

From: Matthew Scott, Kent Police and Crime Commissioner
To: Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel
Subject: Support for Victims
Date: 15 November 2016



Introduction:

1. This paper follows the report on victim services that the Panel received on 15 November 2015. As noted in previous papers Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) were given responsibility for the commissioning of victim support services in October 2014. This required PCCs to ensure that a core support service was in place for victims of crime regardless of whether their crime had been reported to the police. In addition, specialist services also needed to be made available for victims with more complex needs.
2. The PCC, through his Police and Crime Plan is committed to providing services to victims and witnesses that treats them as an individual and has the ability to be tailored to their individual needs. In addition, the services should support them in not only dealing with the often complex criminal justice system but empower them to cope and recover from the impact of the crime they have suffered.
3. The Kent victim services commissioning approach consists of the following and this report is structured accordingly:
 - National Commissioning Changes;
 - Compass House;
 - Core Victim Service; and
 - Specialist Victim Services.

National Commissioning Changes:

4. Currently support services for victims and witnesses of crime are commissioned or grant funded under a mixed national and local model through both the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and Home Office. In May 2016, the Minister for Policing, Fire, Criminal Justice and Victims wrote to PCCs seeking their views on the devolution of the remaining nationally commissioned victim's services. This reflects the government's commitment to devolution and giving local people more control over the decisions that affect them.
5. The services under discussion for devolution include:
 - Adult victims of modern slavery;
 - Families bereaved by homicide and road traffic crime;
 - Victims of terrorism;
 - Victims of female and male rape and sexual violence; and
 - Victims and witnesses at criminal courts.
6. In addition, the MOJ have developed a Victims' Information Service, including a telephone number and website which provides signposting and support to victims at a national level (<https://www.victimsinformation.service.org.uk/>). Plus TrackMyCrime which enables victims to access progress updates on the investigation of the crime they have reported.
7. Discussions regarding the devolution of these services are ongoing with continued engagement taking place between the MOJ and PCCs. However, in order to ensure continuity of service for victims and witnesses, grant funding to the services subject to discussion has been extended into 2017/18.

Compass House:

8. Compass House was launched in June 2015 and is the co-located hub for victim services in Kent. It aims to provide a facility where victim's services can locate on a permanent or ad hoc basis providing greater collaboration. Victim Support, as the commissioned service provider, and Kent Police's Witness Care Unit (WCU) were the first organisations to permanently co-locate in April 2015. This co-location has resulted in greater information sharing and joint working, which is of direct benefit to the services being provided to victims. It should be noted that victims are not required to visit Compass House to access support as the services are delivered within Kent's communities.

9. To further develop the services delivered from Compass House, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) facilitated the permanent co-location of the Citizens Advice Court Based Witness Service. This is one of the nationally commissioned services being considered for devolution, but they work exceptionally closely with the WCU, including providing support to the vulnerable victim/witness live link suites located at Compass House. This co-location took place in May 2016 and has further enhanced the collaboration between nationally and locally commissioned services for the benefit of victims and witnesses.
10. Compass House provides a number of public access facilities including counselling rooms, vulnerable victim/witness live link suites, hot desk facilities and a training room. These facilities are utilised on a regular basis by organisations, free of charge, that support victims of crime in Kent. Examples include:
 - Rubicon Cares which provides specialist one to one trauma counselling to those affected by crime in Kent and Medway, including children and young people. There are currently three counsellors who use the counselling rooms up to three days a week to meet with clients.
 - Family Matters which delivers specialist counselling to both children and adult survivors of sexual abuse and rape. They have been, and continue to use the counselling rooms regularly, on average two days a week.
 - Ashford Mediation Service (AMS) which helps with disputes between neighbours, families and in the workplace. AMS are using Compass House more regularly to meet with clients and utilise the training room to provide group training.
 - Kent Domestic Abuse Consortia (KDAC) uses the hot desk facilities once a week but often more frequently. They use the facilities to support liaison with the permanently co-located agencies, with generally one Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) in attendance. They have also recently enquired if they can use the counselling rooms to meet with clients.
11. The Victims' Panel, which is made up of victims who have experienced a variety of crime types including serious offences, originally chose the name Compass House and supported the design of the public access areas. The Panel continues to support the delivery of victim services in Kent and options to attract new members are regularly explored. Recent work undertaken by the Panel includes responding to the integrated domestic abuse commissioning consultation to support inclusion of the victim's voice, and reviewing various literature provided to victims such as the support to court booklet and Restorative Justice (RJ) leaflet. In addition, the Panel has supported HM Courts and Tribunal Service in a review of Magistrates and Crown Court victim and witness facilities to provide low or zero cost improvement options.
12. There are two vulnerable victim/witness live link suites in Compass House, which enables vulnerable, particularly young children, or intimidated witnesses, to give evidence in a safe environment away from the court and hostile defendants. Use of the suites is co-ordinated by the WCU and every effort is made to simulate the court environment, including ensuring witnesses are supported within the suites by volunteers from the Witness Service. The suite is subject to regular review to ensure the facilities continue to provide a high standard of service to victims of crime, which has resulted in some recent enhancements. Feedback on use has been extremely positive, with victims highlighting how they appreciated not having to attend the court venue itself and reducing all the additional worries and anxieties that this can bring.

Core Victim Service:

13. In the summer of 2015 the OPCC launched a formal competitive Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) tendering exercise for the core victim services contract. This was to replace a 12 month grant agreement that was awarded to Victim Support to deliver services from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.
14. The tendering process commenced in February 2015 with the issuing of the Prior Information Notice (PIN) which indicated to the market the intention to seek a lead partner to provide innovative and tailored local services to meet the needs of victims of crime in Kent. In addition, the partner would be required to co-locate within Compass House, whilst delivering outreach services in Kent.

15. The specification was informed by the 12 month grant agreement and resulted in a number of enhancements. These included increasing the number of victims eligible to access services, a more flexible and dynamic approach for victims to access and engage with the service, including the provision of an outreach service, and the ability to tailor responses rather than a 'one size fits all' approach.
16. As a result of the competitive tendering process Victim Support were awarded the contract in December 2015, with the service going live on 1 April 2016. The contract length is for three years with the option to extend yearly for a subsequent three years.
17. Under this new model there are greater numbers of victims able to access support, which can be evidenced through the referral numbers. In the last year of the previous MOJ service 32,683 cases were created for victims of crime resident in Kent, but during the 12 month grant agreement 67,717 cases were created. At the mid-point of this financial year, Victim Support have received 40,708 cases.
18. In terms of victim satisfaction for the service being delivered by Victim Support, 100% would recommend the service to someone impacted by crime and 96% said the Victim Support work had helped them cope and recover more quickly. Positive comments received on the service include:
 - Understanding, unbiased, very supportive and reassuring.
 - Good to talk to someone external and non-judgemental.
 - Helped me move on from the crime.
 - I didn't realise what happened was a crime so I have new knowledge and feel more informed.
 - Knowledgeable quick response.
19. Victim Support is also developing Compass Points, which provide a discrete service in communities with volunteers to enable a more visible local presence. There was a soft launch of Compass Points across the first six months of the year to allow an understanding of the right locations and environments. This approach will further develop to target those people who might be in a controlling or coercive relationship and therefore unable to access support by other means.

Specialist Victim Services:

20. Whilst Victim Support provides the core support service in Kent, there is also a need to ensure appropriate specialist support services are in place, such as trauma counselling and support for sexual assault victims. These specialist services need to work in collaboration with the core support service to ensure there are effective referral pathways for victims to access the right services.
21. In March 2016, the Specialist Victim Services fund was launched to enable specialist providers to bid to deliver services which would support particular specialist areas. The intentions of this funding approach were to provide an opportunity to support continuity of specialist service delivery from 1 April 2016, address potential gaps in support services and ensure the core service had appropriate referral pathways available. The service providers were asked to submit bids to deliver one or more of the following:
 - Therapeutic services and trauma counselling;
 - Support for hate crime;
 - Support for children and young people;
 - Support for male victims of crime, particularly harm related;
 - Child sexual assault services.
22. Examples of successful projects being delivered through this funding include:
 - Support for victims of hate crime who have autism or learning difficulties;
 - Support for adolescent male victims of domestic abuse;
 - Support for male victims of domestic abuse;
 - Support for children and young victims of rape and sexual abuse.
23. Details of all the organisations awarded funding can be found at <https://www.kent-pcc.gov.uk/victims-funds.html>.

24. In addition to the Specialist Victim Services funding, the OPCC has also developed bespoke projects for particular victim groups, examples include:

- Support to children of domestic abuse victims.
- A collaborative commissioning approach between Victim Support and KDAC to deliver initial telephone support to medium risk domestic abuse victims and an onward referral service for support in the community.
- Interim solution for the provision of counselling services to victims of sexual assault and longer term planning with NHS England regarding the provision of Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs), for both children and adults.
- Interim RJ solution for both adults and young people and working towards developing a longer term solution to enable access to RJ opportunities, particularly from a victim initiated perspective.
- Developing links between the integrated domestic abuse commissioning activity being undertaken by Kent County Council and the core victim services contract being delivered by Victim Support.