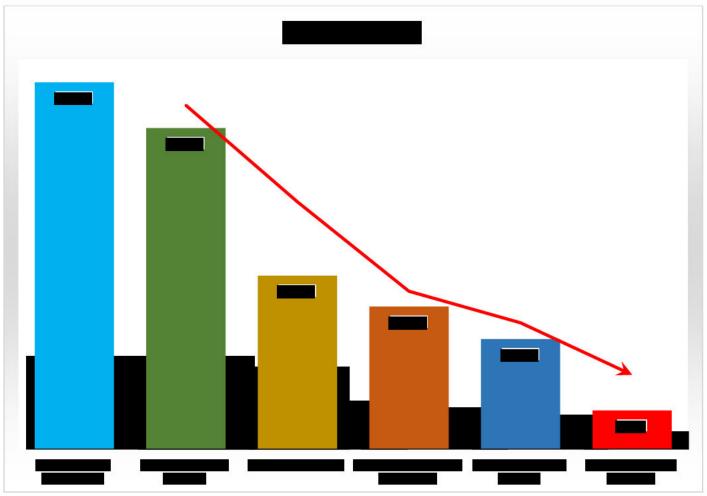


One of the most effective means of assessing a service is to examine its ability to make contact, engage with the victim and conduct a needs assessment which then on leads to support.

The number of victims 'lost' through this process is referred to as its Attrition Rate.



on Rate for the Service is nearly 9 /10. This is high, in comparison to services in other areas.



OTHER ISSUES IMPACTING ON PERFORMANCE
VS speak of a great deal of frustration with the quality of the data received from the force. They frequently have to use the Police 'Contact Us' email facility to request additional or correct information and requests are responded however this is an issue common to all external service providers reliant on the ADT. This issue exacerbates the attrition rate.
The Service also must secure the consent of the victim prior to the offer of a service. Whilst VS are entitled to process victim personal data under GDPR, they must secure the consent of the victim prior to the need's assessment being conducted. This will invariably lead to several victims being confused by the nature and basis for the contact from VS and it relies on the skill of the member of staff to explain full why the victim has been called, explain the offer and read through the fair processing notice.
import on porformance of outs to funding which load to the

The Service has also highlighted the impact on performance of cuts to funding which lead to the closure of partner services and despite their best efforts to maintain up to date information they are unable to find alternatives.

The Service also receives a very few referrals for post -trial support. It could be that the absence of the Witness Service from the Victim Commission is a contributory factor which OPCC may wish to address.

Referrals in and out of the Service does have an impact on service delivery and on the victim, both in terms of their experience and their recovery. To tackle this, the Service state that they are continuing to liaise with partners to improve referral pathways, raising any gaps in provision with the OPCC (e.g. support for male DV victims) and learning from other VS areas to take advantage of successful service models and approaches (e.g. work with gangs in North London).

Strategically, VS recognise that the changing nature of crime means the Service needs to constantly evolve to meet emerging needs, such as cyber and knife crime. The uncertainty of the funding environment leads to the challenge of retaining the best staff as the end of contract date approaches.

### **PEOPLE**

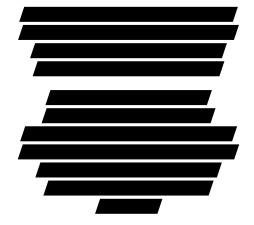
At the heart of any organisation are the many committed, capable and well-trained staff, supported and led by managers and leaders who have the skills and style to translate the corporate vision into operational reality. VS is no different in this regard and in common with many charities the staff bring to bear a sense of strong values and a level of empathy for victims of crime that is commendable.

Having met with and spoken to many VS staff from this service and from across the country the absolute desire to support victims of crime is apparent. There is also a strong belief that a service built on a charitable foundation is the most effective way to ensure that victims get the best possible support. A contract manager once commented to me, 'If you were to cut me in half you would see the red and white Victim Support logo'

### People

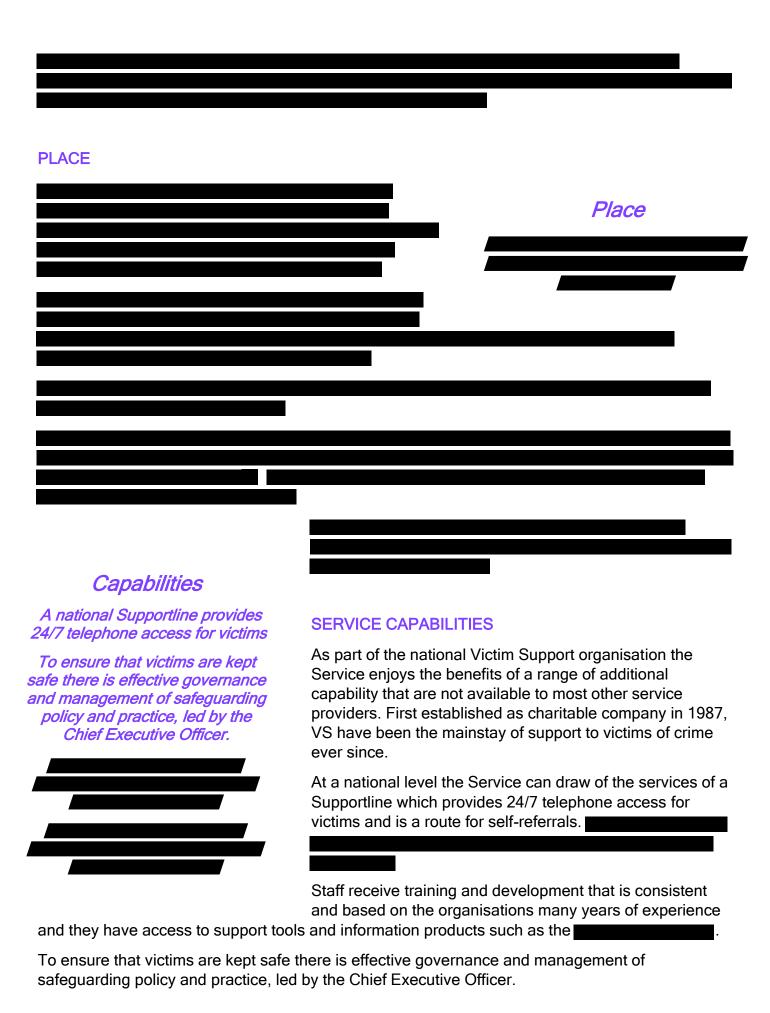
VS staff reflect strong values and a level of empathy that is commendable.

'If you were to cut me in half you would see the red and white Victim Support logo'



At the frontline such values are crucial, the staff who meet and speak with victims every day must represent all that is positive when it comes to supporting victims.

Effective leadership is vital within the charity sector today. In a competitive market place, as service providers, they must compete with a range of organisations to secure future funding. Authentic, inspirational leadership and effective management, which channels the values and empathy that is abundant on the frontline, could ensure continued success.
The Service must demonstrate such leadership to ensure that commissioners have no choice and can find no reasonable alternative to deliver victim support services for the people of the West Midlands, other than to commission VS,
PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT
As would be expected performance management takes the form of regular dip sampling of case records, 6 weekly management reviews of cases, staff 1:1 meetings and performance reviews. The Service recognises and effectively manages the risk of victims becoming 'dependant' on their caseworker.
At a national level, VS have an ISO compliant Quality Management System (QMS) with national data collection and analysis so that they can identify trends and benchmark services; driving improvement and demonstrating quality control and effectiveness in service delivery. The QMS is supported by an annual programme of local service and thematic audits (e.g. Safeguarding or complaints). Local service audits are followed up by an action plan that is monitored quarterly until signed off as complete.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Julie Garbett - VS Contract Manager, July 2018

The national infrastructure has also enabled the NGCM and ever increasingly, policies and practice are based on learning that is shared across the organisation.
. They have access to training and development, including specialist courses on DA, SV and in support for Children and Young People. This builds competence and capability and does enable them to feel valued and supported, thereby improving retention.

### VALUE FOR MONEY

This is recognised as the most complex aspect of any service evaluation, with a range of methods being employed across the country with no one method emerging as best practice.

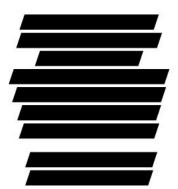
The complexity is exacerbated by the variations in the different models and approaches, which is why the Ministry of Justice has always avoided a unit cost estimate or similar value for money profile in favour of a simple outcome-based framework and a population-based formula to determine grant amounts.

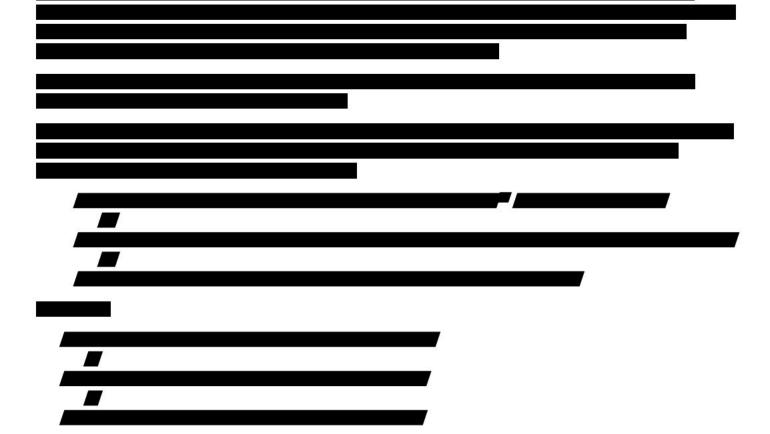
In 2013-14, during the transition from National to local commissioning of victim support services VS were asked to supply PCC with information to help inform such commissioning. Where available, such information was limited and varied from area to area much as it does today.

Discussions with the Chief Executive Officer of VS have identified that the development of a robust Value for Money profile as one of her priorities. This is welcomed.

In the absence of such, each service will approach it as it sees fit and this area is no different.

### Cost per victim



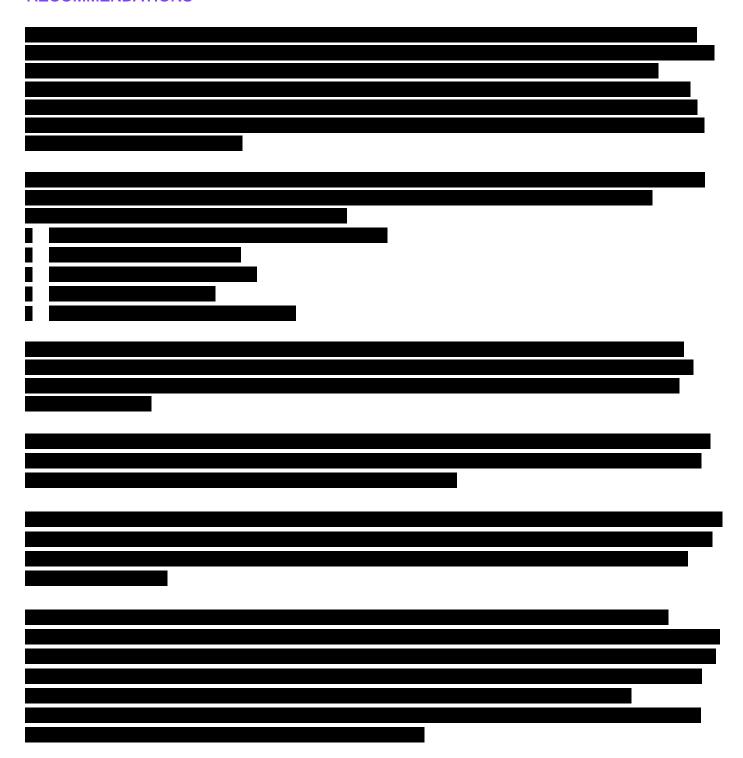


<sup>12</sup> The number of victims receiving both simple and in-depth support.

### **SUMMARY**

At its heart the Service is good, it is built on an established brand which benefits from a strong national infrastructure. This brings added value which in the West Midlands is apparent from the range of additional services that VS have been commissioned to provide.
The
Service has a strategic capability that other victim support service providers would be hard pressed to match.
At a national level VS have seen changes in leadership bringing a fresh vision for the organisation. One that is ready to learn, adapt and evolve to meet the challenges and opportunities that stem from local victim support service commissioning.
This strength is also at times its weakness; with local services delivered by local community-based services, embedded and reflective of local communities being the current trend favoured by most PCC.
The Service must reach as many victims as possible and less flexible and responsive approaches or models can at times be left behind. The West Midlands service has only recently evolved, and it will be some time before the change achieves it aims. However other areas have benefitted from a more agile and responsive service, and this apparent lack of flexibility is perhaps the Services' Achilles heel.
The Service has some excellent and passionate staff, the feedback from the victims they have supported is overwhelmingly positive.
At the heart of this is the Services' seeming willingness or ability to be viewed as a leader in this field, locally through the Victim Commission or simply as a visible and vocal advocate for victims. VS must inspire others to follow in its path, learn from it and seek to emulate it. Those qualities were not immediately apparent through this project.
One must also consider the data.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**



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### Appendix B - Outreach Locations

Venue	Address	LAA
Solihull Police Station	Homer Road	Solihull
	Solihull	
	B91 3QL	
Chelmsley Wood Connect	Ground Floor	Solihull
	West Mall	
	Chelmsley Wood	
	Solihull	
	B37 5TN	
South Staffordshire Water	Community Hub	Sandwell
	Unit 17 Union Street	
	Wednesbury WS10 7HD	
	W510 /HD	
Walsall Campus	University of Wolverhampton	Walsall
Traisan Sampas	Walsall Campus	Traisan
	Walsall	
	WS1 3BD	
Manor Farm Silver Scheme	King George Crescent	Walsall
	Walsall	
	WS4 1EG	
Wolverhampton University	Wulfruna Street, Wolverhampton	
	Wolverhampton	
A 1117	WV1 1LY	100
Age UK	93-94 Darlington Street	Wolverhampton
Dilatan Tanan Hall	Wolverhampton	100
Bilston Town Hall	Church Street, Bilston	Wolverhampton
Loural Bood Community	WV14 0AT	Dirminghom
Laurel Road Community Centre	Laurel Road, Handsworth,	Birmingham
The Signing Tree	Birmingham, B21 9PB Deaf Cultural Centre, Ladywood,	Birmingham
The Signing Tiee	Birmingham, B16 8SZ	
Pioneer Housing Group	11 High Street, Castle Vale Birmingham	
. ionioon riodomig Group	Birmingham B35 7PR	
The Donkey Sanctuary	Sutton Park, The Town Gate, Park	Birmingham
	Rd, Sutton Coldfield B74 2YT	



Prepared on behalf of the West Midlands Police & Crime Commissioner by:-

