

## **Briefing for Police and Crime Commissioner**

**Topic:** Victims of Crime

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### **Purpose of briefing**

To brief the Police and Crime Commissioner on key issues relating to victims of crime

### **Background**

Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) are responsible for commissioning many support services for victims of crime. This currently excludes some support such as the Homicide Service, Court Based Witness Service, national telephone helplines and small amounts of funding administered nationally for rape and sexual assault services. The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) provides a ring-fenced budget with which PCCs are expected to commission, procure and quality assure services that enable victims, and vulnerable witnesses, to cope with their experience and recover as far as possible. This includes support to navigate criminal justice system processes where appropriate.

The OPCC currently commissions Safer Communities to deliver an overarching victim care and support service (VCAS). This includes an automated referral process used by the Police as well as pathways for self-referral and other agencies to refer. VCAS will contact victims, and witnesses where appropriate, carry out an assessment and agree a care and support plan.

A range of other, more specialised services are also commissioned to support victims, and these are described in other briefings.

The role of PCCs in ensuring availability of timely, effective support for victims is underpinned by a range of national policy and standards including, but not limited to:

- Victims Services Commissioning Framework
- Victims' Code of Practice
- National Victims' Strategy
- Proposed Victims' Law
- National Victims' Commissioner reports and research

Ensuring support is available for victims, their families/communities and vulnerable witnesses is a must do for PCCs and they are held to account through regular performance monitoring returns to the MOJ.

### **Current issues**

- The introduction of uniform standards and a new framework of indicators for PCC commissioned services as well as those that are centrally funded intended to improve confidence in commissioned services, and better understand how funding is being used.
- The intention to consult on the detail of victim focused legislation, likely to happen in the Autumn of this year, including strengthening the powers of the Victims' Commissioner, and delivering a Victims' Law.
- Strengthening the Victims' Code and making PCCs responsible for holding relevant agencies to account for compliance through improved reporting, monitoring and transparency.

- In relation to compliance with the victims' Code, PCCs will be responsible for regularly monitoring and identifying issues through local criminal justice partnership arrangements so they can determine effective local intervention. The Criminal Justice Board and Ministers will expect regular reports to monitor delivery at a national level and address cross-cutting issues with national service providers.

### **Decisions needed**

- Many existing contracts will end in March 2021 and work to review provision and delivery is currently being undertaken. Business cases will need to be developed and agreed through OPCC Commissioning Board processes.
- A new model of overarching support for victims and witnesses is being trialled with a view to developing a new service specification by September 2020, this will need PCC approval again likely to be through Commissioning Board processes.
- Discussion has previously taken place about the potential to develop a 'Family Justice Centre' model of support and a decision will be required in respect of whether to continue to pursue this initiative.

### **Partnership involvement**

- The Victim and Witness Planning Group is a sub-group of the Local Criminal Justice Partnership (LCJP) and is the main vehicle for collaboration in relation to overarching victim and witness issues and planning. The Group is traditionally chaired by the PCC and is made up of a range of key partners including Police, HMCTS, CPS, NPS, CRC, Youth Justice Services, and Adult Safeguarding.
- There is a joint Hate Crime Action Group that the PCVC Chairs and is attended by a range of partner agencies.
- There are partnerships groups detailed in other briefings relating to Domestic Abuse, Rape and Sexual Assault.

### **Police involvement**

The OPCC works closely with the Police in respect of victim and witness issues, the main vehicle for discussion being the Total Victim Care Group along with the Victim and Witness Planning Group and the joint Hate Crime Action Group.

### **People to meet**

Key individuals are predominantly those who attend the Victim and Witness Group and the members of the LCJP. Victim and Witness Group meetings are quarterly and the key people to meet are representatives from the membership as outlined above. The joint Hate Crime Action Group meets quarterly and is organised by Police colleagues. It would also be beneficial to arrange a meeting with the National Victims' Commissioner.