

COMMUNITY OUTCOMES MEETING
SUPPORTING VICTIMS AND WITNESSES

31 JULY 2017

SUBJECT: SUPPORTING VICTIMS AND WITNESSES

Report of the Chief Constable

<p>PURPOSE OF THE REPORT</p> <p>1. To provide an update to the PCC on the work West Yorkshire Police do to support victims and witnesses.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION</p> <p>2. That the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) is satisfied that the Force is providing key information to victims and gaining consent for referral to support services from vulnerable victims.</p>
<p>POLICE AND CRIME PLAN</p> <p>3. Supporting Victims and Witnesses is one of the Outcomes in the Police and Crime Plan. Being a victim of crime can have a significant impact on a person's life, on their family and their community. The PCC has pledged to put victims, in particular those who are the most vulnerable, first and around 37% of respondents to the Your Priorities, Your Plan survey agreed that we should keep a focus on supporting victims and witnesses.</p>
<p>KEY INFORMATION</p> <p>4. The PCC has provided a wide range of victim support services which are available to all victims in West Yorkshire whether or not they have reported a crime to the police. All services are focused on enabling victims to both cope and recover from the impact of crime.</p> <p>5. Victims Hubs are centres dedicated to supporting victims and witnesses operate in each district of West Yorkshire. They are Open to the public for drop in support, appointments and information. They can also be used for 1-1 meetings with partner agencies for victim support work.</p> <p>6. The PCC regularly supports campaigns to support vulnerable victims including the Hate Hurts campaign, a variety of Domestic Abuse campaigns and Honour Based Abuse campaigns among others.</p> <p>7. In November 2017, the PCC will be hosting a Third Sector Conference titled 'Police and Third Sector – Working Together to keep Yorkshire Safe and Feeling Safe'. The third sector already play a very important role, for example, in meeting the needs of victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence.</p> <p>8. The PCC chairs the Local Criminal Justice Board where criminal justice agencies work together to ensure that victims and witnesses are supported throughout the criminal justice system.</p>



Supporting Victims and Witnesses

Paper requested by: OPCC for Community Outcomes Meeting 31st July 2017

Report on behalf of: ACC Katherine Hankinson

Report Author : Inspector J Crowther

Date of Report : 11th July 2017

Summary

The report contained in this paper outlines the current position in relation to the following;

How West Yorkshire Police support victims and witnesses

ONGOING WORK AND DEVELOPMENTS

West Yorkshire Police have fully implemented the Code of Practice for victims of crime and this forms part of its day to day contact with the victims and witnesses. The Code of Practice forms a key part of the wider government strategy to transform the criminal justice system by putting victims first, making the system more responsive and easier to navigate. Victims of crime should be treated in a respectful, sensitive, tailored and professional manner without discrimination of any kind. They should receive appropriate support to help them as far as possible to cope and recover and be protected from re-victimisation. It is important that the victims of crime knows what information and support is available to them from reporting a crime onwards and who to request help from if they are not receiving it.

Throughout its work with victims and witnesses, staff will ensure that the Code of Practice is fully utilised.

Code of Ethics

The Code of Ethics must be used in all decision making undertaken by the police. These standards reflect the expectations that the professional body and the public have of the behaviour of those working in policing. They originate from the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2012 (for police officers) and the Police Staff Council Joint Circular 54 (for police staff).

The Code has adapted the wording in the Regulations and Circular 54 so that it applies to everyone. All police officers and staff have received training in relation to the use of the codes of ethics. The main areas that our staff are expected to use when dealing with victims and witnesses are as follows;

- Honesty and integrity
- Authority, respect and courtesy
- Equality and diversity
- Use of force.
- Orders and instructions
- Duties and responsibilities
- Confidentiality
- Conduct
- Challenging and reporting improper behaviour

Victims Code of Practice (VCOPS)

The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (VCOPS) sets a minimum standard of service that must be provided to victims of crime. In November 2015 amendments to the code were introduced by the Ministry of Justice whereby written confirmation of crime details were to be provided to the victim.

West Yorkshire police adapted its computer system (Corvus) to improve victim satisfaction. The aim of the module is to encourage officers to form the habit of regularly updating victims in a timely manner, according to victim wishes, and particularly at the point of key events such as arrests.

The process assists officers to confirm with the victim at the point of a crime being recorded how often they would like to be updated. This is recorded on the crime occurrence log and it's then set to remind the officer that the victim requires an update on progress. It also allows supervisors to monitor compliance against the code.

Victim contact Cards

The most significant change within the new code which affects West Yorkshire Police is that all Victims of any criminal offence must have written notification of their report to the Police, detailing crime number, a description of the offence and the reporting officer/staff member, within 24 hours. (victims contact card). This leaflet directs victims to Victim Support services and the Help for Victims

websites.

Where the crime is recorded by the Customer Contact Centre (CCC) the communication will be sent via text or email. For those victims who make a report direct to an officer, whether on the street, at their home or business or at a public enquiry counter, the officer will provide the victim with a contact card.

The victim may request not to receive such acknowledgement. Where the police consider there may be a risk of harm to the victim from sending the written acknowledgement (for example in domestic violence cases), this is agreed with the victim.

Victim Personal Statements (VPS)

Staff will ensure that victims are offered the opportunity to provide a victim personal statement wherever it is appropriate. Currently West Yorkshire Police are looking at how the use of VPS can be maximised and have commissioned a group to undertake work around this. West Yorkshire Police have arranged training to assist officers to maximise the use of VPS.

The number of VPS's obtained is regularly monitored and forms part of the internal file quality assessments undertaken monthly, this is also discussed with the Crown Prosecution Service.

West Yorkshire Police force training school provide training to front line staff in relation to VPS. There is also an interactive training programme available together with guidance and assistance should staff require it on its internal intranet system.

Restorative Justice (RJ)

West Yorkshire is now in a position to offer information on restorative justice to all victims of crime should they require it. West Yorkshire Police have implemented a prompt question within the VCOPS. The Office of Police and Crime Commissioner is currently reviewing RJ provision across the county and holds quarterly meetings with the third party RJ service providers.

Each Police district has a special point of contact (SPOC) whose role it is to identify suitable cases where RJ is required and to pass this information on to the RJ provider.

Victim Support

West Yorkshire Police have worked closely with victim support since the mid-1980s. Cases where victims require assistance from Victim Support are provided by the Police to ensure that victims of crime are provided with ongoing support. Victim Support are part of the Quarterly Local Criminal Justice Board, Victim and Witness Group where the meetings are chaired by Tricia Holder of the OPCC, they are also a member of the Out of Court Scrutiny Panel.

Working with wider partnerships

Each of the five safeguarding units (SGU) work closely with a number of support services,

- Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) is managed by Mountain Healthcare Ltd who provide a regional service in YaTH. The service is for adult and child victims in West Yorkshire. The SARC SPOC attends regular contract meetings with the Commissioners and any issues or concerns are dealt with promptly
- Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVA) are victim-focused advocates; funded to work with victims of recent and historic serious sexual crimes to enable them to access the services they need in the aftermath of the abuse they have experienced.
- Child Sexual Exploitation - each District works closely with Barnardo's and social care to ensure that children that are involved in CSE are provided with the support and assistance required through the multi-agency meetings (MASH).
- Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA's) work across West Yorkshire. Referral mechanisms are in place through email referrals and/or attendance at the DRAM (Daily Risk Assessment Meetings.)
- MARAC meetings (Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conferences) are held in each district which involve partners in order to ensure the effective safeguarding of domestic abuse victims.
- Operation Encompass - Operation Encompass is the reporting to schools prior to 9am the following day, when a child or young person has been involved in or been exposed to a domestic incident. The information is given to a trained 'Key Adult' within the school. The child can then be supported with silent or overt support. This is currently operating in Leeds, Bradford and Calderdale. Again, WYP are awaiting funding decision through the Whole Systems Approach to DA bid as to whether money is available to continue.
- Honour Based Abuse/Force Marriage – The Safeguarding Central Governance Unit (SCGU) have established strong links with Karma Nirvana (National Charity for Honour Based Abuse and Forced Marriage.) Karma Nirvana have delivered specialist training to officers and WYP ensure victims are supported by Karma Nirvana. Karma Nirvana have recently recruited an IDVA to work with victims of HBA and FM. They have attended the MARAC meetings as part of their training and induction. Referral pathways need to be established once the IDVA is trained and prepared to support victims.
- Stalking and Harassment – the SCGU have recently attended a National conference from Paladin (National Stalking Advocacy Service.) Following this, SCGU have placed information on their intranet page for officers and staff to be aware of support agencies available to victims of stalking, for example Paladin and the National Stalking Helpline.

Working with diverse community groups and partners

In terms of supporting victims throughout West Yorkshire there are various communication mechanisms used to act as an intermediary between local communities, service providers and statutory organisations to report crime to West Yorkshire police from the victim's perspective. Examples of this include:

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans community:-

- Driven by the Force Equality Objectives, WYP and the OPCC are working in partnership with the LGBT community, Barnardo's, statutory organisations and British Transport Police by concentrating on the preventative element of LGBT young people becoming victims of crime. As a result, a comprehensive resource called "Safer Me" has been produced which identifies causes of increased vulnerability of the LGBT Q community and how to get support and advice, used by youth groups, schools and other networks.
- Since 2014, the OPCC/WYP joint 'Hate Hurts' campaign has aimed to raise awareness of hate crime and promote support to LGB and Trans victims and communities using literature focusing on LGBT hate crime and Live webchats for debate (Appendix A).
- Following the Orlando incident in 2016 WYP established a 'Safe-In, Safe-Out' working group with members of the community to ensure reassurance messages and good communication channels are open for feedback. Positive social media responses are evident from service users (Appendix B).

People seeking asylum and refugees:-

- Based on an established partnership working, local service providers are able to identify cases where a particular vulnerable service user may have been the victim of crime but not reported directly to the police. This is particularly important as currently and historically these members of the community are fearful of the Police, do not always understand the way British law works, there may also be cultural issues such as female victims reporting to a male officer.

Disability:-

- Working with victims who have a disability to establish the best communication channel and method is an equality objective. An outcome of work achieved is the Visual Impairment Protocol, this is used for offices attending the home of person with visual impairment. In addition extensive work has been done with the deaf and hearing impaired community including redesigning the 'how to contact the police' posters looking at specific methods and communication channels, face-to-face visits around local Customer Contact Centres and Web chats.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

Considered in all areas within this paper

STRATEGIC RISK IMPLICATIONS

The procurement of the core referral and local support service contract, could result in a change of provider which would mean the police developing a relationship with a new organisation.

The annual funding of victims services through the Ministry of Justice with no longer term guarantees.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION