



**WEST YORKSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL**

**11 SEPTEMBER 2015**

**VICTIM SUPPORT SERVICES – 2015/16**

**Introduction**

This delivery plan sets out how the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) will allocate his Victim Support Services and other funding to continue his work in supporting victims and witnesses for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

The PCC became responsible for funding some victims support services from 1 October 2014 with an initial budget of £774,396. The PCC's Annual Report 2015 documents the services commissioned between then and 31 March 2015.

The PCC's budget for the financial year 2015-16 is £2,501,439 which includes funding for the core referral and local support services, and the Prisoners Earnings Act allocation previously commissioned by the Ministry of Justice.

With a focus of working with a wider range of partners and supporting the most vulnerable, intimidated, persistently targeted and hate crime victims this year's plan builds on those services. Service delivery draws on available evidence of need, local demand and any knowledge of what works in West Yorkshire particularly from the preparatory programme of work undertaken early last year.

**Accessing information and support for victims**

Knowing where to go for support for victims of crime is essential. The PCC is keen to provide services which will support to all victims whether or not they choose to report their crime to the police. The PCC has put in place the *Help for Victims Website* (<https://www.helpforvictims.co.uk>) which is an on-line resource for victims and practitioners which, includes questions and answers explaining the Victims' Code and Witness Charter. Over 400 organisations offering a huge range of generalist and specialist services are now listed and can be accessed by West Yorkshire communities. Information relating to services in the County needs to be reviewed and refreshed regularly to ensure victims are directed to organisation most appropriate to their needs.

The PCC will ensure that a one year review of the Help for Victim website is undertaken and that a quality check is undertaken to ensure the services listed continue to support victims. All existing and new services included on the site will be asked to complete a short questionnaire to enable this.

Working with our criminal justice partners the PCC now wishes to focus on ensuring that for those victims and witnesses going through the court process are able to access information on progression of their case.

It is now the PCC's intention to the expand *Help for Victims* website to include a case progression system to enable victims to access progress of their case through the wider criminal justice system.

### **Referral and local support services**

On 1 April 2015 the PCC worked with his colleagues in Humberside and South Yorkshire to fund Victim Support to continue their work of the Victim Care Unit based in Wakefield, West Yorkshire. The Unit receives information on victims of crime, where consent has been given, directly from each of the police forces on a daily basis, makes contact victims and refers them to the appropriate agency. Victim Support will also receive self-referrals from victims if they choose not to report their crime. As part of the contract Victim Support are also able to continue to provide support directly from their Local Support Services which includes trained officers and a network of volunteers.

This service was previously commissioned by the Ministry of Justice and became a responsibility of each PCC this year.

The PCC has with his colleagues in South Yorkshire and Humberside commissioned Victim Support to deliver their core referral system and local support services from 1 April 2015.

### **Supporting victims of sexual violence**

Sexual violence and abuse can cause severe and long-lasting harm to victims. The effects of sexual violence can include depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, drug and substance misuse, self-harm and suicide. However, when victims receive the support they need when they need it, they are more likely to be able to cope and take positive steps to recovery. It is important, therefore, that victims of rape and sexual violence have good support and access to effective services, whether or not they wish to report incidents to the police.

The PCC worked with a number of specialist partners to inform a service specification to procure an Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA) service which will work closely with the interim West Yorkshire Sexual Assault Referral Centre which also became operational on 1 April 2015.

From the 1 April 2015, the PCC commissioned an ISVA service is to provide a proactive service to women, men, and young people who are victims of rape and sexual violence and abuse, both current and historical. Through risk assessment and safety planning the service will enable victims to access the services they need and if victims choose to pursue their case ensure they are kept supported and informed as their cases progress through the criminal justice system.

In addition, the PCC will continue to work with partners who had previously been funded by the Ministry of Justice until the end of March 2016, and he will continue to review the evidence and work with partners to identify any further gaps in provision for victims of sexual violence.

The PCC has commissioned a West Yorkshire wide Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA) service for an initial two year period from 1 April 2015. The service will support all victims of all ages whether or not they choose to report their incident to the police. The service will work closely with the interim West Yorkshire Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) which was commissioned by NHS England, PCC and police force and became operational at the same time.

The PCC has continued, for this financial year to March 2016, to support the Jyoti Project (Bradford Rape Crisis) which has previously been funded by the Ministry of Justice which support female victims of sexual violence from the BAME communities in Bradford.

### **Supporting victims of domestic abuse**

A review of domestic abuse in West Yorkshire was undertaken as part of the preparatory programme of work by Nicola Hughes Consulting which highlighted a number of key areas and recommendations for the PCC.

The review supports the use of Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs) to provide support to medium and particularly high risk victims with complex needs but notes that there is a lack of capacity in current IDVA provision in West Yorkshire. This lack of capacity impacts for example on type of support offered, support through court attendance, length of support, and ability to undertake assertive engagement.

The five districts within West Yorkshire provide IDVAs within their local areas and this partnership work is essential and welcomed by the PCC, in some districts their resource is being expanded during this financial year.

Overall though current investment struggles to cover the support for the volume of victims. Work with and support for male victims, same sex couples, young people and more marginalized ethnic communities is also sporadic across the region.

The lack of IDVA support will directly impacts on ability to address victim attrition. The West Yorkshire LCJB review of attrition in 2013 highlighted a series of recommendations relating to improving attrition rates and court efficiencies. Attrition rates remain fairly static and a target was set of 23% which, in most districts has now been met. Key influencing factors for poor outcomes include:

- reluctance of the victim to proceed with the case
- victim fails to attend

IDVAs support victims in both these areas but there will be a series of reasons why a victim fails to attend or proceeds with a case including maintaining victim 'interest to proceed' during the length of time to trial – they may wish to 'move on'; over commitment of the courts to hearings which result in rescheduling, all can play its part in victims feeling that the system isn't prioritizing or supporting their case. The case progression system mentioned above

may also assist together with stronger partnership working with the wider criminal justice system.

Commissioning of services in all districts has primarily focused on medium/high risk victim support. Investment in prevention, standard/medium victim support and addressing offending is more limited across the county, the newly established Domestic Abuse Board for West Yorkshire coordinated by the PCC's office can assist in this respect. This group has recently undertaken a procurement exercise for a Perpetrator Programme using the PCC's £1m allocated to all districts for domestic abuse interventions.

The PCC will invest in IDVAs to ensure there is a service which **all victims** of domestic abuse can access whether or not they report their incident(s) to the police.

The PCC will continue to work with partners of the Local Criminal Justice Board to identify wider improvements for victims of domestic abuse.

The newly formed Domestic Abuse Board will be asked to consider further supporting early intervention and prevention and work with standard risk victims to complement the Perpetrator Programme which will become operation before the end of 2015.

The PCC will continue to work with the police force of West Yorkshire to ensure that the findings from the [HMIC inspection](#) are fulfilled.

As the Ministry of Justice had previously funded IDVA provision within Keighley Domestic Violence Service, the PCC has for this current financial year to end March 2016 continued to providing funding at the same level.

Supporting his work within the OPCC, the PCC has also committed resources for domestic abuse coordination, working with the Partnership Manager and the Domestic Abuse sub group to the Community Safety Partnership Forum to establish the Domestic Abuse Board which will meet for the first time in September.

### **Supporting victims using restorative practices (RP)/justice(RJ)**

Restorative processes bring those harmed by crime, and those responsible for the harm, into communication, enabling victims affected by a particular incident to play a part in repairing the harm and finding a positive way forward. RP offers victims an opportunity to be heard and to have a say in the resolution of offences, including agreeing rehabilitative or reparative activity for the offender. It can provide a means of closure and enable the victim to move on.

Within the Victim Support Services fund provided to the PCC an amount of £507,022 is identified for restorative justice, although this is not ring fenced.

In 2014 the PCC funded a number of projects as part of his Victims Services Preparatory Grant Programme and funded from the Victim Support Services fund the six month period from 1 October 2014. This included the commissioning of a report mapping existing initiatives, and analysing their strengths and weaknesses.

Taking the review findings, the PCC held a conference in February 2015 to consult stakeholders about the way forward, and then issued a consultation paper seeking further

views which came to an end in April 2015. Respondents were supportive of the proposals set out in the consultation paper. The PCC is therefore supportive of RP/J providing that:

- it is one of a range of options available to the victim, with objective information being provided to encourage meaningful choice and empowerment of the victim;
- the approach taken is a consistent one across West Yorkshire, so people know what they can expect regardless of what area they live in or with which of our diverse communities they identify;
- the offender must be willing to engage in the right spirit, with a genuine desire to take responsibility;
- those facilitating face to face dialogue need to be appropriately trained to do it in the right way;
- indirect communication between the victim and offender can play a useful role
- it can be made available at different points in the victim journey, although the current focus is on offering it post-sentence.

Highlighted in the review was the range of practice by partner organisations including community safety partnerships, police, prisons, and third sector throughout West Yorkshire and the PCC is keen to continue to work in partnership when delivering restorative practices.

### **Supporting victims of hate crime**

The PCC will commission a restorative justice project which will assist in enhanced working with those partners and will incorporate a West Yorkshire wide dimension towards coordination for victims.

For this financial year the PCC is funding restorative justice in HMP Leeds who are working with victims of post sentence offenders.

During the last financial year the PCC worked with the West Yorkshire Police to develop and promote the hate crime awareness campaign. Further work is required to provide confidence for victims of hate crime to come forward and report incidents.

Current PCC provision for supporting victims of hate crimes is primarily through specialist support workers within Victim Support, however, there is more that can be done to ensure all victims can access and receive the support they needs to help both cope and recover from their experiences.

Project scoping prior last year identified the following areas which will form a basis for spending decisions.

- Raising awareness of what hate crime is, how it can be reported and how people can access help
- Victims need support to feel able to come forward and report incidents/crimes
- Message needs to be reinforced that hate crime is not acceptable in any form
- People are able to access organisations they can trust and feel assured that hate crime will be dealt with appropriately.

Further work with partners will be undertaken to enable delivery options for victims of hate crime during autumn 2015

## **How the PCC will commission his victim support services fund for 2015/16**

In October 2013 the PCC published his Commissioning Framework [http://www.westyorkshire-pcc.gov.uk/media/52648/wypcc\\_commissioning\\_framework.pdf](http://www.westyorkshire-pcc.gov.uk/media/52648/wypcc_commissioning_framework.pdf) which sets the scene and describe differing options:

Commissioning though is not all about money: Securing better outcomes relies on a mix of activities from a range of partner organisations. Supporting a 'troubled family', for example, will involve the resources and assets of a range of agencies, the local community and buy-in from the family themselves. Very often therefore we are seeking to influence others through our commissioning, as well as commission direct.

Commissioning is not all about procurement: Delivery models, procurement strategies and contracting rules and regulations are important but commissioning is much wider. As much time as possible should be spent on understanding the need and seeking innovation from partners to maximise delivery of outcomes.

Options:

- Competitive procurement
- Devolving commissioning to communities or individuals
- Galvanising the way all partners working together to achieve shared outcomes
- Proving grants
- Transferring funding for others to deliver
- Procure full or part-cost recovery via charging

All delivery partners are asked to agree to the PCC's 10 principles for commissioning which were identified by partners in West Yorkshire:

1. Involve all communities
2. Work in partnership
3. Identify collaborative opportunities that can be delivered county-wide while meeting local need
4. Make decisions based on available evidence
5. Use people/organisations best suited to the task
6. Ensure quality standards across West Yorkshire
7. Identify shared priority areas for development
8. Be transparent and secure value for money
9. Safeguard vulnerability
10. Highlight the successes and innovation, decommission where initiatives are not working

## **Conclusion**

The PCC welcomes views from members of the Police and Crime Plan on his early thinking in providing support to victims as outlined above.