

The Views of Victims and Survivors

On Avon & Somerset PCC's Draft Commissioning Intentions for Victim Services



**AVON &
SOMERSET**
POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER

Status: Report
Date: 6/7/2018
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Version: 1.6

TONIC

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TONIC were asked by the Avon & Somerset PCC to ensure local victims and survivors have their voice heard on what is important to them, shaping the future of victim services.

SECTION 1

Executive Summary



Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

The Avon & Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner is responsible for local victim services. Current contracting arrangements end in March 2019, with services being commissioned this year in order to start in April 2019.

The PCC asked TONIC to consult victims of crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) to ensure they had the opportunity to comment on these draft commissioning intentions and help shape future services.

Over 600 local residents affected by crime took part and shared their views through an online and paper survey, and through qualitative interviews. This executive summary sets out some of the key findings of the exercise.

What was most important to you after you were affected by crime?

The Police

A small number of people had their views affected by their previous experience of how they were treated by the police and support services.

Many respondents wanted to see an effective and more visible police response, along with getting a positive criminal justice outcome.

Many wanted better communication from the police, being regularly given case updates and being kept informed about what was happening and what was likely to happen next. Respondents also mentioned wanting their support directly from the police, including having a dedicated single point of contact (SPOC).

Some just wanted to be taken more seriously, and to feel that they had been heard and believed. This was mainly in relation to the police but also about how they wanted to be treated by support services.



Executive Summary

Support Services

Many respondents felt it was most important to have the following provision in place after being affected by crime or ASB:

- Specific support services throughout the criminal justice system
- Help to feel safe, confident and cared for
- Advocacy, counselling, emotional support and someone to talk to

It was important to victims to have someone who cares and offers consistent care that is tailored to individual needs. They wanted choice and control over support available to them.

The need to be supported to feel safe was very important to victims.

What types of support do you think should be available for victims of crime in Avon and Somerset?

The Police

Many wanted regular case updates from the police, with a dedicated SPOC who was easy to access.

Some wanted:

- Better prevention of crime and greater protection for public through more visible policing
- A positive criminal justice outcome and a proactive police investigation of the crime they were affected by
- It was important for the police to listen and take them seriously. This meant validating them and treating them with respect. Some also wanted support services to come from the police

Support Services

Around half of respondents specifically mentioned the need for emotional support, therapy, counselling and mental health support through professional and trained staff.



Support Services Elements

Some respondents felt that support services for victims and survivors should include the following service elements, skills and attributes:

- Staff and organisations should be caring and reassuring, offering a safe space for victims to access help, and making follow-up calls
- Staff and organisations should have a thorough understanding of victims' needs and be non-judgemental. They should provide someone to talk to who is good at listening
- There should not be waiting lists, with services being easy to find (through proactive marketing) and access. This support should be ongoing, providing aftercare after court or investigation has ended
- Face-to-face access to support staff who are visible in the community using venues that are easy to access
- Services should be victim-led, offering tailored and personalised support, dependent on the type of crime and the specific issues facing the individual

If you needed support after a crime, how would you prefer to access this?

- The majority (69%) wanted support to be available face-to-face
- Around half (51%) wanted support to be provided by a professional advocate, and 49% wanted support to be available on the phone
- 43% wanted online support via a website

Do you think there are gaps in the services currently available in Avon & Somerset for victims?

Half (49%) felt there were gaps in the current service offer and/or the draft commissioning intentions plan, with around a quarter saying they were unsure if there were gaps (27%) or that there were no gaps (24%). Many respondents identified two key gaps in current provision for victims in Avon & Somerset:

- General comments that they felt that there were gaps in provision but did not provide specific information as to what these gaps were
- The police were felt to be over stretched and unable to respond as well as they could due to budget cuts affecting local police forces across the country



Do you think the PCC should commission additional services to support victims of crime and ASB?

Nearly half (48%) of respondents were not sure if additional services were needed, while over a third (39%) felt additional support services were required.

Many respondents wanted to see more therapeutic services made available to victims in the area, as well as case workers and PCSOs who can work one-on-one with victims and conduct follow-up visits.

Some wanted additional provision to include:

- More visible police on the streets
- Support being provided to victims after the case or investigation has finished
- A range of classes, groups and workshops being provided for victims to help them to recover

How do you think services should be set up to encourage them to work together in the best way?

Many respondents felt that services should be encouraged to work together through having joint working processes and better communication.

Some felt that better collaboration between services could be achieved through:

- A single point of contact and/or offices in same building, supported by case information and databases shared among all departments
- Regular meetings between organisations
- More information and promotion of the full range of services available to the public and to other services

Recommendation

The OPCC should now use this report to inform the next steps in their development of their commissioning intentions.



SECTION 2

Introduction



Introduction



BACKGROUND

Sue Mounstevens is the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Avon and Somerset. As PCC, she is responsible for commissioning a range of victim services for residents, investing £1.3m. The PCC is considering what services should be in place from April 2019, when current contracts and grants come to an end.

THE TASK

TONIC, an independent research organisation, has been asked by the PCC to ensure local victims and survivors have their voice heard on what is important to them, shaping the future of victim services.

OUR APPROACH

We ran an online and paper survey for victims and survivors of crime and ASB to share their views on current services, their experiences and their ideas on how future services should be shaped, as well as commenting on a summary of the draft commissioning intentions.

The survey was promoted through relevant local services, social media and targeted online adverts as well as by partner agencies, Police and the OPCC.



CURRENT SUPPORT AVAILABLE FOR VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS IN AVON & SOMERSET

TONIC

VICTIM HUB

Lighthouse is an Integrated Victim and Witness Care service that works with victims who are vulnerable, intimidated, persistently targeted or have experienced serious offences.

Referrals are made by police, then a Victim and Witness Care Officer contacts victims to:

- Act as a single point of contact for the individual;
- Assess people's need for further support; and
- Make referrals to a range of services, and follow this up

They also provide on-going support, updates and information to all victims and witnesses going through the court system.

Victims that have not reported to the Police or are not involved with Lighthouse are able to self-refer to a range of local victim support services, having the same level of access as those referred from Lighthouse.

VICTIM SUPPORT

Emotional and practical support for victims of crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).

AVOICE

AVoice is an advocacy service for victims of crime or ASB who need support relating to mental health, learning difficulties, physical disabilities, problems associated with isolation, race, religion, or sexuality.

YOUNG VICTIMS' SERVICE

Specialist advocacy support for young victims of crime and ASB up to the age of 18, and for those aged 18-25 where additional needs are identified.



CURRENT SUPPORT AVAILABLE FOR VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS IN AVON & SOMERSET

SAFELINK

A specialist advocacy service supporting victims who have experienced a sexual offence at any time in their lives. The service provides a holistic approach to support, whether victims wish to pursue a police investigation or not. Safelink provides support to women, men and children. It also provides a specialist learning difficulties Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA).

UNSEEN UK

Specialist support service focusing on the needs of victims of modern slavery before and after engaging in nationally commissioned services.

RESTORATIVE APPROACHES AVON AND SOMERSET (RAAS)

A holistic approach supporting victims, their family and communities enabling their voice to be heard, empowering them to move towards closure and for perpetrators to have greater insight into the impact of their behaviour.

NATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

A number of services are directly commissioned and funded by the Ministry of Justice across the country. These provide support to:

- Adult victims of modern slavery
- Families bereaved by homicide and road traffic crime
- Victims of terrorism
- Victims of rape and sexual violence
- Victims and witnesses at criminal courts

OTHER LOCAL SERVICES

Many other local services are in place, commissioned by others such as Local Authorities. These include specialist domestic abuse services. These other local and national services are out of scope for this process.



DRAFT COMMISSIONING INTENTIONS FOR VICTIM AND SURVIVOR SERVICES IN AVON & SOMERSET

WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS FOR FUTURE VICTIM SERVICES?

A recent assessment of local victims' needs has been carried out. The PCC's Office has responded to this by setting out what they intend to commission to meet these needs. The amount of money available to buy services with is expected to remain the same as in previous years.

The six services to be commissioned from this funding are:

1. Emotional Support Service for adults
2. Vulnerable Adults Service
3. Young Victims' Service for those aged up to 18 (or 25 where there are additional needs)
4. Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) Service
5. Restorative Justice Service for victims of any crime or ASB
6. Contribution to local specialist provision for Modern Slavery victims

This will be backed up by a small annual Prevention and Early Intervention Fund for the network of providers to reduce victimisation.

These services will be available for victims of crime and anti-social behaviour, whether they report the crime or not, and whether it happened recently or in the past. Services provided by Lighthouse and specialist domestic abuse services are not included in this round of commissioning.



SECTION 3

Who Took Part in the Consultation?



Respondent Demographics



Over 600 local victims and survivors took part

573 participated in the survey

30 took part in qualitative interviews

Gender

58% were female

40% were male

1% identified their gender as 'other'

1% preferred not to say

97% identified with the gender they were given at birth

2% did not identify with the gender they were given at birth

1% preferred not to say

Age

2% were aged under 18

15% were aged 18-24

23% were aged 25-34

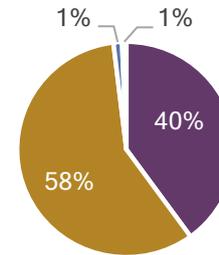
26% were aged 35-44

20% were aged 45-54

12% were aged 55-64

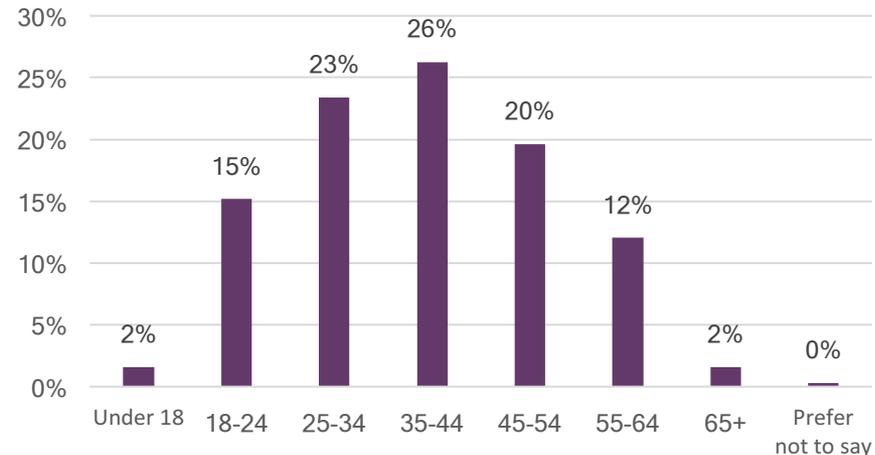
2% were aged 65+

Gender



■ Male ■ Female ■ Prefer not to say ■ Other

Age



Respondent Demographics

Area of Residence

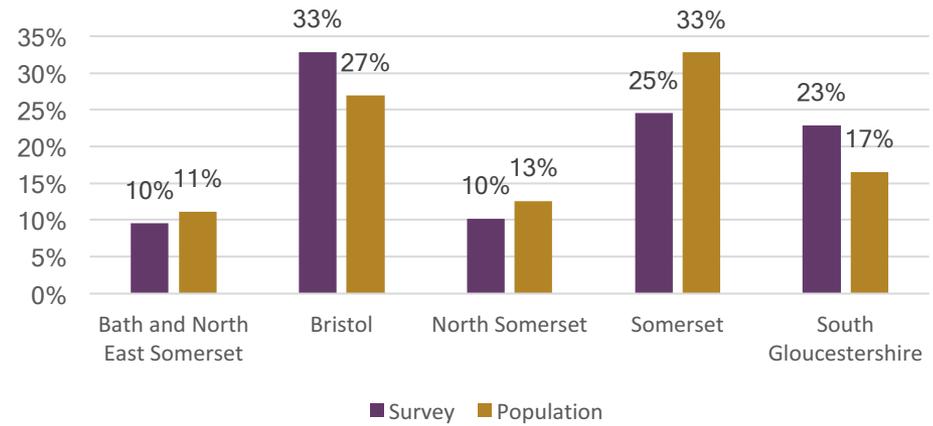
- 33% live in Bristol
- 25% live in Somerset
- 23% live in South Gloucestershire
- 10% live in Bath & North East Somerset
- 10% live in North Somerset

Therefore, our sample was underrepresented for Somerset and North Somerset and over represented for Bristol and South Gloucestershire.

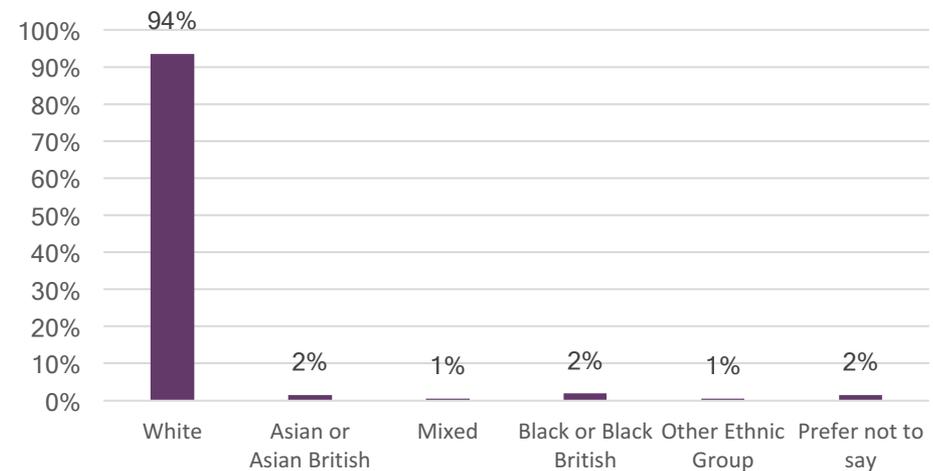
Ethnicity

- 94% were White
- 2% were Asian or Asian British
- 2% were Black or Black British
- 1% were of Mixed Ethnicity
- 1% were from another Ethnic Group
- 2% preferred not to say

Area of Residence



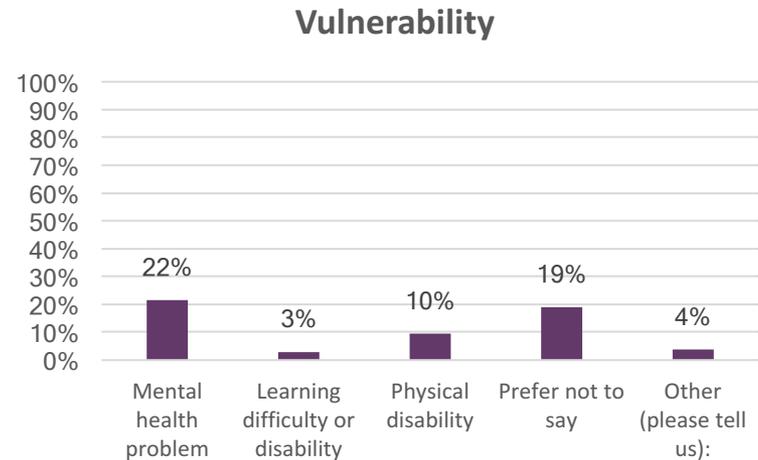
Ethnicity



Respondent Demographics

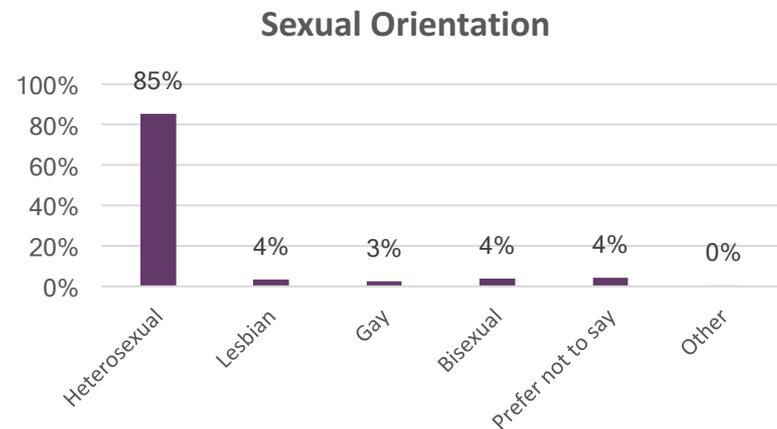
Vulnerability

- 22% had experienced mental health problems
- 10% had a physical disability
- 4% had 'other' issues which made them vulnerable or affected their daily lives
- 3% had a learning difficulty or disability
- 19% preferred not to say



Sexual Orientation

- 85% described themselves as Heterosexual
- 4% described themselves as Lesbian
- 4% described themselves as Bisexual
- 3% described themselves as Gay
- 4% preferred not to say

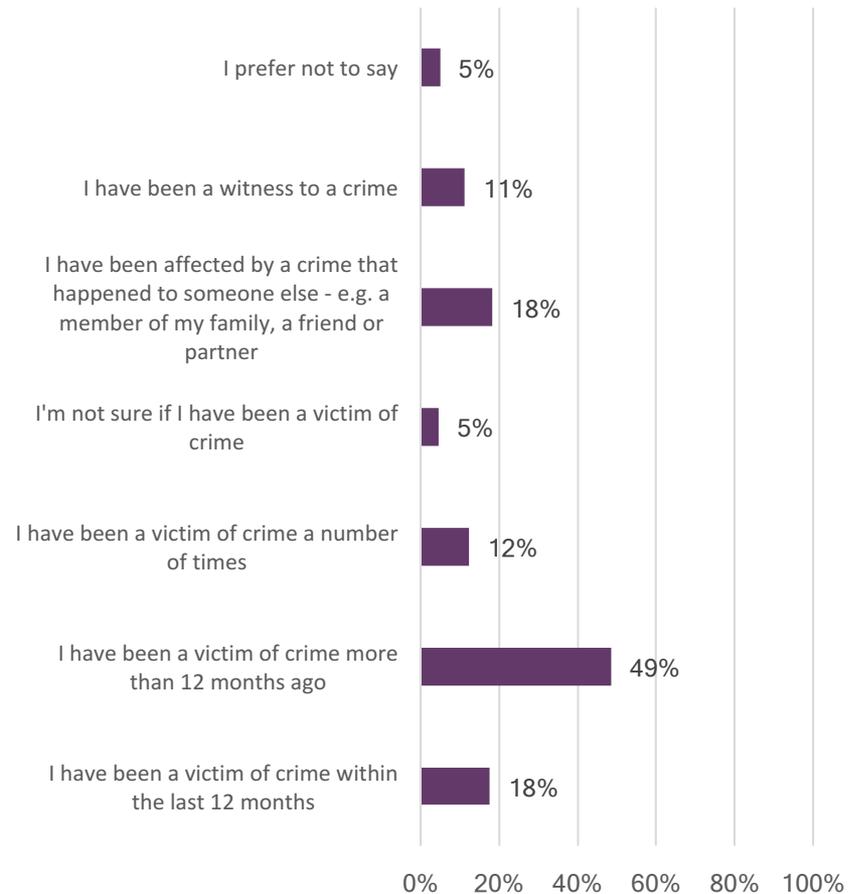


Respondent Demographics

Affected by Crime

- 49% had been a victim more than 12 months ago
- 18% had been a victim within the past 12 months
- 18% had been affected by a crime that had happened to a family member, partner or close friend
- 12% had been a repeat victim of crime
- 11% had been a witness to a crime
- 5% were not sure if they had been a victim of crime
- 5% preferred not to say

How affected by crime and ASB



Interview Respondent Demographics



A total of 30 interviews were conducted with victims and survivors living in Avon and Somerset.

Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to an hour in duration.

Participants were drawn from across a diverse range of victims, including men and women, victims of domestic violence, sexual violence, anti-social behaviour, burglary, assault and hate crimes.

The sample included multiple ethnicities, individuals from the transgender community, those with physical disabilities and mental health needs (including complex PTSD and autism), as well as those with no fixed abode.

This permitted a robust level of enquiry across a range of needs, to fully assess the extent current provisions met such needs, and offer an opportunity for victims to have a say on how gaps could be improved in the future.

The interview schedule and topic guide centred around key questions. The findings from these questions will be explored in Section 4, with accompanying themes and answers from victims/survivors.



Reporting Incidents to the Police



Reporting Incidents to Police

66% had reported the crime to the police

34% had not reported the crime to the police

Why didn't you report the incident to the Police?

Many of those who had not reported a crime to the police said they did not report because they did not think there this would result in a conviction. Many also felt that the previous police response they had received when reporting a crime was unsatisfactory.

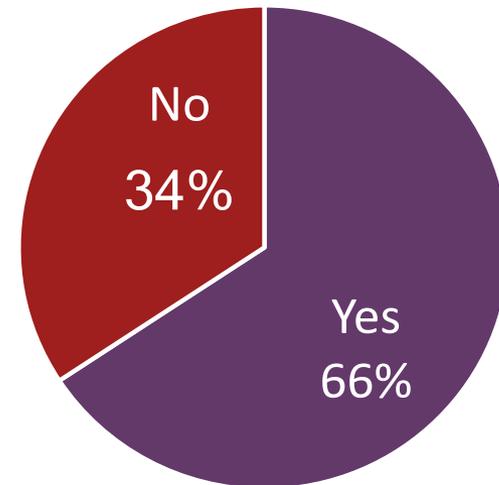
Some of the respondents who had not reported a crime to the police felt that the:

- Crime was not important enough to be reported
- Someone else reported the incident
- They were afraid to report the crime

A small number of "non-reporters" felt they had not reported a crime because:

- They had a personal relationship with the perpetrator
- The evidence would not be strong enough for action to be taken

Did you report the incident to the police?



SECTION 4

What did victims & survivors tell us?



Terminology used in this section

Majority:	Well over 50%
Half:	Around 50%
Many:	15 - 30%
Some:	5 - 14%
A Small Number:	1 - 4%



1. What was most important to you after you were affected by crime? Survey Findings

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES SHAPED THEIR VIEWS (POLICE)

Small numbers reported having a negative experience with the police, which had affected them badly when reporting a crime and during the criminal justice process.

"We were made to feel like dirt by the police. They never listened or acted as my children and family suffered. The police still are victimising my family and protected the people that make our life hell. The police have taken our lives away."

"When I called 999 immediately after being assaulted I was told I probably deserved it and then the following couple of days I tried to report the assault to several officers but eventually it was only because my father went with me to the police station was anything done about it. One of the offenders pleaded guilty but the rest were never looked for."

The same number of respondents reported a positive police experience.

"The police came quickly. We felt we were listened to and our complaint was taken seriously."

"Great support from the police."

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES SHAPED THEIR VIEWS (SUPPORT SERVICES)

A small number of respondents reported having a positive experience with support services.

"They phoned me the day after I reported the incident to the police. They told me that I didn't have to do anything I didn't want to and that I was in control with how fast or how slow everything would go. They spoke to me about all my options and told me that they would do their best to help me to get through this. They were like a safety net at the end of the phone and would come out to see me to keep looking at what I needed. They called my college and got me extra time to submit my assignments. When I thought I would die they helped me to live again as I stopped blaming myself."

"I needed someone to talk to about what had happened to me. I needed someone to help me to talk to the police and I was so frightened to speak to them myself. I was offered an ISVA. She phoned me and then came out to see me the next day."



1. What was most important to you after you were affected by crime? Survey Findings

EXPECTATIONS FROM THE POLICE

Many respondents wanted to see an effective and more visible Police response, along with getting a positive criminal justice outcome.

"Just knowing there is a police presence on the street would help."

"I wanted to feel like something was going to be done about it."

Many wanted better communication from the Police, being regularly given case updates and being kept informed about what was happening and what was likely to happen next. Respondents also mentioned wanting their support directly from the Police, including having a dedicated single point of contact (SPOC).

"Assurance and reassurance, that the crime will be dealt with responsibly and effectively and any process is explained clearly."

"Quick response from the police and a dedicated person and number we can use during the early time after the crime."

Some just wanted to be taken seriously, and to feel that they had been heard and believed. This was mainly in relation to the police but also about how they wanted to be treated by support services.

"It was important to me to know that the police would take it seriously and listen."

For some, the most important thing was to be listened to by the Police, being treated with respect in a non-judgemental manner.

"I reported the crime but I was told I wasn't co-operating for a reason I do not understand and I have been severely re-traumatised. Then, years later, I attempted again to report which was also re-traumatising."



1. What was most important to you after you were affected by crime? Survey Findings

SUPPORT SERVICES

Many respondents felt that it was most important to have the following provision in place after being affected by crime or ASB:

- Specific support services throughout the criminal justice system
- Help to feel safe, confident and cared for
- Advocacy, counselling, emotional support and someone to talk to

Some respondents also made the following points about what was important to them after being affected by crime:

- Preventing future crimes happening to them, stopping repeat victimisation
- Mental health support
- Understanding the impact of crime on people's lives
- Understanding vulnerability, such as the specific needs of particular groups such as the elderly
- Help to cope with the immediate impact of a crime, through practical support and advice with issues arising at the time
- Long-term, ongoing support and aftercare, including after court
- Being in control of what happens to them and being allowed to "*move at their own pace*"
- Support with financial recovery, such as help with insurance and compensation claims and support to fix any damage or replace stolen property
- A quick response from police and support services
- Support from friends and family
- Support for the whole family of someone affected by a crime
- The services must be easy to access
- Restorative justice opportunities
- Knowing what support is available, being able to access information on services, and a proactive support offer from services without having to chase them



1. What was most important to you after you were affected by crime? Survey Findings

Support should always be offered to victims, yet some victims detailed occasions where they had had to seek support themselves or ask for support because they knew about it from others or previous experiences. This suggests there may be victims who go unsupported in the absence of this previous experience or knowledge. Support seemed more difficult to access when there were added vulnerabilities, for example, disabilities, homelessness or substance misuse.

Victims discussed the importance of crime prevention information, often asking, *"Why did it happen to me and how can I prevent it in the future?"* One victim stated, *"All people are mainly worried about is when will it happen again and will it be worse so any information regarding personal safety is welcome."*

Victims highlighted how important it is to have a designated, consistent contact throughout the case that can provide updates, even if there is no information.

"It is so important to keep a victim informed. It can give a sense of justice to know law enforcement are doing something. It is so bad to be dealt with dismissively. It is soul destroying. The contact was always initiated by me to the police, to the officer in charge of the case, but he never called me back."

Where victims reported receiving successful support, this was mainly due to a pivotal relationship with an empathic individual able to guide a victim throughout their journey to recovery. Victims stated *"having someone who cares"* was paramount to their ability to cope.

"I bumped into the Lighthouse manager and he had a soft voice and said 'Can I help you?' It all came flooding out. He found me a lovely police officer. I will never forget this officer, he was so understanding and empathetic. He listened and he wrote down exactly what we said."

"I had an amazing police officer who supported me throughout – she found me some psychotherapy for free. She was instrumental in me being able to stand in that court."



1. What was most important to you after you were affected by crime? Interview Findings

Victims reported having a worker who can respond to the way they prefer to learn or interact was also vital and helped them feel like an individual rather than a case number:

"My IDVA helped me to see I wasn't to blame for what happened – they kept chipping away at me and helped me. The best IDVA was so focused on my recovery, she knew that I liked facts and that's how she worked with me, that was her approach. She adapted it to how I learnt and responded – I gradually took little bits in and the more I took in the more I wanted."

Generally, this sense of being treated like an individual rather than adopting a "one size fits all" approach was reported to be extremely helpful.

"I felt like a person, very individual. Being a victim of a burglary, I was one of many and I just felt unimportant. I don't think anyone took on the impact it had on me and my husband, but Victim Support did, they understood it and I was treated individually."

Victims also noted that help processing "injustice" was very important to their ability to recover:

"I was able to process the fact it's unlikely they are going to catch the perpetrators. Before Victim Support, I was so angry they would not be caught. Now I can move on and accept 'they don't get people for burglaries'. I was able to put that to one side and move forward with their support. The police were quite blasé about this on the night of the burglary saying 'it's doubtful we will catch them'. Victim Support helped me actually realise I can cope and recover in the absence of them catching them."



1. What was most important to you after you were affected by crime? Interview Findings

Outreach was said to be vital, rather than victims having to go to a service themselves or have support over the phone. Outreach also allowed support around "*small but significant*" things, from helping victims decide what to wear to court to bringing milk or bread on a visit. Victims conveyed a sense that after a crime they found very simple tasks extremely hard to complete and their minds felt "*scrambled*" so to have an advocate or support service that helped with daily tasks, and did some of the thinking with the victim was extremely helpful.

"I needed someone to bring me milk, bread, make phone-calls for me – my police officer just understood the day to day complexities that I was finding hard. She was not being bound by regulations and procedures or not being allowed to do something. She saw me as a human and was thinking 'what can I best do for you?'"

"People need to be able to think outside the box in these roles."

"She did small things like buying me lunch during the court case in case I saw him."

Victims also stated that feeling like they had a choice in their care and being believed were extremely important:

"They were so understanding – they gave me so much choice in the whole process. They said I could choose if I wanted an examination, if I wanted it to stop. They made me feel so secure."

"No one disbelieved me. That was really really really really important."

Victims reported they liked it when they had the same officer all the way through the case:

"My police officer was really helpful – I had the same person all the way along, from the beginning he was on the journey with me."



1. What was most important to you after you were affected by crime? Interview Findings

Reinstating a feeling of safety was paramount to victims:

"SVA and the police also supported me through appeal when the first trial was a hung jury. To keep me safe, they put [the offender] on tag, he was out of area and he had a curfew. I was kept informed about this which was reassuring. The barrister also drew up a restraining order in case he wasn't found guilty to keep me safe – such forethought. I knew about the MARAC meeting – so everyone involved in the case was communicating about keeping me safe and I was told about this meeting."



2. What types of support do you think should be available for victims of crime in Avon and Somerset? Survey Findings

POLICE

- Many wanted regular case updates from the police, with a dedicated SPOC who was easy to access.
- Some wanted better prevention of crime and greater protection for public through more visible policing.
- Some wanted a positive criminal justice outcome and a proactive police investigation of the crime they were affected by.
- For some, it was important for the police to listen and take them seriously. This meant validating them and treating them with respect. Some also wanted support services to come from the police.

SUPPORT SERVICES

- Around half of respondents specifically mentioned the need for emotional support, therapy, counselling and mental health support through professional and trained staff.
- Some mentioned the need for practical help with coping with the immediate impact of a crime on their lives.
- Some felt services needed to offer assistance to help victims feel safe, through crime prevention and security advice, security equipment and protection.
- Some mentioned the need to ensure support was tailored to meet specific needs of vulnerable groups. This included for victims of sexual abuse and violence, young people, members of BAME communities.
- Some felt support groups and access to peer support was important to help people feel less isolated and benefit from others' experiences.
- Some stated the need for support to help them with financial recovery, assisting them with compensation and insurance claims, or even financial assistance after a crime. This also included the recovery or repair of property stolen or damaged during the crime.
- Small numbers felt that services should offer:
 - Advocacy and legal support
 - Signposting and referral to other agencies through a more integrated care planning approach
 - Provision of a 24hr helpline that was anonymous and confidential. This could also be provided through an online chat facility
 - Restorative Justice



2. What types of support do you think should be available for victims of crime in Avon and Somerset? Survey Findings

SERVICE ELEMENTS

Some respondents felt that support services for victims and survivors should include the following service elements, skills and attributes:

- Staff and organisations should be caring and reassuring, offering a safe space for victims to access help in, and making follow-up calls
- Staff and organisations should have a thorough understanding of victims' needs and be non-judgemental. They should provide someone to talk to who is good at listening
- There should not be waiting lists, with services being easy to find (through proactive marketing) and access. This support should be ongoing, providing aftercare after court or investigation has ended
- Face-to-face access to support staff who are visible in community in venues that are easy to access
- Services should be Victim-led, offering tailored and personalised support, dependent on the type of crime and the specific issues facing the individual

A small number of respondents felt that services should include:

- Whole family support
- Health provision
- Housing support or hostel provision
- Be free for service users to access
- Help with the court process

Some felt that the existing range of services sounded like it was the right mix of provision required to meet local needs.



2. What types of support do you think should be available for victims of crime in Avon and Somerset? Interview Findings

Victims highlighted that support should not be time limited:

"Police shouldn't give someone the sense 'oh here we go again' in domestic violence cases. Even if you're thinking it do not show it! It's about allowing someone time and courage to follow up a prosecution – they will get there, help them to be ready to come forward. We need unconditional positive regard and a sense 'when you're ready we're here.'"

In terms of how support should be available, some people were happy to have email or telephone support:

"If they had to traipse to see everyone in person, this wouldn't be feasible, as they have so many cases maybe the elderly would prefer face to face but phone worked for me. Phone support was enough support for me."

One victim detailed a service from Samaritans where she could email in her thoughts, almost like a diary and she would always have a response in 12 hours. It was also an effective way for her to log what was happening in the case (of anti-social behaviour).

Other victims were clear they wanted face to face contact and felt other means were too impersonal.

"As soon as I found SARI I was invited to their offices to have a proper chat; they informed me of everything they could do and they were on my side. They contacted me regularly by email and phone, to see how it's going, how I was feeling, what's going on, was there anything they can do to help. I liked that they called me in, to have a chat with me about the case and come up with a plan; let's get down to the nitty gritty of the case and run through what can happen. It's great to have a call and then a letter about the court appearance and I was told, if you like you can have a walk through, but I would like it to be a bit more personal, not just a default response."



2. What types of support do you think should be available for victims of crime in Avon and Somerset? Interview Findings

The key seemed to be to offer a service that was able to cater to individual preferences in terms of how contact should be made and support should be offered.

Specialist services were unequivocally argued for. This was discussed for victims of hate crime; for people with disabilities; for victims of sexual abuse; and for victims of domestic violence. There were two arms to this argument. Firstly, victims with disabilities (mental or physical) wanted to work with someone who knew what options were available to support people through the court process, e.g. registered intermediaries.

"Life is tough enough having a disability but then when you are a victim of hate crime it would be nice to have someone who understands and is empathic to this. I suggest a specific officer or support volunteer who knows about disabilities and Disability Act (2010) – someone knowledgeable on what we're entitled to."

"AVOICE told me about the intermediary, they sent me information, told me about advocates and the need for registered intermediaries but I am terrified about court. Without an intermediary, I am totally alone. Apparently I get half an hour with CPS; that's not long enough for me to explain what I struggle with. The judge doesn't understand that autism is different for everyone – we all have different communication needs."

The second strand of the argument for specialist support services related to victim empathy and to understanding the specific nature of the crime:

"Specialist service is so important because police don't know how to handle people that have been abused. The police don't understand – they always concentrate on the evidence and just because there's no evidence doesn't mean there's no need for support."



2. What types of support do you think should be available for victims of crime in Avon and Somerset? Interview Findings

"SARSAS never made me feel like I wasn't believed – without it I possibly could have killed him – especially when he got away with it. They helped with my frustration with him not being prosecuted as well as the emotional trauma. The police don't understand you can have PTSD still after all these years."

"I feel like my life is at a really good place now, I have a happy grateful life and I feel like specialist trauma counselling has had a lot to do with this."

As mentioned, victims valued specialist, emotional, therapeutic support, but they also indicated the importance of practical support. For example, how to get a non-molestation order or someone sharing their knowledge about what they're entitled to or able to do.

"Having someone who can help you with the minefield of practical and legal things I am able to do as a victim of domestic violence. For example, I needed someone to tell me that changing the locks is not allowed when the perpetrator still owns half the property."



3. If you needed support after a crime, how would you prefer to access this?

The majority (69%) wanted support to be available face-to-face.

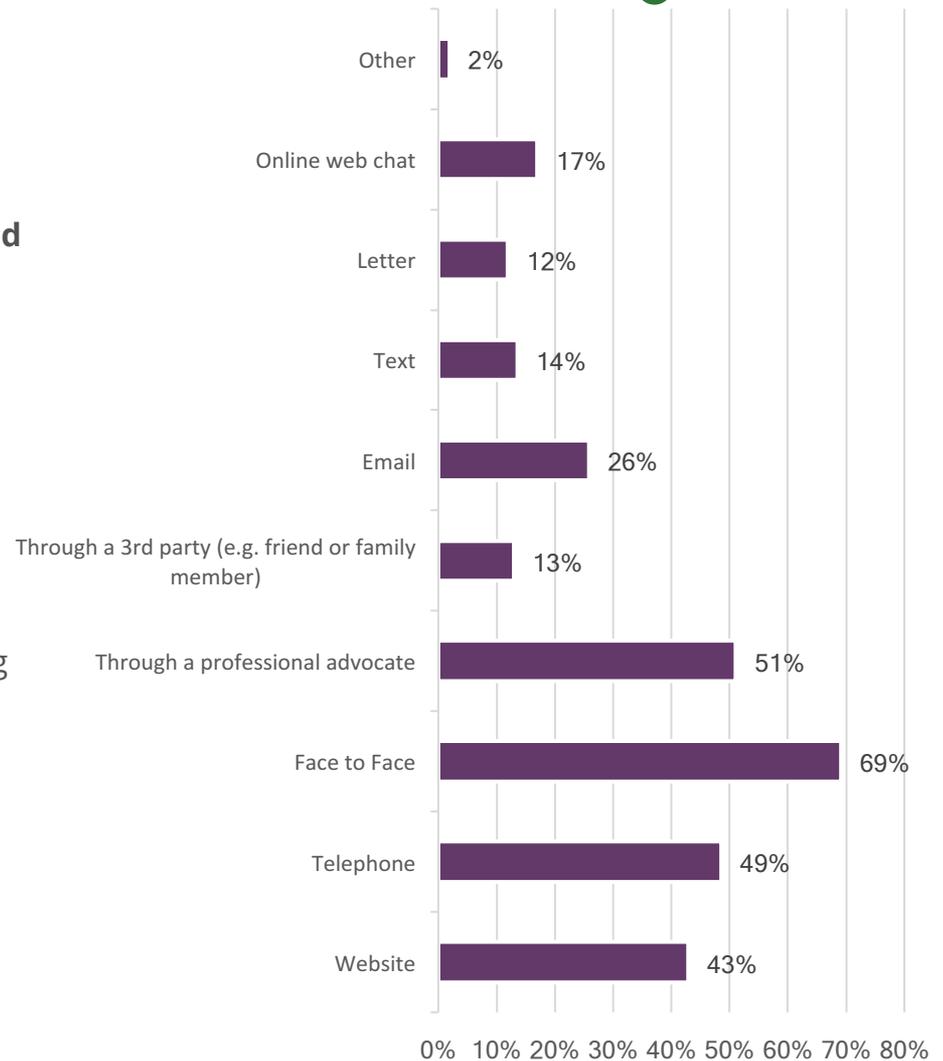
Around half (51%) wanted support to be provided by a professional advocate, and 49% wanted support to be available on the phone.

43% wanted online support via a website, with 26% wanting email contact and 17% wanting online web chat provision.

14% wanted support and contact via text messaging services.

13% wanted support to be offered through a third party, such as a friend or family member.

12% wanted contact by letter.



3. What ideas do you have about future services for victims in Avon and Somerset?

Victims were able to reflect on what components could be introduced to victims' services in order to better meet needs and plug gaps:

"It would be good to have a checklist of things to consider and sort, and people to call. After the crime your head is scrambled and there's so much to do."

In recognition of the long wait times for therapy, one victim suggested assessments took into account what type of crime one had fallen victim to:

"Timeframes for accessing counselling could be prioritised differently. With talking therapies you are prioritised if you are pregnant or ex-forces but maybe domestic violence or sexual abuse could be prioritised."

Victims reported it was occasionally difficult to identify where they should be accessing support from, so there was a sense that "a single front door" would be helpful and then specialist signposting could follow.

Victims consistently mentioned that where there were additional needs, or specific crime types, they felt there was a lack of understanding. Therefore, several victims suggested having individuals with lived experience train professionals (including the Crown Prosecution Service and judiciary) about specific crime types and vulnerabilities:

"I would like to train professionals about what services and offers there are for survivors, about the role of empathy and believing a victim, what victims of domestic violence need."

"I feel a campaign coming on. I have been advocating for disability rights for so long. I have been living in terror now for 2 months while I wait for this trial – I feel violently sick that I am not allowed to give the best evidence I can give. It would be nice to be able to explain this to the CPS."



3. What ideas do you have about future services for victims in Avon and Somerset?

One victim of domestic violence suggested there were barriers to being rehoused, such as pets or children, that limited people's ability to recover or stay safe. She suggested there should be more foster carers for pets of people who need to be rehoused as well as a better understanding of the impact of relocation on the victim, rather than this being used against them.

Victims repeatedly suggested that there needs to be a clearer, louder message that reassures victims they will be "believed" by the police as this was said to be a barrier that prevented reporting.

"This message needs to be a bit clearer: that the police will believe victims when you come forward. Go to schools, on the TV, social media, providing outreach to schools on the healthy relationship. I never thought anyone would ever believe me, if someone had come to my school maybe I would have come forward earlier and I could have stopped it for myself and others but there's a climate of silence. Kids need more support in being believed (as do adults); helping people at an earlier age even while it's carrying on."

"There needs to be more awareness about rape – more investment here. I know they have statistics about it but they need to reiterate that YOU WILL BE BELIEVED. Social media needs to send out this message, GP, children's centres, women's toilets."

"Victims need to know it's ok not to be ok and have the courage to speak out. As a woman there is still a stigma about walking back at 2am and was I to blame? Some people have been judgemental asking what were you doing out on your own and what were you wearing? I didn't deserve this to happen and I wasn't to blame."

"It didn't go in my favour that I kept it to myself. I never told anyone about it. There should be a campaign that encourages victims to write events down even if they don't want to take it forward."



3. What ideas do you have about future services for victims in Avon and Somerset?

Several victims advocated peer led victim support groups who can also advise police and other organisations:

"I think there should be support from a disabled people-led organisation, for disabled survivors of a crime. Disabled people can feel additionally vulnerable due to being a disabled person e.g. a wheelchair user cannot retreat, turn round to get away from the perpetrator."

This seemed particularly important in light of feedback from victims with disabilities who felt let down due to a lack of understanding about their additional needs:

"I wasn't asked about any disabilities on my assessment. Accessibility would have been good to cover. I was being seen in winter and this is especially difficult for me. They could have asked whether I have any mobility need or was there anything they needed to know. It would have been a welcoming thing to be offered that first coffee, this would have been more soothing. It's so painful for me to move around in winter. It would have been nice to just have an awareness of how challenging that might be for me in my scooter"

One victim also suggested that there should be continual development in the form of improved monitoring and accountability for support services:

"Bring them together every quarter; spot-audit their records annually to identify where things went well and where they could have been better."



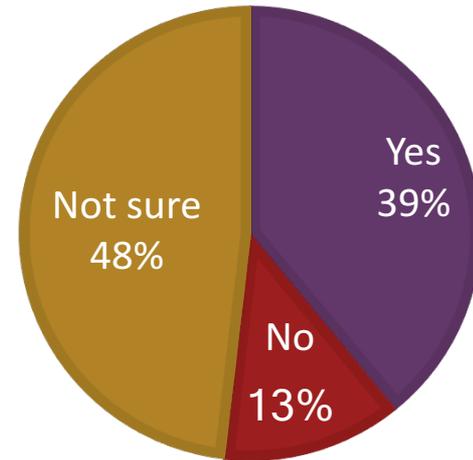
Gaps & Additional Services



4. Additional Services

Nearly half (48%) of respondents were not sure if additional services were needed.

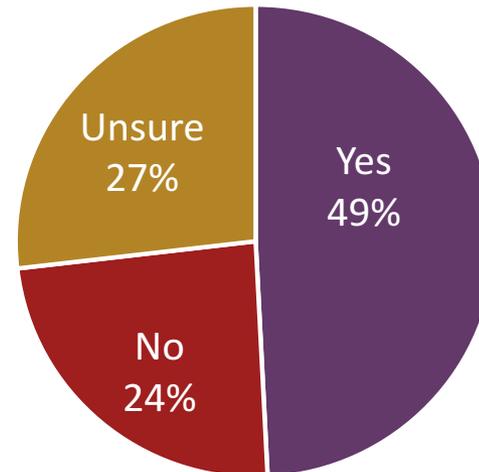
Over one third (39%) felt additional support services were required.



Additional Services Required

5. Gaps

Half (49%) felt there were gaps in the current service offer and/or the draft commissioning intentions plan, with around a quarter saying they were unsure if there were gaps (27%) or that there were no gaps (24%).



Gaps



4. Do you think the PCC should commission additional services to support victims of crime and ASB?

Many respondents wanted to see more therapeutic services made available to victims in the area, as well as case workers and PCSOs who can work one-on-one with victims and conduct follow-up visits.

Some wanted additional provision to include:

- More visible police on the streets
- Support being provided to victims after the case or investigation has finished
- A range of classes, groups and workshops being provided for victims to help them to recover

Small numbers of respondents wanted to see the following additional services:

- More opportunity to provide feedback about the police and support services
- Greater publicising of the support that is available for victims in the area
- Better helplines, including 24-hour access
- More Restorative Justice provision, enabling victims to have a greater understanding of perpetrators' motivations and lives
- Greater provision of financial assistance and advice for victims
- More work done with young people, such as youth provision
- More funding to existing support services to ensure there were no waiting lists and people's needs could be better met
- More local centres to easily access support



5. Do you think there are gaps in the services currently available in Avon and Somerset for victims? Survey Findings

Many respondents identified two key gaps in current provision for victims in Avon & Somerset:

- General comments that they felt that there were gaps in provision but did not provide specific information as to what these gaps were
- The police were felt to be over stretched and unable to respond as well as they could, due to budget cuts affecting local police forces across the country

Some felt the main gaps were:

- A need for a dedicated police SPOC, providing regular progress updates on individuals' cases as well as a greater role for the police in supporting victims
- A lack of counselling and mental health support provided by trained professionals
- That the system is unfair - being more in favour of criminals than victims
- Support services being over-stretched, leading to long waiting times. Some felt more funding was needed to resolve this
- Anti-social behaviour (ASB) and some other crime types were felt not to be prioritised by the police.
- Neighbourhood mediation services to prevent repeat ASB
- A general feeling that the current service offer is not good enough



5. Do you think there are gaps in the services currently available in Avon and Somerset for victims? Survey Findings

A small number identified the following gaps in current provision:

- It was hard to find information about available services and they were then hard to access
- The range of services was not sufficiently integrated and needed to be a more collaborative system
- Specialist support for young people and prevention activity in schools
- Support groups and peer-led groups
- Services with a specialism in specific vulnerable groups, such as those with a disability or learning difficulty, or the elderly
- Financial support and advice
- Insufficient Restorative Justice provision
- A need for more proactive prevention of re-victimisation
- Geographic gaps in the ability to access the full range of services
- Police and services ignoring feedback channels and not acting on feedback from service users or victims
- Legal support and advice
- Personalised services tailored to the individual's needs
- Provision for victims of hate crime



5. Do you think there are gaps in the services currently available in Avon and Somerset for victims? Interview Findings

Whilst victims highlighted the need for an empathic response, this was not always the case and some gaps remained, particularly between police and victims where police were seen to be "scary" or "intimidating":

"The barrier between them and us (victim and police) needs to be softened."

The psychological and physical health impact of hate crime and ASB from neighbours came through very strongly. Namely, how difficult it was to secure a prosecution and how victims suffered with constant, repeat offending, often in or near their homes. This highlighted a particular gap around the policing of this offence and, in turn, the importance of support for this victim type:

"I have had two heart attacks as a result of this stress – the night before this happened I had stones thrown at my window. They have poured petrol on the front doorstep. I have reported this every single night to the police and still nothing happens, there is no deterrent for the perpetrators."

"Anti-social behaviour needs to be taken more seriously. It's frustrating handing over so much evidence. My partner has suffered more of this than me, five years where she's felt too afraid to come forward, she's finally put a CCTV camera to document the behaviour but the police didn't want to pursue it thinking it was a neighbourhood dispute."



5. Do you think there are gaps in the services currently available in Avon and Somerset for victims? Interview Findings

Victims of all crime types reported extremely adverse affects from their experiences with the need for therapy and counselling to cope:

"The first 4 to 5 days I was coping and I was in a bit of denial. I was more focused on how I fought this guy off rather than being attacked viciously but then I had a huge come down coming to terms with what happened, and my bulimia flared up again following the attack. It was the only way I knew how to get the pain inside to come out. It was a coping mechanism I knew how to use – even though I hadn't used this for 15 years. I felt embarrassed and like a failure,"

However, victims reported long waiting lists for specialist therapy sometimes between eight months and a year. There was also a perceived gap for support for children and young people who are affected by crime either directly or indirectly:

"Support and counselling needs to be available for children – I had older teenage boys – there was support for really small children but not their age. Not just signposting, it should be a referral to really ensure someone gets in to that service."

"There is no support offered for my little girl who is 9. My daughter is the target of racial hatred and abuse, as soon as she's in the garden they come over and throw stones at her, they're using weapons and wood with nails in, it's a group of 11-12 youths from 12-16 years old."

There was also a gap in support for family members who may not understand how best to support the victim:

"There needs to be support for the family who struggle to understand what's going on for the loved one; understanding what a victim can go through, how my family can support me. Nobody understands what we're going through and we feel so alone. For me it brought up things I had never told my husband before."



5. Do you think there are gaps in the services currently available in Avon and Somerset for victims? Interview Findings

Victims simultaneously highlighted the important role of victim support when waiting for specialist therapeutic interventions, which, on the whole, were available and did seemingly offer a short-term solution to this gap.

Gaps in housing options for victims were discussed, and especially how they could make an individual feel they were being re-victimised or punished:

"As a lesbian I find it hard that there's single sex crisis houses – you may not want to be open with another woman – it's a woman who has abused me. It's always a women only space – but for me, this isn't safe."

"They tried to move me really far away from my family and network. They told me I should be grateful for new accommodation but I felt I was being punished again. If I said no, they said I would be intentionally homeless. I was able to appeal it through my IDSPA and thankfully I was homed near my family. The council did not have much victim empathy."

This highlighted an important point about broader services being supportive of victims, not just those flagged as victim services:

"I would have liked my back door to be replaced with a plastic reinforced door and the council would not do it. Maybe there could be funds for this in the future. I had a wooden door that had already been kicked in once so this proved it was not secure and I argued my case with the council and they would not change it. A bit of flexibility on this to help reinstate my feeling of safety a bit more would have been good."



6. How do you think services should be set up to encourage them to work together in the best way?



Many respondents felt that services should be encouraged to work together through having joint working processes and better communication.

Some felt that better collaboration between services should be achieved through:

- A single point of contact and/or offices in same building, supported by case information and databases shared among all departments
- Regular meetings between organisations
- More information and promotion of the full range of services available to the public and to other services

A small number of respondents felt that services should collaborate better through:

- A comprehensive range of services to support victims
- All services being easy to access, including for those in rural settings
- More support groups being made available and given better funding
- Continuing to use the existing set of services
- A shared "*traffic light system*" that helps all agencies understand risk and levels of need so that they can respond appropriately to offer more integrated care for individuals



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