

# Victim Needs Assessment in Avon & Somerset

---

*A Report for the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner*

**Charlotte Howell  
Josephine Ramm  
Caitlyn McGeer**

*March 2018*



**Perpetuity Research & Consultancy International (PRCI) Ltd**  
11a High Street · Tunbridge Wells · TN1 1UL · United Kingdom  
[www.perpetuityresearch.com](http://www.perpetuityresearch.com)  
[prci@perpetuityresearch.com](mailto:prci@perpetuityresearch.com)  
Tel: +44 (0)1892 538690



## **Copyright**

Copyright © 2018 Perpetuity Research and Consultancy International (PRCI) Ltd

All Rights Reserved. No part of this publication may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical or other means, known now or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from Perpetuity Research and Consultancy International (PRCI) Ltd.

Warning: the doing of an unauthorised act in relation to copyright work may result in both civil claim for damages and criminal prosecution.

## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank all local stakeholders for their involvement in the victim needs assessment. The response to requests for interview and to survey invitations was very high. A special thanks to Alice Jones and colleagues Marc Hole and Amy Hurst at the Avon & Somerset Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for their continuous support and advice throughout the process.

## Table of Contents

Section 1. Executive Summary.....	5
The approach .....	5
Purpose .....	5
Overview of findings .....	5
Recommendations.....	6
Section 2. Introduction.....	10
Aims & Objectives .....	10
The structure of the report .....	10
Section 3. Methodology .....	11
Stage 1: Literature Review .....	11
Stage 2: Fieldwork.....	11
Stage 3: Data Analysis .....	12
Stage 4: Report Writing .....	12
Limitations .....	12
Section 4. Literature Review.....	13
Part 1 - The National Landscape for Victim Services .....	13
Part 2 – The Current Picture in Avon & Somerset .....	27
Section 5. Consultation with local stakeholders.....	36
Organisation Details .....	36
Current Provision .....	38
Reporting Offences.....	50
Gaps and Weaknesses.....	54
Summary of Key Findings from Stakeholder Consultation.....	75
Section 6. Strategic Recommendations & Priorities .....	76
Recognising and celebrating progress .....	76
Meeting changing needs.....	77
Partnership and integrated working .....	78
Raising awareness of victim services .....	79
Addressing gaps in service provision and reaching victims .....	80
Improving victims’ experiences of the CJS .....	82
Adopting best practice .....	83
Developing practice .....	83
Appendix 1 - Reference List.....	85

# Section 1. Executive Summary

## The approach

- 1.1 Perpetuity Research was commissioned by the Avon & Somerset Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) to undertake a victim needs assessment. The findings are based on a review of local and national literature and documentation, and consultation was undertaken with 101 local stakeholders (82 via an online survey and 19 via a telephone interview). These represent a wide range of roles and organisations involved in supporting victims of crime.

## Purpose

- 1.2 The purpose of the work was to clarify current victim need and demand upon services, identifying any areas for improvement to provision for victims of crime across Avon & Somerset and ultimately to inform future service provision and commissioning processes.

## Overview of findings

- 1.3 Local recorded crime trends and caseload figures for OPCC commissioned services suggest that referral levels to victim services are likely to continue to increase in the immediate future. Within the Victim Code of Practice (VCOP) defined 'priority' crime types, domestic abuse and hate crime currently represent the largest volume of recorded crimes (and recorded levels are increasing), but notably high increases were observed in human trafficking and false imprisonment (although based on small numbers) suggesting that these issues will remain a key focus.
- 1.4 The overall impression from the needs assessment process is that victim services are undertaking a much needed service and this is largely considered to work well and be effective for victims. OPCC service providers were very committed to the work they were undertaking and enthused about the interaction between services and the creativity and flexibility they were enabled and encouraged to use by the OPCC. The general view is that the OPCC commissioned services provide an effective foundation in Avon & Somerset, albeit some further refinement is needed as these services become more established.
- 1.5 However, a number of gaps were thought to exist across Avon & Somerset (although this is not uncommon and is largely reflective of the national situation). The gaps predominantly reflect issues of demand versus capacity, i.e. that more of the same is needed, but also that some types of support are not available. Those most consistently mentioned among stakeholders were a lack of support for those who do not qualify as vulnerable victims under VCOP and those who do not meet the threshold for access to statutory services to deal with

additional needs, along with those in need of therapeutic support. Moreover, some services are only available in certain areas (Somerset was perceived by many to be lacking and generally there was a perception that in the more rural areas there was less provision).

- 1.6 It was also felt that some types of victims of crime (in terms of personal attributes and also crime type) may not be attempting to access support. In terms of personal attributes, young people, those with mental health issues, BME communities, males and LGBTQ were most commonly mentioned by stakeholders. In terms of crime types, sexual offences, CSE, hate crime (and disability crime was specifically noted) and ASB were most commonly cited.
- 1.7 The other main issue apparent (for victims who come into contact with it) is the negative impact that interacting with the criminal justice process can have. Possible refinements to the local approach were also highlighted in relation to commissioning, partnership working, defining vulnerability, and overcoming barriers to accessing services. The potential to use existing services outside of those designed to work with victims, that are currently underused but could provide certain aspects of support was also explored. Each of these aspects is considered in detail within the main body of the report.

## **Recommendations**

- 1.8 A number of recommendations were highlighted for consideration. These are organised in to eight main themes. While the first addresses the merit of recognising and celebrating progress in terms of the positive foundation laid by the OPCC commissioned services, the remainder focus largely on refining the work already in place. The recommendations (full details available in Section 6) are:

### **Recognising and celebrating progress**

Recommendation 1: OPCC commissioned service providers and the OPCC should recognise and celebrate their achievement in developing good services for victims of crime in Avon & Somerset.

### **Meeting changing needs**

Recommendation 2: Services need to be supported by the OPCC to retain the ability to be flexible and adapt to meet the increasing and changing demands of service users observed both locally and nationally.

Recommendation 3: Consider where there are opportunities for joint commissioning across Avon & Somerset or other ways in which OPCC commissioners can work more closely with other commissioners to ensure that there is a more consistent level of service and that resources are used efficiently.

Recommendation 4: The re-commissioning process provides a good opportunity for services to review their accessibility and plan improvements.

### **Partnership and integrated working**

Recommendation 5: Review how working practices across OPCC commissioned services could be improved to reduce the need for victims to retell their story.

Recommendation 6: Consider where there are further opportunities for co-location of services or secondments.

Recommendation 7: Review Lighthouse procedures for clearing referrals in order to help services manage and respond to their referrals in a timely manner.

Recommendation 8: Consider the benefits of promoting shared definitions of vulnerability and safeguarding across services.

### **Raising awareness of victim services**

Recommendation 9: Ensure that partners are aware of the role of Lighthouse.

Recommendation 10: Consider how the knowledge of frontline police officers can be raised so they have a clear understanding of the system - both when to refer to Lighthouse and where to signpost/refer those who are not eligible for a Lighthouse referral.

Recommendation 11: Continue to support the Restorative Justice Service to raise its profile in the local area.

Recommendation 12: Findings from the (planned OPCC) mapping exercise should be used to develop the Lighthouse directory of services, and awareness of this resource should be raised amongst practitioners and public.

Recommendation 13: The positive feedback provided by victims should be used appropriately in publicity to share experiences and encourage engagement.

### **Addressing gaps in service provision and reaching victims**

Recommendation 14: Consider how the needs of victims who do not meet criteria for enhanced service, or (in the case of domestic abuse) are assessed as low-medium risk can be met.

Recommendation 15: The OPCC should consider targeted work to address specific barriers to access identified by the stakeholder consultation.

Recommendation 16: The results of the stakeholder consultation should be used to consider where further work can be carried out to engage with victims who do not typically engage with support services.

Recommendation 17: Consider how greater access to services providing specialist emotional support services (such as therapy) to victims of crime can be facilitated.

Recommendation 18: Consider how self-help groups and befriending services can best be developed in Avon & Somerset.

Recommendation 19: Consider how greater access to mental health services for victims of crime can be facilitated.

Recommendation 20: Review whether joint commissioning of domestic abuse services across the area could result in a more consistent level of service.

### **Improving victims' experiences of the CJS**

Recommendation 21: Consider how feedback from victims and service providers can be used to inform improvements to the practice of agencies involved in CJS in regards to victim care.

Recommendation 22: Supporting victims through the CJS is a crucial element of victim support work. Consideration could be given to whether the work of IDVAs and ISVAs can be expanded and whether this model can be applied to other crime types.

Recommendation 23: Review the findings from the stakeholder consultation to identify where OPCC resources might be best targeted to reduce barriers to reporting.

Recommendation 24: Empower victims to choose whether they would like to report. Victims must be given realistic expectations about the likely outcomes of CJS involvement.

### **Adopting best practice**

Recommendation 25: Continue to foster working environments where best practice can be achieved. As far as possible a focus should be retained on achieving procedural justice for victims, adopting a multi agency approach, professionalising services and enabling clear communication with victims.

### **Developing practice**

Recommendation 26: Establish a protocol for OPCC commissioned services to gather victim's feedback on barriers or issues they face as a victim and how these can be shared amongst services.



Recommendation 27: Consult with and use the expertise of well-placed practitioners to develop practice. Many interviewees highlighted areas where they could develop their own work or support other services, which would be worthy of further consideration.

## **Section 2. Introduction**

2.1 Perpetuity Research was commissioned by the Avon & Somerset Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) to undertake a victim needs assessment. Perpetuity is an independent research and consultancy company specialising in the areas of community crime, policing and victimisation. The assessment was carried out between late November 2017 and the end of January 2018.

### **Aims & Objectives**

2.2 The main aims and objectives of the research were:

- To present a clear picture of victim need and demand upon services
- To understand how to address under-reporting and low take up of services
- To understand what works and where improvements could be made to the current victim services landscape
- To inform future service provision and commissioning processes

### **The structure of the report**

2.3 Section 3 outlines the methodology used for conducting the work.

2.4 Section 4 provides a detailed literature review focused on victim needs, characteristics of good services, and gaps in service provision across the UK, and context on what is already known about support in Avon & Somerset.

2.1 Section 5 presents the views of stakeholders based on interviews with key stakeholders and a survey of a wider group of local stakeholders.

2.2 Section 6 brings together the findings to present the strategic recommendations for the OPCC to consider.

2.3 The report is accompanied by an appendix with the literature review bibliography (Appendix 1).

## **Section 3. Methodology**

- 3.1 Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to undertake the needs assessment. A summary is provided below.

### **Stage 1: Literature Review**

- 3.2 At the start of the needs assessment a meeting was held between Perpetuity and the OPCC to clarify the approach to the needs assessment. Key priorities were discussed and it was agreed that the OPCC would promote and support the research and provide key documentation and contact details.
- 3.3 Perpetuity reviewed the documents provided by the OPCC, which included:
- Commissioning documentation and plans
  - Previous needs assessments
  - OPCC commissioned service provider quarterly reports
  - Satisfaction surveys
- 3.4 Perpetuity also conducted both broad and directed literature searches. Broad searches were made over Google Scholar, as well as a university library database. Our search terms included, for instance, 'needs' and 'victim'; 'services' and 'victim'; 'assessment' and 'victim services'; 'emotional and practical support' and 'victim'. Our directed searches were aimed at the victim support services sector (e.g. policing services, community organisations). After exhausting these high-level and directed searches, we examined the quality of the evidence. We used a high, medium and low rating scale to categorise the literature by relevance and quality. We then used a snowballing technique to expand the search. This involved identifying key sources from within the high and medium categorised pieces (e.g. service provider annual reports or impact assessments) and reviewing the source to identify links to any other key literature.
- 3.5 As well as providing a context for the needs assessment in terms of understanding the landscape both nationally and within Avon & Somerset, the literature review informed development of the empirical research tools.

### **Stage 2: Fieldwork**

- 3.6 In order to more fully develop an accurate assessment of victims' needs, we invited local stakeholders from commissioned services and Community Safety Partnerships for each area to take part in a semi-structured research interview. Consultation took place through telephone interviews.
- 3.7 We also developed and disseminated an online stakeholder survey to engage with a broader range of local stakeholders. The survey was

open for data collection from 13<sup>th</sup> December 2017 to 8<sup>th</sup> January 2018<sup>1</sup>. The interviews were conducted between 5<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> January. We completed interviews with 19 individuals and received 82 survey responses (although the precise number of respondents answering each question varies and is reported within the findings).

### **Stage 3: Data Analysis**

- 3.8 We analysed the data thematically over the course of collection using a variety of tools including Excel, Survey Monkey, and SPSS.
- 3.9 We adopted a framework analysis approach<sup>2</sup>:
- Familiarisation with the data – achieved by reading the interview transcripts and survey responses.
  - Identifying a thematic framework – noting key phrases and ideas arising and developing these into categories of findings.
  - Indexing – sifting the data, highlighting and sorting illustrative responses and making comparisons within and between these.
  - Charting – lifting the responses from their original context and re-arranging them under the newly-developed thematic content.
  - Mapping and interpretation – building the relationships between the responses and the links between the data as a whole.

### **Stage 4: Report Writing**

- 3.10 Finally, the findings were organised and presented in a written report, and recommendations were developed. In terms of terminology throughout the report those experiencing crime are typically referred to as 'victim(s)'. When quoting individuals or summarising their experiences based on the information collected via support services the term 'service user(s)' is used.

### **Limitations**

- 3.11 It should be noted that a number of factors related to this piece of work were defined as out of scope and are therefore not directly addressed within this research:
- The Lighthouse service is not a part of the imminent re-commissioning process of OPCC commissioned services (although they were engaged as a stakeholder for this piece of work)
  - Feedback directly from victims (although existing information is collated)
  - Service mapping
  - Services to support victims of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
  - Services that are not commissioned by the OPCC

---

<sup>1</sup> A small number of responses were completed in a Microsoft Word version of the questions by the National Probation Service after this time due to their systems being incompatible with the online survey software.

<sup>2</sup> Ritchie and Spencer. 1994

## **Section 4. Literature Review**

- 4.1 In order to provide a context for the needs assessment and to inform development of the research tools, a review of key evidence/literature was carried out.
- 4.2 The review is divided in to two sections. The first sets the context of the national picture in terms of commissioning of victim services, current crime trends in England and Wales and a review of the national good practice for victim services. The second focuses in on the current picture in Avon & Somerset, including local crime trends and crime recording issues and a summary of what is being achieved by current provision, victim feedback on the commissioned services and any gaps in support. Full references for the literature can be found in Appendix 1

### **Part 1 - The National Landscape for Victim Services**

- 4.3 Since all local work with victims sits within the wider national landscape for victim services, the first part of this review considers the current commissioning landscape – in terms of responsibility for commissioning services and recent and possible changes in commissioning; before moving on to consider national crime trends and the national good practice literature for work with victims.

#### **The Commissioning Landscape**

##### **Responsibility for commissioning services**

- 4.4 Since 2014, PCCs became responsible for commissioning victim services for emotional and practical support for victims of crime in their local area<sup>3</sup> with the goal of developing a consistent and sustainable level of support to victims, informed by their local reality and context.<sup>4</sup> While there appears to be a move towards commissioning the majority of victims' services locally<sup>5</sup>, there are exceptions. The Ministry of Justice retains responsibility for commissioning support for victims of human trafficking, victims of rape and sexual violence, those bereaved by homicide and road traffic crime, witnesses at court, victims of terrorism, and some national help-lines,<sup>6,7</sup> although some of these services are commissioned locally as well as nationally. The Government has also committed to providing £40 million for domestic abuse between 2016 and 2020, as well as a £2 million donation to Women's Aid and Safelives to support local early intervention pilots. Further, the Home Office funded 144 Independent Domestic Violence

---

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Justice, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Tapley, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Justice, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Herrington, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Home Office, N.D.

Advisers (IDVAs) and 87 Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs) in 2016/17.<sup>8</sup>

4.5 To date the approach of PCCs in commissioning services has varied. In some cases the approach is to bolster what is funded nationally and in others to fund strictly local initiatives. The PCC commissioning framework highlights that “*PCCs may wish to collaborate with other agencies (for example Department of Health or Local Authorities) in the provision of support services for victims of crime*”<sup>9</sup> and this has certainly been the case, for example Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) have been co-commissioned between NHS England (for the sexual assault public health element), local police forces/PCCs (for the forensic medical, criminal justice and local rape support element); CCGs (for other health services and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services [CAMHS] aspects) and local authorities (for children and family services and preventive public health).<sup>10</sup>

4.6 It is clear that beyond the PCCs, there are many other commissioners of services for victims of crime. How and whether or not these other commissioners work with the PCCs varies across the UK. While not an exhaustive list, actors/partnerships that engage in commissioning or grant funding include:

- Local Criminal Justice agencies:
  - Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs)  
(Typically hosted within local authorities, and may or may not receive PCC funding)
  - Local Criminal Justice Boards – also known as Local Criminal Justice Partnerships.
  - Certain areas also have local forums or boards focused on specific issues (e.g. domestic violence)
- City Councils including Public Health
- Housing Trusts
- Local Authorities (aside from CSPs - covered above)
  - Local Safeguarding Children Boards
  - Safeguarding adults panel
- Local Health Organisations
  - Health and Wellbeing Boards
  - Clinical Commissioning Groups<sup>11</sup>
  - NHS England Health and Justice

### **Recent and possible changes in commissioning**

4.7 A general trend towards competitive tender processes for victim services may have made it harder for small, community based organisations to compete, particularly for broad support contracts.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Home Office, N.D.

<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Justice, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> NHS England 2015.

<sup>11</sup> The National Council for Voluntary Organisations, N.D.

<sup>12</sup> Knight, 2016.

- 4.8 There is also suggestion that PCCs need to build strong relationships with health commissioners to, for example, influence mental health service commissioning between Clinical Commissioning Groups, local authorities and NHS England.<sup>13</sup>
- 4.9 There have also been a lot of innovations through commissioning. This has resulted in new services in some areas, such as agreements between victim services and mental health services to ensure seamless referrals, dedicated support for children and young victims that is linked to family support programmes, and joint teams to provide victims with both police updates on investigations and decisions and witness care support for court cases.<sup>14</sup> Other examples include extending service contract lengths and co-location between victim services and police services.<sup>15;16</sup> Victim services themselves have also been innovative in the methods used to partner with commissioners.<sup>17</sup>
- 4.10 Innovations of this nature will prove increasingly useful if the remaining nationally commissioned victims' services are devolved to PCCs; indeed further change to commissioning arrangements seems likely. The MoJ has been in dialogue with OPCCs to consider the potential but at present the discussion is ongoing.<sup>18</sup>

## **The National Crime Landscape**

- 4.11 The most recent Crime Survey for England and Wales<sup>19</sup> estimates that for the majority of crime categories incidents have either fallen or shown no statistically significant difference<sup>20</sup>. Meanwhile police recorded crime is increasing. There are a multitude of reasons why this may be – not least changes to police recording practices and increasing awareness and focus on certain crime types. However, this is an important trend for victim services since it suggests that as more of the offences occurring are being brought to the attention of the police, there is potential for the corresponding levels of referrals from the police to victim services to also increase.
- 4.12 According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales, crime types dealt with by police that have increased over the last few years include violent crime, knife crime, sexual offences, theft and fraud<sup>21</sup>.

---

<sup>13</sup> Mind, 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Knight, 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Mills, 2017.

<sup>16</sup> Knight, 2016.

<sup>17</sup> See for example - Catch 22, N.D.

<sup>18</sup> Scott, 2016.

<sup>19</sup> Office for National Statistics. 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Although it is notable that the inclusion of new questions on fraud introduced to the CSEW from October 2015 has resulted in a dramatic increase in crime figures, with an estimated 3.3 million incidents of fraud occurring in the year ending June 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Perpetuity and the Police foundation are currently engaged in a two-year research project investigating the local response to fraud and fraud victims across the UK, it is anticipated that this work will be published in Autumn 2017 and will be made available on the PRCI website.

- 4.13 The Crime Survey for England and Wales suggests that the levels of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) experienced or witnessed by survey respondents has remained relatively static over the past 5 years (between 27% and 31%).

## **The National Picture of Victim Needs**

### **Unmet Needs**

- 4.14 The literature highlights numerous groups of victims whose support needs are not being met. Of significant interest to the work at hand, these groups include victims with disabilities/special needs; low-medium risk domestic abuse victims; victims of trafficking and exploitation; victims of fraud and other cybercrime typologies; and victims with no recourse to public funds (e.g. migrants).<sup>22</sup>
- 4.15 Notably absent are services for victims of hate crime, victims with mental health issues, and victims with disabilities/special needs.<sup>23</sup>; The services that do exist typically lack the ability to provide support and information in a way that caters to different communication capacities (e.g. languages differences, lower levels of reading comprehension).<sup>24</sup>
- 4.16 The literature emphasises that victims of hate crime are the least likely to have their needs met, as well as the least likely to have access to services.<sup>25</sup> Victims of hate crime's main unmet need is a lack of awareness of how to report the incident.<sup>26</sup>
- 4.17 Other frequently cited unmet needs include those for victims with mental health issues. This group of victims' main unmet need is that there is only a low level of support available. These victims require early intervention, access to treatment, and 24/7 responses, all of which are lacking under current statutory service provisions.<sup>27</sup>
- 4.18 For young victims, there is a lack of specialist services and early intervention. There is also a lack of services that empower young people to keep themselves safe.
- 4.19 For elderly victims, the main unmet need is a lack of protection, especially for repeat victims. There is also a lack of ability to access services.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> See: Magilton and Goodby. 2015; Victims' Commissioner. 2014.; Soper. 2012.; Callana et al. 2012.; Bowman, Redding, and Hudson. 2014.; Wedlock & Tapley 2016: 24; Callana et al. 2012.; Whitty and Buchanan, 2015.

<sup>23</sup> See: West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner. 2014.; Hahn. 2017.; Pettitt et al. 2013.; and Callana et al. 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Callana et al. 2012.

<sup>25</sup> See West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner. 2013 and Callana et al. 2012.

<sup>26</sup> Soper. 2012.

<sup>27</sup> Soper. 2012.

<sup>28</sup> Soper. 2012.



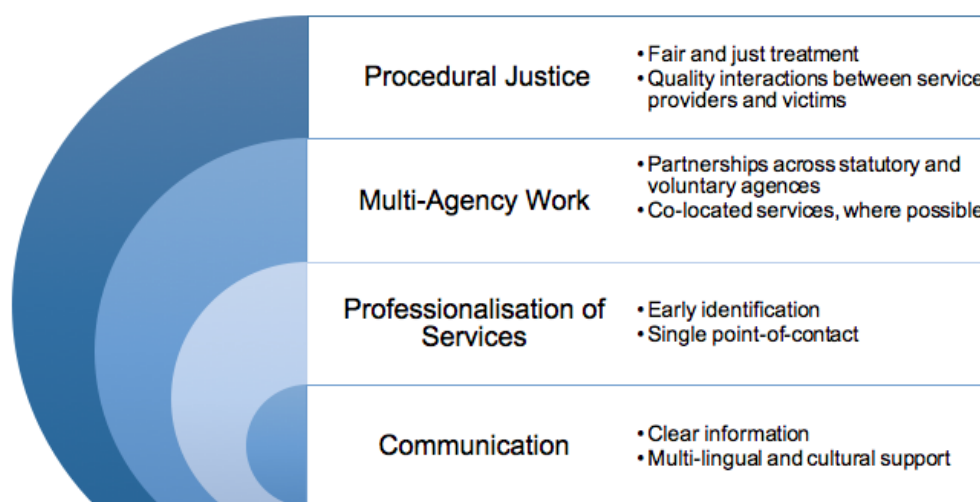
4.20 The fragmentation of support, inability to access long term support (particularly for victims of domestic abuse, sexual violence, and honour based violence), inability of those with no recourse to public funds to access support, inability of support to reach new and emerging communities, lack of support for BME groups, and low levels of support for male victims are other commonly cited unmet needs.<sup>29</sup>

### How to Best Meet Needs

4.21 Given personal circumstances influence victims’ needs, the best practice is to focus on victims’ experiences with the incident instead of the type of incident.<sup>30</sup>

4.22 To meet victims’ needs services should adopt the principles of best practice in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Best practice pillars for service provision<sup>31</sup>



4.23 In addition to the above best practice pillars, meeting victims needs involves ensuring:

- Services are offered immediately to victims and are available for as long as victims need them.<sup>32</sup> This is particularly important for victims of domestic abuse, sexual violence, and hate crime.<sup>33</sup>
- Victims are given a choice of services, but that the services take responsibility for reaching out to victims.<sup>34</sup>
- Local services are mapped, and this map is hosted online in multiple languages in a centralised location so that victims can research more information on each service.<sup>35</sup>
- A single point-of-contact manages victims’ needs and signposts them to other services, where relevant.

<sup>29</sup> Soper. 2012.

<sup>30</sup> Walklate, 2007:75

<sup>31</sup> Information taken from: Wedlock & Tapley. 2016

<sup>32</sup> West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner. 2014.

<sup>33</sup> Soper. 2012.

<sup>34</sup> See Soper. 2012. and also Morton 2015:23; Wedlock & Tapley 2016: 23; Crime Reduction Team. 2014.; and Mind. 2014.

<sup>35</sup> Morton 2015:23

- Core and specialist services have clear and transparent referral processes.<sup>36</sup>
- A combination of oral and written information on the criminal justice system process (e.g. rules of evidence) is available in a clear, non-technical manner in victims' languages of choice.<sup>37</sup>
- Services have partnerships with community-based organisations and services (e.g. schools and religious groups).<sup>38</sup>
- Regular updates are given in relation to the case.<sup>39</sup>
- Informal support networks (e.g. family and friends) are valued and involved where relevant (e.g. parents/guardians for young victims).<sup>40</sup>

4.24 Table 1 highlights the literature review findings on which support methods have been cited as most effective for some key victim groups.

---

<sup>36</sup> Victims' Commissioner. 2014.

<sup>37</sup> See for example; Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk. 2014.; Soper. 2012.; Callana et al. 2012.; Morton 2015.

<sup>38</sup> Victims' Commissioner. 2014.

<sup>39</sup> Victim Support. 2011a.

<sup>40</sup> Vincent et al, 2015; Soper. 2012.

Table 1: Proven good practices by victim group

Victim Group	Support Methods
Young Victims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team Games<sup>41</sup></li> <li>• Group and individual therapy<sup>42</sup></li> <li>• Mindfulness courses<sup>43</sup></li> <li>• Involving parents and teachers<sup>44</sup></li> <li>• Empowerment and self-esteem focused<sup>45</sup></li> <li>• Very low number of times victims have to tell their story<sup>46</sup></li> <li>• Refuge-based children's workers to provide specialist support<sup>47</sup></li> </ul>
Victims of Hate Crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulnerable group specific needs exist<sup>48</sup></li> <li>• Work to develop positive informal support networks<sup>49</sup></li> <li>• Support to report crimes<sup>50</sup></li> </ul>
Victims with Mental Health Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trust-building is a central approach<sup>51</sup></li> <li>• Named case worker that acts to guide victims through health services, in addition to support services<sup>52</sup></li> <li>• Community based multi-agency risk assessment committees to facilitate information sharing and coordinated treatment plans.<sup>53</sup></li> <li>• Clear referral routes<sup>54</sup></li> </ul>
Victims of domestic violence and sexual violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drop-in, local services<sup>55</sup></li> <li>• Local 24/7/365 hotlines<sup>56</sup></li> <li>• Many victims will have complex needs<sup>57</sup></li> <li>• Recommended ratio of 1 refuge per 10,000 in population<sup>58</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>41</sup> SAFE! 2013

<sup>42</sup> Crime Reduction Team. 2014.

<sup>43</sup> SAFE! 2013

<sup>44</sup> SAFE! 2013

<sup>45</sup> See Crime Reduction Team. 2014. and also SAFE! 2013: 4

<sup>46</sup> SAFE! 2013: 4

<sup>47</sup> Crime Reduction Team. 2014.

<sup>48</sup> Wong et al. 2013.

<sup>49</sup> Wong et al. 2013.

<sup>50</sup> Wong et al. 2013.

<sup>51</sup> Mind. 2014.

<sup>52</sup> Mind. 2014.

<sup>53</sup> Mind. 2014.

<sup>54</sup> Mind. 2014.

<sup>55</sup> See Morton 2015 and also Soper. 2012.

<sup>56</sup> Morton 2015:24

<sup>57</sup> Crime Reduction Team. 2014.

<sup>58</sup> Crime Reduction Team. 2014.

## Type of Needs

- 4.25 According to the reviewed literature<sup>59</sup>, victims' emotional and practical support needs include:
- Advocacy
  - Information
  - Empowerment;
  - Compensation;
  - Legal advice and/or assistance;
  - Risk reduction, safety, and/or protection;
  - Privacy and confidentiality
  - Mental health service (e.g. counselling);
  - General well-being; and
  - General practical support (e.g. housing, financial)
- 4.26 Needs vary according to where in the criminal justice system process victims' cases are. Immediately following the incident, victims have different needs than, for example, when their case is in court.

## Prevalence of Needs

- 4.27 Victim Support found that 1 in 5 victims want some form of support.<sup>60</sup> A recent victims' needs assessment in North Yorkshire, however, found that all of the victims engaged in the research (n=665) described the need to "get their life back", which shows that all of the victims in the research were impacted by their victimisation and suggests that support for people victimised by crime could be of value to a high proportion of victims.<sup>61</sup>
- 4.28 The most common type of needs identified are information, advice, and legal assistance, followed by mental health service needs (e.g. counselling).<sup>62</sup>
- 4.29 The needs of victims are based both on their personal circumstances and the crime they have experienced, however some trends can be observed in demand according to crime types, for instance, 1 in 3 victims of burglary want some form of support, whereas 1 in 2 of sexual offences do.<sup>63</sup>
- 4.30 Estimates for victims who want support but do not receive it are as high as 1 in 3.<sup>64</sup> In part, this is because the provision of support is inconsistent across areas and many victims fall outside of service catchment (or awareness) areas.<sup>65</sup> There is a distinct postcode lottery.

---

<sup>59</sup> See for example: Wedlock & Tapley, 2016:10; Callana et al. 2012.; Bowman, Redding, and Hudson. 2014.; Hahn. 2017.; Institute of State and Regional Affairs. 2013;

<sup>60</sup> Victim Support. 2011b

<sup>61</sup> Bowman, Redding, and Hudson. 2014.

<sup>62</sup> Mawby 2016:10

<sup>63</sup> Victim Support. 2011b

<sup>64</sup> Hahn. 2017.

<sup>65</sup> See Greater Together. 2015. and also Victims' Commissioner. 2014.

Some areas have a duplication of services whereas others have none. Rural areas are particularly disadvantaged.<sup>66</sup>

### **Support Needs**

- 4.31 Support for victims of crime can be both emotional and practical, and good support can be broadly understood to comply with the following four dimensions.
- 4.32 First, support must be immediate and long term (for those who require it). This must be high quality support (especially for emotional support) that includes practical help (e.g. changing locks), clear guidance on how to access any available financial compensation, and involves there being someone available for victims to talk to about their emotional needs (e.g. group support, specialist counselling). If the case goes to trial, this also involves victims being informed about how long each stage of the criminal justice process has the potential to take.<sup>67</sup>
- 4.33 Second, support must be delivered in a simple, clear, and easily navigable way. This involves victims feeling that their best interests are at the heart of the process: victims are listened to and all agencies involved work together to support the victim.<sup>68</sup>
- 4.34 Third, communication must be clear, it should be: easy for victims to understand; gives victims plenty of time to respond; and outlines what is happening next and what steps the victim needs to take. This also involves it being easy for victims to contact their main support point-of-contact and victims' queries being responded to in a timely fashion.<sup>69</sup>
- 4.35 Lastly, support must be consistent throughout the criminal justice system process. This includes victims: having a single point-of-contact; knowing where their case is in the criminal justice system process (and being updated when it changes); and getting the same information and advice from all agencies they interact with (i.e. not contradictory information or advice).<sup>70</sup>
- 4.36 The literature posits that victims' personal circumstances influence their perception of the crime and their associated emotional reaction, both of which are the best indicator for what type of support is needed.<sup>71</sup> Such personal circumstances include: gender and sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status, substance abuse issues, and mental health issues. These circumstances are summarised in Table 2.

---

<sup>66</sup> See Wedlock & Tapley, 2016:7; Supported in: Bowman, Redding, and Hudson. 2014.

<sup>67</sup> Bowman, Redding, and Hudson. 2014.

<sup>68</sup> Bowman, Redding, and Hudson. 2014.

<sup>69</sup> Bowman, Redding, and Hudson. 2014.

<sup>70</sup> Bowman, Redding, and Hudson. 2014.

<sup>71</sup> Freeman 2013

Table 2: Personal circumstance by unique need or service requirement

<b>Personal Circumstance</b>		<b>Unique Needs or Service Requirements</b>
Gender and Sexual Orientation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Males are significantly less likely to vocalise domestic violence than females because they feel they will not be believed<sup>72</sup></li> <li>• LGBTQ victims suffer a different pattern of victimisation<sup>73</sup>, fear not being understood, and being outed and humiliated</li> </ul>
Age	Young Victims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusion of these victims as individuals throughout the criminal justice system process is required<sup>74</sup></li> <li>• Focus should be on safety, sensitivity, and protection, as well as providing information about the criminal justice system process<sup>75</sup></li> </ul>
	Elderly Victims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longer lasting negative outcomes post-victimisation than any other age group<sup>76</sup></li> <li>• Higher perception of risk of victimisation and, thereby, higher fear of crime than any other age group<sup>77</sup></li> <li>• More prone to post-traumatic stress disorder than other age group<sup>78</sup></li> </ul>
Lower Socioeconomic Status		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial needs typically outweigh other types of needs<sup>79</sup></li> <li>• Have difficulty in accessing services due to financial constraints<sup>80</sup></li> <li>• More likely to be a victim of crime than their more affluent peers.<sup>81</sup></li> </ul>
Substance Abuse Issues		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More likely to have eroded social support networks and to have physical health issues<sup>82</sup></li> </ul>
Mental Health Issues		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typically suffer greater adverse psychosocial and physical outcomes.<sup>83</sup></li> <li>• More likely to be severely traumatised by the experience of crime<sup>84</sup></li> <li>• Being a victim of crime can worsen pre-existing mental health issues.<sup>85</sup></li> <li>• Less satisfied with the support they do receive.<sup>86</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>72</sup> Brooks, 2017

<sup>73</sup> Wong et al. 2013.

<sup>74</sup> Soper. 2012.

<sup>75</sup> SAFE! 2013

<sup>76</sup> Office for Victims of Crime. n.d.

<sup>77</sup> Soper. 2012.

<sup>78</sup> Soper. 2012.

<sup>79</sup> Soper. 2012.

<sup>80</sup> Soper. 2012.

<sup>81</sup> Soper. 2012.

<sup>82</sup> Safer Sutton Partnership, 2017.

<sup>83</sup> Mind. 2014.

<sup>84</sup> Safer Sutton Partnership, 2017.

<sup>85</sup> Mind. 2014.

- 4.37 Beyond personal circumstance, there are some patterns in demands for support by type of crime. Victims of violent crime, for example, more often require mental health service support and legal advice/assistance than any other type of support.<sup>87</sup>
- 4.38 In another example, because victims of domestic abuse are more likely than any other crime type to suffer repeat victimisation<sup>88</sup>, domestic abuse is highly correlated to adverse mental and physical health outcomes and therefore victims may have unique support needs. This is particularly true for children exposed to domestic abuse.<sup>89</sup> The complex needs of domestic abuse victims most commonly relate to:
- Mental health problems
  - Learning difficulties and/or disabilities
  - Substance misuse problems
  - Housing problems
  - Employment problems
  - Money and debt problems
  - Family and childcare problems<sup>90</sup>
- 4.39 In addition to responding to these complex needs, support requirements for domestic abuse should also focus on ensuring a safe and secure space for support and self-esteem raising.<sup>91</sup>
- 4.40 Other types of crime with distinct needs and associated support requirement patterns are hate crime and antisocial behaviour. Victims of these crimes most commonly require information provision and the perception that their needs are being taken seriously.<sup>92</sup>

## **Gaps in Support Provisions**

### ***Lack of information***

- 4.41 Victims most often feel that they do not receive the information they need. This relates to both information about criminal cases and their own support needs, for example, timely information that updates them on their case, information about the type of support available, and more general information about the criminal justice system process.<sup>93</sup>
- 4.42 This can be particularly significant for those from BME groups and those who have difficulty communicating in English. Further, the over-emphasis on internet-based services can be exclusionary for these groups.<sup>94</sup>

---

<sup>86</sup> Pettitt et al. 2013

<sup>87</sup> Hahn. 2017.

<sup>88</sup> Soper. 2012.

<sup>89</sup> Somerset Public Health and Somerset County Council, 2017.

<sup>90</sup> Safer Sutton Partnership, 2017.

<sup>91</sup> Morton 2015.

<sup>92</sup> Soper. 2012.

<sup>93</sup> Bowman, Redding, and Hudson. 2014.; Wedlock & Tapley, 2016.

<sup>94</sup> Cumbria Police and Crime Commissioner, 2016.

### ***Lack of specialist support***

- 4.43 There is a huge lack of specialist counselling services for young victims and victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence.<sup>95</sup>
- 4.44 More generally, there is lack of one-on-one support services.<sup>96</sup>
- 4.45 There is also a lack of services that offer free legal advice/assistance.<sup>97</sup>

### ***Uncoordinated Responses***

- 4.46 Across the UK, continual changes to policy and procedure have left an inconsistent quality of support for victims.<sup>98</sup>
- 4.47 Victim services are complex and difficult to navigate. In some areas, it is not uncommon for victims to have contact with over ten different organisations at the same time.<sup>99</sup>
- 4.48 Organisations have a tendency to work in silos and this lack of partnership working impacts negatively on victims. For example, there is a lack of information sharing and signposting between services.<sup>100</sup> This can make it very difficult for victims to access services by way of referral.<sup>101</sup>
- 4.49 Victims, as well as service providers, lack knowledge about what services exist in local areas. There is a lack of mapping and advertising of services. There is no central information point for victims or service providers.<sup>102</sup>

### ***Inadequate timescales***

- 4.50 Waiting lists for services are typically far too long. This is particularly true for specialist services, with some having waiting lists of over 6 months.<sup>103</sup>
- 4.51 The majority of support services offer short-term support (usually between 3-6 months), but this can be inadequate for some victims. It also takes victims time to trust in service providers before they begin to open up.<sup>104</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup> Soper. 2012.

<sup>96</sup> Soper. 2012.

<sup>97</sup> Morton 2015

<sup>98</sup> Cumbria Police and Crime Commissioner, 2016.

<sup>99</sup> West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner. 2014.

<sup>100</sup> West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner. 2014.

<sup>101</sup> West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner. 2014.

<sup>102</sup> See: West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner. 2014.; Victims' Commissioner. 2014.; Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk. 2014; Morton 2015.; Northamptonshire Victims' Commissioner. 2013.

<sup>103</sup> See: Callana et al. 2012.; SAFE! 2013: 3; Tapley et al. 2014: 40.

<sup>104</sup> West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner. 2014.



4.52 Even though there are some longer-term support services, there are very few that offer on-going, continual support. The majority of support is time-bounded.<sup>105</sup>

### ***Opening Hours Issues***

4.53 Many services are not open overnight and during the weekends. These times, however, are ones in which some victims would want to access services.<sup>106</sup>

### **Summary of the national documentation**

4.54 The national literature suggests that approximately 1 in 5 victims want some form of support. As many as a third of victims want support but do not receive it. Victims with disabilities/special needs; victims that are not considered vulnerable; victims of trafficking and exploitation; victims of fraud and other cybercrime typologies; and victims with no recourse to public funds (e.g. migrants) more often want support but receive it less often.

4.55 Nationally, there are significant gaps in service provision for victims of hate crime, victims with mental health issues, and victims with disabilities/special needs. Moreover victims of hate crime are the least likely to have their needs met and the least likely to have access to services. Victims with mental health issue follow close behind.

4.56 There is also a distinct postcode lottery, where in some areas have a very high concentration of services and others have almost none. Rural areas are particularly disadvantaged in this way.

4.57 Other notable gaps in service include:

- Lack of specialist support
- Uncoordinated responses
- Inadequate timescales: waiting list and time-limited support
- Opening hours: not open overnight and during the weekends

4.58 Research suggests that improvements to services can be made by ensuring procedural justice, facilitating multi-agency work, professionalisation, and improving communication. This involves ensuring the following:

- Fair and just treatment delivered through a quality interaction
- Victim services being co-located with other services
- Early identification of the victim
- Early identification of and response to mental health needs.
- The victim having a single point-of-contact
- Support that is offered in a clear, multi-lingual manner
- Support being offered immediately, for as long as victims want, at the victims' pace

---

<sup>105</sup> Clifford 2010: 27; Potter, 2017.

<sup>106</sup> Cumbria Police and Crime Commissioner, 2016.

- Support is offered throughout their involvement in the entire criminal justice system process
- Victims having a choice of services
- Victim empowerment and the use of peer support groups t being an important tenant of support, as well as whole family support
- Victims being able to access services 24/7/365
- Victims being able to access local services
- Transparent referral processes
- Regular updates on case

## Part 2 – The Current Picture in Avon & Somerset

4.59 A wealth of information exists locally on current practice in Avon & Somerset. This part of the review considers key characteristics of the Avon & Somerset population, crime trends within the area and notable issues with recording practices, followed by an overview of what is already known about the OPCC commissioned victim services in terms of the work undertaken, feedback collected by services from their service users, and any existing gaps and issues identified.

### Demographic Characteristics of Avon & Somerset

4.60 According to Avon & Somerset Community Risk Register 2016<sup>107</sup>, the population is around 1.7 million people, and 679,000 households. This figure is predicted to increase by around 5.3% by 2020, resulting in 87,000 more residents. The highest growth rates are projected to be among children aged 5 to 14, particularly in Bristol, and among people aged 70 and over, particularly in Somerset and North Somerset.

4.61 Population figures for Avon & Somerset (correct as of June 2016) are:

- Bath and North East Somerset – 184,874
- Bristol - 449,328
- North Somerset - 209,944
- Somerset - 545,390
- South Gloucestershire – 274,661

4.62 According to Avon & Somerset Community Risk Register 2016 Avon & Somerset covers 1,855 square miles, and includes a broad range of rural and urban settings, from city centres and commercial industrial complexes, to vast rural areas and busy holiday resorts. The diverse physical, social and demographic landscape presents a complex environment for local services.

4.63 The 2015 Avon & Somerset Police and Crime Needs Assessment identified a number of notable facets of Avon & Somerset's composition:

- Less ethnically diverse than the national average but diversity is increasing.
- Higher than average levels of people speaking Somali, Welsh, South Asian languages, East Asian languages, Gypsy and Traveller languages and British Sign Language.
- Fewer same sex couples in civil partnerships than the national average (particularly in South Gloucestershire and Somerset) while in Bristol this exceeded the national average.
- Fewer areas of high overall deprivation than the England average but significant pockets of deprivation in central Bristol, Lawrence Hill,

---

<sup>107</sup> Avon and Somerset Local Resilience Forum: *Avon and Somerset Community Risk Register*, 2016.

Filwood, central and south Weston-Super-Mare, Bridgwater, Taunton, Yeovil and Shepton Mallet.

- The health profile of Avon & Somerset is broadly reflective of the national picture.
- The prevalence of people experiencing mental health issues is increasing and this trend is expected to continue.
- Self-reported drug use has been increasing in excess of the national average in the South West of England.
- Alcohol abuse is prevalent, particularly in Bristol.

### **Crime trends in Avon & Somerset**

4.64 The statistics (ONS 2017) for recorded crime in Avon & Somerset during the most recent period of commissioning (i.e. April 2015 to March 2016 and April 2016 to March 2017) suggest that incidences of most crime types have remained fairly static. The largest percentage increase was shown for Homicide (+116.7%) - although caution should be exercised interpreting this when based on very low numbers - followed by public order offences (+73.9%), Violence without injury (+30.5%) and Possession of weapons offences (+29%). The most commonly reported crimes in Avon & Somerset are violence without injury, public order offences, criminal damage and arson, and theft offences. These figures are detailed in Table 3.

Table 3: Police recorded crime figures for Avon & Somerset (ordered by percentage change)<sup>108</sup>

Type	Percentage change	Year ending March 2016	Year ending March 2017
Homicide	116.7	6	13
Public order offences	73.9	9726	16911
Violence without injury	30.5	20348	26562
Possession of weapons offences	29.0	445	574
Robbery	16.0	978	1134
Miscellaneous crimes against society	14.6	1484	1700
Vehicle offences	11.2	10744	11943
Shoplifting	11.1	11405	12670
Violence with injury	8.9	10149	11052
Sexual offences	7.7	3065	3300
All other theft offences	4.5	13206	13799
Criminal damage and arson	2.8	14584	14990
Domestic burglary	0.1	5324	5331
Drug offences	-1.8	3409	3349
Bicycle theft	-4.9	3118	2966
Non-domestic burglary	-9.6	6642	6004
Theft from the person	-13.0	1497	1302

#### Victim Code of Practice 'priority' category crime levels

4.65 Recorded crime levels (Avon & Somerset Constabulary, 2017) for the 'priority' categories (as defined in the Victim Code of Practice) for victim services in Avon & Somerset, indicate that in terms of volume, Domestic Abuse and Hate Crime would likely represent a noteworthy level of police referrals to victim services and both of these increased (particularly Hate Crime at +38.4%) from the year ending March 2016 to the year ending March 2017. Unsurprisingly, a focus on these two priority categories is therefore likely to need to continue. The largest percentage increases however were for Human Trafficking (+389.5%) and False Imprisonment (313.3%). While caution should be exercised interpreting these statistics as the recorded volume of both these offences is comparatively low, the increases are likely to represent a growing awareness of them both across the constabulary and public.

<sup>108</sup> Data from the Office for National Statistics, 2017.

For the time being this trend suggests a likely increase in the numbers of these victims being referred for support from victim services in the future.

Table 4: Police recorded crime figures for Avon & Somerset for priority categories for victim services (ordered by percentage change)<sup>109</sup>

Type	% change from 2016 to 2017	Year ending March 2016	Year ending March 2017	Apr 2017 to Dec 2017
Human Trafficking	389.5%	19	93	38
False imprisonment	313.3%	15	62	44
Hate Crime	38.4%	2309	3196	1781
Attempted Murder	30.8%	26	34	20
Kidnap	30.6%	36	47	26
Wounding/causing grievous bodily harm with intent	29.6%	456	591	280
Domestic Abuse	19.8%	13671	16373	8734
Arson with intent to endanger life	-6.9%	131	122	59

### Crime Recording Practices

4.66 The HMICFRS Crime Data Integrity Inspection 2016 for Avon and Somerset Constabulary showed that the constabulary has made concerted efforts to improve crime recording. It is noted that the majority of officers and staff have made progress in placing the victim at the forefront of crime. The report notes the effective process for providing vulnerable victims with quick and appropriate access to support services to which they are entitled.

4.67 The report, however, also found that there were areas that required improvement. The report indicates that 10.4% of crimes (estimated to equate to 13,700), including serious crimes such as rape, other sexual offences and violence go unrecorded and that improvements are also required in the recording of modern slavery. This failing is judged to potentially deprive many victims of the services that they require.

<sup>109</sup> This data was compiled specifically for this research by the Avon & Somerset Constabulary in December 2017. It should be noted that the figures are drawn from incidents with a 'flag' for Domestic Abuse, Hate Crime and Human Trafficking (flag for 'Modern Slavery'); with an offence code for Wounding/causing grievous bodily harm with intent, Kidnap and False imprisonment; and with an offence group for Arson with intent to endanger life and Attempted Murder. There was no flag/means for specifically identifying incidents of terrorism and therefore no data was available for this priority category.

4.68 Of further note, the report found:

- For the purpose of crime-recording, officers and staff do not always believe reports of crime received from victims who they consider are suffering from mental health issues.
- The recording of offences of rape is of significant concern. The constabulary has insufficient specially trained officers to attend to victims of rape and also fails to correctly record reports of rape.
- The report estimates that 13,700 reports of crime a year are not recorded. Of this figure, 4000 are estimated to be cases of violent crime and the report states that as violent crime can be particularly distressing for the victim, this is an area in which the need for better recording of reported crime is particularly acute. An estimated figure of 270 reports of sexual offences are not recorded a year, this included offences against both adults and children.
- Seven recorded crimes of modern slavery were examined and the report found that 18 crimes should have been recorded, nine of the crimes that were not recorded were offences of rape.
- The report found that Lighthouse provided a good service for victims with enhanced needs, however noted that victims not assessed as requiring an enhanced service may not receive the support they require.
- Staff were aware of their responsibilities under the code and there were observations of good practice, but many officers did not understand how to use the victim contact element of the 'Niche' records management system.

### **Summary of key findings from local crime trends and demographics**

4.69 Local documentation suggests that in Avon & Somerset, there are gaps in reporting and recording serious crimes such as rape and sexual offences. This is particularly notable around recording modern slavery.

4.70 The most commonly reported crime types at present are violence without injury, public order offences, criminal damage and arson, and theft offences. Within the VCOP 'priority' crime types, recorded crime levels are highest for domestic abuse and hate crime and these are increasing. The largest increase in prevalence was for human trafficking and false imprisonment, which could reflect the increased police focus on modern slavery.

4.71 Mental health needs are continuing to increase and self-reported drug use is increasing at a rate higher than the national average. Avon & Somerset also has higher than average levels of people speaking 'Gypsy/traveller' languages, Somali, Welsh, South Asian languages, East Asian languages and British Sign Language.

4.72 Geographically, while there are fewer areas of high overall deprivation than the England average, there are significant pockets of deprivation. Avon & Somerset also has a notably broad range of rural (and urban) settings. Rural areas are known for being particularly disadvantaged when it comes to support services.

## OPCC Commissioned Services for Victims

4.73 One of the purposes of the needs assessment is to identify the future demand in Avon & Somerset and this will feed in to the future commissioning decisions around the services provided. While the services offer different levels and types of support, a summary of the number of cases provided with support since being commissioned by the OPCC in 2015 is provided in Table 5.

Table 5: Summary of cases by service provider<sup>110</sup>

Service	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18 (Q1&2)
Avoice	285	350	127
Restorative Justice	-	-	(Jun to Oct) 43
Safelink	788	860	468
Unseen	9	17	11
Victim Support	1554	1373	687
Young Victims' Service	331	465	201

4.74 On the whole the service data suggests that referral numbers are typically increasing. The service data also suggests that (where appropriate) the services are working with a variety of individuals and needs as desired/reflected in the scope of their work.

### Victim Feedback

4.75 Information available from local documentation provided some insights on the experiences of victims. Perpetuity can make no assurances of the validity, reliability and accuracy of the data collected from service users, nonetheless, they can provide rich insights into which aspects of services are helpful to victims of crime.

4.76 Key issues affecting service users identified by one service included:

- Service users' perception that the police are on the side of the defendant.
- Police complaints procedure very difficult and confusing.
- Concerns over not being taken seriously, particularly for male service users.
- Fear of repercussions from the defendant and inadequate police action to keep service users safe.
- Contradiction from different officers where more than one are involved in the case.
- Communication mechanisms/methods not adapted to meet the need of service users.

<sup>110</sup> The figures are taken from the respective quarterly and annual reports for each service provider.



- Poor communication with the CJS, particularly around arrangements for special measures for vulnerable victims.
- Poor audit trails for incidents of ASB and a lack of continuity in process across different LA areas.
- An increase in the numbers of referrals of sexual violence victims with learning difficulties and severe mental health problems.
- Safeguarding concerns particularly in relation to child protection.
- Service users experiencing domestic violence continue to fear that social services will take their children away if they report the crime.
- Service users with regard to 'rape' and 'other sexual offences' are not always given the choice of independent support.
- There is little additional support for vulnerable service users.
- Delays in appointing registered intermediaries (or not appointing them at all) in court for service users with learning disabilities and severe mental health problems.

4.77 Verbatim comments from service users about the services they had accessed were reviewed. Frustrations with the victims services were rare, but where these did occur typically reflected needs beyond the scope of the support offered or a desire for more contact with the service, for example:

*'I wish I could have seen her every week'*

*(Service User)*

*'The chap that I saw was very helpful and listened, but I wanted him to do more. For example I wanted to get my books in order for my business and rather than going through this with me, he asked me to ring someone else.'*

*(Service User)*

4.78 Overwhelmingly however, feedback from service users was positive and outlined the many ways in which the support had been transformative in terms of improving the service users' quality of life.

4.79 Specifically, support helped inform service users of their choices, for example:

*'Advocacy, has been a great help to co-ordinate the facets of my issues, and having a positive slant, communicating with me what was going on, showing me there are options and choices rather than just a dark tunnel.'*

*(Service User)*

*'Having someone explain all my options and be there with me. She didn't feel intimidating like the police did sometimes.'*

*(Service User)*

*'I am happy to think about things and make decisions. Before I found it difficult as very depressed and stressed.'*

*(Service User)*

- 4.80 Support also helped service users to liaise with a police investigation and (where relevant) court proceedings:

*'I cannot fault my advocate at [service]. The support I received was exceptional. I was a complete mess after being assaulted. I'd never been a victim before so I didn't understand anything about dealing with the police and going to court. My advocate was so brilliant and so kind. They really cared. Thanks for everything!'*

(Service User)

- 4.81 The support received was often cited as increasing confidence among service users:

*'Thanks for all your support, it has given me a confidence boost as I had lost confidence, with all that lot [perpetrators family/friends are all close neighbours] all the information I needed was given to me, and it helped me to make a sensible decision. If it wasn't for you lot I would have been in a worse state with my mental health.'*

(Service User)

*'I know where to go for services, it has given me confidence. I have all the things I need for my baby.'*

(Service User)

*'It renewed my self-confidence and made me feel less like a victim and more like someone who had been wronged by a crime.'*

(Service User)

- 4.82 Many service users made reflections that indicated the support received had helped to prevent a decline in mental health:

*'I would be lost with out u and probably in hospital and nervous break down. Ur [sic] like my angel.'*

(Service User)

*'She sat with me and kept me calm, thank you.'*

(Service User)

*'Made me feel less stressed.'*

(Service User)

*'She made me feel normal.'*

(Service User)

*'She gave me some very helpful insights into trauma, how it affects people, and was so reassuring when I felt that I was going mad and felt I was losing everything. I cannot thank you enough.'*

(Service User)

*'If I hadn't been supported by [Service], maybe I would have died, as at that time I was thinking of committing suicide. You have helped me go out there, do a course,*

*before I wouldn't do that, wouldn't meet people or even jump on a bus. Now I can do that, even if it's full of people.'*

*(Service User)*

- 4.83 And more generally, service users reported that engaging with support had meant that they do not feel alone and it provided an outlet for their emotions and experiences:

*'I never felt alone. She was always on my side. She was such important support to me.'*

*(Service User)*

*'The empathy and understanding I got from the person that I talked to, they seemed to be able to not only take my side but also to offer practical solutions to the emotional state that I was in.'*

*(Service User)*

*'Knowing there are people who can help others to navigate through a situation is helpful and it helped reduce my emotional distress and fear. I felt less isolated and receiving reassurance and feedback helped guide me and build my confidence.'*

*(Service User)*

*'This has been the worst experience of my life, and that's why it's vital that services like yours exist. The support has been so helpful for me as it's allowed me to talk about how I've been affected and how it's affecting my family. Talking to you has helped me to process my situation and make decisions, and I can then concentrate on supporting my family. I genuinely look forward to you calling and having the opportunity to offload.'*

*(Service User)*

- 4.84 Particularly notable, was that service users were not pressured to report the offence to the police and this was highly valued, for example:

*'They didn't pressure me to report. They didn't pressure me to do sexual abuse counselling. They realised I was very affected by the recent death of my mother and referred me for bereavement counselling.'*

*(Service User)*

*'Always there for me even though I didn't want to report to the police.'*

*(Service User)*

## Section 5. Consultation with local stakeholders

5.1 The section presents the detailed findings from consultation with local stakeholders engaged through either an interview or an online survey.

### Organisation Details

5.2 Consultation was undertaken with local stakeholders through interviews (n=19) and a survey (n=82). The types of organisations that the views presented in the report represent are described in Table 6. Survey respondents were asked to select one option that best described their area of work.

Table 6: Stakeholders' area of work (n=101)

Type	Survey	Interview	Total
Victims of crime	21	8	29
Constabulary	18		18
Community Safety	7	7	14
Health	8		8
Voluntary & Community	7		7
Criminal Justice	6	1	7
Safeguarding	6		6
PCC		3	3
Fire	2		2
Police & Crime Panel	2		2
CCG	1		1
Disability	1		1
Education	1		1
Religion & belief	1		1
Not stated	1		1
<i>Total</i>	<i>82</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>101</i>

5.3 Survey respondents were asked specific questions to understand their level of interaction with victim work. For a third of those consulted all of their service users were victims of crime or ASB and for the majority (80% in total) more than half of their service users are victims of crime or ASB. Table 7 displays the results.

Table 7: Respondent estimate of the proportion of their service users that are victims of crime or ASB (n=77)

<b>Estimated Proportion of service users</b>	<b>Percent</b>
0-25	16%
25-49	5%
50-74	21%
75-99	25%
100	34%

5.4 Over two fifths (42%) of the survey respondents were in a frontline role. Approaching half (45% in total) were in a management role (middle or senior). The full breakdown is shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Role of respondent (n=82)

<b>Role</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Frontline	42%
Middle management	23%
Manager/Director	22%
Volunteer	4%
Other	10%

5.5 The majority of respondents (62%) reported that they work directly with victims of crime or ASB<sup>111</sup>.

5.6 There was a fairly even representation in terms of the areas of Avon & Somerset covered by the service that the stakeholder represented. 20% (n=16) of the stakeholders indicated that their service covered all 9 areas of Avon & Somerset. Table 9 displays the full results.

Table 9: Area of Avon & Somerset covered by the respondents' service (n=82)

<b>Area</b>	<b>%</b>
Bristol	46%
Taunton Deane	45%
South Somerset	45%
West Somerset	43%
North Somerset	40%

<b>Area</b>	<b>%</b>
South Gloucestershire	39%
Sedgemoor	38%
Mendip	38%
Bath & North East Somerset	37%

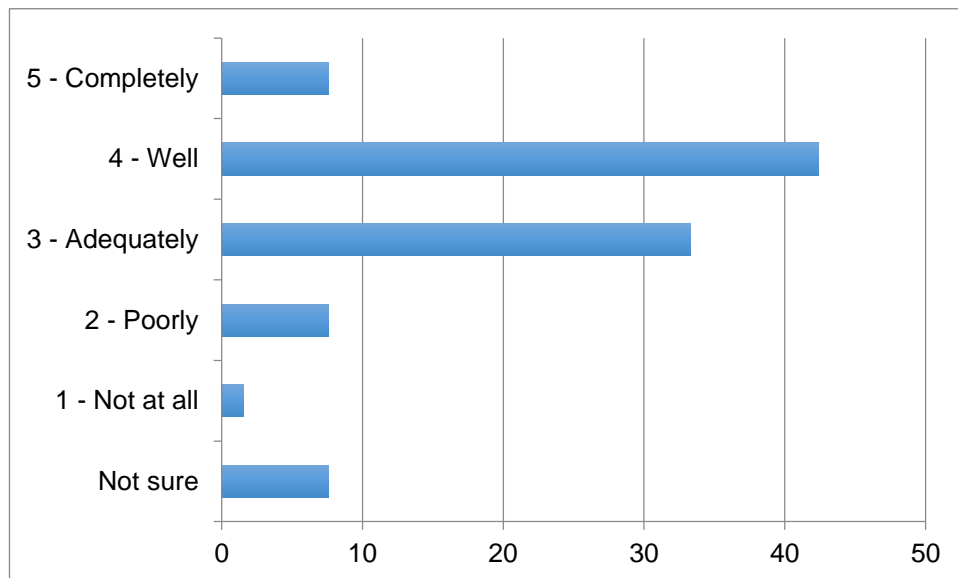
<sup>111</sup> 38% reported they did not. The sample for this question was n=81.

5.7 Interviewees were all working at management or senior level. Interviewees from the OPCC commissioned victim services cover the whole of Avon & Somerset. While community safety interviewees were selected to represent each of the five districts of Avon & Somerset.

### Current Provision

5.8 Survey respondents were asked to reflect on how well the services commissioned by the OPCC, as a whole, provide an effective foundation for service provision for victims of crime and ASB in Avon & Somerset. Here the results were quite positive. In total, half stated ‘completely’ or ‘well’ (8% and 42% respectively), and a further third (33%) stated ‘adequately’. The full breakdown is displayed in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Perception of the extent that OPCC commissioned services provide an effective foundation for service provision for victims of crime and ASB (n=66)



5.9 Interviewees broadly agreed that the commissioned services were an effective foundation for service provisioning for victims of crime because the services successfully engaged with victims:

*‘I think that we absolutely do our best and are way ahead of some places across the country... we’re in a good position across A&S because Sue [PCC] has really championed victims, if she was replaced by someone else with different priorities it could be very different.’*

*(Interviewee 13)*

*‘I think things are going well and there is a general desire to provide support and the ones that have been commissioned are doing their job and it is a good picture we have here compared to other areas.’*

*(Interviewee 10)*

- 5.10 While there was broad agreement that the services offered an effective foundation, issues are identified subsequently in the 'Gaps and Weaknesses' section of the report.
- 5.11 Additionally, interviewees observed that the OPCC commissioned services work within a broader system and that these services can only be effective if they enhance other commissioning systems - e.g. via joint funding whereby the PCC funding is supplemented with council funding. Consequently some felt that overall effectiveness of services was restricted:

*'We as a combined force are not adequate because we are not working together. It's a bit harsh but I feel it is true.'*

*(Interviewee 4)*

### **Victim Profile**

- 5.12 Table 10 below summarises the profile of victims engaging with the OPCC commissioned services that were consulted (Lighthouse is included due to the integral role played in the foundation laid by the services). The information includes stakeholder views on who the service is for, the most common profile of their service users, and any restrictions on whom they can work with.

Table 10: Victim profile of OPCC commissioned services consulted

<b>Service</b>	<b>Service User group</b>	<b>Common victim profile</b>	<b>Restrictions</b>
AVoice	Vulnerable adults with 'enhanced' needs	Most have police involvement (90% are referred from Lighthouse) Most have Mental Health issues which deteriorate as a result of the offence. Typically no social network/agency involvement compounding their issues. Many are victims of ASB 70% are from Somerset and North Somerset <sup>112</sup> , and 30% elsewhere	Will assess anyone to explore suitability, but must have a vulnerability or be suffering discrimination
Lighthouse	Victims of crime referred by police that are VCOP eligible	Nearly half are victims of DA Rape and Sexual Assault around 9%	Must be adult (18 yrs +)
Restorative Justice	Victims and offenders interested in pursuing a restorative justice approach (Also conduct workshops with offenders)	None  Referrals are – 54% police, 20% Lighthouse, 14% probation, 1% CRC, 4% self, 6% other.	Work with victims age 12 – 80yrs

<sup>112</sup> This is thought to be due to a comparative lack of other available services in these locations.



<b>Service</b>	<b>Service User group</b>	<b>Common victim profile</b>	<b>Restrictions</b>
Safelink	Victims of rape and sexual abuse Have specialist ISVAs to work with young people and those with disability	Predominantly women, but working to raise numbers of men. Working to increase LGBTQ reporting and BME groups.	None (also support parents of children of any age that have been raped or sexually abused)
Unseen	Victims of Modern Slavery, including Potential Victims of Trafficking (PVOTs)	Women, increasingly with children. Mid 20s to 40s. Currently common profile of Eastern European and Vietnamese women.	Under 18s are supported by statutory services
Victim Support	All victims of crime with needs	Women from a White background (but many men and BME backgrounds too). Age range varies widely.	Can not work with those scoring above 14 on CAADA DASH Officially work is with adults
Young Victims Service	Young victims including indirect involvement (e.g. witness) Also support parents to support their children	Typically female, age 13-15 yrs. Originally more from Bristol although increasingly equal between Bristol and Bath.	Preferably those who have suffered serious sexual offences will go to a specialist service Work with ages 8 to 18 (and up to 25 if additional 'vulnerability')

## Support Type

- 5.13 With the exception of Lighthouse (which assesses the needs of victims referred by the police, coordinates referrals to support services and acts as a single point of contact for victims navigating the CJS including ongoing support and guidance to those whose case proceeds to court) and Restorative Justice which gives victims an opportunity to express the impact on their lives and define how restitution can be made) the primary function of the OPCC commissioned services consulted was to support, empower and advocate for victims to aid in their recovery from victimisation.
- 5.14 The services work with a wide variety of service users, who often present with complex support needs. The services take a holistic approach to their service user's needs and engage with victims in numerous ways, offering emotional support and advocacy, information and specialist advice, appropriate signposting and sometimes act as a single point-of-contact for service users.
- 5.15 Victim Support is in place to offer emotional support, although the other services noted that emotional support was an important aspect of their work, essential to facilitate their work with victims.
- 5.16 Most of the services reported offering practical support to their service users, and help to liaise with a police investigation (although Lighthouse provide this post-charge), and any relevant protection/safety considerations.
- 5.17 While the services offered some form of emotional support and some services employed psychological techniques (for example, YVS reported using Cognitive Behavioural techniques and solution focused approach), the interviewees were clear that where therapeutic support was required, appropriate referrals were made.
- 5.18 Unseen was the only organisation that reported providing legal information, but the other services where relevant would signpost victims for this type of support.
- 5.19 Most of the services took a holistic approach to the support they offered their service users, looking behind the presenting issues, assessing support needs and reviewing them regularly with their service users. The need for this holistic approach was particularly evident for services working with service users with complex needs or who were particularly vulnerable, for example, AVoice play a central role, acting as a service user's voice and central point-of-contact for the, often numerous, services engaged with the service user.
- 5.20 Many of the services played a role in ensuring that their service users additional needs were met. These included issues such as accessing

health services, refuge/housing, basic needs, benefit claims, financial advice, employment, mental health issues, and drug and alcohol use. Service users were commonly supported either with advice, or signposting and referral.

### **Length of engagement**

5.21 Notably the OPCC commissioned services do not typically specify a limit on engagement – which is identified in the good practice literature as a preferable approach for meeting victims’ needs. In some cases the length of engagement is very short, for example for Lighthouse, for pre charge cases, once other agencies are engaged and for Victim Support where a single phone call may be sufficient to deal with the needs of the individual. In others it is much longer, particularly where cases are slow to proceed through the criminal justice system. YVS aim for seven sessions but will offer support for as long as is necessary. Unseen are funded to provide support for 6 months or 100 hours, and this built in flexibility allows the service to offer support when it is most appropriate.

### **Assessing Needs**

5.22 All of the services reported that they conducted a needs assessment with those entering their service. Indeed, a common needs assessment was developed for use by Lighthouse and the OPCC commissioned service providers. Services reported identifying the aims of the support, and the support the service user required to achieve these. These were agreed with the service user, typically in writing. All of the organisations reported that they had a review process in place, although the nature of this review varied, reflecting the varied work that the services were involved with. Some reported structured weekly or monthly reviews of needs, while others mentioned a continual process of identifying and addressing emerging needs over the course of engagement.

5.23 Needs expressed that were beyond the scope of the organisation engaged with a victim were dealt with through referrals to other agencies. It was noted however that thresholds to access statutory services were increasingly high, and finding appropriate specialist support for service users could be difficult. This sometimes resulted in services holding victims while they were on waiting lists for other support, or required them to ‘think outside of the box’ to identify novel ways of supporting their service users.

5.24 The needs of service users reportedly varied widely. Emotional needs were mentioned frequently, *‘To have someone to talk to and figure out how to put fear behind them and move on’* (Interviewee 12). Another key need was to engage with a professional that they could talk to and help identify what would help them to cope and recover from their experiences, and put the necessary support in place either directly or through information, signposting and referral. By virtue of the

vulnerability of many service users, it was noted that many had complex needs to be address.

- 5.25 It was also highlighted that a key need for those cases with police or Criminal Justice System involvement, was support to navigate the process – and not just to get through it, but to ensure that service users had the best experience possible so that victims were not discouraged from going through the process in future should further victimisation occur.

### **Current demand**

- 5.26 All of the OPCC commissioned services reported experiencing high demand. Indeed the figures available from the local documentation illustrated that referrals/cases are typically increasing, no doubt in part due to the services becoming more established. The Restorative Justice service, having been reorganised in June 2017 was in the process of establishing itself in the community, and reported on work that was being carried out to raise awareness of the service, and that since June, a sharp increase in conversion rates from enquiries to cases had been noted.

- 5.27 In terms of the immediacy of support offered:

- Young Victims Service contact the individual within 48 hours of the referral.
- Victim Support reported they are running a waiting list, but that most cases are contacted within two weeks.
- AVoice reported having to use a waiting lists at times, but all cases are contacted within a month.
- Safelink use a triage system to determine how immediate an individual's needs are and manage their work accordingly to avoid the use of a waiting list.

- 5.28 Local stakeholders interviewed representing each of the five community safety partnerships within Avon & Somerset, all felt that the domestic abuse services they commissioned locally were in very high demand and it was also observed that cases are now more complex, with individuals having a number of additional needs. Some services reported having to operate waiting lists and others restricted their remit to be able to cope. Somerset Community Safety Partnership commission a service for young people with trauma related to sexual violence which was noted to be in very high demand.

- 5.29 Survey respondents were asked their perception of both the demand for and the capacity of a number of key types of support for victims within Avon & Somerset. For all types except Restorative Justice more respondents felt demand was 'high' than 'moderate' or 'low'. Similarly for all types except Restorative Justice more respondents felt capacity was 'too little' than 'about right' or 'too high'. The types of support most

commonly identified as having a 'high' demand matched those most commonly identified as having too little capacity, namely:

- emotional support – demand rated 'high' by 72% and capacity rated 'too little' by 74%
- practical support – demand rated 'high' by 68% and capacity rated 'too little' by 63%
- counselling – demand rated 'high' by 61% and capacity rated 'too little' by 67%

5.30 Restorative justice was the only type rated by more respondents as 'moderate' demand (38%) and 'about right' capacity (31%) although this category also held the highest level of 'not sure' answers (24% and 41% respectively).

5.31 The full findings are displayed in Figure 3 and Figure 4.

Figure 3: Stakeholder perception of level of demand by type of support (n=68-69)

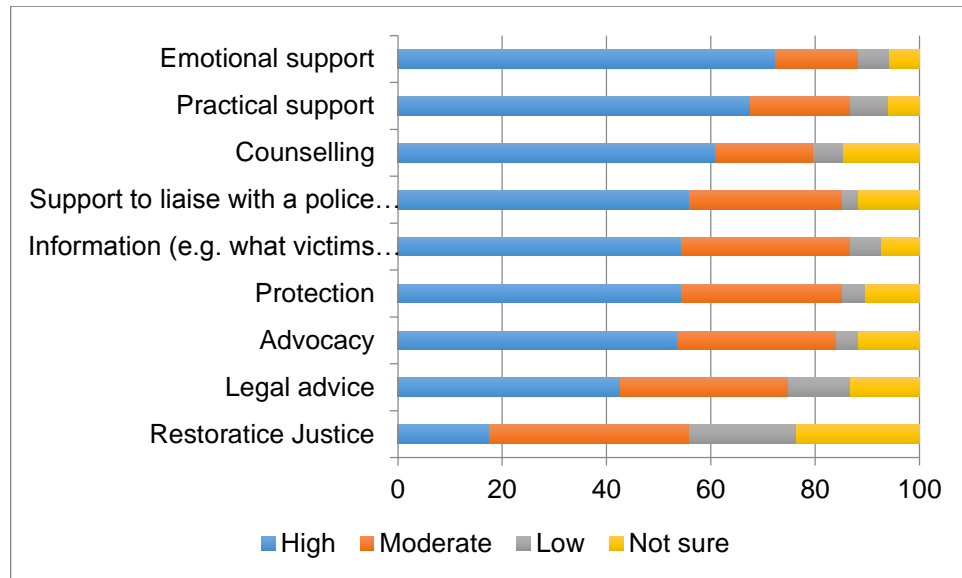
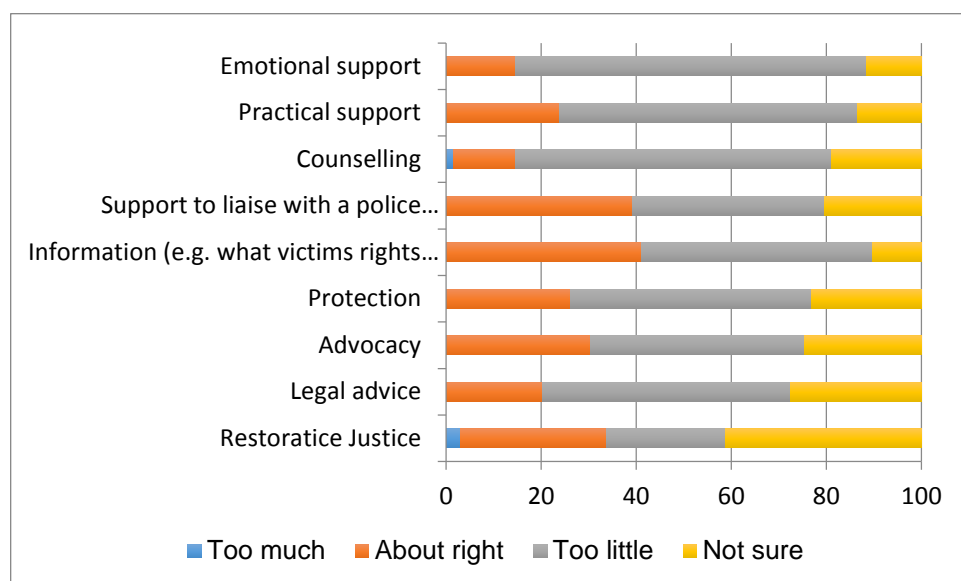


Figure 4: Stakeholder perception of level of capacity by type of support (n=67-69)



5.32 The level of ‘not sure’ survey responses in relation to demand for Restorative Justice, suggests a lack of knowledge about/interaction with the service. As highlighted above, this will in part be due to the short time in which the current service has been operating. The interviewee representing the Restorative Justice service indicated plans to develop briefings and training to target people effectively and to engage champions to promote it to others, they also indicated that they had work planned to track the effect of this promotion on referrals in order to better target. A desire to raise awareness among young people was voiced, along with a more general desire for members of the public to be made aware of what restorative justice is and for their awareness to be comparable to public awareness of Victim Support.

5.33 Overall, the findings in relation to demand highlight that many services are working close to or at their capacity and that the general perception among local stakeholders is that greater capacity within services is required to meet need. *‘Busy, very busy... we’re stretched but using resources well’* (Interviewee 13). This issue is revisited subsequently in the ‘Gaps and Weaknesses’ section of this report.

## Duplication

5.34 Stakeholders responding to the survey largely found it difficult to identify whether there is duplication in the support services for victims of crime and ASB in Avon & Somerset – 45% indicated they were unsure. Meanwhile a third (33%) thought there isn’t and just over two fifths (22%) thought there is.<sup>113</sup> When asked what is being duplicated, 13 respondents provided an answer. There were three main examples that emerged although reported by relatively small numbers:

<sup>113</sup> The sample for this question was n=69.

- Safelink and the witness service and some smaller services supporting an individual on the day of court.
  - Domestic abuse covered in part by CRC, Victim Support, NPS and other victim support services.
  - Lighthouse with:
    - Safeguarding Coordination Unit
    - (along with Young Victims' Service) YOT
    - ISVA and IDVA roles
- 5.35 One respondent noted that there is a police ASB coordinator and local authority ASB teams. They suggested police may discourage use of the council team despite them offering a high level of service which may be worthy of further investigation.
- 5.36 The main concern among the small number of survey respondents identifying duplication (aside from the inefficiency of duplication) was that offers of the same type of support from different services was undesirable and confusing for victims.
- 5.37 There was also noted to be problems with victims retelling their stories. It was suggested that since services have to report on success they ask very similar questions to the information already provided by Lighthouse.
- 5.38 Interviewee respondents also explored issues surrounding duplication and raised further points in regard to the services, and these are presented below in the following points. However, the primary theme to emerge was that services were relatively new and had been through a process of development and embedding, and during this time it was inevitable that some incidences of duplication would occur, but that services had worked well to address this and ensure that their work now complemented rather than duplicated each others'.
- 5.39 In keeping with the survey results, several of the interviewees raised issues with the completeness of the referrals they received which resulted in extra time being spent completing them rather than providing a service, and caused detriment to the PCC's ambition that victims would tell their story once.
- 5.40 One interviewee mentioned that there was double handling rather than duplication – people were sometimes passed between agencies without being picked up and provided with services.
- 5.41 Service providers mentioned that the way in which they were set up was good, reporting that the services were easily able to identify when they were not the best service to be engaging with a service user and how to refer to a more appropriate service.

- 5.42 One interviewee reported that there would be some duplication in 'any advocate service to a certain extent' but added that this had been minimised by the structuring of the services:

*'Our split is ideal, each has their own specialism.'*

*(Interviewee 11)*

- 5.43 One interviewee reported observing duplication between a local Youth Offending Team (YOT) and Restorative Justice service, with the YOT reporting that they already had a brief to do Restorative Justice and that the Restorative Justice service '*cut across it*'. (Interviewee 12). However, the reorganisation of the service, resulting in Restorative Justice being offered by Bristol mediation since Summer 2017 was developed to mitigate this and was reported to be embedding well. The interviewee from Bristol Mediation reported, '*It wasn't a good use of resources, there was a lot of people doing the same thing*'. The interviewee also mentioned that the renegotiation process has been open and transparent, which they had appreciated and that there was now a '*more active use of resources*'.
- 5.44 Another interviewee reported that duplication had been identified and managed in a productive manner, '*We had to look at duplication of work with Lighthouse... such as with them organising pre trial visits/staff going to court with victims*' (Service Provider Interviewee), reporting that they had a partnership meeting of OPCC services to '*iron out duplication and victims having to tell their story repeatedly*' and have reported positive outcomes from this meeting '*it's about constant communication...unless we partner, the victim is going to be the loser*'.

## **Partnership Working**

- 5.45 The stakeholders were generally positive about the partnership working across Avon & Somerset:

*'... we're good at working with each other, we have established systems for referral, duplication has been reduced, staff understand where they fit, it's very established – it shows by the stretched nature of the services, it's not just VS any more...and we have unique specialisms... having that directory [of services] is absolutely brilliant, there's places they can go'.*

*(Interviewee 11)*

- 5.46 Key themes regarding the nature of partnership working across Avon & Somerset are presented below.
- 5.47 OPCC commissioned service providers were positive about their engagement with the other services, and found the Victim Services Provider Forum meetings to be a useful way of keeping engaged with work being carried out in the area.



- 5.48 Additionally, some of the interviewees commented positively about the passion and commitment to partnership working that they observed across the area:

*'There's quite a lot happening, a lot of drive and passion and working together... it's lovely that we've got it'.*

*(Interviewee 15)*

- 5.49 Community Safety interviewees reported that there was a broad range of services that interlinked with OPCC commissioned services, with pathways for referrals. They reported trying to work collaboratively with other commissioners but that more could be done. One interviewee reported:

*'I think in a small authority like this they link up well. Lighthouse is a good glue that helps the different services link up'.*

*(Interviewee 16)*

- 5.50 Interviewees talked positively about their relationships with the OPCC and the good working relationships that had developed. They appreciated the drive and willingness of the OPCC to engage and understand issues at a ground level; getting involved, meeting service users and staff and attending meetings. They also appreciated their understanding of the flexibility required to deliver effective tailored services and their long-term view. It was felt that the approach to commissioning in terms of the variety of services, the forum meetings arranged to share knowledge and update each other, and the introduction of Lighthouse to make appropriate referrals worked well.

*'The commitment and drive of Lighthouse staff, they're so brilliant'.*

*(Interviewee 14)*

- 5.51 OPCC commissioned service providers reported good working relationships between themselves, and a good knowledge of who they could refer to. The interviewees reported that this had developed in line with the services establishing themselves:

*'Partnership is better than it was, from where we were last year it's bounds ahead.'*

*(Interviewee 15)*

- 5.52 Interviewees reported that partnership working was especially valuable in complex cases, where agencies could provide specific complementary services to support people:

*'We've had brilliant experiences working [together] ... it's a great team'.*

*(Interviewee 11)*

- 5.53 Some of the interviewees mentioned some areas where partnership working had provided exceptional results, for example, a multi-agency

approach involving police, fire, noise abatement teams, and Environmental Health had worked together to resolve a case of ASB:

*'The feedback from the other statutory services was that it was the best case they have ever worked on. And the fire service is going to use it as a document for how they work in multiagency work.'*

*(Interviewee 4)*

- 5.54 And a few of the interviewees mentioned the exceptional support that had been provided through a partnership between AVoice and ISVA service:

*'The support that IDVAs and ISVAs provide is exceptional in terms of being in the court room and offering real support throughout the trial.'*

*(Interviewee 8)*

- 5.55 Finally, a number of areas for improvement for partnership working were noted, and these are considered below in the sub section 'Gaps and Weaknesses'.

## **Reporting Offences**

- 5.56 The survey asked stakeholders to estimate the percentage of victims that their service works with who have reported the offence to the police. The average of the estimates was 57%<sup>114</sup>.

## **Why victims do not report**

- 5.57 Survey respondents were asked for their views on the reasons (from a list of issues identified by literature) that victims do not report crimes to the police. Most commonly cited was a fear of the consequences (85%) and of not being believed (81%) and not feeling mentally strong enough to cope with the process (81%). Lack of trust in the police was also indicated by quite a high proportion of respondents (78%). The full breakdown is displayed in Table 11.

---

<sup>114</sup> The sample for this questions was n=60.

Table 11: Why victims do not report crimes to the police (n=59)

Reason	Percent
They were scared of the consequences of reporting	85%
They did not feel mentally strong enough to go through with the process	81%
They were afraid that they wouldn't be believed	81%
They didn't trust the police	78%
They didn't want their family/friends to know about it	64%
They just wanted to move on with their life	61%
They thought it was their fault	58%
They didn't want the suspect to get into trouble	56%
They didn't think there was enough evidence	56%
Other	44%

- 5.58 Other reasons suggested by respondents included that there was a lack of faith that action would be taken against the offender or that action would result in conviction, lack of understanding of their rights as a victim, perception that the offence is trivial (not worth police time), previous negative experience of the criminal justice system, barriers such as disability, language or immigration status. It was suggested that some victims may fear reporting will do more harm than good, for example they will open a lid on issues that there is no support for, that they could be 'outed' (for LGBTQ) or that it may lead to intimidation or further abuse. Also it was felt to be particularly difficult for offenders to report crimes because of the perception of them as an offender rather than a victim.
- 5.59 Interviewees also discussed issues surrounding reporting, mentioning a number of the issues covered by the survey respondents, for example a fear of the consequences of reporting to the police due to possible retribution from the perpetrator, or fear that police will turn up on their doorstep. They also noted other more specific factors, summarised below.
- 5.60 A few of the interviewees reported that victims might be afraid of the police themselves, especially in the case of refugees, people who have been trafficked and those who have had negative experiences of police in other countries.
- 5.61 Interviewees reported that underreporting was more likely in deprived areas and among BME communities and that specific crime types were associated with underreporting, for example DA, Hate Crime, Sexual Offences.

5.62 One interviewee highlighted the specific issues that victims of DA face when deciding to report:

*'Its not just about the prosecution, its about safeguarding them and working with partners in LA around accommodation – often they will be scared – with DA – what happens with their home, their children, will they have anyone to talk to. I think victims may see police as focused on recording crime and dealing with the offender rather than supporting the victim through it.'*

*(Interviewee 8)*

5.63 The same interviewee also reported that victim expectations about outcomes (such as sentence length) were not always met and so they were discouraged from reporting again.

5.64 In the case of historic sexual abuse people were reported to sometimes worry about lack of forensic evidence and to be:

*'... petrified of cross examination and being told they're not telling the truth'.*

*(Interviewee 13)*

5.65 A few of the interviewees highlighted the emotional impact of reporting crimes and that the process could cause people to 're experience what they've been through' (Interviewee 14).

### **How to encourage reporting**

5.66 Survey respondents were also asked for suggestions on how reporting could be encouraged. From those provided (48 responses) four main themes were apparent.

5.67 The first was a need to create opportunities for individuals to engage. Ideas included:

- Regular police engagement with the public, such as drop in sessions with beat officers
- Outreach work by specialism (e.g. hate crime, LGBTQ, young people, BME)
- Engaging with those attending hospitals
- Work in schools (before victimisation occurs) to build trust in police

5.68 The second was to raise awareness:

- Advertising for vulnerable people (example cited of NSPCC and Barnardo's)
- Of positive reporting experiences for victims through the media
- Of action taken against offenders
- Of the support available
- Information available on victim services in multiple place i.e. via police website, OPCC website

- That even if a previous report could not be investigated or progressed, it is still worth reporting repeat incidents
- Of the process – what will happen when they report
- Of online reporting

5.69 The third, was to ensure an effective response is in place when a report is made:

- Ensuring a non judgmental and approachable police response (particularly use of language, avoiding victim blaming):

*‘The process needs to feel supportive every step of the way with clear communication and expectations of the outcome’.*

*(Survey respondent)*

- Ensuring victims get the right information
- Ensuring consistency and continuity
- Agencies working together and sharing information
- Providing advocacy to support victims through the process

5.70 The fourth was that changes are needed within the criminal justice system. Suggestions included reviewing sentencing and victim protection, and making the process quicker and safer for victims (particularly for sexual violence and domestic abuse).

5.71 Building on the survey findings, interviewees provided further insight into how to encourage reporting. One Community Safety interviewee recognised that the source of messages encouraging reporting is key, and that though they themselves may not be the most appropriate source, it was important to identify who messages would be well received from. In addition this interviewee identified certain areas for work, including targeting the younger generation through schools and youth groups:

*‘I think it’s best led by communities... campaigning by us is not necessarily the best thing’*

*(Interviewee 2)*

5.72 One interviewee mentioned that though there were practical issues, *‘When you have 101 and it is rubbish that is a barrier’* (Interviewee 3), the more fundamental issue was people’s prior held beliefs. If people believed that the police could or would not do anything then reporting would not be increased, *[people] need to believe the way in works’*, another interviewee reported the need to tackle the belief, *‘If I report this, it will get treated in a certain way, or I will get ignored’*. (Interviewee 5)

5.73 One interviewee observed:

*‘The biggest complaint I hear from members of the public, and this is usually in public meetings, is that they are not*

*able to find someone on the street to report the crime to, there and then reporting is difficult... the response time on the telephone is very long.'*

*(Interviewee 4)*

- 5.74 An interviewee working with victims of DA emphasised that, '*when they get the courage to go to the police it is certainly not the first time they have been a victim*' – raising awareness of vital importance of a good experience. Another noted how important it was for victims to hear back from the police with updates, and another reflected:

*'People lose confidence if they've reported it before.'*

*(Interviewee 16)*

- 5.75 One interviewee mentioned that it was very important to manage people's expectations of the CJS:

*'It is a real nuance to say, 'He may not be put away for 10 years but the fact that you've come forward shows them you are not prepared to stand for it anymore'.'*

*(Interviewee 8)*

- 5.76 A few of the interviewees mentioned the importance of services talking to people about reporting. Related to this, one interviewee felt that providing the facility for people to report to advocacy groups instead of directly to the police would help.

- 5.77 Another interviewee emphasised the importance of victims recognising that their report would not only be beneficial to themselves but to other people.

- 5.78 Some of the interviewees emphasised that while they provided information about reporting, and what their experience was likely to involve it was important that people did not feel pressured into reporting and that it was the victim's own choice to engage. A few interviewees reported engaging with victims who had felt pressured to take cases further by the police and made to feel bad that they did not want to. In one recent case a service was involved with a victim attending court who disclosed to them:

*'I've said all the way along I don't want to do this.'*

*(Interviewee 13)*

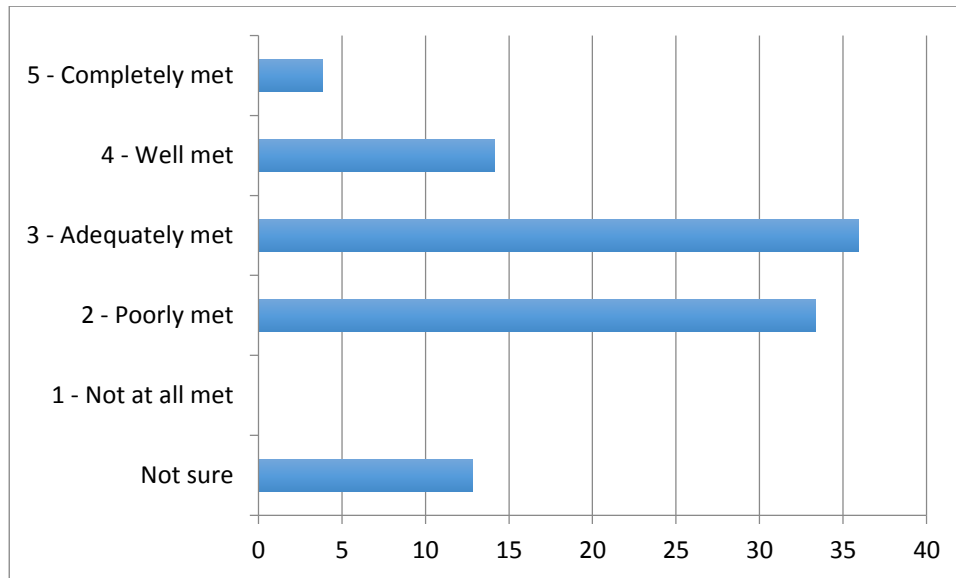
## **Gaps and Weaknesses**

- 5.79 This section considers the areas for improvement identified by local stakeholders based on analysis of who is not engaging with services, what and why needs are not met, and any barriers to victims being supported to cope and recover from their experiences. It should be noted that these reflections relate to the total provision of services in Avon & Somerset (**i.e. not just the OPCC commissioned services**).

## Meeting Need

5.80 Survey respondents were asked to indicate how well they felt the needs of victims of crime and ASB to cope and recover, are being met, by the full range of available services in Avon & Somerset. More than a third (36%) felt needs are 'adequately' met, but almost as many (33%) felt they are 'poorly' met. This suggests that there is room for improvement. Figure 5 shows the full results.

Figure 5: Whether needs are met by all services in Avon & Somerset (n=78)



5.81 Interviewees were asked in a more open ended manner whether they felt needs are being met in Avon & Somerset. This was typically difficult for Community Safety interviewees to answer since their awareness was focused more specifically on their own district. One thought locally, it would vary according to availability and theorised that:

*'If the day you ring, [the service someone wants to contact is] closed because they need to address their backlog, then you would say you got a less than zero response. If you call the day they are open you would have a good response.'*

*(Interviewee 4)*

5.82 Another questioned to what extent need was defined by authorities rather than victims:

*'They might get the services the government has said they need.'*

*(Interviewee 16)*

5.83 The response from service providers interviewed largely reflected the variation seen in the responses from the survey respondents. There were those who felt that gaps exist, and also those who felt the services in place provide a good response and are comparatively good at meeting need:

*'It's fantastic that the OPCC is funding the advocacy and support services that it is. Whilst I have to answer that there aren't enough services I do feel we are very lucky to have what we have and that there is a good amount of provision but it needs clarity and honing and enhancing with some changes to the models to make sure there is the right outreach.'*

*(Survey respondent)*

- 5.84 In light of the earlier findings, that the OPCC commissioned services are largely viewed as providing an effective foundation for meeting need, this raises the question of why exactly needs are not being met across Avon & Somerset. Based on the feedback from the survey respondents<sup>115</sup> and interviewees the key themes are examined in turn.

### **Identifying those in need**

- 5.85 Interviewees had differing opinions concerning how well the needs of victims are identified and signposted/referred to support services. In terms of referrals coming from the police, some acknowledged that Lighthouse is doing a good job, for example:

*'Lighthouse are good at identifying needs and getting people referred on. We are getting more referrals from them than we anticipated.'*

*(Interviewee 10)*

*'Lighthouse are really good now, there have been challenges - ensuring agencies have an understanding of what advocacy is.'*

*(Interviewee 11)*

*'They absolutely are signposted. We have some very good working practices around these two areas. It is not always the case that people want to take up services. Particularly those involved in ASB and street drinking.'*

*(Interviewee 4)*

- 5.86 However it was clear that all interviewees felt there were ways to improve referral processes and that it may be possible that victims slip through the support net.
- 5.87 One concern highlighted by interviewees was that because police refer to Lighthouse, they have stopped referring directly to other services and consequently there could be victims not eligible for a Lighthouse referral that are not signposted elsewhere.
- 5.88 Others stated that because police have to refer into Lighthouse (as opposed to automatic referrals) there are many people not getting referred because of the need for officers to reliably identify who should

---

<sup>115</sup> All respondents, except those that indicated needs were 'completely met' were asked what needs are not currently being met by services in Avon & Somerset. The responses received (n=57) are integrated, along side the responses to other specific questions that address gaps and weaknesses in provision.



be referred. This is in part because it can be challenging to determine what victims' needs are:

*'A number of challenges faced by the constabulary – when somebody on the street or call centre is working with a victim – need to correctly tag what they are a victim of – that doesn't always happen. So may miss people'.*

*(Interviewee 1)*

5.89 It should however be noted that to some extent this concern may be unfounded, since Lighthouse reportedly use a 'work around' to check the system for any eligible victims that may not have been referred by officers.

5.90 Interviewees raised many concerns as to how effective Lighthouse is at recognising the needs of victims. Interviewees felt that the police were not very effective at referring vulnerable victims. They felt this was in part due to a lack of skill among referring police. Some also felt that police were not effective at referring those that do not meet the threshold for enhanced service delivery:

*'The role of Lighthouse is important, traditionally there was no link other than a police officer and if he was away no one would know anything, so it's a really good concept. However, I have heard second hand that people phoning Lighthouse are not getting the support that they got a year or so ago, this could be due to staff changes or demand on services but sometimes people can't get through, or they're not having the supportive conversations around crime/services available that they once did...if you were vulnerable you'd get a link at Lighthouse, that was my understanding... but now people aren't getting quite what they got before'.*

*(Interviewee 7)*

*'Those that are intimidated, and vulnerable victims receive a very good service from Lighthouse for signposting. Officers are a bit de-skilled – won't necessarily know all the services available so probably rely on Lighthouse. If they are not vulnerable or intimidated I'm not sure how knowledgeable officers are to signpost to appropriate services.'*

*(Interviewee 8)*

5.91 Interviewees highlighted that referral pathways are also not clear both from the victims' perspective and service providers:

*'There's sometimes a lack of understanding of services and what they're able to provide.'*

*(Interviewee 14)*

*‘The Lighthouse website exists, though I’m not sure how well it is used. I think that if I were a victim of crime, where would I go? Unless you work in this sector... I don’t think they would know’.*

*(Interviewee 7)*

*‘Avon & Somerset has seen great improvement but a lot of inconsistencies and some confusion – victims aren’t consistently made aware of the service by police.’*

*(Interviewee 15)*

*‘They don’t know who they don’t know’.*

*(Interviewee 12)*

## **Engaging victims**

5.92 To better understand unmet need, survey respondents and interviewees were asked to consider whether there were victims that were not engaging with support services across Avon & Somerset.

## **Types of victims**

5.93 Stakeholders were asked if there were any particular types of victims who are not engaging with support in terms of personal attributes. Many interviewees and 60% of survey respondents thought that there were<sup>116</sup>. The most common responses among interviewees and the survey respondents that provided commentary were:

- Young people
- Those with mental health issues
- BME communities
- Males
- LBGTQ

5.94 Other less frequent responses included:

- Those who have a history of criminality
- Children that witness domestic abuse
- Individuals with chaotic lives (i.e. with drug, alcohol and mental health issues)
- Those with a physical or learning disability
- Those unaware they are being victimised
- Gypsy and Traveller communities
- Homeless people
- Those who have had a poor previous experience of the Criminal Justice System

5.95 The main reasons for these gaps in engagement were thought to be a lack of awareness of services, of being a victim and also the needs of these individuals not being represented in services. It was also suggested that the profile of service users is largely reflective of those that engage with the police, since they are a main referral source, and

---

<sup>116</sup> For survey respondents (n=72) 6% said no, 60% said yes and more than a third were unsure (35%). 43 respondents provided commentary on which types of victims they believe are not engaging.

therefore those that do not engage with police will also not engage with victim services.

- 5.96 One interviewee suggested that certain communities, such as some BME communities and also Traveller communities are relatively closed and as such seek support from within:

*‘Support is sought within these communities which is absolutely fine, but the worry is that they do not know we are here. The worry is that if the crime is within their community they won’t know where to turn.’*

*(Interviewee 10)*

- 5.97 Interviewees were asked how to better engage the types of victims not currently accessing support services. For those who are unaware of their victimisation, suggestions included increasing community awareness of crimes such as domestic abuse as well as the services available (some service providers noted this type of work is already underway), working with young people to understand healthy relationships, and increasing police awareness of the non-violent dimensions of domestic abuse:

*‘One of the things I am really concerned about is whether police understand what coercive control is. If victims do not understand it themselves, do police? Physical abuse is easier to see.’*

*(Interviewee 3)*

- 5.98 For engaging communities such as BME and Travellers it was noted to be advantageous for services to be ‘independent’, particularly from the police.

- 5.99 There was noted to be a failure at times within the police to offer interpreters, resulting in referrals that lacked information with a statement that the questions could not be answered because English was not the victim’s first language. Engaging interpreters would therefore increase the likelihood of the individual being referred to the support required:

*‘We had a domestic abuse case...where the DASH wasn’t completed because it said English was not first language.’*

*(Interviewee 10)*

## **Crime types**

- 5.100 Stakeholders were asked if there were victims of particular types of crime that were not engaging with support services in Avon & Somerset. Most interviewees but only two fifths (38%) of survey respondents indicated there were. Interestingly, more than half (56%) of the survey respondents were not sure<sup>117</sup>. The most common

---

<sup>117</sup> For survey respondents (n=71) 6% said no, 38% said yes and more than half were unsure (56%). 26 respondents provided commentary on the crime types for which they believe victims are not engaging.

responses among interviewees and the survey respondents that provided commentary were victims of:

- Sexual offences
- CSE
- Hate Crime (and disability crime was specifically noted)
- ASB

5.101 Other less frequent responses included:

- Victims of gang related behaviour
- Modern day slavery
- Cybercrime
- Victims of cuckooing (drug dealers using the home of a vulnerable person as a base for their drug dealing)

5.102 The main reason for these gaps in engagement were thought to be the particularly traumatic nature of the offence and inherent difficulty of talking about it to others (for sexual offences and CSE) and potentially a training issue where some characteristics of incidents are not recognised as signalling e.g. a form of hate crime, and so people are not being referred to appropriate support services. In the case of ASB it was suggested that this may receive less priority than other cases due to police resources being stretched.

5.103 Suggestions for better engaging with victims of these types of crime included training of police to recognise them, increasing awareness of available services and looking at alternatives to commissioning services such as encouraging self help, and building skills within communities to avoid issues before they become problematic:

*'We need to shift the psyche towards how can you protect yourself; how can you avoid getting involved in ASB; how can you safeguard your own wellbeing so you do not get into crisis. How can we look at what strength and skills are in communities and build these. We can make huge efficiencies here, given we have diminished resources. How can we shift models of services.'*

*(Interviewee 2)*

*'ASB is a gap – people are personally targeted and all that they want is for it to stop – all the emotional support in the world won't change that.'*

*(Interviewee 9)*

5.104 Representatives from the OPCC highlighted an interest in understanding whether there was a need for specialist provision for stalking and harassment and road collisions (a case for each had been presented to them in the past) and also whether under-reported crimes such as Honor Based Abuse, Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation were mentioned. However, these offences/incidents were not raised by local stakeholders as issues or gaps during the needs assessment process.

## Perception of support that is lacking

- 5.105 In terms of understanding unmet need, survey respondents and interviewees perceived a number of types of support to be lacking, which in their view meant some people receive little or no support and that others, who do access support do not have all of their needs addressed.
- 5.106 A clear theme to emerge was that stakeholders were concerned that the volume and types of support across the districts of Avon & Somerset were not consistent.
- 5.107 There was considered to be a general lack of support for victims in rural areas (victims of sexual offences and domestic abuse were most commonly referenced) and some services were considered 'Bristol centric' with less provision in other districts, such as support for domestic abuse, CSE and victims of hate crime. It was also observed that for domestic abuse services, delivery is by different providers in different areas, with different thresholds.
- 5.108 More specifically though, Somerset (and particularly North Somerset) was repeatedly cited as lacking support services – a Sexual Assault Referral Centre, ISVA presence and provision for children and young people suffering sexual abuse were all thought to be lacking in the area.
- 5.109 It was noted that in some cases greater use of technology to compensate for a lack of services based in rural areas was not appropriate, since '*people want to talk to people*' and:

*'Internet based stuff doesn't work for the ageing population.'*

*(Interviewee 5)*

- 5.110 On top of this perceived inconsistency across the area, there were also some types of support that stakeholders thought were generally lacking in Avon & Somerset. The group mentioned most consistently among stakeholders were those who do not qualify as vulnerable victims under VCOP and those who do not meet the threshold for access to statutory services to deal with additional needs. There was specific concern about a lack of services for non high risk domestic abuse because of the potential for these cases to escalate suddenly,

*'Cases can fluctuate rapidly and need specialist assessment.'*

*(Survey respondent)*

- 5.111 Also consistently perceived as lacking was counselling (particularly for victims of sexual violence and domestic abuse). This was frequently cited as the demand outweighing capacity. Stakeholders highlighted how instrumental this can be for enabling victims to cope and recover from their experiences. Many of the interviewees mentioned limited

availability of therapeutic support services across the area, which impacted on particularly vulnerable groups, for example, victims of sexual assault.

5.112 Also frequently mentioned by stakeholders was support for mental health issues. It was noted that services can not refer to mental health services (it must be self referral or GP) and that the thresholds for access were too high.

5.113 Other types of support thought to be lacking in Avon & Somerset that stakeholders raised (but less commonly) included:

- Longer term support for mental health needs

*‘Crisis intervention is okay but support drops off to support long term issues’*

*(Interviewee 14)*

- IDVAs (these are in place but it was felt that more are needed)
- ISVAs (these are in place but it was felt that more are needed)
- Face to face support for male victims of sexual violence (other than that provided by ISVAs)
- Lack of support groups, peer or self advocacy
- Advocates for victims of ASB
- Cognitive therapies and coping strategies for ASB victims
- Specialist services to reach marginalised groups such as LGBTQ
- Specialist BME services
- Victim support groups (peer led but facilitated by professionals)
- Lack of supported volunteering to help individuals become volunteers
- High demand but a long wait for the services for those experiencing gender-based violence, harassment and hate crime
- A lack of accessible refuges and support workers from different communities who speak minority languages
- A lack of interaction/partnership working with GPs
- A lack of resources for parents of children who have been abused
- A lack of consideration of whole family circumstances when assessing needs.

### **Support for young people**

5.114 There was also a perception that gaps exist in the support available in Avon & Somerset as a whole, for young people who have been the victim of crime. Some of these mirror areas highlighted above – there was thought to be insufficient support in place for:

- LGBTQ young people
- BME children
- Young victims of domestic abuse
- Young victims of ASB
- Advocacy

5.115 A number of additional types of support for issues affecting young people were also noted (by fewer stakeholders) – they felt that support was lacking for:

- Child victims of peer exploitation
- Victims of gang crime (particularly weapon crime)
- Those who are also involved in offending
- Disabled young people facing hate and mate crime
- Young victims of bullying
- Victims of child abuse experiencing PTSD
- Family intervention for children living in a toxic trio<sup>118</sup> environment.
- Support for young carers who are victims of crime
- Ongoing support for families whose children have been victims
- Services for very small children:

*‘The Young Victims’ Service are really good, but they ... support ages 8 or over.’*

*(Interviewee 10)*

### **Level of funding for support services**

5.116 A number of stakeholders reported more generally that more funding and more resources were needed to be able to see those in need and provide appropriate help for them to cope and recover from their experiences, for example:

*‘There needs to be an increase in services to meet the increasing demand from victims as these issues become more recognised and spoken about in the mainstream and more people feel able to come forward to report and seek support. Increasing the capacity of existing specialist services to support more people must be a priority as these services already work well.’*

*(Survey respondent)*

5.117 It was also noted that the number of vulnerable victims and the relative complexity of cases is increasing. This was frequently reported to be related to cuts in statutory services which meant that issues were not picked up until they had reached an acute stage requiring intense intervention.

### **Approaches to commissioning of services**

5.118 Some stakeholders expressed perceived limitations in the approach to work with victims, either in specific services, or services generally.

5.119 The most commonly cited aspect was the need to focus on prevention, early intervention and work with perpetrators to prevent the creation of so many vulnerable and repeat victims:

---

<sup>118</sup> I.e. domestic abuse, mental ill-health and substance misuse.

*'We're acting responsively at the moment – we would like to work preventatively. In the case of cyber abuse and grooming there is a desperate need to do some more work with young people in schools.'*

*(Interviewee 12)*

*'The [domestic violence protection order] with perpetrators, I would love to know more about how this is being used in Avon & Somerset. Wherever possible we want to deal with perpetrators. It seems impossible that the victim move out and the perpetrator stay at home.'*

*(Interviewee 3)*

- 5.120 Preventative approaches were thought to be crucial in reducing the damage caused by victimisation in local communities, and indeed the demand on victim services. Suggestions were made around working with schools to improve education on sexual relationships, consent and exploitation. Programmes for perpetrators and initiatives such as 'Caring Dads: Safer Children'<sup>119</sup> were also put forward.
- 5.121 Another limitation mentioned was the impact of commissioning approaches. Interviewees mentioned that funding cuts, and short-term funding of services limited their ability to meet the needs of victims, by not providing the time required for services to establish themselves in communities and develop good partnership arrangements. The re-commissioning process was viewed as taking away resources from victims, and could create periods of change and realignment while existing services try to understand the impacts and implications for their own practices. Stability is needed to enable good partnership working to develop. It was thought that longer term commissioning, and more awareness raising around change would help to reduce these issues.
- 5.122 It was also suggested that the different approaches in commissioning between the OPCC and local areas resulted in a mismatch of services. Interviewees suggested pooling budgets would help provide more consistent services. Some Community Safety interviewees mentioned examples of integrated commissioning of services that had provided positive results in capacity, for example, *'we ended up in a 25% increase in capacity and an extension of services at the same money'*. One Community Safety interviewee also mentioned that it was inevitable that there would be some cross over between mainstream and victim services.
- 5.123 Suggestions were made around agreeing a common level of service across the area and more collaborative commissions in order to be more effective and economise:

---

<sup>119</sup> An NSPCC programme of 17 sessions for fathers to understand and stop their behavior, understand the impact it has on a child and improve parenting.



*'From a Local Authority perspective, you would want an agreed upon common level of service across Avon & Somerset so if you can add something to the service; you can see you are adding something different. It means you are adding an additional service and answering gaps. It is more politically palatable.'*

*(Interviewee 5)*

*'I think we need to look at collaborative commissions across a range of commissioners and a range of areas. We need to look at commissioning in a creative way - avoid a competitive tendering process because this [impedes] people working together. If we are commissioning services, we need to look at more flexible and longer term tenders/contracts. Sexual violence, for example, for over 10 years for flexible services, it enables organisations to respond to needs more effectively. 3 year periods takes focus away from service provision into bidding. There are a range of areas where we need to change the culture to do things differently and use our resources more effectively.'*

*(Interviewee 2)*

- 5.124 The potential benefits of more co-location and co-working were also raised. Some initiatives have been trialled with initial positive results, such as an ISVA working in Lighthouse one morning a week, and there was a desire among some to make this standard practice. However, services reported that they did not currently have the resources to fund this work.
- 5.125 Other suggestions for improving the design of services when commissioning included greater use of volunteers, for example to bridge the gap between referral and delivery of support by staff; and ensuring an emergency response plan is in place for victims for traumatic events that would affect communities if they occurred (such as acts of terrorism).

### **Limitations of the Criminal Justice System**

- 5.126 Some of the key issues stakeholders felt were present are summarised below. Some overarching points are followed by specific commentary on the Constabulary, CPS, Courts and Council.
- 5.127 The impact of the police and criminal justice system was persistently viewed as creating barriers to achieving optimal outcomes for victims. The OPCC has work in place to address procedural issues fed via the criminal justice board, and clearly there is a commitment to look for ways to mitigate and improve the processes experienced by victims. It was noted that while change is needed, it is key to have effective support processes in place to enable victims to navigate the system.

- 5.128 An overarching reflection made by both a survey respondent and interviewees was that the system is difficult to navigate but particularly so for those with mental health problems.
- 5.129 Interviewees and survey respondents also reported that victims received a poor experience across the CJS. This included victims receiving poor (or no) feedback on actions that were being taken, victims being ignored or receiving no response, victims not being taken seriously, and victims being viewed as ‘a problem’.

### **The Constabulary**

- 5.130 It was noted that some victims reporting crime are never seen by police (due to lack of resources) and therefore receive no reassurance or support.
- 5.131 On another note, it was highlighted, that one way the pressure and demands on the police could be alleviated would be by service providers having greater input to support (or take over from) the police with welfare visits (e.g. for those at risk of suicide) – providing victims with immediate support and access to services.
- 5.132 The language used by the police (and other agencies) was also thought to be significant, for example in relation to young people:

*‘[This] can be really damaging. All professionals whether police or not need to be aware of terminology they are using and think about how this can affect young people’s choices and feelings in the future.’*

*(Survey respondent)*

- 5.133 One survey respondent believed that some victims of Hate Crime are discriminated against by the constabulary, through a lack of response and action, and that consequently trust and confidence in police among the BME community is very low which will impact on their likelihood of accessing victim services.
- 5.134 One stakeholder reported that they had experienced failings in the police at many points during their work with victims, this included: police not informing victims of the support services available; failure to take a video statement (for victims of sexual offences) where this has been stated as their preference; providing complex information without ensuring it is understood, failing to provide a Registered Intermediary for service users with communication difficulties; failure to take victims with mental health issues seriously; treatment of repeat victims as a nuisance; inadequacies in investigation including delays and failures to interview a suspect which may have affected the outcome of a case; unwillingness to investigate reports and; failure to interview a suspect where the accused perpetrator works for the NHS; failure to give written acknowledgement of a crime being reported (contrary to VCOP); and failure to keep victims informed on progress of the investigation.

## **CPS**

5.135 The main weaknesses reported to exist in the role of the CPS were:

- Communication – a lack of communication between the CPS and other services was reported, for example, the police, courts, victim services, but also the victim themselves:

*‘Either [special measures are] not arranged in time for court hearing or victim has no idea whether they have been granted in advance of a court hearing. This leads to much anxiety and distress for the victim.’*

*(Survey respondent)*

- Time keeping – it was suggested case material was often not submitted in a timely fashion therefore hindering the victim’s opportunity to contribute a personal statement.
- Understanding victim needs – it was thought that a lack of understanding could manifest in a number of ways, for example poorly worded restraining orders leaving victims vulnerable.

## **Court**

5.136 The main weaknesses raised in relation to court procedures were:

- Safety – it was noted that in many cases, sentencing and bailing of perpetrators does not make adequate account of protection for the victim.
- Further, it was noted to be problematic at some courts to arrange for a victim to use a different entrance to the accused perpetrator (an entitlement under VCOP).
- Waiting times for cases to go to court was thought to cause prolonged suffering for the victim and it was highlighted that adjournments frequently occur for a multitude of reasons:

*‘All of this is very distressing to the victim, destroys their trust in the criminal justice system and demotivates them in continuing.’*

*(Survey respondent)*

## **Council**

5.137 One survey respondent noted that where victims need help to relocate to a different area due to a crime committed against them, it would be advantageous if the local council could accept evidence from the commissioned victims service, rather than insisting on evidence directly from the police, when allocating priority for housing.

5.138 Another survey respondent noted there was not enough joined up work to tackle crime and ASB. They reflected that council staff claimed:

*‘... not being "aware of any issues" despite these running for four years, including the perpetrator being taken to*

*court and numerous other actions such as community trigger, also many internal multi-agency meetings.*

*(Survey respondent)*

## **Partnership work**

5.139 The survey and interviews provided stakeholders with the opportunity to provide feedback on gaps and improvements that could be made to partnership working across OPCC commissioned service providers and more generally across Avon & Somerset. It is important to recognise that despite these issues, stakeholders were generally very positive about partnership working, and felt that good working relationships had developed and that they worked well together to address issues such as duplication. Gaps and weaknesses, and suggested improvements are detailed below.

5.140 Unsurprisingly, given the central role of Lighthouse in Avon & Somerset, most stakeholders were aware of the service, and suggestions for improvements to integrated working practices frequently focused on this service.

5.141 Some of the interviewees accounts highlighted that there was miscommunication and misunderstanding around the Lighthouse's role across the region, this was both in terms of victim understanding, and, of present concern, across some agencies.

*'[Lighthouse] was sold initially as being a single point-of-contact for victims to prevent multiple contacts etc. – perhaps mis-advertising or misunderstood but that doesn't necessarily happen. Once [victims] reach Lighthouse they still have multiple contacts, so the service may not be lacking but it may be a misunderstanding of their role. Lighthouse may be doing what they are supposed to – clearly one organisation can't provide all the support and functions that victims may need, but making it clear to victims what their role is, is important.'*

*(Interviewee 8)*

5.142 An issue raised by the representatives for one community safety area was their reported experience of Lighthouse operating to set deadlines to 'clear their desk', resulting in local services being inundated by referrals and occasionally overwhelmed, for example:

*'One of the reasons some services have to close is that on a Friday, Lighthouse has to close their decks, so they dump on the provider at the end of the week. It is not appropriate; their referrals are often not good quality.'*

*(Interviewee 4)*

5.143 Interviewees also suggested that the knowledge of Lighthouse staff members varied and that the service that victim's received varied in line with this.

*'The service depends on the experience and expertise of those taking up the cases. There is a lot of difference in expertise at the Lighthouse so some issues are not recognised. We have done a lot of work on this. Cases were prioritised or not being questioned because a police officer said it was.'*

*(Interviewee 3)*

5.144 Some interviewees noted that variation in priorities within the different local areas meant that service levels varied – particularly in the case of DA. One interviewee reported a consequence of this was that it could be difficult to engage with LAs:

*'Support is non-existent, they have one IDVA and they close their doors to referrals... [I've] had difficult conversations with the council but they don't show any interest'*

*(Interviewee 9)*

5.145 One interviewee reported the difficulty of maintaining good partnership links with services, and reported that it required a lot of maintenance especially with police because they moved roles frequently and individual links - which were viewed as very valuable - were lost.

5.146 One interviewee reported that there had been acute issues working with the SARC in the previous year, this was reasoned to be due to an overwhelming demand and issues surrounding staffing, which were having repercussions for other services, however, the interviewee reported that these issues had been resolved now and communication between the organisations was much improved.

5.147 Some of the interviewees reported that the ambition to ensure that victims only have to tell their story once had not been realised and required more integrated planning of assessment. This was reflected in a few of the interviewees reports that the data that different services captured was inconsistent.

5.148 A few of the interviewees mentioned that knowledge of services, particularly across the police, was inconsistent and work was required to address this.

5.149 Finally, some of the survey respondents provided feedback on ways in which they felt partnership working could be improved across Avon & Somerset:

- Better coordination of provision across the various services
- For agencies, councils, housing associations and advocates to help each other, not hinder.

- Communication – especially between police and victim/support agencies – dealing consistently and robustly with every report/case. Communication needs to be timely in order for it to be effective.
- Better awareness of police attending call outs for handling victims sensitively.
- A more integrated approach from all the statutory agencies who support victims (for example, Victim Contact Service in Probation is not widely recognised as a vital support for victims of particular crimes)
- ISVA service should be more integrated with other sexual violence providers
- More time for staff at Lighthouse

### **Defining vulnerability**

5.150 Less than a quarter of the survey respondents (23%) felt that in Avon & Somerset all services use the same definition for ‘vulnerability’ in terms of identifying victims most in need of support. Nearly half (46%) believed services have different interpretations and nearly a third (31%) were unsure<sup>120</sup>.

5.151 One service provider interviewee noted that there are inevitable variations in the definition of vulnerability across services, because of their different remits. While some work to the VCOP criteria, others such as Avon & Somerset Constabulary worked with a wider view of additional support needs, which would not meet the criteria of the services working to VCOP criteria. Another interviewee noted a shared definition of vulnerability (and similarly safeguarding):

*‘... definitely needs to be incorporated into any new design’.*

*(Interviewee 6)*

5.152 There may be merit in trying to unify interpretation across the area to ensure a consistent approach.

### **Barriers to accessing services**

5.153 Nearly three quarters of the survey respondents (74%)<sup>121</sup> felt that there were barriers to accessing services. 50 responses were provided. The main themes were:

- Clear information for victims and professionals is lacking. There was thought to be a need for a reference point describing the services available and how to access them, and efforts needed to raise awareness of a reference point.

<sup>120</sup> The sample for this question was n=65.

<sup>121</sup> 10% felt there were not, and 16% were not sure. The sample for this question was n=68.

*'All victims should be told about all the options available to them. This could be done at the time when they are given the written acknowledgement of the crime report for example (which should always happen). They should be told about and be given leaflets about the different services if they want them. Where applicable information should also be available in easy-read or accessible format. Victims should be given information on services so they can self-refer if they want, as well as being referred by the police and Lighthouse. The needs assessment should include an assessment of the victims communication difficulties and communication adapted accordingly. In addition, it would be helpful to have information available on victims entitlements for those able to self-advocate. Information could be via an app, information pack, or easy to follow website and could include information in addition to the code of practice and links that victims of crime could find useful. The young victims service should work with all referred children under 18 (no minimum age).'*

*(Survey respondent)*

- Capacity – it was suggested that services lack capacity to respond to victims in a timely fashion, consequently expectations are not managed and their emotional wellbeing thought to be affected.
- Suitability – it was felt that in many cases there are high thresholds for eligibility to access services (for example, to gain support for domestic abuse, and to access statutory services) which create barriers to support for those not meeting the thresholds.
- Practicalities – such as childcare, location, travel costs, opening hours were all noted to create problems from victims seeking support.
- Communication – it was noted that language barriers affect the ability of victims to engage with services. This manifests both in finding out what services are available and in approaching services for support.
- Fear – of what will happen. It was felt that information on how services work and what to expect from the support would help alleviate the fear of engaging that creates a barrier for some victims.

5.154 Interviewees discussed the accessibility of services across Avon & Somerset, many of the points raised by the survey were reflected in the accounts of the interviewees, particularly the need for good communication about what was available, problems associated with access to services in a large and varied area, capacity, and eligibility thresholds. The interviewees raised some further points which are presented below:

5.155 One interviewee cautioned that a lot of the services were only contactable online or over the phone, which may be a barrier to some service users.

5.156 One interviewee urged caution in how the names of services were perceived and caused barriers to users, for example the SARC which is based in Bristol, being perceived as only for service users from Bristol when it is in fact available for the whole of Avon & Somerset; and similarly the 'Southmead Project' which the interviewee reported was available to others, not just those in Southmead.

5.157 Some of the interviewees pointed out that routes in to the police were inadequate and this ultimately had an impact on how accessible services were for victims, of particular note, 101 reporting was criticised:

*'Everyone complains about 101. You cannot talk to 101. We have this come up all the time and people do not want to have to report online. We have this a fair bit in our night-time economy group. People think it is a waste of time.'*

*(Interviewee 3)*

5.158 One Community Safety interviewee reported that their own lack of awareness of OPCC services meant it was difficult to promote them in their area, they had appreciated meetings that had occurred when services were commissioned but reported:

*'... then they stopped so we never fully understood and couldn't promote them within our area.'*

*(Interviewee 6)*

5.159 This interviewee reported that a more holistic simple overview of services would be useful, identifying who can refer in and how, what the service user can get and what all the services do, commenting, *'it's quite vague at the moment'*.

5.160 While the problems associated with accessible services across a wide area such as Avon & Somerset were discussed frequently, a few interviewees pointed out that those who were most likely to be disadvantaged due to their location, were also most likely to be impacted by other failings, such as poor public transport and internet provision:

*'For many people, services are wholly inaccessible. If you live in a rural area you can be 1½ hours by car and if that person doesn't drive, there is no public transport. These people are often those who have shabby broadband so asking them to use some kind of computer system is not feasible. They are totally under the radar.'*

*(Interviewee 4)*



5.161 There were contrasting reports of the education sector's willingness to engage, with one interviewee reporting excellent support, and another reporting that, *'getting into schools can sometimes be a barrier'* (Interviewee 13). The interviewee stressed the importance of being able to have safe private spaces for services to engage with young people at schools.

5.162 One interviewee pointed to the way that services need to be aware of ongoing changes in the way that their service user group engage and change their practice correspondingly:

*'Young people don't use websites anymore, we took advice and realised websites attract parents and professionals, facebook, twitter [as well].'*

*(Interviewee 12)*

5.163 This interviewee reported that for them, engagement with online platforms that young people use was important development work.

5.164 Finally, one interviewee mentioned that in light of issues around accessibility and changing crime and victim profile across the UK and Avon & Somerset, the recommissioning process provided a good opportunity for services to review their accessibility:

*'Services need to review their accessibility to victims, so that they get a thorough understanding of any issues to enable them to plan improvements. This could be something the PCC could help with?'*

*(Interviewee 7)*

### **Utilising existing (non-victim) services**

5.165 During consultation it was noted by staff from the OPCC that there may be existing organisations outside of those designed to work with victims, that are currently underused but could provide certain aspects of support. A third of the survey respondents (34%) felt this was the case. Those identified, along with those noted by interviewees are listed (alphabetically):

- Age UK
- Bath and District Crime Reduction Agency
- Barnado's
- Brook
- Christian Police Association
- Church/community groups
- Citizens Advice
- Council
- Council ASB team
- Creative Youth Networks
- Disability organisations
- Diversity Voice

- Kinergy ‘They are doing unbelievable work’. (Interviewee 5)
- Learning Partnership West
- Mentoring services – particularly ‘Promise Mentoring Service’
- Multi-cultural friendship association
- Nilaari
- Oasis Talk
- Off the Record
- One Teams
- Schools
- Spark
- Village Agents (now Community Connectors)
- Young carers service

5.166 More detailed insights from interviewees included a range of faith based groups that were specifically working with destitute individuals in Bristol and also the need for more befriending services and social activities in local communities:

*‘The cost of isolation makes it harder for people to recover from crime. For a lot of old people, if you can get them out and meeting others it can help their recovery’.*

*(Interviewee 10)*

5.167 Finally, some of the interviewees noted that a mapping exercise for each local area including these types of additional services and what elements of support they can provide to meet specific needs of victims would be highly beneficial and viewed it as urgent and essential work to support other services working with victims.

### **Low take up of services**

5.168 The interviewees were asked about low take up of services in their area. The overwhelming majority of responses indicated that they were unaware of any low take-up issues, and that services were overstretched:

*‘... there is nothing that is underused definitely. There has been so many cuts that provision is pretty well cut to the bone.’*

*(Interviewee 3)*

*‘I am not aware of any that are under-used. The vast majority of them are actually rationing services by saying we can only deal with the top X% of vulnerable victims.’*

*(Interviewee 5).*

5.169 A few of the interviewees mentioned that they were unaware how the RJ service was organised currently and that they had limited engagement with them and felt take up might be low. While advocating for the value of RJ, they reported that other practitioners were often unaware of the value, or how to suggest it to victims:

*'It's seen as a 'nice to do' unfortunately... people are wary to suggest it [to service users] but I absolutely believe in it'.*

*(Interviewee 9)*

5.170 However, an interview with a RJ representative reported that referrals into the newly reorganised RJ service were developing and were being turned into cases at a much higher rate than previously (31% of enquiries since June had been turned into cases – 58) and work was being undertaken to track referrals and develop briefings and trainings to promote the service effectively:

*'The comms team for OPCC and Avon & Somerset have been brilliant, it just takes time and raising awareness until it becomes a known word'.*

*(RJ Interviewee)*

5.171 Some of the interviewees mentioned that referrals varied by area, with lower referral rates typically coming from urban areas where there were a wide range of available and accessible services.

## **Summary of Key Findings from Stakeholder Consultation**

5.172 Overall the feedback from stakeholders illustrates that victims services are undertaking much needed work and this is largely considered to work well and be effective for victims. Service providers interviewed were passionate about the work they were undertaking and enthused about the interaction between services and the creativity and flexibility they were enabled and encouraged to use by the OPCC. The general view is that the OPCC commissioned services provide an effective foundation in Avon & Somerset, albeit some further refinement is needed as these services become more established.

5.173 However, for Avon & Somerset as a whole, a number of gaps were thought to exist. These predominantly reflect issues of demand versus capacity, i.e. that more of the same is needed, but also that some types of support are not available and that some are only available in certain areas. The other main issue apparent (where applicable) is the negative impact that issues with the investigation and criminal justice process can have.

5.174 What is notable however is that the gaps and weaknesses identified are largely reflective of the national picture. The next section considers the implications of the findings of the needs assessment and how these can be addressed.

## Section 6. Strategic Recommendations & Priorities

6.1 Based on both the review of local and national literature, and the consultation with local stakeholders, the following recommendations and priorities are suggested. These recommendations are divided into eight main themes:

- Recognising and celebrating progress
- Meeting changing needs
- Partnership and integrated working
- Raising awareness of victim services
- Addressing gaps in service provision and reaching victims
- Improving victims' experience of the CJS
- Adopting best practice
- Developing practice

### Recognising and celebrating progress

**Recommendation 1: OPCC commissioned service providers and the OPCC should recognise and celebrate their achievement in developing good services for victims of crime in Avon & Somerset.**

6.2 Recommendations, by their nature, identify weaknesses and suggest ways that practice can be improved. However, it is also very important to recognise and celebrate progress and achievements. This is certainly true of Avon & Somerset, where the consultation engaged with a group of highly professional, committed, and enthusiastic practitioners who were working in a progressive service environment where they felt respected and trusted to develop their work with victims.

6.3 Some key points for recognition include:

- Practitioners were highly professional, committed, and enthusiastic about their work.
- The working practices of the OPCC, including their commitment to the services and their willingness to listen and engage at the ground-level had created an environment where practitioners felt able to work flexibly, challenge where necessary, and consider innovative approaches in order to meet the needs of their victims.
- Services were empowered to take a holistic view to the work they carried out with victims, retaining a clear victim-focus in their practice at all times. The services retained the ability to flex and adapt their practice to meet the needs of their clients.
- Services repeatedly demonstrated the ways in which they worked with very vulnerable clients, often with complex needs providing holistic and caring support, which nurtured and empowered their clients.

- Services retained a clear focus on their role and remits and worked with partners to avoid duplication.
- Services worked well to ensure that they empowered their clients and used good working practices to avoid creating dependency on services.
- Perhaps as a consequence of the nurturing service environment, practitioners thought actively about ways in which their services could be developed and had ideas about work they would like to explore and progress.

## **Meeting changing needs**

**Recommendation 2: Services need to be supported by the OPCC to retain the ability to be flexible and adapt to meet the increasing and changing demands of service users observed both locally and nationally.**

6.4 Based on a review of local and national documentation, and through consultation with stakeholders it is clear that the needs of service users have changed since the commissioning of the services (for example, there has been increasing complexity) and will continue to do so. There was also some suggestion from stakeholders that they were seeing an increase in demand for their services, and certainly, as the services embed in the local landscape and more promotional activity is planned, demand may increase further. This sits within a context of stretched resources for most services. To meet these changes services need to have the freedom to be able to work flexibly and develop innovative working practices and strong partnerships.

**Recommendation 3: Consider where there are opportunities for joint commissioning across Avon & Somerset or other ways in which OPCC commissioners can work more closely with other commissioners to ensure that there is a more consistent level of service and that resources are used efficiently.**

6.5 A number of stakeholders believed that closer working between commissioners could yield benefits by improving consistency and maximizing the use of available resources.

**Recommendation 4: The re-commissioning process provides a good opportunity for services to review their accessibility and plan improvements.**

6.6 A number of barriers to access were observed by stakeholders (also considered further below). Reviewing how improvements to accessibility can be built into service design would be beneficial.

## **Partnership and integrated working**

**Recommendation 5: Review how working practices across OPCC commissioned services could be improved to reduce the need for victims to retell their story.**

6.7 Though stakeholders mentioned the ambition that victims would only have to tell their story once across Avon & Somerset, many reported that this had not been achieved. This was often because referrals did not include the information that services required. The re-commissioning process may provide a valuable opportunity, now that services have embedded and the information needs of different services are better understood, to work together to develop a common needs' assessment.

**Recommendation 6: Consider where there are further opportunities for co-location of services or secondments.**

6.8 A key element of a good practice approach to victim services, and an area that stakeholders desired more focus on, was an increased use of a multi-agency approach to victim support, specifically they highlighted the value of co-location. Pilots have already been undertaken within Avon & Somerset in line with this model (such as locating ISVAs within other services) and stakeholders reported that there were emerging benefits from these pilots and they would like to develop this work. Co-location is shown to benefit partnership working, victim experience, victim outcomes, and efficiencies in service provision.

**Recommendation 7: Review Lighthouse procedures for clearing referrals in order to help services manage and respond to their referrals in a timely manner.**

6.9 A small number of stakeholders reported that it was common practice for Lighthouse staff to clear their referrals on a weekly basis, on Fridays, resulting in services receiving a large number of referrals at the end of the week that were difficult to manage and caused them to be unable to act on referrals immediately and preventing victims from accessing timely support.

**Recommendation 8: Consider the benefits of promoting shared definitions of vulnerability and safeguarding across services.**

6.10 The stakeholder consultation suggested that agencies did not have a shared understanding of vulnerability and safeguarding. In practice this meant that inappropriate referrals were sometimes made, for example, police referring to Lighthouse when victims did not qualify for an enhanced service. A shared understanding of these terms, and of how agencies applied these in practice may improve working efficiency.

## **Raising awareness of victim services**

### **Recommendation 9: Ensure that partners are aware of the role of Lighthouse.**

6.11 While the function of Lighthouse was appreciated and understood by many practitioners, some of the stakeholder's accounts revealed confusion about the extent of the service that Lighthouse offered. Additionally, some practitioners reported that the quality of referrals received from lighthouse varied.

### **Recommendation 10: Consider how the knowledge of frontline police officers can be raised so they have a clear understanding of the system - both when to refer to Lighthouse and where to signpost/refer those who are not eligible for a Lighthouse referral.**

6.12 The consultation exposed many instances where police had not given victims the information about services that were available to them across Avon & Somerset. Stakeholders mentioned that awareness building needed to occur on an ongoing basis given the frequency with which police changed roles.

### **Recommendation 11: Continue to support the Restorative Justice Service to raise its profile in the local area.**

6.13 It was clear that some stakeholders were unaware or confused by the current Restorative Justice service in Avon & Somerset. This might be expected given the very recent implementation of the service in June 2017. The Restorative Justice Service has promotional work planned and valued support from the communications team at the OPCC, however the OPCC should consider if there are ways that they can amplify or support this work. For example, targeting police with the message that RJ offers workshops for shoplifters to prevent them offending.

### **Recommendation 12: Findings from the (planned OPCC) mapping exercise should be used to develop the Lighthouse directory of services, and awareness of this resource should be raised amongst practitioners and public.**

6.14 This resource could include non-victim services such as charities and local community groups who may be of assistance to those who are also eligible for victim services but require additional support to help them to cope and recover. Publication of this tool is of vital importance for those victims who require support but are not eligible for an enhanced service.

**Recommendation 13: The positive feedback provided by victims should be used appropriately in publicity to share experiences and encourage engagement.**

6.15 The victim feedback presented in quarterly and annual reports is valuable. This is particularly the case when considering increasing the engagement of people from groups who do not typically engage with services – targeting groups with positive feedback from members of those groups may encourage uptake.

### **Addressing gaps in service provision and reaching victims**

**Recommendation 14: Consider how the needs of victims who do not meet criteria for enhanced service, or are assessed as low-medium risk can be met.**

6.16 While it is recognised that OPCC commissioned services are designed, typically, to work with victims with an enhanced need, stakeholders identified that there was little provision for those who did not reach criteria, and that these victims of crime may be underserved. This was especially true for low-medium risk victims of domestic abuse.

**Recommendation 15: The OPCC should consider targeted work to address specific barriers to access identified by the stakeholder consultation.**

6.17 A number of barriers to access were thought to exist, including practicalities such as travel (particularly for those in rural areas), childcare, opening hours, language barriers and victims not having enough information about the available services. It was also felt that further consideration could be given to the methods available for contacting services.

**Recommendation 16: The results of the stakeholder consultation should be used to consider where further work can be carried out to engage with victims who do not typically engage with support services.**

6.18 The stakeholder consultation identified numerous groups of victims that were not engaging with support services. OPCC commissioned services were actively encouraging various groups to engage, but the OPCC should consider if it can use its position to facilitate a more coordinated approach to this work. Consider whether this aspect of the services' work can be protected from the competing demands to providing a service to victims in a high-demand climate.



**Recommendation 17: Consider how greater access to services providing specialist emotional support services (such as therapy) to victims of crime can be facilitated.**

6.19 This area of work was considered critical for enabling victims – particularly those experiencing domestic abuse and sexual violence - to cope and recover.

**Recommendation 18: Consider how self-help groups and befriending services can best be developed in Avon & Somerset.**

6.20 Stakeholders frequently reported that victims wanted access to services that could continue to offer emotional support once their active work with their clients had been completed. This kind of support was valued highly, but it is rare. Self-help and befriending services were viewed as able to 'hold' victims and provide support that prevented isolation and revictimisation. One stakeholder wanted to develop work like this in-house so there was somewhere to refer people without relying on other services offering it.

**Recommendation 19: Consider how greater access to mental health services for victims of crime can be facilitated.**

6.21 A collective approach with relevant partners is clearly needed to consider how access issues can best be addressed. It was recognised that the thresholds required to access mental health care were very high and that provision was stretched and often inadequate. Some stakeholders felt that barriers to accessing what provision was available could be ameliorated by creating a service that supported people to get access to the provision they were entitled to. It was suggested that implementing a referral pathway for professionals (currently only GP and self referrals are permitted) would be a beneficial approach.

**Recommendation 20: Review whether joint commissioning of domestic abuse services across the area could result in a more consistent level of service.**

6.22 Provision of services for victims of Domestic Abuse was viewed to vary greatly across the area. There was felt to be something akin to a postcode lottery for non high-risk victims seeking support from specialist domestic abuse services.

## **Improving victims' experiences of the CJS**

**Recommendation 21: Consider how feedback from victims and service providers can be used to inform improvements to the practice of agencies involved in CJS in regards to victim care.**

6.23 While the support services do well in supporting victims through the system, they continue to have bad experiences because of the difficulties in interacting with the police and court procedures. Further initiatives such as that established by the OPCC via the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) could be considered.

**Recommendation 22: Supporting victims through the CJS is a crucial element of victim support work. Consideration could be given to whether the work of IDVAs and ISVAs can be expanded and whether this model can be applied to other crime types.**

6.24 This type of support was well received and consistent, was highly valued by victims, and highly valued by stakeholders from other services. The nature of the work in that it offers specialist support, focuses strongly on the victim, and the consistent contact throughout engagement with the service was viewed as key in the success of the work. Consideration could be given to embedding ISVAs within other services (this was trialed with Lighthouse and viewed very positively).

6.25 Given how often any difficulties and negativities clients have in relation to their support as a victim relate to their experiences with the CJS, it was also suggested that the type of advocacy offered would be useful for other crime types. The example was given of victims of hate crime who may face language or cultural challenges and would benefit from specialist help to keep them engaged with the process.

**Recommendation 23: Review the findings from the stakeholder consultation to identify where OPCC resources might be best targeted to reduce barriers to reporting.**

6.26 The consultation revealed numerous factors that may be significant in people's decision to not report offences. When aiming to encourage reporting, addressing practical barriers (e.g. people didn't like 101 and wanted to report face-to-face) rather than attempting to change attitudes (e.g. *'the police won't do anything'*) to reporting may be a more effective use of resources. For example, stakeholders suggested that given the trusted and embedded nature of services, victims may be encouraged to report if they could do so through victim services.

**Recommendation 24: Empower victims to choose whether they would like to report.**

6.27 Victims must be given realistic expectations about the likely outcomes of CJS involvement and should be empowered to make their own decisions about reporting. Indeed, some stakeholders reported instances where victims felt pressured by police, and action should be taken to ensure this does not occur.

**Adopting best practice**

**Recommendation 25: Continue to foster working environments where best practice can be achieved.**

6.28 Services exhibited key elements of good practice in their work with victims, but there remain areas for improvement. It would be beneficial to retain a focus on achieving the 'best practice pillars for service provision for victims' approach i.e:

- Procedural justice: fair and just treatment, quality interactions between service providers and victims
- Multi-Agency work: partnerships across statutory and voluntary agencies, co-located services where possible
- Professionalisation of services: early identification, single point of contact
- Communication: Clear information, multi lingual and cultural support.

**Developing practice**

**Recommendation 26: Establish a protocol for OPCC commissioned services to gather victim's feedback on barriers or issues they face as a victim and how these can be shared amongst services.**

6.29 In their quarterly reports, AVoice presents victim feedback about barriers their clients have faced in their contact with the CJS (similarly Victim Support and Safelink feedback on some of the frustrations of their clients as well as the positives). This provides a valuable and up-to-date resource that could be replicated across services. Services are well placed and trusted by victims, and this kind of informal victim consultation could provide an ongoing and up-to-date picture of areas where work is required.

**Recommendation 27: Consult with and use the expertise of well-placed practitioners to develop practice.**

6.30 While it was beyond the scope of this work to consult services in detail on their future development work, many of the interviewees highlighted areas where they felt their services could do further work, or were well placed to support other services. For example, YVS ambition to carry out preventative work in schools. Some of the interviewees reported

that there was a tension between offering this kind of work and supporting victims. It would be beneficial for the OPCC to consider whether funding could be earmarked for this kind of activity.

## Appendix 1 - Reference List

Avon and Somerset Local Resilience Forum: *Avon and Somerset Community Risk Register*, 2016. Available Online:

[https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/media/27527858/bd9011-community-risk-register\\_16.pdf](https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/media/27527858/bd9011-community-risk-register_16.pdf)

Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Needs Assessment, December 2015

Bowman, M., Redding, W., and Hudson, S. (2014). *Victim Needs Assessment*. Knaresborough: The Buzzz Consultants. Available Online:

<https://www.northyorkshire-pcc.gov.uk/content/uploads/2016/09/Victim-Needs-Assessment-2014-Full-Final-Report.pdf>

Brooks, M. (2017). *Male victims of domestic and partner abuse 30 key facts*. ManKind Initiative. Available from:

<http://new.mankind.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/30-Key-Facts-Male-Victims-February-2017-1.pdf>

Callana, M., Brown, A., Turley, C., Kenny, T., and Roberts, J. (2012). *Evidence and Practice Review of support for victims and outcome measurement*. London: Ministry of Justice. Available from:

[https://www.sericc.org.uk/pdfs/3138\\_evidence-practice-review-support-for-victims-outcome-measure.pdf](https://www.sericc.org.uk/pdfs/3138_evidence-practice-review-support-for-victims-outcome-measure.pdf)

Catch 22. (N.D.) *Commissioners*. Available from:

<https://www.catch-22.org.uk/collaborate/commissioners/>

Clifford, J. (2010). *Alana House Women's Community Project, In conjunction with Parents and Children Together: SROI Evaluation*. London. Baker Tilly and Cass Centre for Charity Effectiveness.

Crime Reduction Team. (2014). *Bristol Domestic & Sexual Abuse Needs Assessment*. Bristol: Safer Bristol. Available from: [www.bava.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Bristol-Domestic-Sexual-Abuse-Needs-Assessment-June-2014-1.pdf](http://www.bava.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Bristol-Domestic-Sexual-Abuse-Needs-Assessment-June-2014-1.pdf)

Cumbria Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. (2016). *Victims Needs Assessment*. Cumbria: The Office of Police and Crime Commissioner. Available from: <https://cumbria-pcc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/VNA-13.01.16-Final-Draft-v.6.docx>

Greater Together. (2015). *The Children and Young People's Victims' Service Service Specification*. Blackpool: Greater Together. Available from: [www.greatertogether.org.uk/sites/default/files/Commission%205%20-%20Independent%20Evaluation%20Specification.pdf](http://www.greatertogether.org.uk/sites/default/files/Commission%205%20-%20Independent%20Evaluation%20Specification.pdf)

Hahn, T. (2017). *Victim Needs Assessment*. Illinois: Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. Available from:

[www.icjia.state.il.us/articles/victim-needs-assessment](http://www.icjia.state.il.us/articles/victim-needs-assessment)

Herrington, L. (2014). *Victim Services Commissioning Intentions*. Surrey: Office of Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey Police. Available from: <http://www.surrey-pcc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Surrey-OPCC-commissioning-intentions-2014-16.pdf>

HMICFRS (2017). Avon and Somerset Constabulary: Crime Data Integrity Inspection 2016. Available from: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/avon-and-somerset-crime-data-integrity-inspection-2016/#code-of-practice-for-victims-of-crime>

Home Office. (N.D.). *Have You Got What It Takes? Supporting Victims and Witnesses of Crime*. London: Home Office. Available from: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/511440/2016\\_Candidate\\_Guidance\\_\\_victims\\_and\\_witnesses\\_\\_v1.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/511440/2016_Candidate_Guidance__victims_and_witnesses__v1.pdf)

Home Office and Newton, S. (2017). *Modern Slavery Victims to Receive Longer Period of Support*. London: Home Office. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/modern-slavery-victims-to-receive-longer-period-of-support>

Institute of State and Regional Affairs. (2013). 2013 Victim Services Needs Assessment. Pennsylvania: Penn State Harrisburg. Available from: [www.pccd.pa.gov/Victim-Services/Documents/VictimsNeedsReport\\_2013\\_Final.pdf](http://www.pccd.pa.gov/Victim-Services/Documents/VictimsNeedsReport_2013_Final.pdf)

Knight, L. (2016). *Opportunities and Challenges in Commissioning and Evaluating Victim Services in the UK*. Northampton: Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice. Available from: <http://www.ipscj.org/information-centre-blog/475/>.

Magilton, S. and Goodby, S. (2015). *Bedfordshire Victim Needs Assessment*. Bedfordshire: Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner. Available from: [www.bedfordshire.pcc.police.uk/fluidcms/files/files/Bedfordshire-Needs-Assessment.pdf](http://www.bedfordshire.pcc.police.uk/fluidcms/files/files/Bedfordshire-Needs-Assessment.pdf)

Mawby, R.I. (2016). Victim Support in England and Wales: The end of an era? *International Review of Victimology*, 22(3), pp: 1-19.

Mills, N. (2017). *Victims' Services - Recommendations for Service Commissioning 2018-2021*. Merseyside: Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. Available from: <https://www.merseysidepcc.info/userfiles/2017-071.pdf>

Mind. (2014). *Commissioning victim services: meeting the needs of people with mental health problems*. London: Mind. Available from: <https://www.mind.org.uk/media/1059967/PCC-briefing-to-support-commissioning-victims-services.pdf>

Ministry of Justice. (2013). *Victims' Services Commissioning Framework*. London: Home Office. Available from: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/203979/victims-services-commissioning-framework.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/203979/victims-services-commissioning-framework.pdf)

Morse, A. (2017). *Reducing Modern Slavery*. London: National Audit Office, Home Office. Available from: <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Reducing-Modern-Slavery.pdf>

Morton, K. (2015). *Commissioning Domestic Abuse Services: A Report for The Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner*. Thames Valley. The Capability Company on behalf of Berkshire Women's Aid.

National Council for Voluntary Organisations, The. (N.D.). *How Police and Crime Commissioners Operate and Their Main Responsibilities*. London: National Council for Voluntary Organisations. Available from: <https://knowhownonprofit.org/funding/commissioning/commissioning-1/influencing-commissioning-1/police-and-crime-commissioners/roles-and-responsibilities>

NHS England. (2015). *Sexual Assault Services Provider Service Specification and Commissioning Framework for Paediatric Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) Services*. London: Direct Commissioning Operations - Public Health. Available from: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2013/05/SARCs-service-spec-contract-template-and-paed-framework.pdf>

Northamptonshire Victims' Commissioner. (2013). *Victims' Voice Report of the Northampton Victims' Commissioner*. Northamptonshire: Northamptonshire Victims' Commissioner. Available from: [www.northants.police.uk/images/mediapool/news/24-09-13-Victims-Voice-Report.pdf](http://www.northants.police.uk/images/mediapool/news/24-09-13-Victims-Voice-Report.pdf)

Office for National Statistics. (2017) *Crime in England and Wales: year ending June 2017*, Statistical bulletin, 19<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

Office for Victims of Crime. (n.d.). *Elderly Victims*. USA: Office of Justice Programs. Available from: [https://www.ncjrs.gov/ovc\\_archives/reports/firstrep/eldvic.html](https://www.ncjrs.gov/ovc_archives/reports/firstrep/eldvic.html)

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk. (2014). *Norfolk Victim, Witness and Offender Needs and Commissioning*. Norfolk: Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk. Available from: [www.norfolk-pcc.gov.uk/documents/policy/commissioning/commissioning\\_2012-16/VictimWitnessAndOffenderNeedsJuly2014.pdf](http://www.norfolk-pcc.gov.uk/documents/policy/commissioning/commissioning_2012-16/VictimWitnessAndOffenderNeedsJuly2014.pdf)

PACT Charity. (n.d.). *Alana House*. Reading: PACT Charity. Available from: [pactcharity.org/community-projects/alana-house](http://pactcharity.org/community-projects/alana-house)

Pettitt, B., Greenhead, S., Khalifeh, H., Drennan, V., Hart, T., Hogg, J., Borschmann, R., Mamo, E., and Moran, P. (2013). *At risk, yet dismissed: The criminal victimisation of people with mental health problems*. London: Mind. Available from: <https://www.mind.org.uk/media/642011/At-risk-yet-dismissed-report.pdf>

Potter, L. (2017). *The Needs Assessment for Domestic and Sexual Abuse in Sheffield 2017*. Sheffield: Sheffield Domestic Abuse Co-ordination Team. Available from: <http://sheffielddact.org.uk/domestic-abuse/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2017/03/Part-1-Contents-and-Summary-FINAL.pdf>

SAFE! (2013). *Findings from a Young Victims Focus Group*. Oxford. SAFE!

Safer Sutton Partnership. (2017). *Sutton Community Safety Partnership Strategic Needs Assessment 2017-18*. Sutton: London Borough of Sutton. Available from: [https://www.sutton.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/3048/csp\\_strategic\\_assessment\\_2017-18.pdf](https://www.sutton.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/3048/csp_strategic_assessment_2017-18.pdf)

Salvation Army, The. (2015). *Modern Slavery: The Salvation Army is awarded Victim Care Contract*. London: The Salvation Army. Available from: <https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/modern-slavery-salvation-army-awarded-victim-care-contract>

Salvation Army, The. (2018). *Modern Slavery: Specialist Support*. London: The Salvation Army. Available from: <https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/specialist-support>

Scott, M. (2016). *Support for Victims*. Kent: Office of the Kent Police & Crime Commissioner. Available from: <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s73078/Support%20for%20Victims.pdf>

Somerset Public Health and Somerset County Council. (2017). *Somerset Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment 2017*. Somerset: Safer Somerset Partnership. Available from: [http://www.sometsurvivors.org.uk/EasysiteWeb/getresource.axd?AssetID=125781&type=Full&servicetype=Attachment](http://www.somerset survivors.org.uk/EasysiteWeb/getresource.axd?AssetID=125781&type=Full&servicetype=Attachment)

Soper, M. (2012). *Victim & Offender Needs Assessment July 2012 Draft Consultation Version*. Cambridgeshire: Cambridgeshire County Council. Available from: [www.cambridgeshire-pcc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Victim-and-Offender-Needs-Assessment-FINAL.pdf](http://www.cambridgeshire-pcc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Victim-and-Offender-Needs-Assessment-FINAL.pdf)

Tapley, J. (2016). Sharing and collaborating: improving outcomes for victims of crime. *Papers from the British Criminology Conference*, 16, pp. 111-128. Available from: [http://www.britisoccrim.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/pbcc\\_2016\\_Tapley-1.pdf](http://www.britisoccrim.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/pbcc_2016_Tapley-1.pdf)



Victim Support. (2011a). *Left in the dark, why victims of crime need to be kept informed*. London: Victim Support. Available from: <https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/sites/default/files/Left%20in%20the%20dark%20-%20why%20victims%20of%20crime%20need%20to%20be%20kept%20informed.pdf>

Victim Support. (2011b). *Summing Up: a strategic audit of the criminal justice system*. London: Victim Support. Available from: <https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/sites/default/files/Summing%20up%20strategic%20audit%20of%20the%20criminal%20justice%20system.pdf>

Victims' Commissioner. (2014). *Review of Victim Services in London*. London: Home Office. Available from: <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Review%20of%20victim%20services%20in%20London.pdf>

Vincent, N., McCormack, J. and Johnson, S. (2015) A Comprehensive Conceptual Programme Model for Supporting Families Surviving a Homicide Victim. *Child Adolescence Social Work Journal*, 32, pp: 57-64.

Walklate, S. (2007) *Imagining the Victim of Crime*, Cullompton; Willan Publishing.

Wedlock, E. & Tapley, J. (2016) *What Works in Supporting Victims of Crime: A Rapid Evidence Assessment*. University of Portsmouth, Victims' Commissioner

West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner. (2013). *Report on the Police and Crime Commissioner's Victims Summit*. West Midlands: West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner. Available from: [www.westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk/media/195953/victims\\_should\\_come\\_first\\_report.pdf](http://www.westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk/media/195953/victims_should_come_first_report.pdf)

West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner. (2014). *Victim Services Strategy 2014 - 2016 From National to Local Commissioning*. West Midlands: West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner. Available from: [www.westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk/media/359356/pcc-victims-services-strategy-2014-16.pdf](http://www.westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk/media/359356/pcc-victims-services-strategy-2014-16.pdf)

Whitty, M, and Buchanan, T. (2015). The online dating romance scam: The psychological impacts on victims – both financial and non-financial. *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 1(19), London; Sage.

Wong, K., Christmann, K., Meadows, L., Albertson, K., and Senior, P. (2013). *Hate crime in Suffolk: understanding prevalence and support needs*. Project Report. Hallam Centre for Community Justice, Sheffield Hallam University. Available from: <http://shura.shu.ac.uk/10393/1/Hate-Crime-in-Suffolk.pdf>



Perpetuity Research & Consultancy International Ltd  
11a High Street  
Tunbridge Wells  
TN1 1UL  
United Kingdom  
Tel: +44 (0)1892 538690  
[www.perpetuityresearch.com](http://www.perpetuityresearch.com)  
[prci@perpetuityresearch.com](mailto:prci@perpetuityresearch.com)