



Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner Report

Performance Update on the Police and Crime Plan

Date: 4th July 2022

Originating Officer: Partnership and Strategy Manager

Executive Summary

This report presents an update on Objective 3 of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan: A Focus on Victims.

Recommendation

That the Panel notes this report.

1 Overview of Objective 1

- 1.1 The Police and Crime Commissioner launched his new Police and Crime Plan in November 2021, following a detailed process to identify the key areas of work which will contribute to the aim of "Keeping Cumbria Safe". The third objective within the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan provides a "Focus on Victims", working with partner agencies, the Police and support organisations. There is a strong commitment from the Commissioner to helping victims to cope and recover after a crime or abuse and it forms a substantial part of three of his key activities: commissioning, partnership working and holding the Chief Constable to account. Many of the priorities under this objective build on existing areas of focus from the Commissioner's previous Plan. This report to the Panel will focus in particular on the commissioning and funding aspects of this objective, as requested by the Panel, and will briefly outline other work of the OPCC in relation to victims.
- 1.2 The Police and Crime Commissioner holds the Chief Constable to account for her delivery of aspects of the Police and Crime Plan. He gains assurance through his Public Accountability Conferences and has recently focussed on the quality of care provided by the force to victims. The OPCC also runs a multi-agency scrutiny panel which looks at a dip sample of cases where the outcome was dealt with out of court. This enables good practice and learning to be identified in relation to aspects of the handling of the case, including from a victim's perspective. This model is being used as a basis of developing an Independent Violence Against Women and Girls Panel, which will focus on how the Police have dealt with a sample of cases of these types of crime. The OPCC

is currently working to set this up with the Cumbria Victims' Charitable Trust, which will chair the Panel and the focus will be around key aspects of the journey for victims.

2 Commissioning Effective Victim Support Services

- 2.1 The recent Government response to the consultation on the proposed Victims' Bill has set out the intention for new duties to be given to the Commissioner in relation to victims. This will include a "joint statutory duty on PCCs, Local Authorities and health bodies to collaborate when commissioning support services for victims of domestic abuse, sexual violence, and other serious violence". This collaboration is already embedded within the way in which the OPCC works, with many of the services for victims commissioned collaboratively with partner organisations, whether through pooled or aligned funding or the OPCC being part of the partnership which informs partner commissioning priorities. In terms of delivery, each service area has an allocated contract manager within the team and a process of review, decision-making and, where appropriate, recommissioning is carried out to align with the end of that contract or grant. Key development areas from the Police and Crime Plan are identified in an action plan with nominated action owners, to focus resource on new areas of service development alongside maintaining and improving existing core services.
- 2.2 The core support service commissioned for victims is provided by Victim Support, which includes telephone and face-to-face support as well as online tools and 'live chat' support. Victims of many types of crime are supported, including assault, burglary, theft, hate crime and criminal damage. There is a national service which supports family members who have been bereaved as a result of homicide. The Victim Support provision also has the domestic and sexual abuse services integrated within it, including the Independent Domestic and Sexual Violence Advisors, who have specialist training to provide support and advocacy for those who have experienced the highest levels of risk and trauma. Services delivered for the victim are tailored to the individual, based on a needs assessment. The most frequently provided types of support in the past year include help to look at coping strategies, providing advocacy with other services, providing information to help the individual understand the Criminal Justice System, giving personal safety information and helping with practical issues such as housing. One survivor of rape's comments demonstrate the valuable role which the Victim Support service can play in helping victims to cope: "They just offered me certainty and reassurance, and they would be able to check things for me and make the calls that I wasn't in a headspace to do."
- 2.3 Service users of the all-crime service have reported a positive impact of having this support: 82% felt better able to cope with aspects of everyday life, 65% felt their health and well-being had improved, 74% felt safer and 74% felt better informed and empowered to act in their final assessment compared with their initial assessment when starting the service (March 2022 data). One service user explained the impact: "I do strongly believe I'm almost half way to recovery and that's very much thanks to you, it takes an amazing person to do what you do!!"

- 2.4 Victim Support has also been developing a new children and young person's domestic abuse service, working with other local support agencies and schools. The service works with children and young people between 8 and 18 years old who are victims or witnesses of domestic abuse, providing tailored one-to-one support depending on the child's assessed needs. It is also developing group work, for example in partnership with Family Action. Of the service users who had completed their support between January and March 2022, 94% said that their health and well-being had improved and similarly, 94% felt that they had better coping strategies¹. This supports a new priority in the 2021-25 Police and Crime Plan to develop support for children and young people who witness domestic abuse. The Commissioner secured £655,285 over 2 years from the Ministry of Justice's National IDVA Fund to enable this service to be introduced. In addition, the OPCC has worked with the County Council to develop support for children and young people in supported accommodation where a parent/carer has experienced domestic abuse. This investment brings significantly increased resource for young people and helps to fill an identified gap in support for children witnessing domestic abuse in the county.
- 2.5 The PCC works collaboratively with Local Authorities, health commissioners and the Police to align funding and commission services for sexual assault and abuse victims under the banner of The Bridgeway. This includes the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) which provides forensic-medical examinations, crisis support and a 24/7 helpline for victims. During the past year, the OPCC has worked closely with NHS England, which has reprocured this contract, to secure an all-age service for the next 4 years. A therapeutic service for children and adults is also commissioned by the OPCC on behalf of the commissioning partnership, which is provided by Safety Net and Birchall Trust. Regular contract management is used to ensure continued effectiveness and continue to develop the service as new demands arise. Through the contract funded by the PCC and partners for therapeutic services, 89% of service users reported that they had seen an increase in their health and well-being and 87% had seen an improvement in their ability to cope with aspects of daily life. This highlights the valuable impact of the service, particularly given the significant and complex impact which the trauma of sexual assault or abuse can have on a survivor's life. Feedback from one of the Birchall Trust's service users reinforces this: "They honestly, probably, saved my life... I honestly do believe that I would not be here today if it wasn't for the service they provided."
- 2.6 Through a service commissioned by the PCC and provided by Remedi, victims of all types of crime are also able to access restorative justice. This provides the opportunity to tell the offender about the impact which the crime has had on them and, particularly where the victim and offender are able to meet, to ask questions which can help them to gain closure and move on from the crime. During the past year, the OPCC has worked collaboratively with Probation, which now part-funds the service, to procure a new contract for delivery of restorative justice. This has secured the provision at least until March 2025.

¹ Feedback questions are asked in an age-appropriate way.

2.7 The Commissioner has made a commitment to supporting the role of women's centres. This is in recognition that they often offer a first step for women who do not have the confidence or are not ready to approach a 'victim support'-type of service. The nature of domestic and sexual abuse is such that some victims do not recognise that they are being abused or controlled and so these services offer the supportive environment to build self-esteem and to understand different types of abuse, which can result in them seeking further help. During 2021-22, the Commissioner funded Gateway4Women and Women's Community Matters, including additional funding secured from the Ministry of Justice, to provide support for victims of domestic and sexual abuse at centres in Carlisle and Barrow. It also worked with Probation and Cumbria County Council to secure funding and develop a pilot outreach service in Kendal and Eden. Feedback from service users is overwhelmingly positive about the impact which the support has for them. For example, 99% of clients had reported a positive impact from the Women's Community matters service on their feedback forms (of 307 service users funded via the OPCC).

3 Ensuring Victims are Offered their Entitlements under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime

3.1 The second priority within the Focus on Victims in the Police and Crime Plan is to "ensure victims of crime are offered their entitlements under the national Code of Practice of Victims of Crime". The Commissioner took on the role of leading an annual review of compliance with the Victims' Code of Practice, commissioning Victim Support to develop an audit toolkit. This has been in place for a number of years and the recent "Quality Assessment Framework", as it is known, found good levels of compliance with the Code overall. The Safer Cumbria Criminal Justice Business Group is providing oversight of the implementation of recommendations from the report. The Commissioner has also held the Constabulary to account in relation to entitlements of victims under the Code and sought assurance about this at his most recent Public Accountability Conference in June. The recent Government response to the Victims' Bill has signalled the intention to introduce a statutory duty on Police and Crime Commissioners to take a "convening role in monitoring compliance locally" so Cumbria is already in a good position to meet this duty.

4 Ensuring the Voices of Victims are Listened to

4.1 The Commissioner has a range of ways in which he receives feedback on the lived experiences of victims. This includes direct feedback at events, via letter or telephone into his office and via support service providers. This supports the Commissioner and his team to understand what is important in commissioning services and to identify areas on which the Commissioner seeks assurance through his accountability process. In addition to this, funding secured from NHS England enabled independent research to be commissioned into the experiences of survivors of rape and sexual abuse, with the aim of understanding their journeys from first accessing a service onwards. The report from the University of Cumbria is now being considered by criminal justice and support agencies, including at a partnership workshop on 8th July, to look at how the aspects of the journey which worked well for survivors can be built on and where further improvements can be made, to make a difficult process easier for victims. This

will also support the priority within Objective 3 in relation to understanding why some cases do not progress to prosecution.

- 4.2 The OPCC recently took the opportunity to review how it obtains and uses information about victims' satisfaction with services following a crime, with a focus on OPCC commissioned support and the Police. This review has also looked at how feedback from victims can be used to support the Quality Assessment Framework in relation to the Victims' Code of Practice. The Victims' Charitable Trust, whose Board members offer a range of perspectives from former roles in criminal justice agencies and their own lived experience, has acted as a critical friend as part of this process. The review reinforced the many ways in which the OPCC already receives and uses the voices of victims and identified ways to build on how it is used. The results of this review have now been reported internally and a plan is in place which will see some additional processes piloted over the next year, with the initial emphasis being on developing more opportunities for listening to victims' satisfaction and lived experience of using commissioned services. There will also be a focus on collecting feedback on aspects of the Victims' Code, to support the annual Quality Assessment Framework and this will set the OPCC in good stead to meet the new duty proposed as part of the Victims' Bill to take account of feedback from victims about their experiences in monitoring compliance with the Victims' Code.

5 Maximising Funding Opportunities

- 5.1 There has been significant focus on securing additional funding to support the Police and Crime Plan, in particular for services for victims of crime and abuse. In total, in 2021-22, the Commissioner brought in an additional £454,605 from Ministry of Justice and £43,506 from NHS England, on top of the core Ministry of Justice Victims Grant. The Commissioner also recently ran an application process for Ministry of Justice funding in relation to domestic abuse and sexual violence, which has resulted in local support organisations being awarded a total of £261,028 per annum for 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25.
- 5.2 Expressions of interest have been submitted in relation to the UK Prosperity Fund to support prevention of violence and abuse related to the night-time economy. This would include the roll out of the Cumbria Night Safety Charter to the whole of Cumbria. This is a voluntary pledge to demonstrate to patrons that their safety is a priority, especially for women and those with protected characteristics. Businesses will provide training to their staff to ensure that all those who report incidents of harassment and abuse are treated with care and respect and will receive help and support.
- 5.3 The Commissioner has successfully secured funding from the Home Office' Safer Streets fund, which has supported a number of projects aiming to prevent crime and increase safety, thereby reducing the number of victims. Working with Cumbria Constabulary and district councils, £333,621 of external funding enabled delivery of the Safer Streets Fund Round 2 Project in St Michael's ward, Workington, to improve safety and reduce residential burglary. The Safer Streets Fund Round 3 Project in Whitehaven had a primary focus on the safety of women in public spaces and drew on

£191,584 of Home Office funding. The most recent project, under the Safety of Women at Night (SWAN) funding stream, has taken place in Carlisle, with £114,096 of funding.

6 Public Awareness Raising

Another priority area within Objective 3 is encouraging awareness and reporting of crime and abuse, particularly for types of crime where victims can find it hard to come forward, such as modern slavery, hate crime and domestic abuse. The OPCC runs a programme of awareness-raising press releases and social media campaigns, through a Victim Communications Plan, which covers different crime types and vulnerable groups over the year. Recent focusses have included modern slavery, male victims, and the Victims' Code of Practice. Annual campaigns are delivered in partnership with the Constabulary, for example, a campaign around domestic abuse in the pre-Christmas period, where the risk of incidents can increase, and another on hate crime to link in with Hate Crime Awareness Week.

- 6.1 Support services are also regularly promoted by the OPCC to help victims access help, whether or not they choose to contact the Police. Through the Safer Streets programme, Crimestoppers has been funded to run a campaign on consent: an issue which partner agencies repeatedly identify as important to help prevent sexual assault by developing understanding of what is and is not appropriate. As part of the service commissioned from Get Safe Online, the Commissioner promotes regular messages about online safety to prevent fraud and online exploitation, with themes tailored to common issues during the year, such as dating scams in February. This all aims to prevent members of the public from becoming victims, which is at the heart of the Police and Crime Plan's overall objective of Keeping Cumbria Safe.