

Victims Commissioning – update for Wiltshire and Swindon

1. Introduction

In October 2014 and April 2015, the Ministry of Justice will step back from aspects of victim services commissioning and PCCs will take on this responsibility. Significant local, regional and national preparation is required to ensure this transition is smooth.

2. Local Work

- In November 2013 the Commissioner received £170k in order to:
 - Prepare for local commissioning.
 - Build restorative justice capacity in the area.
 - Build the capacity and capability of wider voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector.

The Ministry of Justice has issued high level grant conditions under which it is apparent that these sums can be carried forward.

- In October 2014 the Commissioner will be responsible for the commissioning the majority of services for victims locally. £560k per annum is allocated to Wiltshire for this.
- Grant agreements for services which are currently commissioned by MoJ have been extended to October 2014. These services will continue to be provided past this date as Commissioners put new grant agreements in place with existing or new organisations.
- There is confusion nationally about how domestic abuse and sexual violence services will be commissioned. The Ministry of Justice will issue a discussion paper imminently to clarify funding streams.
- Commissioning and tender processes will ensure local services are in place to meet victims' needs in October 2014.

3. Regional Work

- Victims Support currently provides a national referral mechanism (run through a series of regional call centre hubs) and have a network of local volunteers. The grant for this service sits with the MoJ. From April 2014, the MoJ are working to ensure that local commissioners have oversight of these arrangements via regional boards.
- From October 2014 a small number of areas including Wiltshire may be able to commission their own referral mechanism. These referral systems must ensure victims are able to access the support they need with safeguards to ensure that:
 - they are able to support people who live in their area and refer on victims of crime who live in different areas to their local support services, and
 - do not destabilise either the regional or national victims support service.
- From April 2015 all PCCs will be responsible for commissioning referral mechanisms and any network of local volunteers. We are currently working

together across the region to ensure individual commissioner's plans dovetail together and create smooth transition from MoJ to regional / local Commissioning.

4. National Work

The MoJ and Commissioners have created a working group to oversee the transition. The group represents PCCs on the programme, influencing the MoJ's planned work including the commissioning of national services and wider policies that affect the victims' journey. The group is engaging with Victim Support nationally.

5. Nationally commissioned services include:

- The arrangements for referral of victims to support services, information provision on services available, assessment of need and associated service and support provision within the current model provided by Victim Support, where a PCC has remained within this model until April 2015.
- In addition to extending some Victim Support referral models until April 2015, the MoJ is nationally commissioning:
 - the court based witness service, the national homicide service (but see below on road traffic crime bereavement); Human trafficking support and rape support funding. PCCs may choose to supplement these services locally.
 - In terms of support for those bereaved by road traffic crime, MoJ is proposing to consult PCCs on what might be done nationally to provide support (this is not part of the current homicide service and is instead supported by information packs and a telephone helpline funded by MoJ).

6. Submission on Arrangements for Referral of Victims to Support Services

On 10th November 2013, The Commissioner confirmed that he is seeking to become an Early Adopter in local commissioning of referral arrangements. This aligns with the objectives for victims set out in the Police and Crime Plan, specifically:

- To give victims a clearer picture of how to access the criminal justice system and the types of support available at different stages.
- To involve victims much more in designing the services put in place to support them and make sure that these services are available to all those who need them.
- To keep victims and witnesses much better informed throughout the whole process from initial incident or crime to final resolution or sentence.
- To make criminal justice processes shorter, thereby reducing the amount of time victims' and witnesses' lives are put on hold.
- To place a much greater focus upon restorative justice outcomes, with victims seeing reparation for the offences committed and preferably resolution of the underlying issues.
- To make the process of giving evidence in court much more victim and witness-focused.

A draft **Victim Strategy** will be available for the Local Criminal Justice Board and the two Community Safety Partnerships at their next round of meetings.

A system's thinking review of customer access has been initiated in partnership with Wiltshire Council, developing an integrated service delivery aspiration for police and local authority services. The Probation Service is a key component, as is the Centre for Justice Innovation. They are developing a Neighbourhood Justice Panel model of restorative justice for each of the 27 community areas across Wiltshire and Swindon. Integrating support for the victim as they interface with the police and the criminal justice system is central to the service the PCC will commission. The ACC chairs the Programme Board on Customer. The restorative justice programme is governed by a sub-group of the Wiltshire Criminal Justice Board.

A Programme Team is in place comprising:

- Programme Management and Project Officer support
- Constabulary Business Lead and Project Officer support
- OPCC Chief Executive
- Local Authority Commissioning Lead on secondment to OPCC
- Professional advice as appropriate (Procurement, Human Resources, Legal advice)

7. Update on Proposal for Referral Arrangements

The Commissioner and Chief Constable have agreed that a local, police-led approach to victim needs assessment and referral to relevant support services is the appropriate model. This will ensure victims have access to support, regardless of whether or not they choose to report to the police. The Wiltshire model will accommodate a close working relationship with the local delivery arm of Victim Support. We currently use Victim Support for Victim Panels and Forums, which respectively seek the views of victims and professionals engaged in this area of work. These views will shape the services to be commissioned and the structure and process of the new referral system.

8. Delivering the Victims Code of Practice and EU Directive from October 2014

The approach will ensure delivery of the Victims Code of Practice and EU Directive as follows:

Access Requirement	Referral Mechanism
<p>Access to support for victims who report to the police 'tier 1':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victims Code of Practice enhanced entitlement categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Victims of the most serious crime; ○ Persistently targeted victims; ○ Vulnerable or intimidated victims. 	<p>Police-led Integrated Victims Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification at first point of contact and referral direct to Integrated Victims Team • Full needs / risk assessment • Provision of immediate advice/support and referral to relevant support pathways • 'Single-point-of-contact' approach that follows the victim through the CJ process • Data sharing/seamless handover between police, partners and support organisations

Access Requirement	Referral Mechanism
<p>Access to support for victims who report to the police 'tier 2':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victims Code of Practice entitlement for information and access to support services as required 	<p>Police-led victim contact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of tier at first point of contact and referral to Integrated Victims Team as appropriate • Offer of support from Integrated Victims Team to be included in all contact with victim (letter templates, victim leaflets) • Regular contact with the OIC to keep victim up to date on progress alongside • Online Victim Services Directory available to all victims (see below for detail)
<p>Access to support for victims who do not report to the police:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU Directive requirement to ensure access to services regardless of whether a victim has reported to the police 	<p>PCC Commissioned / Local Support Services</p> <p>PCC commissioning of coordinated support services for victims which are accessible to all victims, regardless of whether they have chosen to report to the police. Commissioned support services will include a focus on access to services for those who are least likely to report and increasing confidence to report. Seek to encourage third party referral where appropriate. It will be a requirement of the commissioned referral service that sensitive personal data will be held securely on a case management system at the appropriate level.</p> <p>Partner agency referral</p> <p>Referral by partner agencies will be established through close liaison between Integrated Victims Team and Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs. Additional opportunities for referral will be developed as part of the Integrated approach.</p>
<p>Universal access to information and support services</p>	<p>Online Directory of Victim Services</p> <p>Tool for professionals supporting victims through the Integrated Victim Team and commissioned referral service, and as an information, advice and signposting tool for members of the public.</p>

9. Interoperation with other areas including the Victim Support Model

A consistent approach with regional PCCs and their commissioned referral service will ensure:

- The victim is directed to support on the basis of where they live;
- A single point of contact will be identified for each Early Adopter area;
- Existing national coordination is adapted to fit local arrangements. For example Automatic Data Transfer from Action Fraud to the Victim Support West Midlands Victim Care Unit for onward referral to the relevant VCU on the basis of where the victim lives.
- Managing transition to safeguard national and regional interoperability and standards of service.

10. Commitment to working with the Ministry of Justice, Victim Support and PCCs in Stage 2 and beyond to ensure that transition arrangements are robust

South West PCCs set out shared principles they are working to in developing a collective approach. Agreement has been reached on proposals for regional oversight by PCCs of existing referral arrangements. South West Regional PCCs will assume responsibility for regional oversight from April 2014, and an Operating Board will advise PCCs on this function. Regional oversight will focus on:

- Consideration of the impact of the Early Adopter decision on the Bishopsworth VCU Hub;
- Consideration of arrangements in relation to Dorset (currently served by the Shoreham VCU Hub);
- Development of Regional Oversight arrangements in relation to:
 - Local delivery arrangements, performance data and regional activities, victim outcomes, financial data, Value for Money;
 - Issues identified in the transition plan – including cross-boundary victims, referral from national bodies;
- Joint working on preparatory work, commissioned support services from October 2014, and development of options for commissioning of regional referral arrangements from April 2015.

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