

AGENDA ITEM:10

AVON AND SOMERSET POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

7 DECEMBER 2015

SCRUTINY OF DELIVERY AGAINST THE POLICE AND CRIME PLAN – VICTIMS PRIORITY

PURPOSE

This report sets out issues for consideration to enable members of the Police and Crime Plan to scrutinise delivery against the Police and Crime Plan, focusing on the priority *Putting Victims First*.

BACKGROUND

At their meeting in March 2015, the Police and Crime Panel agreed to dedicate agenda time during the 2015/16 meeting cycle to support and scrutinise delivery against the Police and Crime Plan. It was agreed to scrutinise the Police and Crime Plan priorities in turn with a focus on performance, success in delivery against the objectives set out under each priority and remaining areas for improvement in each area. Panel Members identified key lines of enquiry for each priority during the PCP Training Day held on 2 September 2015. *Putting Victims First* was agreed as the first theme for scrutiny.

OVERVIEW: PUTTING VICTIMS FIRST

What does the priority seek to address?

The Commissioner's vision for victims is set out in the Police and Crime Plan:

"I want to improve victim's satisfaction with and influence over the services they receive. I will support a joined up approach to service delivery that has the voice of victims at its heart. I will be a fierce advocate for all victims, particularly those that are vulnerable, intimidated or persistently targeted, victims of serious offences such as domestic abuse, sexual abuse and hate crime."

The priority seeks to address two themes that emerged as issues during the PCC election campaign:-

- a) **The lack of joined up services for victims:** victims spoke about how difficult the criminal justice system is to navigate, how they were being contacted numerous times by different people and organisations, and how they were having to repeat their story time and time again. This can have the effect of 're-victimising' victims and preventing them from being able to come to terms with and move on from their experience;
- b) **Making the voice of the victim heard in the criminal justice system:** victims spoke about feeling like 'bystanders' in a process that revolves around the offender.

Victims felt that they were not being kept informed of what was happening in their case, and expressed concerns at long delays in cases coming to trial, their experience at court, and access to services to help them to cope and recover from their experience.

The priority and its focus were reaffirmed in consultation undertaken post-election to confirm priorities for the current term of office and inform development of the Police and Crime Plan 2013-17.

Avon and Somerset Approach

The Avon and Somerset approach to victim care developed alongside two key national changes:

- Publication of the **Revised Victims Code of Practice** in 2013, setting out rights and entitlements for victims, with an emphasis on identification and enhanced support for victims of serious crime, repeat, vulnerable and intimidated victims; and
- Ministry of Justice **commissioning arrangements for victim services**, which introduced a new responsibility for PCCs in commissioning local referral and support services for victims of crime. Avon and Somerset was an 'early adopter' of new arrangements for victim services. The Commissioner made additional funding available in order to extend the service in Avon and Somerset to include victims of anti-social behaviour.

The *Putting Victims First* priority has three key elements:

- Providing joined up and coordinated support for victims throughout their journey through the criminal justice system;
- Commissioned services to ensure that victims have access to appropriate support, on the basis of their needs;
- Building a culture of ownership for victim care to ensure high quality support for all victims, including those outside the scope of 'enhanced services' under the Victims Code of Practice and Lighthouse Victim Care service.

The approach represents a significant shift in focus to improve services for victims of serious crime, those who are persistently targeted and vulnerable and intimidated victims.

Lighthouse Victim Care

The Lighthouse Victim Care service was launched in October 2014, operating from three 'hubs' in Keynsham, Bristol and Bridgwater. Lighthouse Victim Care provides a 'single point of contact' approach, guiding a victim through their journey from first point of contact with the police, through the investigation and on to the end of the criminal justice process. The aim of the teams is to provide greater ownership of the whole journey of a victim, reducing handovers and radically simplifying the process for victims.

Features of the service include:

- Robust identification of 'service tier' (those victims requiring an enhanced service as defined in the Victims Code of Practice);
- Full and detailed common needs assessment for victims, to identify and put in place appropriate support pathways;

- Provision of safety and crime prevention advice, target hardening measures and other practical interventions to help reduce the risk of repeat victimisation;
- Regular and timely updates on case progress as required by the Victims Code of Practice, delivered in the way that the victim wants it;
- Multi-agency co-location to ensure effective partnership working with agencies supporting victims;
- Clear links with multi-agency safeguarding hubs to ensure safeguarding concerns and risks are identified and addressed;
- Restorative approaches that are victim led, and available to victims at the appropriate point in their journey.

The Lighthouse services is complemented by an online victim 'service directory', providing information about what to expect if you are a victim on crime, and support services in each part of the Force area. The website can be found at: <http://lighthousevictimcare.org/>

The approach to victim care in Avon and Somerset is well regarded nationally. A national open day, held in Summer 2014, attracted attendance from across the country. Commissioned services are now up and running and have been well received. There has been a steady increase in referrals across the commissioned services.

Case studies, demonstrating the value of the new approach and services in place, can be found in the Victim Services Celebration booklet, available at the following link: <http://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/Partnerships/Victim-Commissioning.aspx>

Commissioned Services

On the basis of the evidence base and commissioning process set out below, the OPCC commissioned the following services from April 2015. All services cover Avon and Somerset:

Service	Provider	Value	Description
Emotional Support Service for Victims of Crime and ASB	Victim Support	£296,973 p.a. (contract)	Emotional and practical support for victims of crime and ASB, available both to those who report to the Police and those who do not.
Adult Advocacy Service	The Care Forum (lead) working with SEAP and SARI	£329,467.42 p.a. (grant)	Specialist advocacy support for victims of crime or ASB who require enhanced support relating to mental health, learning difficulties, physical disabilities, problems associated with old age, problems associated with isolation, race religion or sexuality. Available both to those who report to the Police and those who do not.
CYP Advocacy Service	North Somerset Youth	£165,000 p.a.	Specialist advocacy support for young victims of crime and ASB up

	Offending Service	(grant)	to the age of 18 and victims of crime and ASB aged 18-25 where additional needs are identified. Available both to those who report to the Police and those who do not.
Independent Sexual Violence Advisor Service	Safelink (Missing Link)	£194,580 p.a. (contract)	Specialist advocacy support for victims of rape and sexual assault. Available both to those who report to the Police and those who do not.
Modern Slavery Support Service (one year pilot)	Unseen UK	£39,854 (grant)	Specialist support service focusing on the needs of victims of modern slavery before engaging in nationally commissioned services as well as the period after that support ends. Available both to those who report to the Police and those who do not. One year pilot to be evaluated.

The OPCC is working closely with commissioners of victim services that fall outside the scope of services commissioned by the PCC. These include Local Authorities, health commissioners and national government departments. The PCC's annual grant funding supports local services and where opportunities arise, the OPCC supports applications to national funding streams to enhance local service provision. Examples include: successful Home Office Innovation Fund bid for the West of England Child Sexual Exploitation Service.

Evidence Base, Commissioning Process and Partner Engagement

The Avon and Somerset approach to victim care is described at a high level in the Avon and Somerset Integrated Victim Strategy. The Strategy was overseen by a multi-agency Integrated Victims Board, including representatives of Local Authorities, health, criminal justice agencies and voluntary sector representatives, established as a 'task and finish' group to oversee development of the new approach. Cllr Lisa Brett represented the PCP on the Board in her capacity as PCP Link Member for victims commissioning. Partners were kept informed on progress and invited to contribute to the development of the Needs Assessment, Mapping work and consultation with victims of crime through regular agenda items at Community Safety Partnerships, Health and Wellbeing Boards, Local Criminal Justice Board and other relevant partnership meetings. Market engagement events were held with providers to help shape proposed services during consultation on commissioning intentions.

A Victims Reference Group and Providers Forum have been established to ensure that services continue to be shaped in response to learning and experience as services develop. Oversight is now via an internal Victims Steering Group, and the Avon and Somerset Commissioning and Community Safety Board.

Preparatory work in relation to commissioning victim services can be found below:

Timeframe	Activity	Published Document
Autumn 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with Victims of Crime on their Experience • Mapping and Needs Assessment evidence gathering 	http://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/Document-Library/Consultations/Consultation-on-victim-experience-feedback.pdf
February 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of Draft Victims Needs Assessment 	http://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/Document-Library/Victims/AS-Integrated-Victim-Care-Needs-AssessmentFeb-2014.pdf
February – End May 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation on Commissioning Intentions • Market engagement 	http://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/Document-Library/Victims/Victim-Services-Commissioning-Intentions-Feb-2014-FINAL.pdf
August 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of Commissioning Plan 	http://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/Document-Library/Victims/FINAL-Commissioning-Plan-August-2014.pdf
August – October 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement process 	Decision notice: http://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/Document-Library/Decisions/2015/Commissioning-of-Victims-Services/2015-003-Commissioning-of-Victims-Services.pdf

Performance and Impact

Current performance and the approach to measuring the Police and Crime Plan indicators in relation to the Victims Priority is set out below. Oversight of progress and performance is carried out through the Victims Steering Group, COG/PCC meeting, and PCC membership of the Avon and Somerset Criminal Justice Board in relation to the statutory duty to work with agencies to ensure an efficient and effective criminal justice system.

Victim Cohort and Measuring Satisfaction

The Integrated Victim Care approach is based on the transformation of victim care for the most vulnerable victims. This follows a strategic decision to move away from existing referral arrangements, focused on automated referral of victims of ‘volume’ crime, with time-limited support offered via a letter/telephone call, usually in the immediate aftermath of the crime. Statistics taken from the six month period before new arrangements took effect (April-September 2014) provide a snapshot of existing referral arrangements:

- Caseload peaked at just over 2,600 cases per month. Of total caseload:
- 25% victims received a needs assessment (following initial contact via phone/letter/text)

- 14% victims had needs identified and met (either immediately or through onward referral)
- 14% victims received follow up support calls
- 5% victims received follow up support visits

The Lighthouse Victim Care approach represents a fundamental shift away from previous arrangements, aimed at transforming support for the most vulnerable victims: victims of serious crime, persistently targeted and intimidated victims, and vulnerable victims. A key feature of the new approach is that support is coordinated through support from a Victim Care Officer responsible for assessing the needs of the victim from the outset, arranging referral to appropriate support services, and providing support and information for the victim through to completion of the criminal justice process. Since 'go-live' on 1 October 2014, referral rates for Lighthouse Victim Care demonstrate a transformation in support for victims of serious crime, repeat and vulnerable victims, as outlined in the table below:-

- Victims of 38,263 crimes, 26,107 incidents and 7,500 cases of ASB have been referred to Lighthouse for consideration of 'enhanced service'.
 - 13,493 referrals have been made to practitioner agencies have been made for support and safeguarding.
 - 52% of referrals for Lighthouse are related to Domestic Abuse, Sexual Offence or Hate Crime.
 - 17.1% of victims supported by Lighthouse are under 18.
- [1 October 2014 - end-August 2015]

The headline measure for Victim Satisfaction for Overall Crime is currently 80.4% (37/43 nationally), using the statutory crime survey. There are difficulties in this measure given the cohort of victims surveyed focuses on burglary, violent crime, vehicle crime, hate crime and anti-social behaviour only. It is not therefore representative of the cohort of victims supported by Lighthouse Victim Care and commissioned services. There is ongoing work to strengthen the approach to capturing the experience of the vulnerable victims and victims of serious crime that do fall within the cohort of the Lighthouse Service, and utilising learning to improve services. This draws on approaches such as the ISVA survey, whereby Independent Sexual Violence Advisors work with victims to capture valuable information about their experience at every stage of their journey.

Current performance with respect to the Victim Satisfaction measure reflects the ongoing challenge to reinforce and embed a culture of victim ownership across the organisation, for example the responsibility of OICs for keeping victims informed about progress in their investigation. Use of technology, by encouraging victims to make use of the 'Track My Crime' service, as well as internal management tools to maintain a close focus on timeliness of updating victims on a case-by-case basis, are examples of efforts to drive up satisfaction rates. The ongoing programme of PCC Service Delivery Assurance, scrutinising the quality of service delivery through reviewing closed case files and associated calls also maintains a focus on driving up satisfaction rates.

Successful Criminal Justice Outcomes

The headline measure for Successful Criminal Justice Outcomes for cases that are taken to court currently stands at 83% of all prosecuted cases. The measure reflects the core aim of the new approach in providing seamless support for victims from first referral through to court. Lighthouse Victim Care teams play a crucial role in ensuring high quality support for victims to prepare for and appear at court, reducing the risk of attrition and bringing offenders to justice. Beyond conclusion of the criminal justice process, the experience and outcome at court also represents a significant milestone in a victim's journey in coming to terms with their experience and start to recover and move forward with their life. Work continues to develop working relationships between the Lighthouse Teams and criminal justice agencies to improve systems and processes between agencies to support successful outcomes at court and address systematic issues at this particular 'pinch point' in the criminal justice journey. Examples include practical working arrangements to improve communications, addressing specific issues for example production of timely Hearing Record Sheets (recording court outcomes and providing information necessary to safeguard victims). The OPCC is also working with the Citizens Advice Support for Witnesses at Court service to develop means of capturing feedback from victims at court, which can often be a daunting and difficult experience, with a view to informing service improvements.

Performance of Commissioned Victim Services

The OPCC has commissioned the University of West of England to evaluate the Lighthouse Victim Care Service to inform continued improvements to the quality and consistency of victim services. Evaluation is due to report in January. Quarterly meetings are held with providers of commissioned victim services where pre-submitted performance reports are presented. The OPCC continues to work with services to develop outcome monitoring based on the extent to which victims 'cope and recover' from their experience. At the start of the process the OPCC established an outcomes matrix to support providers look at the range of factors which influence 'cope' and 'recover'. Good practice established by providers is being shared as the OPCC continues to work towards development of outcome measures for all services. The Quarterly Providers Forum brings together providers across the services to strengthen partnership working and share learning.

Emerging Issues and Areas for Improvement

The following emerging issues and areas of improvement have been identified. Panel Members are asked to consider how they may contribute in moving these forward.

Under-reporting

Access to commissioned services is available both to those who choose to report to the police and those who do not. Work aimed at encouraging victims to report is a significant focus of the Commissioner's work, particularly under the Tackling Domestic and Sexual Abuse priority. In recognition of the challenge in addressing the barriers in engaging with the criminal justice system, commissioned services have been tasked with reaching out to those who do not report or historically unlikely to engage. Encouraging strong partnership working across all organisations supporting victims is an essential aspect. The Lighthouse website includes details of a wide range of support organisations, and made referrals beyond those services commissioned by the OPCC.

Planning for future provision

The OPCC continues to work with Local Authorities, health partners and other commissioners to plan for future service provision with a view to secure and stabilise the wider landscape of victim services. Services commissioned by the PCC are one part of a plethora of services provided by statutory agencies, services providers and voluntary/community groups to support victims according to a broad range of needs, many of which may be highly specialised. Building strong working relationships across partners and commissioners is essential in ensuring early sight of risks to existing funding arrangements, identifying new opportunities for joint working and co-commissioning and working together to lever in external funding (as with the successful Home Office Innovation Bid for the West of England Child Sexual Exploitation service). With Ministry of Justice funding confirmed to 2016, PCC elections in the coming year, and the prospect of continued austerity through the Comprehensive Spending Review, this remains a key area of focus.

Recommendation

That Panel Members consider and discuss progress against the Victims Priority as outlined in the report.

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