

HORIZON SERVICE UPDATE

Purpose of report

1. This paper provides the Panel with an update on the development of the Horizon Victim and Witness Care Unit.

Background

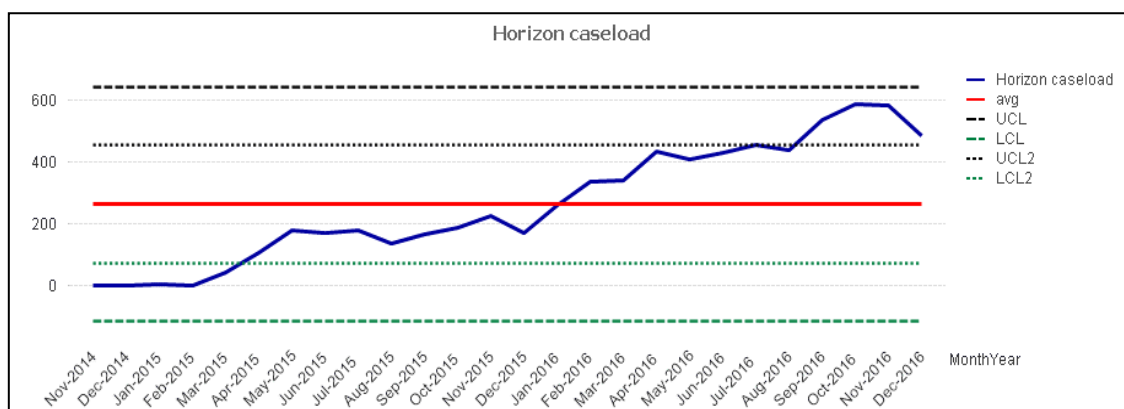
2. Horizon Victim and Witness Care Unit is commissioned by the Police and Crime Commissioner with the support of the Ministry of Justice Victim Service Fund. The service became fully operational in April 2015 and is provided by Wiltshire Police.

The Service

3. Horizon provides a single point of contact for victims of crime to support them on their journey through the criminal justice system. The service can refer victims on to specialist services to provide practical and emotional support. Telephone contact is provided for all victims of crime who are vulnerable, intimidated, persistently targeted or victims of serious crime. All other victims receive written information about services available to them and can self refer.
4. Horizon also supports witnesses who are involved in the criminal justice system, ensuring that victims and witnesses are informed of the court process and how they are required to participate, referring to specialist services as required to enable them to give best evidence at court.
5. The Horizon team are fully trained on both the victim and witness care process. The team deal with everything from initial victim contact to large and complex cases which can result in long criminal trials at crown courts. Horizon have found that the majority of victims do not require additional support beyond the first or second telephone conversation. The Horizon officer deals with the same victim if the case then progresses to court, providing consistency of support.

Progress Update

6. Over the last year referrals into Horizon have increased. As the team has become embedded and skills have developed Horizon have taken on more responsibility for victims of domestic abuse, victims of fraud and all victims of domestic burglary. The Horizon victim caseload can be seen in the table below. The team are now dealing with around 450 cases per month, some of which have more than one victim.



7. The team also administer the Victim Right to Review where victims can review the decision made on their case. To date, there have been 77 requests for a review on cases which have been deemed 'no further action'.
8. The table below gives an indication of crime types supported by Horizon during one month; the 84 cases unallocated are victims of 'incidents' rather than recorded crime types. Horizon refer between 60 and 80 victims per month on to the commissioned Victim Support Service; they also refer victims to SPLITZ domestic abuse support service, the Swindon and Wiltshire SARC, SPLASH youth services and the Intercom Trust for LGBT victim of crime. The team also liaise with the police Hate Crime Advisors to ensure that victims of these very impactful crimes are given necessary support.

Horizon Niche caseload - December 2016	
Violence Against the Person	178
Theft Offences	122
-	84
Public Order Offences	40
Sexual Offences	28
Criminal Damage & Arson	22
Robbery	6
Miscellaneous Crimes Against Society	3
Possession of Weapons Offences	3
Total	486

9. A large proportion of Horizon's work also covers the support of witnesses in the court process. At any one time the team can have up to 8000 victims and witnesses to coordinate and manage who have provided statements and are potentially listed for a trial for either Magistrates or Crown Courts. The team liaise closely with colleagues within Wiltshire Police, Crown Prosecution Service, Witness Service and HM Courts services to ensure that processes run smoothly. Horizon ensures that if vulnerable victims require 'special measures' in order to give evidence (for example a pre-trial visit, video links, screens or assistance), this is provided.
10. The trial of a serious case, for example murder, can involve contacting in excess of 100 witnesses over a period of many months to ensure they are available to attend when required by the court, and meeting their needs when required. This includes

making travel arrangements, booking accommodation and liaising with police colleagues, CPS and witness service and is vital to the delivery of justice. This work requires very careful planning and delivery.

11. The Horizon Supervisor works across the police force and with partners to promote and improve the work Horizon does with victims to continue to fill the gaps where support is still required and review and improve the way in which victims are dealt with in the criminal justice process. The supervisor also works with colleagues on supporting the delivery of the policing elements of the victim code of practice and has also been dip sampling individual cases to look how VCOP is delivered across criminal justice partners.

Next Steps

12. It is recognised that some of our most vulnerable victims are those of Anti-Social Behaviour rather than recorded crime. The OPCC and the Horizon team are working with the police to look at the potential for Horizon to support victims of ASB. This will be dependent on volumes and capacity and services available to support these victims.
13. Over the next year the OPCC and Horizon team will be continuing to build on the success of Horizon, looking at the support available to victims of crime and continuing to link into a wider network of appropriate support services. The team will also look for areas where appropriate support needs to be commissioned by the PCC or jointly with other local authorities.

Conclusion

14. I believe that the work of my office and policing colleagues on the development of the Horizon Victim and Witness Care Unit has increased the focus of the police service and other partners in Wiltshire and Swindon on the care of victims. This work will continue in line with my Police and Crime Plan which aims to put victims at the heart of our work.

Angus Macpherson
Police and Crime Commissioner