

ORIGINATOR: HEAD OF COMMISSIONING

DECISION NO. 20 - 2020

REASON FOR SUBMISSION: FOR DECISION

SUBMITTED TO: POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

**SUBJECT: FUNDING FOR ADDITIONAL INDEPENDENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE
ADVISORS 2020 - 2022**

SUMMARY:

1. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner worked with Suffolk Constabulary and The Ferns Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) to bid to the Ministry of Justice for increased Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) capacity in Suffolk.
2. The Ministry of Justice subsequently granted funding for 1.81 FTE ISVAs in Suffolk amounting to £34,535 for the period October 2020 to March 2021 and £71,716 for 2021/22.
3. The funding will support delivery of the current Police and Crime Plan and the delivery of activity under the terms of the Ministry of Justice Victim Services Grant 2020/21 (Grant Addendum Notice Number 1).

RECOMMENDATION:

1. It is recommended that the PCC uses additional Ministry of Justice grant funding to support 1.81 (Full Time Equivalent) Independent Sexual Violence Advisor posts for the period 1 October 2020 until 31 March 2022.

APPROVAL BY THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

The recommendation set out is agreed.



Signature

Date 20.08.2020

DETAIL OF THE SUBMISSION

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In accordance with the provisions in the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 the Police and Crime Commissioner can commission services that:
- secure, or contribute to securing, crime and disorder reduction in Suffolk;
 - are intended to help victims or witnesses of, or other persons affected by, offences and anti-social behaviour.
- 1.2 This report seeks approval to use Ministry of Justice grant funding to support 1.81FTE Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) posts for the period 1 October 2020 until 31 March 2022.

2. FUNDING FOR ADDITIONAL ISVAs

- 2.1 Reported sexual violence offences in Suffolk remain high with 2,083 serious sexual offences recorded in the last 12 months, an increase of 20.1% on the 3 year average. Suffolk has the second highest number of SV offences compared to most similar forces with 3.5 crimes per 1,000 population. In 52.3% of cases the victim does not support police investigation¹.

Independent Sexual Violence Advisors

- 2.2 Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) are victim focussed advocates who provide pro-active services to victims of sexual violence through risk assessment and safety planning. They play a critical role in ensuring that victims feel informed, supported and engaged throughout every stage of the criminal justice process.
- 2.3 ISVAs provide emotional and practical support, support before, during and after Criminal and Civil Court Proceedings, act as a Single Point of Contact from other services and agencies and provide accurate and impartial information to victims. Outreach including home visits, advocacy support and Court visits.
- 2.4 The support provided is direct contact, telephone contact and referral to specialist support working with clients throughout their journey including support through the court process if applicable.

Current ISVA Provision in Suffolk

- 2.5 In June 2020 there were eight trained ISVAs based at a dedicated Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) 'The Ferns' in Suffolk, but working countywide to support victims of sexual assault and rape.
- 2.6 The Ferns is commissioned by NHS England (East) Health and Justice and Suffolk Constabulary. The PCC directly commissions other voluntary sector services to provide support for victims of sexual violence (counselling and therapy).
- 2.7 Support is provided to all referrals for service that come into the SARC in regard to penetrative and non-penetrative sexual assault. The majority of referrals to the ISVA service are through the SARC (having originated mainly from Suffolk Constabulary) but the service supports all victims, whether or not they have reported to the police.
- 2.8 There were 259 referrals to the ISVA service during the past 6 months and caseloads increased during the Covid-19 pandemic to 35-40 active cases for each ISVA.

¹ Suffolk Constabulary Performance Report July 2020 AP20/25.

- 2.9 ISVAs make contact as soon as possible after receiving a referral but at least within five working days to discuss the pathways for support and future contact.

Ministry of Justice ISVA funding

- 2.10 In September 2019 the Government announced a £1m per annum investment in recruiting more ISVAs alongside an increase in funding for specialist rape support services.
- 2.11 The purpose of this funding is to increase ISVA support provision in areas of need to ensure victims receive consistent, high-quality support that meets their needs and provides clarity on the criminal justice process (where pursued), so they feel informed and supported at every stage.
- 2.12 The Ministry of Justice invited PCCs to send an expression of interest (EOI) for recruitment of additional ISVAs in February 2020. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk worked with Suffolk Constabulary and The Ferns to submit an EOI but was not successful in securing funding at that point due to the fund being oversubscribed. In June the MOJ requested that unsuccessful bids be resubmitted as further funding had been secured.
- 2.13 The EOI was resubmitted with data that suggested that serious sexual offending had increased, supporting the case for additional ISVA resource. The service anticipated an increase in demand as lock down measures ease, and this view is also held by the specialist Sexual Violence charities that operate in Suffolk. In light of current and anticipated demand the focus of additional ISVA resource would be to maintain high quality support to all clients in the first instance followed by the partnership working and prevention work where workload allows.
- 2.14 Funding for 1.81 FTE ISVAs at a cost of £34,535 for 2020/21 and £71,716 for 2021/22 was subsequently awarded from the Ministry of Justice to the PCC.

Police and Crime Plan

- 2.15 As well as fulfilling the MOJ intentions the funding supports the delivery of Objectives 2 and 3 in the Police and Crime Plan 2017-2021 and in particular:
- Commissioning services which support victims to cope and recover;
 - Ensuring that the most vulnerable victims receive appropriate high quality support from commissioned victims' services in accordance with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime;
 - Raising awareness of crime that is hidden from sight, so that our most vulnerable victims have the trust and confidence to report crimes;
 - Monitoring the experience and satisfaction of victims of sexual abuse to ensure they receive appropriate high-quality support from commissioned victims' services in accordance with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime;
 - Work in partnership to improve the whole system for victims (sexual abuse).

3. MONITORING AND OUTCOMES

- 3.1 The PCC's Head of Commissioning attends the quarterly SARC Strategic Board where an update on ISVA activity is provided.

- 3.2 A 6 month and year end report will be required from the ISVA service in order to satisfy the Ministry of Justice requirements set out in the Victim Services grant agreement. A template for reporting is provided by the MOJ.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Ministry of Justice have confirmed funding of £34,535 for 2020/21 and £71,716 for 2021/22. This will be administered through a grant addendum to the main Victim Services grant for 2020/21 that the MOJ have with the PCC. The grant agreement for 2021/22 will include the additional funding for ISVAs.
- 4.2 The funding will be transferred to the SARC/ISVA budget line to support the specified ISVA posts. Any underspend will be notified to the Head of Commissioning and returned to the MOJ as set out in the grant agreement.
- 4.3 It has been agreed that the existing ISVA service budget will cover the cost of recruitment, ISVA expenses, clinical supervision, training and management.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

- 5.1 An assessment of risk in delivery of the service has been undertaken. There are no major implications or risks associated with this decision paper.
- 5.2 The funding will cease on 31 March 2022 and the MOJ has indicated that any extension or re-competition of the funding post April 2022 is dependent on the outcome of the Spending Review. This is to be reflected in the posts being employed on the basis of a short term contract.
- 5.3 Should there be any risk to the service being delivered, the SARC manager is required to notify the PCC.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 It is recommended that the PCC uses additional Ministry of Justice grant funding to support 1.81 (Full Time Equivalent) Independent Sexual Violence Advisor posts for the period 1 October 2020 until 31 March 2022.

ORIGINATOR CHECKLIST (MUST BE COMPLETED)	PLEASE STATE 'YES' OR 'NO'
Has legal advice been sought on this submission?	Yes
Has the PCC's Chief Finance Officer been consulted?	Yes
Have equality, diversity and human rights implications been considered including equality analysis, as appropriate?	Yes
Have human resource implications been considered?	Yes
Is the recommendation consistent with the objectives in the Police and Crime Plan?	Yes
Has consultation been undertaken with people or agencies likely to be affected by the recommendation?	Yes
Has communications advice been sought on areas of likely media interest and how they might be managed?	Yes
Have all relevant ethical factors been taken into consideration in developing this submission?	Yes

In relation to the above, please ensure that all relevant issues have been highlighted in the 'other implications and risks' section of the submission.

APPROVAL TO SUBMIT TO THE DECISION-MAKER

Chief Executive

I am satisfied that relevant advice has been taken into account in the preparation of the report and that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the PCC.

Signature: 

Date 19.08.2020