



Victims Services Review Executive Summary



May 2022

The Victims Team

Contents	
Introduction	3
Summary of recommendations	4
Scope	5
Methodology	5
Reported Crime	6
Commissioned Victims Services	7
In-house Services	8
Survey Results	10
Funding	12
Strategic Aims	12
Procurement Timeline and Commissioning Intentions	13

Introduction

Under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) have a range of responsibilities, duties and powers including:

- Commissioning services to help victims of crime and to secure crime and disorder reduction; and to
- Award grants to support the delivery of priorities set out in their Police and Crime Plan; and to
- Deliver better value for money.

Historically, Victim Support have provided support services to help victims of crime in Thames Valley under a non-consent-based model which was commissioned in 2015 in partnership with Surrey Police and Sussex Police and Crime Commissioners.

In 2016, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) for Thames Valley began a review of victim's services to provide a better service to victims. This found victims of crime would be best served through a single point of contact (the Victims First Hub). A consent-based model was adopted in Thames Valley in April 2018 for victims of crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (whether or not they report the offence).

Specialist support services for victims were commissioned and began in April 2020 which coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic saw local services, especially those for domestic and sexual violence, come under strain and as a result more funding than ever before has been committed for victims in the Thames Valley.

Post pandemic, services have found service delivery and victim's needs have changed highlighting the importance of having the capacity and capability to offer remote or digital services to victims. As such, services have adapted their support provision to enable victims to access support whenever and wherever they need to. Note, this does not detract from the importance of face-to-face provision, but does highlight ways in which processes can be improved to achieve better outcomes for victims.

The challenges brought about by the pandemic, together with increasingly more complex cases requiring extended support, has required a rethink of the OPCC victim services support model. As such, in May 2022 an evaluation of victim's services that are funded by the OPCC in Thames Valley took place. The Review of Victim's Services (Review) principally elicited three key aims:

1. To evaluate the current commissioned and internal services.
2. To provide a framework to inform future commissioning of victim's services.
3. To listen to victims and to assess their needs, and ensure their voices inform the commissioning of services.

The Review made a total of **41** over-arching recommendations for our commissioned and internal-led services. Of these, **21** were completed (and **2** partially-completed) whilst the Review was a work in progress, and **24** actions are 'on-going'. This document provides a summary of the Review, of the high level recommendations, the views of victims and our aims going forward.

Summary of recommendations

As the model and services we have commissioned have evolved, our knowledge of victim needs and the local landscape improves. This has enabled collation of data and insights for evaluation and analysis to bring about understanding of where and how services can be developed to provide better outcomes for victims of crime – within the funding available. The learning has provided awareness as to what is working well, and also identifies areas for learning and improvement.

Key recommendations are:

- **Core contracts are extended until March 2024 to allow robust procurement and contracting process to take place.**
- **Move away from the current consent model to automatic referrals from Thames Valley Police (TVP).**
- **A new Case Management System (CMS) is procured for the Victims First Hub (VFH). This is imperative before a move to automatic referrals can take place.**
- **Continue to work with current providers to implement service improvement measures.**
- **Ensure future commissioned services have the ability to flex and grow in relation to both demand and changes to cohort need.**
- **Future commissioned services utilise a range of evidence-based interventions and adhere to best practice recommendations.**
- **Future OPCC specifications and contracts give clear expectations on service requirements and deliverables. Have robust remedial measures embedded.**
- **Introduce a range of feedback and engagement mechanisms to ensure the victim's voice is front and centre of all work undertaken.**
- **Complete a further review of the recommendations at six, twelve and eighteen months to establish if recommendations have been achieved.**

Scope

The following services were in scope of the Review:

Commissioned services:

- Victims First Emotional Support Service
- Victims First Adult Specialist Service
- Victims First Young Victims Service

Internal services:

- Victims First Counselling Service
- Victims First Hub
- Victims First Connect

Grant funded services:

- Domestic Abuse Complex Needs Services
- Medium Risk Safety Planning
- FLAGDV

Methodology

A range of quantitative and qualitative methods were utilised to inform the Review including:

- **Review of victim's literature**
A literature review has been completed which highlighted both the increase/decrease in certain type of offending, national guidance, and support needs, local need and legislative changes.
- **Victims Code of Practice**
The revised Victims Code of Practice (the Code) came into effect on 1st April 2021 and sets out the services and minimum standards which must be provided to victims of crime regardless as to whether a crime is reported to the police or not.
- **Desk top review of Victims First services performance data**
Performance data was evaluated from the start of services to the end of the recent financial year.
- **Victims Survey with professionals, VF staff and service users**
A Victims Survey has been completed to gather a range of feedback on a variety of questions from personal experiences of services, gaps in provision, staff training and suggestions for improvements.
- **Conversations with providers**
Meetings were held with two external providers, SAFE and Thames Valley Partnership (TVPa). Meetings were held with the managers of the two internal services the Victims First Hub (VFH) and the Counselling Service (VFCS). The focus of the conversations were on current arrangements, relationships, areas for improvement, and how futures services could meet the needs of victims.
- **Conversations with other PCC areas**
Meetings were held with colleagues from the other PCC areas with similar models to our own/just moved away from the same model and any areas that had been highlighted as particularly innovative. Meetings were held with Devon and Cornwall, Sussex, West Yorkshire, West Mercia, Northumbria, Hertfordshire and Cambridge.

Reported Crime

Notable changes in demand/need

Over the course of five years (2016-2021), Acquisitive Crime was the most reported higher offence type representing 37% of all reported crime classifications in Thames Valley. This is 11% higher than the second most reported higher offence type which was Violence without Injury. However, if figures from Violence with Injury and Violence without Injury are combined, then violent crimes as a collective would also represent 37% of all crime classifications across the five years in Thames Valley. There has also been a notable increase in sexual offences – which are often underreported and the real need is likely to be much higher.

Reported Higher Offence Types in Thames Valley 2016-2021								
Higher Offence Type	Year						Total	
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total	% of Total
Acquisitive Crime	43,584	53,687	53,318	40,075	49,953	58,523	299,140	37%
Violence Without Injury	17,236	22,547	33,941	53,887	41,557	38,081	207,249	26%
Criminal Damage	16,367	20,275	19,778	19,513	17,833	16,999	110,765	14%
Violence With Injury	11,160	13,804	16,340	16,705	16,061	17,743	91,813	11%
Sexual Offences	4,333	5,721	6,534	8,833	12,840	25,211	63,472	8%
Public Order	3,703	4,764	7,073	6,722	6,550	7,888	36,700	5%
Other	214	269	538	625	701	592	2,939	0%
Total	96,597	121,067	137,522	146,360	145,495	165,037	812,078	100%

Acquisitive Crime

Acquisitive crime is defined as an offence where the offender derives material gain from the crime. Examples include, shoplifting, burglary, theft, and robbery. It is a high volume crime group which accounts for nearly half of all reported crime to TVP. Tackling acquisitive crime is a priority for the PCC and we are working with our partners to develop an acquisitive crime toolkit which will include a range of interventions to support victims of acquisitive crime. This will incorporate prevention messages, practical advice and support targeted at those most vulnerable. We will use this collaborative approach to raise public awareness through campaigns, deliver best practice, and to reduce harm.

Fraud

Fraud now makes up the largest crime type in the UK; there are estimated to be over three million offences per year which is thought to cost the UK economy in excess of £100 billion per year. Fraud is one of the priorities identified in the Police & Criminal Justice Plan. The OPCC are actively engaged in multi-agency forums looking at establishing and improving a

coordinated approach against Fraud; looking to achieve better outcomes for both enforcement, prevention and an increased offer provided to victims via Victims First.

Specialist Support

Local data shows that there has been an increase in the types of crime where the victim may need some additional support to move forward and recover.

- Common Assault and Battery up by 114% from 2016 to 2021.
- ABH up by 58% from 2016 to 2021.
- Sexual Offences have continued to rise year on year and are up 481% from 2016.

Sexual Offences

There is a high concentration of young people being victims of this offence type in comparison to other age groups.

- Sexual assault on a female 13 or older accounted for 27.6% of the total count of top 15 reported sexual offence classifications against 10 to 24 year olds from 2017 to 2021.
- Rape of female over 16 accounted for 22.8% of the total top 15 count.
- 87.3% of sexual offence victims aged 10 to 24 were female, slightly higher than the 85.8% for ages 1-99.
- 36.7% of sexual offence victims aged 10 to 24 identified as White British.
- 39.7% of sexual offence victims knew their perpetrators as acquaintances.

Offences against the elderly people has also seen a disproportionate increase since 2017.

- Reports of public order offences against the elderly increased by 724.3%.
- Reports of sexual offences against the elderly increased by 85.5%.
- Reports of violence with injury against the elderly increased by 63.5%.
- Reports of violence without injury against the elderly increased by 242%.

Commissioned Victims Services

Victims First Emotional Support Service (VFESS)

The Victims First Emotional Support Service delivers emotional support services to adults (aged 18 years and above) for up to 12 weeks to help them cope and recover from the impact of crime or anti-social behaviour. Over the past four years the services has;

- Supported **4,382** people.
- Provided **2,421** face to face visits
- Made **18,934** telephone support calls.

Victims First Adult Specialist Service (VFSS)

The Victims First Specialist Services provides holistic support for adults and their families who require specialist and/or medium to longer term support. The services also provide outcome-focused and restorative approaches delivered in line with national and local guidance and protocols. Over the past two years the service has;

- Supported **1,871** referrals
- **1,207** people have had their needs assessed
- **767** people have had their final outcomes measure

Victims First Young Victims Service (YVS)

Using the Protective Behaviours¹ model of support, the Victims First Young Victim's Service (YVS) provides emotional and practical advice and support, and family-orientated and peer support to young victims of crime aged between 5 and 18 years.

- In year one, the service had **878** appropriate referrals, and provided **3,284** sessions of support.
- In year two, there were **1,254** appropriate referrals (an increase of 42%) and provided **3,587** sessions of support.

Grant Funded Medium Risk Safety Planning

In 2020, a single service provider (Hestia) were granted the opportunity to provide Medium Risk Safety Planning (MRSP) across Thames Valley on a one-year Pilot basis. There were **a total of 2,726 referrals into the service. Contact was made with 1,482 people and 1,133 safety plans were completed.**

Grant Funded Free Legal Advice

FLAGDV (Free Legal Advice Group for Domestic Violence) offers a free 45 minute legal advice appointment with a fully qualified family law solicitor for adult victims of Domestic Abuse. Appointments are via a telephone consultation, or in person at specifically run family law clinics. To date, they have **received 1,057 referrals** and of those, **819 have been supported** with free legal advice.

In-house Services

The Victims First Hub (VFH)

The Victims First Hub provides a front door into victim services for all victims regardless of the type of crime committed against them, whether they report to the police, and whether or not anyone is convicted. When a referral is received and someone wants support, the VFH works with commissioned support services and statutory and voluntary organisations to help people find the right support. The Hub also provides telephone information, signposting and 'in-house' support when required. So far, the VFH have;

- Received **75,627** referrals

¹ See [Protective Behaviours - Home to PBPeople and the Protective Behaviours Association](#)

- Made **6,896** onward referrals.

The Victims First Counselling Service (VFCS)

The Victims First Counselling Service was developed and is managed by the OPCC to coordinate and facilitate access to counselling for victims of crime, enabling them to improve the quality of their lives through counselling interventions. Referrals are from various pathways, including the OPCC commissioned services, specialist domestic abuse and sexual violence services, and occasionally from the VFH. Over the last two year the VFCS has;

- Received **1,608** referrals
- An average of **11** counselling sessions was delivered by **26** counsellors across Thames Valley.

Victims First Connect

The aim of Victims First Connect is to encourage self-referrals into Victims First services – particularly from people who do not report to the police. Online sessions now normally take place every month. Since the programme launched;

- **237** people/organisations have signed up to **Tier 1** (this can be as simple as displaying a poster with VF contact details) and includes GP surgeries, libraries, community centres, village halls, family centres and churches.
- There have been **8 Tier 2** (awareness training to instigate a referral to VF) for support training sessions delivered.
- From July 2021 to April 2022, **79** people were **Tier 2** trained from **41** different organisations.

Grant Funded Domestic Abuse Complex Needs

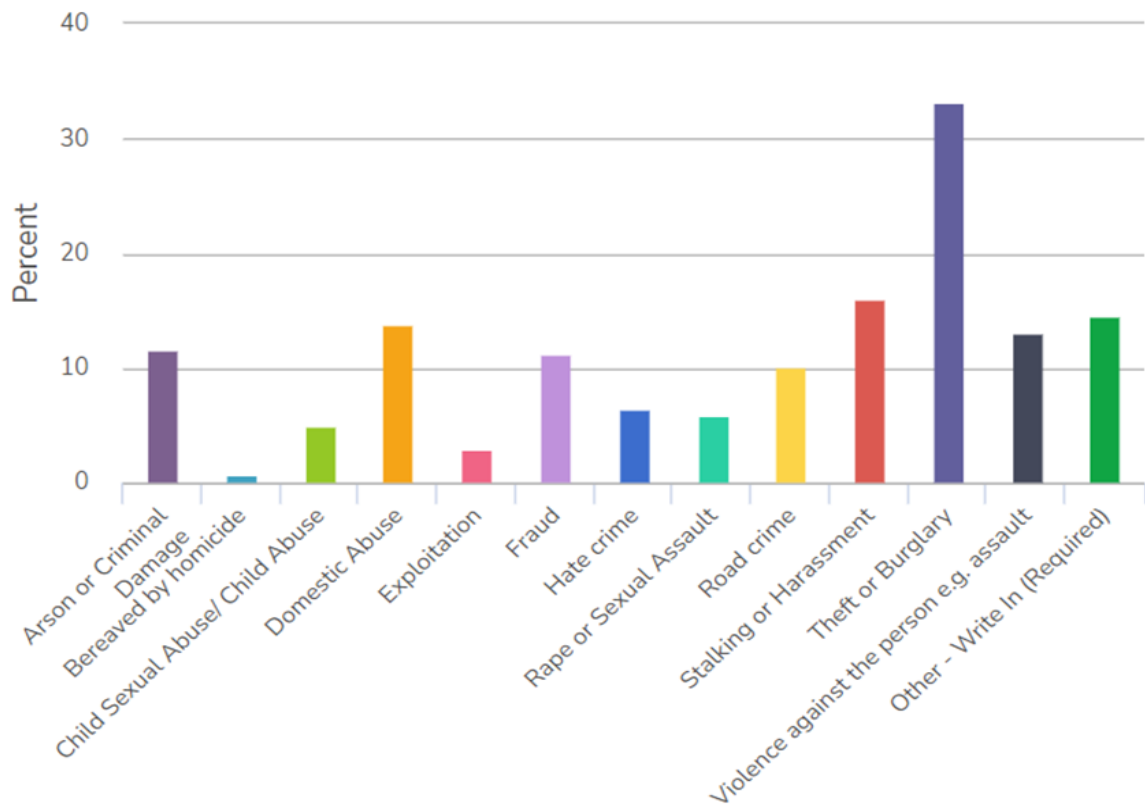
In 2018, the OPCC co-commissioned with Local Authorities, to provide domestic abuse Complex Needs provision across the Thames Valley. The provision is provided by different providers, delivering different interventions; working in specific geographical locations across the Thames Valley.

- Berkshire Women's Aid (BWA) have received **209** referrals for the Stop, Think, Feel programme in Berkshire West.
- The BRAVE service in Berkshire East has received **551** referral for Berkshire East.
- The Anchor Program (TAP) in Oxfordshire has received **256** referrals.
- The Complex Needs IDVA in MK ACT has received **141** referrals.
- Managing Emotions Group (MEG) in Buckinghamshire has received **42** referrals.

Survey Results

To inform the Review, the OPCC undertook a Victims Survey. The Victim's Survey sought to understand the views of victims to inform future service development. The survey was

carried out between March 2022 and April 2022 and there were **943** responses. The majority of people who responded to the survey were victims of theft and burglary.



Many of the “other” option responses were in relation to anti-social behaviour and issues with neighbours.

[Access to Services](#)

- 40% of respondents were aware of Victims First
- 22% had accessed Victims First services
- 12% of those who did not access Victims First accessed another support (so 34% overall accessed some sort of support service)

Of the 22% that had accessed Victim First Services, the top three crimes victims stated they had experienced were:

- 26% Domestic Abuse (26%)
- 19% Rape/Sexual assault (19%)
- 15% Stalking/Harassment (15%)

[Contact Methodology](#)

For those who accessed Victims First services, 65% said they received their preferred contact method for ongoing support; 25% said they did not get their preferred method and 10% said they sometimes received their preferred method. For those who did not get their preferred method of contact (and received ongoing support) nearly 100% received telephone support instead of their preferred method.

What is your preferred on-going support method?

- 54% telephone
- 19% face to face
- 11% email
- 4% video calls
- 2% text message
- 10% other (most of these was people stating they did not end up receiving ongoing support)

Barriers to Support

Regarding barriers to support, there are some key themes for victims:

- Lack of flexibility on time/ day support can be accessed.
- Initial response from the person the victim is disclosing too, including the police's discussion around support.
- Limited awareness on what support is available and how to access (this was a particularly prominent theme in responses).
- Being passed between services and having to retell their story.
- Lack of confidence in services or worry about not being believed/ being judged.
- Fear of consequences e.g. from perpetrator, social services etc.
- The victim feeling like they do not deserve the support or feelings of shame.
- Waiting lists.

Of those who did not access support (could select more than one):

- 39% did not know what support to access
- 35% selected 'other' (need to analyse what the reasons are)
- 19% did not know how to access support
- 14% did not have confidence in support
- 11% support did not meet needs/did not want support and
- 5% could not access

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Victims who expressed their views on VAWG felt:

- 48% said support for women and girls needed to increase
- 45% said support for elderly victims needed to increase
- 44% said support for rape and sexual assault victims needed to increase
- 42% said support for domestic abuse victims needed to increase
- 40% said support for children and young people needed to increase
- 39% said support for stalking victims needed to increase

Funding

The OPCC receives core funding from the Ministry of Justice to provide victims services, this core grant funding remains stable year on year. In addition, the OPCC bids for additional grant funding opportunities to support local services. In 2022, the OPCC was successful in securing an additional 1.4 million to support local domestic abuse and sexual violence services.

	Allocation
2020/21	
Core	2,814,341
Additional DA/ISVA Grant Funding	84,685
Covid-19 grants	943,522
Total	3,842,548
2021/22	
Core	2,814,341
Additional DA/SV Grant funding	£988,830
Covid-19 funding	17,347
Total	3,820,518
2022/23	
Core	3,057,753
Additional DA/SV Grant funding	£1,435,060
Total	£4,492.813

Strategic Aims

Principally, findings from this Review have elicited three key aims:

Aim 1 – Implement clear and consistent outcomes for victims.

We have introduced a set of core metrics for all services to collect and also a set of core outcomes to deliver against. This will ensure we can build a strong baseline for measuring impact, and ensure funding is being used effectively to support victims. These core metrics and outcomes will form the basis for how we want to move forward.

Aim 2 - Work together with our partners and commissioners to provide a framework to inform future commissioning of victim's services.

We will work closely to understand commissioning processes, where appropriate, to reduce the complexity of the landscape for those providing critical services for victims of crime. We will adopt a strategic approach across Local Authorities who have responsibilities for victim funding and commissioning of support services to ensure pathways for victims are clear. We will work together when commissioning support services to ensure victims of sexual and domestic violence and serious violence get the joined-up support needed.

Aim 3 - To listen to victims and ensure their voices inform the commissioning of services.

We will follow national commissioning standards, across all victim support services, to ensure a baseline quality of support for all victims. We will ensure we review and refresh existing services to reflect victim's needs, always putting the victim at the heart of our commissioning.

Procurement Timeline and Commissioning Intentions

Learning from the current model will form the basis of commissioning intentions, with a focus on robust contracting which allows for growth and flexibility. The intention is to extend the current contracts until March 2024. This will allow the OPCC to make the internal changes required to support the new model including a new Case Management System (CMS) for the Victims First Hub and effective co production to develop new services and test the markets capabilities.

Commissioning Intentions

1. Ensure that future commissioned services have simple and clear pathways to make access to effective support as simple as possible for victims.
2. Future commissioned provision meets the needs of victims in the Thames Valley.
3. Commissioning and Contracting processes are robust ensuring public funds are spent affectively.
4. Make the victims needs front and centre to all work undertaken.
5. Enhance and refine the support delivered at the Victims First Hub.
6. Improve outcomes for victims in the Thames Valley.