

IMPROVING SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The document sets out a vision for how victims (direct and indirect) and witnesses of all ages in the county will be able to receive appropriate and proportionate support to help them cope and recover from the impact of the crime.
- 1.2. It has been created by members of Cambridgeshire's Criminal Justice Board Victim and Witness Subgroup. (Membership details are listed in Annex 1)
- 1.3. It has been informed by: Cambridgeshire's Victim and Offender Needs Assessment, national documents including the Draft Code of Practice for Victims of Crime and the Ministry of Justice's 2012 'Getting it right for victims and witnesses' and outputs from local research carried out by the sub-group and other agencies.

2. Intended outcomes

- 2.1. The intended outcomes of the strategy are:
 - Enable all victims (direct and indirect such as parents, siblings, children, partners and close friends) of crime to cope and recover (not just those who report crime)
 - Ensure budgets and resources available to support victims are used as efficiently and effectively as possible.
 - To support the creation of communities with low crime rates and therefore a reduction in the number of victims, high levels of confidence in policing and engaged communities with high numbers of witnesses.

3. Scope - Definition of a victim of crime

- 3.1. Under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime only a person who has "directly experienced criminal conduct" and who has made an allegation to the police in England and Wales, is entitled to receive services under the Code.
- 3.2. The Victims' Services Commissioning Framework defines a victim of crime as: "a person who has suffered harm which was directly caused by a criminal offence, or in relation to a person whose death was directly caused by a criminal offence, a family member who has suffered harm as a result of the person's death, or a family member who has been affected and suffered harm as a result of a criminal offence against the victim." It says the provision of support services to cope and recover should be immaterial to whether a complaint has been made about the offence, an offender charged or convicted.
- 3.3. However this vision takes it one step further and recognises that victims of what the system treats as non-crime (such as anti-social behaviour or road traffic collisions) should also be afforded access to support to cope and recover.
- 3.4. At its heart the vision aims to 'champion the needs of victims' which are often complex and dynamic. It aspires to provide 'victim driven support' which enables them to cope and recover and where possible return to the life they had before the crime occurred. The strategy acknowledges that this cannot be delivered without effective partnership working across both organisational and county boundaries. This will also ensure economies of scale.

4. Definition of risk

3.1 The term 'risk' carries a different meaning for each agency and is often used interchangeably. However all agencies use risk levels to prioritise and allocate resources. Within this vision the term 'risk' is used to collectively highlight that the victim could be at risk of serious harm:

- from the offender
- from themselves through self-harm
- through harming others (for example dependents),
- or is at risk of their physical and mental wellbeing deteriorating as a direct result of being a victim of crime (this could result in homelessness, loss of employment leading to financial problems or an increased disposition to abuse drugs and alcohol). This could also have an adverse impact on other members of the family particularly children. (See also 9.2)

To this end it is acknowledged that the criminal justice system, social care and health need to develop a common language around the definition of risk.

5. Current situation - People who are victims of crime in Cambridgeshire

5.1. There were 31,503 unique victims in 2012/13 (2,113 repeat victims) reported to Cambridgeshire Constabulary. However many people do not report crimes and national surveys suggest that at least one in five people in the country are victims of crime each year. Applied to the population of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough this suggests approximately 100,000 people (aged between 10 and 65) could have been a victim of some sort of crime in the last year.

5.2. The likelihood of someone reporting a crime depends on the nature of the crime they have experienced. It is suggested that almost 100 per cent of people who have had their car stolen will report it to the police; while only 11 per cent of people who are a victim of a serious sexual offence will report it. There are many varied reasons for this disparity in reporting which can be specific to the processes, the individual and/or their personal circumstances.

5.3. Of those people who are victims of crime who do report, 85 per cent (in 2012) were satisfied with the whole experience they receive from the police. However, the public's confidence in public services will affect their decision whether to report a crime or not. It should be noted that historically, the percentage of people who felt that police and local agencies were dealing with things that matter to the people in their community has been lower in Cambridgeshire, than in some areas.

5.4. Within this strategy people who are victims of crime have been divided into three groups:

- the many people who do not report crime and do not seek additional support;
- those people who enter the criminal justice system, are supported within it and do not seek additional support; and
- those people upon which the crime has had a profound effect that they require additional support (this must also include those who have already entered the criminal justice system and people who have not reported the crime to police)

6. Safe, strong and healthy communities

- 6.1. In a healthy, strong community there are low crime rates, high levels of confidence in policing and engaged communities with high numbers of witnesses. Much work is ongoing in the county to build such communities. Priority 4 of Cambridgeshire's Health and Wellbeing Strategy aims to: Create a safe environment and help to build strong communities, wellbeing and mental health. Safer Peterborough Partnership has its own continuing target to reduce the number of victims of crime by ten per cent in the three years 2011-14. A wide range of agencies, statutory and non-statutory, play a part in supporting communities and delivering early intervention and preventative work.
- 6.2. Not everyone who has become a victim of crime needs the same support. Of those who choose not to report to the police (an estimated 68,000 people in 2012/13) many do not seek or need additional support or may rely on personal or community networks, such as Neighbourhood Watch.
- 6.3. However some of those who choose not to report crime do so out of fear or other reasons. They may not have the support of personal and wider community networks. The risk of becoming a victim is higher in many vulnerable groups. It is the responsibility of all agencies to identify these people who are victims and play a role in supporting them, or referring them for help and resolution of the crime which has affected them.
- 6.4. Increasingly all agencies are recognising this role, e.g. in response to domestic violence and sexual assault. Specific victims' services are available for people not choosing to report. For example not all of the 400 women supported by Cambridgeshire Women's Aid and Refuge, or the 320 people helped by the Sexual Assault Referral Centre in Peterborough choose to pursue criminal proceedings.
- 6.5. However the multi-agency approach for some vulnerable groups at risk of crime is less well developed e.g. those living in deprived/vulnerable localities, those with mental illness, those with learning disabilities, the elderly or young, potential victims of hate crime, honour-based violence and sexual exploitation. There may also be cultural or language barriers.

6.6 Actions

- Ensure co-ordinated work with communities to create a safe environment and build strong communities. For example prevention and early intervention work.
- Build up our understanding of those people (specifically vulnerable groups) who choose not to report their experience to the police and why.
- Ensure access to support for those people who require it and are victims who choose not to report the crime to the police.
- Record the number of victims accessing support who have not reported the crime to the police .
- Continued and improved multi-agency work to increase crime reporting, subsequent detections and the support given to people in the community who are victims to cope and recover.

7. Clear supportive pathways – Meeting the requirements of the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime

- 7.1. The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime was published in October 2013. It sets out the key entitlements for victims of crime from the criminal justice system. It forms part of the wider Government strategy to transform the CJS with a victim-centered ethos. It sets out a series of 'enhanced entitlements' to victims of the most serious crime, persistently targeted victims and vulnerable or intimidated victims. It also sets out how the CJS must keep all victims up to date with their case and provide them with the information they require to engage effectively with them.
- 7.2. In 2012/13 32,000 people reported a crime to Cambridgeshire Constabulary, of these many did not wish to be provided with additional support to that given within the CJS; only a third chose to be referred to an initial triage victim support service. Of that third the majority of people were satisfied with an initial conversation and an email with a leaflet attached; only 1,229 people requested support beyond an email. Satisfaction with service delivery by the police is higher than found in the rest of the country.
- 7.3. Those people who are victims who require more support tend to be at the higher risk end of the spectrum; it is important these people are identified early. In fact Cambridgeshire's Victim and Offender Needs Assessment identified three distinct groups of victims:
- those at risk of serious harm (such as domestic abuse, victims of sexual violence, hate crime and honour-based violence) and people bereaved by murder, manslaughter or as a result of a road traffic collision;
 - groups which include a number of cases which could leave the victim at risk of serious harm (such as anti-social behaviour, young victims, vulnerable elderly victims and those with mental health problems) and
 - those living in deprived areas. Three times more victims come from deprived areas than not deprived.

7.4 Actions

- Robust interagency plan put in place to implement the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime to ensure victims are given appropriate access to support.
- Emerging technology is used to ensure victims are automatically kept up to date and as much as possible victims themselves can easily access the information they require.
- Develop a common assessment tool (in consultation with all relevant partners) to determine victim need at regular intervals; this will highlight when early intervention is required to prevent the risk of them or others becoming seriously harmed escalating.
- Develop a more cohesive overarching, rather than agency specific, approach to measuring victim satisfaction.

8. Integrated support for victims who are at risk of serious harm or have substantial needs

- 8.1. Victims' needs are complex, dynamic and wide ranging and this is reflected by the breadth of support services available. Responses should be tailored to the individual rather than crime type.

- 8.2. 'Getting it right for Victims and Witnesses' reinforces the importance of the eight categories of need in which service providers should aim to help victims of crime achieve improvements in their life following the offence. These are: mental and physical health; shelter and accommodation; family, friends and children; education, skills and employments; drugs and alcohol; finance and benefits; outlook and attitudes; and social interaction.
- 8.3. Information from Victim Support (East of England) shows crime can have a profound impact on people. The needs of those who received additional face to face support was wide ranging with:
- 70 per cent of victims saying the crime affected their health and wellbeing
 - 78 per cent of victims saying the crime affected their confidence
 - 43 per cent of victims saying the crime affected their housing
 - 51 per cent of victims saying the crime affected their relationships and social life
 - 35 per cent of victims saying the crime affected their work and study
 - 53 per cent of victims saying the crime affected them financially
- 8.4. Currently additional support for victims is provided by a wide range of providers.

A snapshot of additional commissioned services for people at risk of serious harm or who have substantial needs

Commissioned provider	Number of victims supported
Victim Support	1,229 people requested support beyond an email 140 given face to face support
Bobby Scheme	307 (60-year-old plus) supported
Cambridgeshire Independent Domestic Violence Advocates	874 (54 men, 354 repeat victims)
Peterborough Independent Domestic Violence Advocates	805 (444 at risk of serious harm)
Cambridgeshire Independent Sexual Violence Advocates	173 (Of total support 76 acute, 97 historical)
Peterborough Independent Sexual Violence Advocates	310 (Victims of sexual violence)

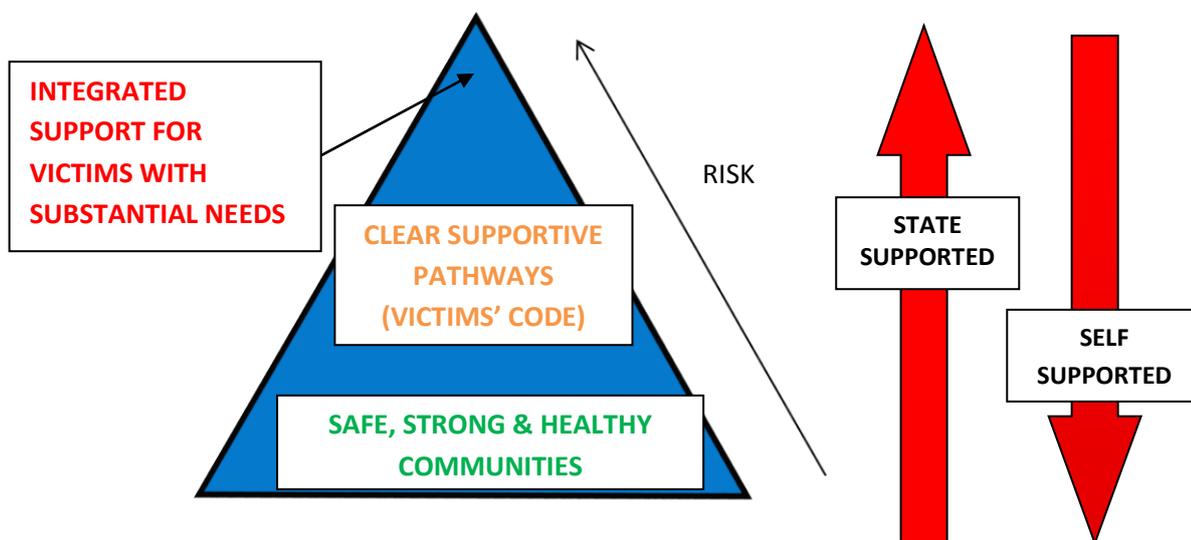
- 8.5. For some groups, such as those who experience domestic violence or sexual assault, support services are increasingly co-ordinated for example through the MARU. But this is not always the case. For all victims Cambridgeshire needs to learn from the successful Integrated Offender Management model (which works with offenders to in turn reduce the number of victims) to develop an Integrated Victim Management Model.
- 8.6. This model should aim to have:
- choices for victims – they need to have as much control over their own journey through the criminal justice system as possible and decide how they are to be contacted;

- clear referral pathways, including those for specialist support services and advocacy, to access other mainstream services if these are required, e.g. drug and alcohol services, housing support, mental health;
- true joined up working and effective handovers between services as the individual needs of the victim change;
- equitable support regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity;
- outcome-based performance measures to show how the support has enabled victims to cope and recover; and
- Resources to support, and assess the needs of, victims who choose not to report the crime to the police but still need additional help.

8.7 Actions

- An inter-agency commissioning strategy is put in place which takes forward this vision. This must take into account the statutory obligations within The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime and the EU Directive on the Minimum Standards, Rights, Support and Protection of Victims of Crime (specifically Articles 8 and 9 – See Annex 2).
- Explore the development of an Integrated Victim Management Model.
- Creation of a clear one-page pledge for victims of crime in Cambridgeshire based on this vision.

9. Summary – The strategy for supporting people who are victims of crime in Cambridgeshire



Annex 1- Membership of the CCJB Victim and Witness sub group

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

Cambridgeshire Constabulary

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Probation Trust

Cambridgeshire County Council
Peterborough City Council
HM Courts Service
Service Providers: Victim Support, Road Victims Trust, Neighbourhood Watch

This strategy recognises that members of the CCJB Victim and Witnesses sub group may not have direct influence over the agencies responsible for delivering the minimal standards of support laid down in the Code of Conduct for Victims of Crime. However those members representing 'responsible authorities', as defined by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, can act as 'advocates for victims' and hold other agencies to account for their actions to support them, within the confines of Community Safety Partnerships.

Annex 2

General support services

Article 8 also says that Member States should take measures to establish specialist support services in addition to, or as part of, the more general victim support services which are offered. Services should be available to victims in accordance with their specific needs and to family members in accordance with their specific needs and the degree of harm suffered as a result of the offence committed against the victim. As with general support services, access to specialist support should not depend on whether the crime has been reported.

Article 9 describes what support services must, as a minimum, be provided and these are set out in a list. The list includes:

- information, advice and support relevant to the rights of victims including how to access national compensation schemes and the victim's role in relation to the trial;
- emotional and, where available, psychological support;
- advice on financial and practical matters including, unless available elsewhere, advice relating to the risk and prevention of re-victimisation, intimidation and retaliation.

Article 9 also provides that victim support services should pay particular attention to the needs of victims who have suffered considerable harm from a serious offence.

Specialist support services

Article 8 also says that Member States should take measures to establish specialist support services in addition to, or as part of, the more general victim support services which are offered. Services should be available to victims in accordance with their specific needs and to family members in accordance with their specific needs and the degree of harm suffered as a result of the offence committed against the victim. As with general support services, access to specialist support should not depend on whether the crime has been reported.

Article 9 sets out what specialist support services should consist of as a minimum. These include:

- shelters or other interim accommodation for victims at risk of repeat victimisation, intimidation or retaliation;
- targeted support, including trauma support and counselling, for victims with specific needs such as victims of sexual or gender-based violence and victims of violence in close relationship.

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