

## Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner Strategic Vision for Victim Services

### 1. Background

- 1.1. From April 2015 Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) will be responsible for commissioning the majority of emotional and practical support services for victims of crime locally. This paper sets out the PCC's vision for the commissioning of local services.
- 1.2. Currently, a large number of services for victims are commissioned by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ). As well as commissioning national helplines and individual charities, the MOJ are responsible for contracting the national charity 'Victim Support' to provide the majority of support services to victims at the local level. Currently Hertfordshire victims receive an assessment of and delivery of immediate support needs from the Eastern Region Victim Care Unit based in Essex. Subsequent emotional and practical support is provided through the local Victim Support volunteer and staff base within Hertfordshire.
- 1.3. This paper lays out the national context in which the PCC is working in Section 2, followed by an overview of the local context in Hertfordshire in Section 3 and 4. The Commissioner's strategic vision is outlined in Section 4 and 5.

### 2. National Context

#### Policy Context:

- 2.1. *Getting it Right for Victims and Witnesses* (MoJ 2012) sets out the Government's strategy to improve services for victims through a model of both national and locally commissioning support services for victims.
- 2.2. The MOJ Commissioning Framework was published in May 2013: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/victims-services-commissioning-framework](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/victims-services-commissioning-framework). The Commissioning Framework is based on the outcomes of supporting victims to **(a) cope with the immediate impacts of crime and (b) recover from the harm experienced**. The framework covers eight categories of need: mental and physical health, shelter and accommodation; family friends and children; education skills and employment; drugs and alcohol; finance and benefits; outlook and attitudes; and social interaction.

#### Statutory basis:

- 2.3. Revised **Code of Practice for Victims of Crime** became effective from 10 December 2013 (henceforth referred to as 'Victims Code') and sets out the rights and entitlements for all victims at every stage of their journey, and 'enhanced entitlements' for victims of serious crime, those that are persistently targeted and those that are vulnerable or intimidated. The Victims Code contains guidance on the minimal standards of support which agencies delivering services must adhere to. However there is currently limited guidance on whether and how PCC should monitor delivering of services against these standards.

2.4. **EU Directive on the Rights, Support and Protection of Victims of Crime Articles 8 and 9** (effective from November 2015) creates minimum standards for victim support services, and includes provisions for victims to be able to access services regardless of whether they have reported to the police.

### 3. **Who are the victims in Hertfordshire?**

- 3.1. In 2013/14 there were 53,359 crimes recorded in Hertfordshire<sup>1</sup> and of these crimes, 19,376 victims were referred on to the current victim service provider; Victim Support. Victim Support then reviewed these referrals and where appropriate, made contact with victims directly to offer additional support.
- 3.2. Work is currently being undertaken by the County Community Intelligence Unit (HCC) to identify and profile victims of crime in Hertfordshire. This should enable us to detect trends in victimisation and offer suggestions for future work on early intervention to prevent individuals or communities from becoming victims of crime. National surveys suggest that at least one in five people in the country are victims of crime each year.
- 3.3. The Victims Code (2013,p4) defines victims of crime as:  
*'a person who has suffered harm, including physical, mental or emotional harm or economic loss which was **directly** caused by criminal conduct'* and  
*'a close relative (spouse, partner, relatives in direct line, siblings or dependents) of a person whose death was directly caused by criminal conduct'. This definition will be adopted by Hertfordshire to identify victims of crime.*
- 3.4. The above definition will form the bedrock for work on victims in Hertfordshire. However it is also recognised that the impact of crime can also be felt by those people who are indirectly affected by criminal conduct, such as parents, spouses, partners, children, siblings and close friends.
- 3.5. We also know that not everyone reports crime, and some are victims of non-crime in the current system (such as anti-social behaviour). These people may still need support to cope and recover and where victims may not be able to 'recover' our strategic aim is to create a system where they are supported to adjust.

### 4. **Current Provision of Support in Hertfordshire**

- 4.1. Emotional and Practical support, as well as Independent Domestic Violence services are provided through nationally commissioned services such as Victim Support , Herts Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Centre, and Herts Women's Centre. Hertfordshire Constabulary provide Independent Sexual Violence Advocacy (ISVA) services
- 4.2. The MOJ will continue to commission services nationally which provide local support for:
- Victims of trafficking

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of writing, this is the unaudited crime figure for 2013/14.

- Those bereaved by homicide
- Victims of Rape (through Rape Support Centres)
- Witnesses at Court

- 4.3. At a local level, a wide range of partners provide services which support victims in Hertfordshire including domestic abuse centres such as refuges, support programmes, tenancy support services via housing associations, and support through health agencies. As such, the commissioning of services by the PCC should be seen as one part of a much broader range of support services commissioned by partners.
- 4.4. There are a number of specialist services which are provided to address specific needs. Some specialist services have complex funding arrangements at present and the PCC will review the current arrangements and consider whether re-commissioning of current services would be appropriate. For example, the provision of Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) is provided by both the Constabulary and Victims Support.
- 4.5. PCCs have been awarded by money from the MOJ to prepare for the local commissioning of services. Hertfordshire received £415,169 in 2013/14 which was divided into £338,323 for building capacity and preparing for local commissioning, and £76,846 for the preparation and commissioning of Restorative Justice (RJ) services. For the commissioning of services, the Hertfordshire PCC will receive £390,219 in 2014/15 and over £1.2million in 2015/16. While this is a significant proportion of the total money spent on services to support victims in Hertfordshire, it remains only a proportion as there are a number of partners and agencies which also commission or directly provide valuable support for victims. Our aim is to work closely with partners and, using the strategic vision outlined here, create an integrated victim management model in which services work together to deliver the best support for victims in need.

## 5. **Proposed Strategic Vision for Services Supporting Victims of crime in Hertfordshire**

- 5.1. This strategy proposes three high level principles under which commissioning priorities will be aligned. :
- **Create resilient, safe communities**
  - **Clear Supportive Pathways**
  - **Integrated support for victims who have suffered or are at risk of serious harm, or have substantial needs**
- 5.2. **Create resilient, safe communities**
- 5.2.1. In resilient, safe communities there are low crime rates, high levels of confidence in policing and engaged communities with high numbers of witnesses. Much work is on-going in the county to build such communities.
- 5.2.2. The multi-agency approach for some vulnerable groups at risk of crime is less well developed for example, those living in deprived/vulnerable localities, those with mental

illness, those with learning disabilities, the elderly or young, potential victims of hate crime, honour-based violence and sexual exploitation. There may also be cultural or language barriers.

5.2.3. Where individuals and communities do become victims of crime, we need to ensure that support is accessible.

5.2.4. Embedding the Principles

- Developing co-ordinated work with communities to create a safe environment and build strong communities. For example prevention and early intervention work.
- Developing access to support for those people who require it and are victims who choose not to report the crime to the police.
- Improving multi-agency work to increase the support given to people in the community who are victims.

**5.3. Clear Supportive Pathways**

5.3.1. The Victims Code sets out the key entitlements for victims of crime from the Criminal Justice System (CJS). It forms part of the wider Government strategy to transform the CJS with a victim-centred ethos. It sets out a series of 'enhanced entitlements' to victims of the most serious crime, persistently targeted victims and vulnerable or intimidated victims. It also sets out how the CJS must keep all victims up to date with their case and provide them with the information they require to engage effectively with them.

5.3.2. Not everyone who has become a victim of crime needs the same support. Some of those who choose not to report crime do so out of fear or other reasons. They may not have the support of personal and wider community networks. The risk of becoming a victim is higher in many vulnerable groups. It is the responsibility of all agencies to identify these people who are victims and play a role in supporting them, or referring them for help and resolution of the crime which has affected them. Increasingly all agencies are recognising this role, for example, in response to domestic abuse and sexual assault.

5.3.3. Embedding the Principles

- Putting in place robust inter-agency plan to implement the Victims Code to ensure victims are given appropriate access to support.
- Continuing to develop robust contact methods with victims to ensure victims are supported appropriately at each stage. For example, making the most of technology to enable victims to be kept up to date and able to easily access the information themselves as they require.
- Exploring the development of an integrated victim support model which has buy-in from multiple agencies and ensures the individual is supported throughout the pathway and support is offered to those at risk of serious or repeat victimisation.

#### **5.4. Integrated support for victims who have suffered or are at risk of serious harm, or have substantial needs**

- 5.4.1. Victims' needs are complex, dynamic and wide ranging and this is reflected by the breadth of support services available. Responses should be tailored to the individual rather than crime type.
- 5.4.2. 'Getting it right for Victims and Witnesses' reinforces the importance of the eight categories of need (see 2.2) in which service providers should aim to help victims of crime achieve improvements in their life following the offence.
- 5.4.3. Information from Victim Support shows crime can have a profound impact on people. The needs of those who received additional face to face support was wide ranging with:
- 70 per cent of victims saying the crime affected their health and wellbeing
  - 78 per cent of victims saying the crime affected their confidence
  - 43 per cent of victims saying the crime affected their housing
  - 51 per cent of victims saying the crime affected their relationships and social life
  - 35 per cent of victims saying the crime affected their work and study
  - 53 per cent of victims saying the crime affected them financially
- 5.4.4. Victims can need support in a number of different areas of their life following a crime. This requires an integrated system of support for victims to ensure that they are enabled to cope and recover.
- 5.4.5. For some groups, such as those who experience domestic abuse or sexual assault, support services are increasingly co-ordinated for example through the Multi Agency Risk Management model. But this is not always the case. Hertfordshire needs to learn from the successful Integrated Offender Management model (which works with offenders to in turn reduce the number of victims) to develop an Integrated Victim Management Model over the coming years as we work with multiple agencies to develop a more victim-centred criminal justice system.
- 5.4.6. Embedding the Principles
- Developing an integrated victim management approach where care is tailored to the need of the individual, rather than a crime type
  - Learning from best practice within the county and nationally to develop an Integrated Victim Management Model, working with multiple agencies to develop a more victim-centred criminal justice system.

#### **6. Summary**

- 6.1. This paper sets out the PCC's vision and proposed timescales for the commissioning of local services. The intended outcomes of the commissioning approach in Hertfordshire are that:
- Victims of crime are supported to cope and recover (not just those who report crime);
  - Resources for supporting victims are managed efficiently and effectively;

- Work continues towards establishing communities with low crime rates and therefore a reduction in the number of victims, high levels of confidence in policing and engaged communities with high numbers of witnesses, and
- An integrated victim management approach is developed where care is tailored to the need of the individual, rather than a crime type.

#### 6.2. Overarching action points

- To put in place an inter-agency commissioning strategy which takes this vision forward. This must take into account the statutory obligations within The Victims Code and the EU Directive on the Minimum Standards, Rights, Support and Protection of Victims of Crime (specifically Articles 8 and 9 – See Annex 2).
- To create a clear one-page pledge for victims of crime in Hertfordshire based on this vision.