

From: Ann Barnes, Kent Police and Crime Commissioner
To: Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel
Subject: Support for Victims

Summary:

This paper aims to provide information on the national changes to the commissioning of victim support services and delivery of victim support services locally.

Background:

1. The critical nature of support services for victims is acknowledged within the Police & Crime Plan, as there is a clear priority to place victims at the heart of the criminal justice system. However, it must be acknowledged that support services for victims cannot be delivered in isolation. Collaboration across partner agencies and the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector provide enhanced and effective services for victims.
2. The Commissioner has two specific co-operative duties under the Police & Social Responsibility Act 2011, which support the ethos of partnership working in delivering effective support services. The community safety duty specifies that the Commissioner and the responsible authorities named within the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 must act in co-operation with each other in exercising functions conferred in the act. The criminal justice duty states that the Commissioner and criminal justice bodies in the Police area 'must make arrangements for the exercise of functions so as to provide an efficient and effective criminal justice system for the police area'.
3. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) currently commission Victim Support nationally to deliver the initial referral service and onward support for victims. This arrangement includes the mechanism for the secure transfer of victim's data from the Police to Victim Support. Contact is then made with the victim, with a needs assessment undertaken as required. Where further support is required a referral is made to specialist service provision or Victim Support at an area level. In Kent 29,442 victims of crime were referred by Kent Police to Victim Support by the secure transfer during 2012 -13.
4. Victim's services, including Victim Support is currently in receipt of £38m per annum grant, of which core victims services represent c£22m. Victim Support is an organisation that is built on its volunteers, with volunteers outnumbering staff five to one. These volunteers are an extremely valuable and important resource in supporting victims of crime. In addition, under the current arrangements individual local providers receive funding from the MoJ and this would need to be worked through in the final devolved arrangements for PCCs.

National Changes to Support Services for Victims:

5. The MoJ has set out its intention for Police & Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to take responsibility for the commissioning of victims support services. The ASB, Policing & Crime Bill (which is expected to have Royal Assent in spring 2014) will provide the legislative powers for PCCs to commission services for victims. Funding will be provided through section 56 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004, which enables the Secretary of State to 'pay such grants to persons as they considers

appropriate in connection with measures which appear to them to be intended to assist victims, witness or other persons affected by offences’.

6. The MoJ will continue to commission the following services nationally,
 - Human Trafficking
 - Homicide Service
 - Rape Support Centres
 - Specialist Domestic Violence / Sexual Violence Centres
 - Court Based Witness Service
 - Telephone helplines
 - VCSE capability and capacity
7. The changes to how support services for victims will be commissioned will impact on the initial referral mechanism for victims. The MoJ is currently consulting with Commissioners on their preferences for initial referral, with the options being maintain the national model or for initial referral to be delivered through local commissioning. The outcome of this consultation will impact on the level of funding made available to each Commissioner.
8. Indicative budgets are expected in the coming weeks, with final budgets being provided in April 2014. Due to the current limited funding information and details on case volumes it is difficult to undertake effective planning at this stage.
9. Commissioners are due to take over the commissioning of support services for victims from October 2014 and the contracts of existing MoJ commissioned services for victims have been extended to this date. The engagement process for those services in Kent currently being commissioned by the MoJ will need to be considered in the future planning, as there are potential risk management issues.
10. As a result of the discussions between the MoJ and Commissioners concerning the initial referral process for victims and the need to maintain effective service delivery a transition plan will be developed by early 2014. This will ensure that there is a managed move from the current arrangements to those that will be delivered by Commissioners.

Delivery of Support Services for Victims in Kent:

11. The Police & Crime Plan includes the pledge to put victims at the heart of the criminal justice system and the Commissioner is progressing delivery through joint working with partner agencies. In particular, this involves working with Kent Criminal Justice Board (KCJB) who also has a strategic priority of ‘enhancing the victim experience sustainably’.
12. The Commissioner and the KCJB co-sponsored a Victim Services Design event July 2013. This event was aimed at identifying the gaps in service that victims receive within the criminal justice system and make recommendations to improve existing victim services.
13. The event was attended by a mixture of partner agencies involved in delivering victim’s services including the Police, Her Majesties Courts and Tribunal Service, Victim Support, Crown Prosecution Service and specialist victim support services. Those in attendance

designed the ideal future state for victim's services, which consisted of a number of key elements. Those elements include, the victim being at the heart of the process, that expectations should be managed and support should be designed based on the individual rather than defined by crime type.

14. Discussions are taking place with KCJB on the outcomes of the event, which includes the scoping of delivery options. This includes the option for implementing a victim's centre approach, which would provide a 'one stop shop' service for victims. These options will also take into consideration the commissioning changes that are taking place nationally for victims to ensure that processes are aligned.