

## **APPROACH TO COMMISSIONING OF SERVICES FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME**

### **Section 1 – Introduction**

1. This document sets out the approach taken to the commissioning of local victims' services<sup>1</sup>. The approach set out is consistent with the mandatory requirements relating to victims' services and in particular the new Code of Practice for Victims of Crime<sup>2</sup> which establishes minimum standards of services to be provided to victims of criminal conduct by criminal justice organisations in England and Wales.

### **Section 2 - Victims of Crime**

2. The MoJ Code of Practice for Victims of Crime defines a victim as:
  - *a person who has suffered harm, including physical, mental or emotional harm or economic loss which was directly caused by criminal conduct;*
  - *close relatives of a person whose death was directly caused by criminal conduct.*
3. Victims are entitled to access services regardless of whether:
  - the crime has been reported;
  - the victim cooperates with the investigation;
  - anyone has been charged or convicted of an offence relating to the criminal conduct.

### **Section 3 – Identifying the needs of victims of crime**

4. Decisions on the services to be commissioned will be informed by following information:
  - Suffolk PCC Local Policing and Crime Survey 2013.
  - Victims' Survey 2014 – commissioned from Victim Support by the Suffolk PCC.
  - Suffolk Constabulary – Interim Strategic Needs Assessment.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 143 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 provides that PCCs may provide, or arrange for the provision of, services to help victims, witnesses, or other persons affected by offences or anti-social behaviour. Consequently the majority of victims' services are now commissioned locally by Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs).

<sup>2</sup> Code of Practice for Victims of Crime. Ministry of Justice, October 2013

- Victim Support thematic study “Listening and Learning: Improving Support for Victims in Suffolk”(2012).
  - Research commissioned by the Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) regarding the experiences of victims of domestic violence with the criminal justice system.
  - Research on Domestic Violence ‘Unmet Need’ commissioned in 2014 by the County Domestic Abuse Forum and funded by the Suffolk PCC.
  - ‘Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board – Joint Strategic Needs Assessment’ (as relating to the Sexual Assault Referral Centre ‘SARC’). 2014.
  - Suffolk Constabulary’s performance against the Suffolk PCC’s Police and Crime Plan.
  - Research carried out for the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Competed Funds exercise conducted in Summer 2014.
  - Knowledge and experience gained as a result of the award of grants from the PCC’s Victims’ Preparatory Fund.
  - Knowledge and experience developed as a result of the award of Crime and Disorder Reduction Grants to victims’ services providers.
  - Findings and/or recommendations of Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary regarding the quality and standards of service that Suffolk victims of crime receive.
  - Local Criminal Justice Board Victims and Witnesses Sub Group Gap Analyses regarding the extent to which agencies are satisfying their responsibilities in relation to the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime.
  - Other information regarding services provided to victims of crime (e.g. reports to Suffolk Constabulary, consultation with victims, etc.).
5. The commissioning process therefore endeavours to ensure that all victims of crime are able to access a service that is appropriate to their needs.
  6. The above exercise also supports an understanding of the services available to victims of crime and any gaps or duplication of services.

### **Section 3 - Commissioning of services for victims of crime**

7. Services will be commissioned on the basis of the outcomes it will deliver (e.g. supporting victims to ‘cope’ with the immediate impacts of crime and ‘recover’ from the harm experienced). The conditions of award for every grant will specify the proposed outcomes for the service along with any additional output measurements which will be helpful for providing an overall picture as to the effectiveness of interventions as well as the level of demand across the county.
8. Commissioning of services will therefore be prioritised as follows:
  - Initial referral, assessment and support (following referral from the police and other agencies, and self-referral).

This service will be provided by a Victim Assessment and Referral Centre (VARC). In many instances this initial support will satisfy victims’ needs and help them cope and recover without further intervention. Following referral by

the police (and/or other agencies, or self-referral) the VARC will, within 24 hours, make contact with the victims of specific crime categories to offer support. Where appropriate the VARC will assess victims' needs and if considered necessary, and with the victim's agreement, an onward referral will be made to a specialist victims' service provider who is able to support them and help them cope and recover.

- **Enhanced services**

The MoJ Code of Practice for Victims of Crime requires that in addition to the initial referral and assessment services for victims, enhanced levels of service, (e.g. specialist support) should also be made available to the following victims of crime:

- *victims of the most serious crime;*
  - *persistently targeted victims and vulnerable; and*
  - *intimidated victims.*
- Other services as determined necessary by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner depending on local circumstances.

## 9. Enhanced services

10. In 2014/15 in response to evidence identifying that there was a significant unmet demand for services for victims of domestic violence and serious sexual offences, all of whom are entitled to enhanced services, the PCC awarded a number of grants to victims' services bodies to help build capacity and capability in these vital services across the county. One such area was that of the provision of Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs). IDVAs are responsible for supporting high risk victims of domestic violence. As a consequence the PCC will commission a new county wide service commencing in 2015. The commissioning of this service for highly vulnerable victims means that a vast proportion of the victims' services budget will be committed to this desperately needed service.

11. The PCC's commissioning intentions will be informed by the process described at Section 2, and will be primarily aimed at (a) fulfilling the requirement to provide services for victims who are entitled to enhanced services, and (b) addressing any gaps in service provision. Commissioning decisions will be made on the basis of those which are considered to have the greatest likelihood of delivering the best possible outcome, in terms of helping victims to cope and recover from their experience. Services will be commissioned via an open, competed process or through the award of a victims' services grant.

12. In addition to the criteria set out above service providers who can fulfil the below criteria will be welcomed:

- **Innovation** - an innovative approach to delivering victims' services;
- **Working in partnership/collaboration** - working in partnership or collaboration with one or more additional victims' services providers;
- **Hard to reach/hear groups** – services that are aimed at supporting victims from hard to reach/hear groups;
- **Gaps in services** – services that will address an unmet need/gap in services.

13. Commissioning decisions will be published on the PCC's website ([www-suffolk-pcc.gov.uk](http://www-suffolk-pcc.gov.uk)).

#### **Section 4 - Monitoring of services**

14. Performance of service providers will be regularly reviewed and monitored against the proposed outcomes/outputs. Where appropriate, services will be assessed using the perceptions of victims of crime in terms of their satisfaction with the services and the extent to which they have been supported to cope and recover. Value for money and efficiency will also feature in the evaluation of services and commissioning of services. All monitoring reports will be published on the PCC's website.

15. The PCC will regularly consult with other stakeholders regarding their views on the effectiveness of victims' services in Suffolk.