

**From:** Ann Barnes, Kent Police and Crime Commissioner  
**To:** Kent Police and Crime Panel  
**Subject:** Victim Services – implementation of Commissioners new commissioning responsibilities  
**Item & Date:** Item B1, 9 September, 2014

## **Introduction**

1. The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) will be devolving responsibility for the commissioning of victim support services to Police & Crime Commissioners from October 2014. Currently, the MOJ issue various grants for victim services in two key areas. Firstly, the MOJ issue the Victim Support charity with a grant to deliver a national service which provides the initial referral mechanism for victims into support services and the community led support for victims of crime. This national grant will cease in October 2014 and Police & Crime Commissioners will assume responsibility for commissioning this service for their local area. Due to the tight timescales for Commissioners to have in place local arrangements it has been agreed that Victim Support will continue to deliver their current service in all areas, apart from those designated as Early Adopters, until 31 March 2015.
2. Secondly, and in addition to the grant to Victim Support, the MOJ has provided grant funding to other specialist victim support providers operating in Kent. This funding will also be devolved to Commissioners in October 2014.
3. The Commissioner is committed to ensuring that victims receive a quality service and this is reflected throughout the Police & Crime Plan. In July 2013 the Commissioner and the Kent Criminal Justice Board delivered a Victim Services Design event, which was attended by professionals from criminal justice agencies and support service providers. This event looked at identifying the opportunities to improve existing services and understand the gaps in current service provision. The key gaps and issues identified during this event included,
  - Extensive contact across the agencies
  - No single point of contact for victims
  - Cross-over in statutory and support service responsibilities
  - Not enough focus on the victim
  - Offender driven triggers
  - Limited information sharing agreements
  - No agreed standards and accountability across partner agencies
4. The Design Event was pivotal in highlighting the gaps in current service delivery, both across the criminal justice agencies and support services. It also highlighted that there were significant opportunities to improve and build upon current victim services delivery. In particular, it highlighted that future services should be tailored to the individual and their needs rather than the crime they had experienced and the criminal justice processes. In addition, future services should, as much as possible, prevent duplication, manage expectations and improve multi agency co-ordination. To take these ambitions forward the event developed the concept of a Victims' Centre. This centre would enable enhanced multi agency working, which is tailored to the individual and aligns the victim's criminal justice journey with their support needs.
5. The devolution of funding has enabled the Commissioner to align the commitment to deliver a quality service for victims with the concept of the Victims' Centre and centred approach. However, Commissioners are required to have local services in place by 1 April 2015 and procurement law requires that a formal contract for support to victims be competitively tendered. However, due to deadline for services and the concept of the Victims' Centre being in development, a single tender, for a short period, with the existing provider will be progressed. This will allow a robust longer term specification to be developed which accords with the ambitions of the Design Event and crucially allows a better understanding of the current victim support offer.

6. Accordingly, the delivery of the Victims' centred approach has been divided into two phases. Whilst these are two distinct phases they will be delivered in tandem to ensure that development opportunities are not constrained by the timing of the phases. Partnership working is fundamental to delivery of both phases and this will be core thread throughout developments.

### **Phase One**

7. Phase one is focused on the following,
- The commissioning of victim support service providers for 2014/15 and 2015/16
  - The co-location of the victim support service provider with the Kent Police Witness Care Unit.
  - The physical building
8. To prepare for the commissioning of victims' services and the victims' centred approach the South East Region Police & Crime Commissioners co-commissioned Victim Focus Groups and a Victims Services Needs Assessment by Portsmouth University.
9. Kent held four Victims Focus Groups which consisted of a mix of gender, age, backgrounds and crime type experienced. The groups explored their experiences of crime, the criminal justice system and support requirements. In addition to the groups, in-depth telephone surveys were also undertaken. The findings from this work have provided a detailed understanding of the victims' views from first point of contact, the criminal justice system and provision of support services. The key findings can be distilled into the following
- I want to be recognised as an individual in the system
  - I have personal needs
  - I want to have my say
  - I want some ownership of the process
10. The Victims Services Needs Assessment by Portsmouth University is currently being finalised but it includes, an audit of existing services, mapping of the victims journey and recommendations to improve the services for victims. There are a number of recommendations identified for Kent which will inform the development of the commissioning plans for victims' services. In particular, the needs assessment has recommended the need for a model that provides victims of crime with one point of contact for information, support and referral to specialist support services.
11. The current national Victim Support service will continue until 31 March 2015, with Police & Crime Commissioners taking a more active role in the oversight of their work from 1 October 2014. This oversight will include the provision of performance management information from Victim Support.
12. From 1 April 2015 Police & Crime Commissioners will be required to have arrangements in place for delivery the initial referral mechanism for victims into support services, community led support and specialist support services i.e. trauma counselling. Kent has been in discussions with the South East Region Police & Crime Commissioners on a collaborative approach to commissioning victim services. However, to accord with the ambitions of the Design Event and ensure there is a locally tailored service for Kent's victims, the decision has been made to commission services locally. This will support improved value for money as resources will be dedicated to Kent services and will enable an approach that is tailored to the individual and therefore provide greater opportunity to support victims in coping and recovering from the crime they have experienced. It will also allow for the risks associated with the commissioning of a new service to be managed locally rather than through a wider regional structure.
13. Due to the phased approach and the need to fully understand the current victim support offer it has been decided to progress a single tender with Victim Support from the 1 April 2015 for 12 months with the option of a 6 month extension. This will ensure continuity of service delivery for victims but also enable an enhanced service to be delivered, which is aligned to the longer term vision.

14. In addition to the Victim Support contract there will be the ability to commission specialist victim support services and restorative justice services. The Commissioning Plan for both these areas is currently in development and will incorporate initial six month support for those Kent based specialist support services in receipt of MOJ funding until 1 October 2014.
15. A core element of developing the victims' centred approach is delivery of the Victims' Centre building which will enable the co-location of Victim Support and the Police Witness Care Unit and will support the longer term phase two developments. A scoping exercise and business case was undertaken to consider the options for the building which included looking at available Kent Police Estate which is independent from the main Police Station, rental and purchase of an external building and the use of a modular building solution.
16. As a result of the scoping the Old Court House at Ashford was identified as the most viable option for the Victims' Centre. The benefits of this building include,
  - It re-uses under-utilised Kent Police Estate
  - It is not in mainstream Police Estate
  - It minimises the need for staff re-location as both Victim Support and Witness Care Unit are currently located in Ashford.
17. The Victims' Centre will have provision for public access, including counselling rooms, video link suite and reception / information area. In addition, there will be a multi-agency training room and hot desk areas available. Whilst the centre will be located in Ashford phase two developments will look at developing wider satellite access points for victims across the county.
18. The co-location of Victim Support and Witness Care Unit brings significant benefits for service delivery for victims and will provide a strong foundation on which to build phase two developments, enable closer working and provide quality service for victims. The benefits of this co-location include
  - Improved information exchange and case management
  - Services tailored to the individual
  - Reduced duplication
  - Improved pooling of multi-agency skills and expertise
  - Alignment of the victims support journey with their journey through the criminal justice system.
19. There is a small Project Board and Working Group in place to oversee and progress the phase one developments. In addition, the Commissioner is proposing to set up a strategic Kent Victims' Board, which will oversee both phase one and two developments.

## **Phase two**

20. Phase two will be delivered in tandem to phase one, which will ensure that development opportunities can be progressed at the point of identification. It will also ensure that phase one developments take into consideration sustainability for the longer term victims' centred approach.
21. Phase two is focused on developing the victim centred approach across the broader criminal justice system and will look to develop effective and efficient services for victims, which is tailored to the individual, whilst recognising the statutory requirements of criminal justice agencies and the capacity and capability of victim support organisations.
22. Phase two will have three key strands. First; identification of the key operational adjustments that individual partners can make individually or collectively to improve the victims experience. Second, the over-arching longer term governance arrangement to maintain focus and momentum and third the development of longer term specification for victim services to be tendered during 2015. This third element is a procurement imperative but needs to be an enabler rather than an inhibitor to the broader vision.

23. A firm commitment has been made to partner agencies to help co-design phase two, as a quality service to victims cannot be delivered in isolation. Liaison is currently being undertaken with the Kent Criminal Justice Board to define the approach to co-design.
24. A follow up workshop has recently been held with the original Victim Services Design event attendees to provide an update on the phased delivery approach but to also to define the quick wins and longer term vision for the victims' centre approach. The outcomes from this workshop will inform the project plan for phase two and include
- Organisational considerations such as resourcing
  - Long term investments
  - Information requirements

