

Avon and Somerset Victim Services Commissioning Plan (For Services Commencing April 2025)

15 March 2024

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Tender Reference: 85275-951 ASC OPCC Victim Services



Introduction and context

This document sets out the Avon and Somerset Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner's (OPCC's) Commissioning Plan for victim services in Avon and Somerset from April 2025.

It has been published following an engagement period on the OPCC's initial [Commissioning Intentions](#). For brevity, background context from that document has not been repeated here.

This document is informed by and published alongside:

- **Annex A** – Needs Assessment and Victim Voice Report Executive Summary (pp.15-24)
- **Annex B** - OPCC response to Stakeholder Survey and Event feedback (pp.25-41)
- **Annex C** – Equality Impact Assessment (pp.42-63)

This Commissioning Plan has been published alongside tender documentation. The below is offered as a guide on the intended audience/use of each document:

Document	Audience
Commissioning Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholders• Potential tenderers
Commissioning Plan Annexes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Those who took part in the Engagement• Potential tenderers
Invitation To Tender Documents inc. Specifications (via Bluelight Portal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potential tenderers

Overview of Intentions

The OPCC's Commissioning Intentions and Strategy for Victim Services was published in November 2023. It provided the national and local context for the OPCC's commissioning as well as the services currently in place.

The document then gave detail on the budget and financial planning assumptions alongside headline data and stakeholder feedback from the Victim Needs Assessment (VNA). The proposed strategy set out our vision, impact, outputs, outcomes, planning assumptions, risks and principles.

As a result of this approach we proposed the following as our commissioning intentions:

Commissioning Intentions (November 2023)	Budget p.a.
<i>Modern Slavery contribution (procurement route tbc)</i>	£30,000
Children and Young People Support Service Lot - contract	£250,000
Adult Support Service Lot - contract	£738,000
ISVA Service Lot - contract	£990,000
TOTAL	£2,008,000

The document then put forward a series of questions to form the basis of our engagement with stakeholders and victims.

Engagement Process and Feedback

The formal engagement period for the recommissioning process ran from 16 November 2023 through to 31 January 2024. The OPCC sought feedback from a range of stakeholders before finalising this Commissioning Plan, including the specific questions outlined in that document.

Engagement Period
Starts

Stakeholder
Event - Bristol

Stakeholder
Event - Taunton

Stakeholder
Event - Online

Engagement Period
Ends

You Said, We Did

The Engagement period activities were designed as follows:

1. Tonic Victim Voice survey and Focus Groups –designed to gain meaningful feedback from victims.
2. Stakeholder Online Survey – high level based on the structure of the Commissioning Intentions document and Key Questions
3. In-person events for potential providers (North, South, Online) – based on the Key Questions
4. Agenda items at partnership meetings already being attended or attending as invited over the period.

Audience

✓ Victims

As part of the recommissioning process, the OPCC asked **TONIC** to conduct a Victims' Voice Project and Victims' Needs Assessment. To achieve this, **TONIC engaged and consulted 674 victims of crime and professionals from Avon and Somerset**, considering findings from the following exercises:

- **A literature review** of existing research to provide context for the current landscape of crime and victim support on a local and national level, as well as a summary of victims' needs and best practice in support.
- **Quantitative data analysis** of the demographic characteristics of the population in Avon and Somerset, crime trends in Avon and Somerset, and current commissioned services' activity and outcomes.
- **Qualitative semi-structured interviews and focus groups with 136 individuals**, including 37 victims, 8 participants on behalf of a victim, and 90 professionals.
- **Surveys that reached 461 individuals**, including 157 victims, 38 respondents on behalf of a victim, and 266 professionals.
- **Feedback forms from 77 victims** of rape and other sexual offences.
- **Site visits and ethnographic observations** of local victim support services.

The Victims' Needs Assessment was undertaken first to inform the OPCC's draft commissioning intentions, which was shortly followed by the Victims' Voice Project. These remained two separate projects, allowing victims to have their say without influence from the findings of the Needs Assessment.

- Monday 4 December 2023, The Station, Bristol
- Tuesday 16 January 2024, The Albermarle Centre, Taunton
- Thursday 25 January 2024, online via Microsoft Teams

The programme of events was designed to enable participation across both the north and south of the area, on different dates as well as offering an online option to increase participation. All three saw good attendance demonstrating the success of the approach. Both in-person events were hosted at community venues selected for their good transport links.

Across the three events:

- 27 agencies were represented with over 50 attendees across front line and management roles
- Largely voluntary sector agencies
- Organisations had a range of specialist expertise in different client groups / crime types
- A mix of current and other providers

At each event the OPCC gave the same overview of the Commissioning Intentions, time for questions and answers then facilitated round table discussions based on the Key Questions in the Intentions document. Feedback was noted by participants themselves at the round tables with the OPCC also making note of any significant feedback contained in questions during the Q&A session. Time was built into the agenda to allow for networking (and for the online event, email addresses were shared with consent in lieu of this).

Overall feedback from events - aside from a small number of specific requests for changes to the budget allocations - demonstrated support for the Commissioning Intentions with most of the feedback being requests for clarification on some specific details. On some points stakeholders had conflicting views. Changes made in response are listed below. Feedback from these events and the OPCC response has been incorporated into the stakeholder feedback at **Annex B**.

✓ **Stakeholders**

Survey

To enable broad participation, a survey was hosted online through Microsoft Forms to facilitate further stakeholder input. This was circulated widely to stakeholders at regular intervals which included interest groups, potential providers and current providers with encouragement to further share within their networks. Additionally, the link was shared by the OPCC Communications Team through social media outlets to broaden outreach. 13 responses were received from different stakeholders and included both incumbent providers along with interested parties. While this number is low we might be able to put this down to the high level of stakeholder engagement through the development of the VNA and attendance at the events.

This survey sought feedback on each section of the Commissioning Intentions document as well as opportunities to reply to the specific questions posed within that document. Responses were received from a range of sectors and agencies across Avon and Somerset including interested parties, current providers and VCSE services.

Overall the survey feedback - aside from a small number of specific requests for changes to the budget allocations - demonstrated support for the Commissioning Intentions with most of the feedback being requests for clarification on some specific details. On some points stakeholders had conflicting views. Changes made in response are listed below. Feedback from the survey and the OPCC response has been incorporated into the stakeholder feedback at **Annex B**.

Briefing stakeholders

Throughout the duration of the engagement period, the OPCC took opportunity to brief partners and stakeholders on its intentions, and to invite feedback via the survey or engagement events through the attendance at boards and meetings occurring during this time. This included but was not limited to the Reducing Reoffending Board, Police and Crime Panel, Sexual Assault and Abuse Strategy Board, Southwest Health and Justice Board, the Avon and Somerset Domestic Abuse Strategy Group, Bristol Domestic and Sexual Abuse Services Collaborative Commissioning Board, meetings with fellow service commissioners as well other business as usual engagements.

Communications and PR

The engagement period was promoted via the following means:

1. OPCC website dedicated page
2. OPCC press release
3. OPCC social media
4. Stakeholder emails to database of contacts held by the OPCC including providers, the Constabulary, commissioners and equalities groups.

VCSE Sector-specific support

As part of the recommissioning process the OPCC has sought to build the capacity and capability of the VCSE sector through the following initiatives:

- ✓ VCSE Sector representation on the Recommissioning Governance Board – [VOSCUR](#)
- ✓ Collaboration funds available for tenderers – please contact the OPCC if you would like to access this resource.
- ✓ Timetabled engagement and tender windows to allow for maximum participation.
- ✓ Planned engagement events to allow for networking, offering a range of dates and venues.

Key decisions/changes following our Engagement

In response to suggestions made and feedback provided throughout the engagement period and the Equality Impact Assessment, the OPCC has made the following headline decisions:

1. **No changes have been made to the proposed overall model.** There were a small number of conflicting views on the merits of a combined adult and CYP Service but this did not outweigh the levels of support for separate services and evidence noted in the VNA. Most notably victims supported separate, dedicated services (See Annex A). We did not consider there to be enough evidence that any additional standalone services would provide good value for money for the residents of Avon and Somerset.
2. **An uplift to the base budget** has been secured as set out below in response to feedback on increasing costs and provision made for an annual review of services in acknowledgement of the impact of inflation on service deliverables.
3. **Flexibility has been added to the Children and Young Victims Support Service Specification** as a result of feedback to allow for consideration of the best service to support the needs of 18-24 year olds (rather than the limited criteria in the current model).
4. **Given the specialist nature and size of the budget allocated for modern slavery, a separate process will be run to allocate funding later in 2024.**
5. **The team has explored co-commissioning opportunities** over the engagement period and has agreed with Bristol City Council that they will join as co-commissioners for the ISVA Service (along with NHSE) investing £50,103 p.a. to fund specialist Street Sex Worker Independent Domestic and Sexual Violence Advisor (IDSVAs) provision in Bristol as part of the ISVA Lot under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) confirmed for two years in the first instance, subject to break clauses.
6. **Feedback from victims has informed specifications.** More detailed feedback is appended to Specifications for tenderers to consider as they design their service models.
7. **We took account of views shared** to inform the design of the procurement process such as provisions to enable collaboration, Panel membership, provision of necessary advice and a mobilisation budgets.
8. **A significant amount of data has been published** as part of the tender documentation to inform tenderer's development of proposals in response to requests to ensure that service design is evidence-based.
9. **We have taken on board feedback relating to specific pathways and the role of other commissioners in specifications.**
10. **A number of other queries have been clarified – see Annex B.**

Budget

The OPCC's budget for victim services is made up of a grant from the Ministry of Justice for this purpose as well as additional local funds to enhance the local offer. It should be noted that this budget has been protected by the PCC and sees no reduction compared to the initial round of commissioning despite budgetary pressures.

Most significantly, a 5% increase to the **core reoccurring budget** has been secured since the publication of the Commissioning Intentions taking into account inflationary pressures raised by the sector. As such the budget available sees a net increase of **£93,624.02 p.a.**¹

As above, Bristol City Council has joined as Co-Commissioner of the ISVA Service to the sum of **£50,103 p.a.**

This is in addition to the reallocation of £45k p.a. from prevention funds and unlocated £4446 as outlined in the Commissioning Intentions, making the **overall increase compared to the budget for services that run to March 2025 £193,173 p.a.** (with BCC funding length caveats).

Total PCC Funding p.a.	<i>OPCC budget</i>	£245,551.96
	<i>OPCC budget uplift</i>	£93,624.02
Total partner funding p.a.	<i>NHSE contribution to ISVAs</i> [To be uplifted annually in line with NHS Business Rules]	£128,139
	<i>Bristol City Council – SSW IDSVAs</i> [secured for the first two years initially under a MOU with the OPCC]	£50,103
MOJ funding in scope p.a.	<i>Formula grant</i>	£1,069,841.02
Total MOJ core uplift 23/24	<i>All Crime services</i>	£68,967
Total MOJ ISVA uplift 23/24	<i>ISVA only</i>	£495,978
TOTAL ANNUAL INCOME inc. MOJ UPLIFT		£2,152,204
TOTAL ANNUAL INCOME excl. MOJ UPLIFT		£1,587,259

¹ The 5% has been applied **only to core reoccurring costs** and excludes unconfirmed MOJ core uplift (£68k) which currently runs to March 2024, and re-allocated funds as described above (£49,446).

Commissioning Plan

Our vision is that all victims of crime and ASB in Avon and Somerset will have access to a broad range of support services locally to help them cope with, and as far as possible recover from the effects of crime or ASB. OPCC resources will be used to commission efficient and effective support services that meet the needs of victims in Avon and Somerset and provide a coordinated victim experience.

Service(s) will offer a range of interventions delivered by a suitably broad range of provision/organisations/staff who can efficiently and effectively meet the diverse needs of victims of across Avon and Somerset. This diversity may be in the form of protected characteristic, vulnerability, geography or crime type. As a matter of principle the service will actively seek feedback and input from its service users and in turn benefit from being a truly co-produced service. Where possible, providers both within this contract and beyond will seek to do things once rather than many times to enable efficient and effective use of resources while at all times having the experience of the service user at the heart of the design of any processes or functions.

The OPCC will therefore procure the following services **if all MOJ uplifts² are secured** at the current levels:

Lot/budget p.a.	Draft Intentions	Uplift ³	Final Plan
Children and Young Victims of Crime and ASB Support Service CONTRACT	£250,000	+£11,715.64	£261,716
Adult Victims of Crime and ASB Support Service CONTRACT	£738,000	+£34,584.56	£772,585
All Age Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) Service CONTRACT	£990,000	+£46,393.92 +£50,103 BCC	£1,086,497
Modern Slavery Pathways contribution [APPROACH TBC]	£30,000	+£1,405.88	£31,406
TOTAL	£2,008,000	+£94,100	£2,152,204

Given the way that the OPCC receives its funding with over 80% of the above income coming from the Ministry of Justice at a flat rate, we are unable to build increments into the budget over the life of the contract. However, provision has been made within Specifications to enable an annual service review including consideration of costs as a reflection of the impact of increasing costs. The OPCC will seek to have realistic and collaborative discussions with providers about service costs and provision over the life of the contract.

Moreover, to allow for the addition of any further investment from co-commissioners, new funding from government or other such scenario, the maximum potential threshold for the contract has been set at 50% to give the OPCC the flexibility to increase investment within the confines of specifications.

² For further detail on the make up of the uplifts see our Commissioning Intentions <https://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/news/2023/11/victim-services-recommissioning/>

³ Included in service contracts at relative rate to current contract costs as amendments from October 2023.

Children and Young Victims of Crime and ASB Service - Budget Rationale

- The average number of users who accessed the Young Victims' Service between 2019-23 (892) **more than doubled** compared with the average number between 2015-19 (393).
- The **increased vulnerability amongst children and young people** and the notion of children becoming involved in crime at a younger age was raised by stakeholders in the VNA as a potential area that will increase in the future.
- An increase to this budget makes the service **more resilient** and able to deliver the aspirations within the Commissioning Plan alongside the other two larger services.
- We have also listened to feedback received during the engagement period and given this service **greater flex to meet the needs of victims up to the age of 24** where this is in the best interest of the victim (with protocols for this to be agreed with the Adult Service).⁴
- There is a clear appetite to **maximise the preventative potential** of providing support to children and young people through a comprehensive support service offer (with the focus remaining on cope and recover).
- Feedback was provided on the demand for support linked to Child Criminal and Child Sexual Exploitation (CCE/CSE) and that the budget was not adequate given increases in need linked to these crimes. However, **the OPCC already invests £238,220 p.a. in specialist CCE/CSE services** through services co-commissioned (and match-funded) with the five local authorities. Therefore, this is out of scope but we of course consider it important that the network of various services work together to ensure appropriate support for children and young people.
- In Avon and Somerset, **individuals aged 0-17 represent 20% of the entire population, while those aged 0-24 constitute 29%**. The CYP service budget makes up around 25% of our all crime/ASB allocation aligning with the demographic composition of the area.

Adult Victims of Crime and ASB Support Service - Budget Rationale

- Stakeholders in the VNA **questioned whether there is a need for separate adult advocacy and general adult victim recovery services**. It was implied that this sometimes leads to duplication of provision, and some participants felt this offer could be combined rather than funded separately.
- There was a sense that a change to the model would streamline the landscape of support available to adult victims, **improve their experience of accessing services** and it may reasonably be assumed that this would create efficiencies e.g. undertaking some functions once rather than many times.
- **OPCC commissioned services cannot make the crime or ASB stop**, that is the role of other statutory services. As such, we may reasonably expect that existing capacity focused on work that is outside of our scope can be reduced. ASB can be complex, longstanding and multifaceted, often requiring a number of tools, approaches and interventions to solve. Contrary to existing delivery, the adults service **will not** work to solve enduring ASB but will work to support the victim in coping and recovering from its impacts, as well as advocating the victims needs amongst those working to solve the ASB. This approach will protect service capacity and enable for greater direct support where it is needed.
- Moreover, while we believe that victims of ASB should receive support to meet their needs, **support for victims of crime is the focus of the MOJ's investment**. To allow for an expanded scope, as indicated in the budget above the OPCC allocates an additional £245,550 p.a. (excluding uplift) to complement this across all-crime/ASB provision. The response needs to take into account the relative resources available for this purpose.

⁴ The current specification allows this for a limited number of additional needs only.

- The total number of ‘new’ referrals for Restorative Justice in 2022/23 was 61. It was suggested in some of the VNA interviews that Restorative Justice could potentially be delivered within the adult service. This is already how other OPCC regions such as Warwickshire, Northumbria, and Nottinghamshire have commissioned Restorative Justice. Professionals considered this an opportunity to “*take Restorative Justice mainstream*” and ensure it is offered more consistently and universally. £179k p.a. is currently spent on this stand-alone service so it might be reasonably assumed that **there is an opportunity to deliver this function more efficiently as part of a combined Adult service.**⁵
- The allocation of 75% of resources to adult services for all crime and anti-social behaviour support **reflects the demographic composition of Avon and Somerset**, where adults aged 18 and over constitute 80% of the total population. This allocation reflects the need to prioritise resources where they are most needed, addressing the predominant challenges faced by the adult population in the region.
- We believe that there will be capacity released as a result of a more efficient and effective overall model that can go towards serving any required collaborative functions.

ISVA Service Budget Rationale

- The number of victims referred to the ISVA Service over the last five-year reporting period **increased by 53%** from an average of 1288 between 2018-20 to an average of 1977 between 2020-23.
- Between 2021-23 Avon and Somerset Constabulary recorded **29% more RASSO incidents** than the years 2016-21, which is likely due to the impact from **Operation Soteria/Bluestone**, a trend we may reasonably anticipate to continue.⁶
- The VNA notes the **increased prevalence of sexual offences impacting children and young people** in Avon and Somerset, with approximately 33% of RASSO victims being aged 10-19. ISVA service data corroborates this trend showing a marked increase in referrals from victims ages 13-24 years old in recent years with support for this group making up 47.2% of ISVA caseloads compared with 38.8% in previous years. As such, it was noted in the VNA that ISVA service capacity should be increased to reflect demand and where possible provide **additional support to CYP victims**. Alongside this, there is a need to develop more effective joint working protocols and referral pathways between the children and young victims’ service provider and the ISVA provider to ensure a robust referral and support offer is in place.
- Bristol City Council have decided to join the OPCC as co-commissioners of this service **investing £50k p.a.** specifically for Street Sex Work Independent Domestic and Sexual Violence Advisor (IDSVAs) provision in Bristol.
- It should be noted that the MOJ ISVA Uplift makes up over 50% of the proposed service budget meaning that there is a **degree of risk**.

Modern Slavery Budget Rationale

- Over the life of this grant, there has been an **expansion in support services for victims engaged in the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) process, leading to a diminished necessity for local support as initially outlined in the OPCC grant**. There is therefore a reduction in the support required under this grant to meet its original aims is proposed.
- This shift is attributable to modifications in the nationwide Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC), which sees extended support to a larger cohort of confirmed victims of

⁵ The specification includes provision for RJ for under 18s where there is not already a service (such as that provided by some Youth Offending Teams)

⁶ For data, please see: <https://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/PCC-Performance-Report-Q1-2023-24.pdf>

trafficking, enabling them to access sustained assistance following the attainment of a Positive Conclusive Grounds decision at the conclusion of the NRM process.

- The reduction will still enable the provider to **continue to provide support for vulnerable victims who do not meet the required Home Office thresholds** for support pre and post NRM.
- The funding reduction will not impact capacity to also continuing to provide specialist direct support to Avon and Somerset Police to assist with direct police operations and welfare visits.
- There was no feedback during the engagement to provide a counter proposal to this change.
- There will be a separate process for the allocation of these funds later in 2024.

Commissioning Principles

The following principles will underpin the Services we will commission:

Support is offered by need not offence type - As part of the initial commissioning of victim services, the PCC took the decision to allocate additional resources to ensure parity of support for victims of crime and ASB by focusing on need. This means this service is commissioned according to need not crime type and as such includes support for victims of ASB where need or intersectional needs are identified (this may be because they are priority victims under VCOP for example). Moreover, this should lead to more accurate recording of the primary crime/ASB type by providers to be able to ensure the support is appropriate and resources are being spent in an efficient and effective way as in many instances what is recorded as ASB may include criminality.

Collaboration will improve efficiency and effectiveness of OPCC investment - Providers of both individual services and beyond should work closely together both operationally and strategically to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the OPCC's investment which will in turn lead to an improved experience for victims who are able to access a diverse range of interventions to meet their needs.

Where specialist resources and/or statutory services are already in place, this should be the first port of call – we do not want to duplicate important existing specialist resources. While some needs may technically be in scope for this service we would expect there to be due consideration of alternative specialist support already in existence. We support continued investment from fellow commissioners into the victim support sector. If it is identified that another service is better able to meet the Service User's needs then they should be referred/signposted to that service. Where a victim has additional support needs that can be met elsewhere the Service should ensure appropriate liaison with other specialist services to determine the most appropriate lead agency. This may include additional requirements related to the crime type, or protected characteristics for example.

Longer contracts will require greater flexibility from providers - In exchange for longer contracts often called for to enable stability, we will require flexibility from providers in terms of their delivery models to ensure that services remain futureproof to meet new/emerging demands.

OPCC services are there to provide support – service models will safeguard investment into the support sector to maximise provision of support to victims and not fill gaps left by others or perform activities outside of this scope. Support services are not responsible for stopping the crime or ASB.

The Service will be fully independent of statutory partners such as the Police in the delivery of its Service to its Service Users. It is important that victims feel confident in the confidentiality and impartiality offered by the Service. Nevertheless, at strategic and crucially, at operational levels, providers should develop and maintain effective working relationships with a range of local partners, to ensure the best provision of support services are available for their Service Users.

The OPCC and Services shall have a flexible and collaborative working relationship working together to best meet the needs of victims in Avon and Somerset. This will be based on a relationship where respective expertise is utilised resulting in service development and continuous improvement. The OPCC encourages innovation and will work with the successful organisation(s) throughout the life of the contract to develop and refine the Service.

The Service will utilise co-production methods and victim involvement to shape objectives and ensure services meet their needs. This specification has been developed following feedback gathered by TONIC on behalf of the OPCC and is provided to in turn inform tender responses. Beyond this, providers will ensure they have their own co-production information sources to inform ongoing service development by providing safe opportunities for the victim’s voice to be heard.

The Service should operate across the entire Avon and Somerset footprint and proactively seek to ensure equitable access to support. This includes engaging with groups or communities that may not be accessing services and working continuously to identify and address barriers which prevent victims from using services. Collaboration, delivery and shared learning with ‘by and for’ services will improve the reach of the Service.

Procurement

The procurement for the three Contracts will be run by South West Police Procurement Services (SWPPS) using an ‘Open Tender Procedure’ under the Light Touch Regime in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations (PCR) 2015.

Children and Young Victims of Crime and ASB Support Service
Adult Victims of Crime and ASB Support Service
All Age Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) Service

A separate process will be run for the modern slavery funding later in 2024.

The procurement will be managed using the Bluelight eTendering Portal. Providers can register as a Supplier on Bluelight via the following link: <https://bluelight.eu-supply.com/>, then searching under tender reference: 85275-951 ASC OPCC Victim Services.

Providers will have approximately ten weeks to draft their tender submissions from the opening of the tender on the **15 March 2024** before submitting final bids through the Bluelight portal.

All bid responses will have their responses to Statement of Requirement Questions evaluated and will have their Weighted Quality Scores for each aspect of the process Totalled, and this figure will then be used in the “Cost Per Quality Point” calculation.

Social value will be included in the Quality criteria with bidders being asked to express the social value they propose to offer during the lifetime of the contracts.

The evaluation will be undertaken by a mixed panel of evaluators with tender submissions evaluated in accordance with published marking guidelines and weighting criteria.

The Contracts will be 5+2 years with break clauses.

Collaboration funds are available for tenderers – please contact the OPCC if you would like to access this resource.

Timetable

Activity	Timeframe (may be subject to change)
Publish Requirement	15th March 2024
Clarification Period for tenderers	15 th March – 5 th April 2024
Clarification Responses due from OPCC	By 19 th April 2024
Return date for bids	20th May 2024
Evaluate Responses	June 2024
Award Contract	July 2024
Contract Mobilisation begins	By September 2024
Contract start date	1 st April 2025

TONIC



**AVON &
SOMERSET**
POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER

Annex A – Victim Voice Report

Avon and Somerset Victims' Needs Assessment and Victims' Voice Project

Executive Summary

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Annex A – Needs Assessment and Victim Voice Report Executive Summary

Introduction

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) suggests that approximately 1 in 6 people will experience a crime each year. For the year ending March 2023, the CSEW estimated 8.7 million offences involving victims over the age of 16 years. In this period, there was a total of 6.7 million crimes recorded by the Police in England and Wales. Research indicates that up to 60% of crimes go unreported by victims or are not recorded by the Police. The likelihood of victimisation varies by crime type, with fraud having the highest probability, followed by vehicle-related theft and criminal damage.

The far-reaching impact of crime on victims is well documented, with physical and/or emotional trauma, mental health implications, and erosion to trust all having the potential to negatively affect people's daily lives and lead to challenges with housing, employment, finances, and relationships.

The Victims' Code of Practice forms part of a wider government strategy that aims to place the victim at the centre of the Criminal Justice System (CJS). This Code sets out that victims of crime should be treated: *"in a respectful, sensitive, tailored, and professional manner without discrimination of any kind. They should receive appropriate support to help them, as far as possible, to cope and recover and be protected from re-victimisation"*.

Police and Crime Commissioners are responsible for commissioning local victim support services, that should be: *"dedicated emotional and practical support for victims of crime to help them cope, and as far as possible, recover from the effects of crime"*.

Since April 2015, the Avon and Somerset Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) has commissioned a set of services to offer enhanced help and support to local victims of crime and antisocial behaviour. The following services are in place until March 2025:

- Emotional Support Service for Victims of Crime and Antisocial Behaviour: provided by Victim Support
- Adult Advocacy Service: provided by VOCAS
- Children and Young People Support Service: provided by the Young Victims' Service
- Restorative Justice Service: provided by Resolve West
- Independent Sexual Violence Advocate service: provided by SafeLink
- Modern Slavery Support Service: provided by Unseen UK.

Methodology

As part of the recommissioning process, the OPCC asked [TONIC](#) to conduct a Victims' Voice Project and Victims' Needs Assessment. To achieve this, **TONIC engaged and consulted 674 victims of crime and professionals from Avon and Somerset**, considering findings from the following exercises:

- **A literature review** of existing research to provide context for the current landscape of crime and victim support on a local and national level, as well as a summary of victims' needs and best practice in support.
- **Quantitative data analysis** of the demographic characteristics of the population in Avon and Somerset, crime trends in Avon and Somerset, and current commissioned services' activity and outcomes.

which shows high levels of contract compliance, and that the majority of victims report improvements in their ability to cope and recover, health and wellbeing, feeling of safety, feeling informed and empowered to act, and in many cases, their experience of the CJS.

Both victims and professionals were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with each part of the victims' journey through the OPCC commissioned services. The results from this were overwhelmingly positive:

- 74% of victims said they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the referral process and 71% of professionals rated the referral process as 'good' or 'very good'.
- 76% of victims and 75% of professionals were pleased with the accessibility of OPCC commissioned services.
- Professionals were positive 80% of the time for their ability to support victims to 'cope and recover'.
- 75% of professionals rated OPCC commissioned services favourably for their joint working.
- The overall satisfaction with support was positive for 76% of victim respondents, and quality of support was rated as 'good' or 'very good' by 85% of professionals.
- The vast majority of victim respondents (85%) and almost all professional respondents (98%) said they would recommend the OPCC commissioned services to victims in need of support.

Areas for Improvement

The Police and Criminal Justice System: Victims expressed frustration and disappointment with both the Police and the wider CJS. Victims reported poor or, in some cases, a complete lack of communication, which they found distressing. There is a need to improve the victims' experience with these agencies to better support them through the court process and to enhance access to support services.

Increase promotion and awareness raising of victims' services: Many victims stated they had very little awareness of the support services available to them in Avon and Somerset and had spent a significant amount of time trying to find help. Victims highlighted a lack of promotion and awareness of support services within the community and suggested that it can be unclear how to access support when a person does not want to report the crime to the Police. The suggestion of having a dedicated website to advertise all victim support services across Avon and Somerset was received well by both victims and professionals. This would make it easier for victims to have access to advice, self-help resources, and contact information for all support services. There were many suggestions from victims relating to accessibility, content, and design to ensure the information remains relevant to all without being overwhelming.

*"When it first kicked off, I spent hours, hours, and hours on the laptop trying to find help."
[Interview]*

Barriers to access and engagement: Victims identified several barriers to accessing or engaging with support services. Victims may not realise they have been a victim of crime, may not be ready for support, may not be aware of the services available to them, or may fear judgement or not being believed. Waiting lists were also identified as off-putting, as were practical obstacles like being in employment, requiring childcare, or poor travel connections from rural parts of the area.

Promoting inclusivity: Barriers were described as more pronounced for individuals with certain protected characteristics – particularly those from minoritised ethnic backgrounds or identifying as

part of the LGBTQ+ community. Victims suggested that a lack of trust in the Police and CJS can prevent minoritised communities reporting crime or seeking support. In order to promote inclusivity amongst communities with protected characteristics, participants called for more assertive outreach work, collaboration with 'by and for' organisations, use of non-traditional methods of communication, and increased co-production to ensure needs are being met accordingly. In addition, victims suggested that building relationships with the heads of communities would be an effective way to build trust and raise awareness of support services.

Enhance communication and collaborative working: Victims do not want to have to repeatedly re-tell their story. As such, there needs to be an improvement in communication between support services, the police, and other statutory agencies, to ensure victims receive the right level of support along with timely investigation/case updates whilst journeying through the CJS. Some victims stated that without the right level of engagement with, and between, professionals, they would most likely drop out of the CJS process. To achieve this, there needs to be more focus on partnership working between OPCC commissioned services, with less reliance on the OPCC bringing organisations together. Victims reinforced the need for collaborative working so that service providers have knowledge of the support landscape to appropriately signpost and refer. Victims believed that improved collaboration between services would prevent re-traumatisation.

Improve data collection and information sharing: During both projects it was highlighted that the OPCC commissioned services need to improve their data collection and consideration is needed around how they use this information to steer service improvement. Victims were very willing to provide this information during TONIC's fieldwork, particularly when it was explained clearly to them why this information was important. Further education is needed for service provider staff and volunteers on how integral this can be in relation to service success. Future providers may wish to explore the potential of employing a data analyst, whose responsibility it would be to drive more accurate data capture.

Restorative Justice: Victims had very little awareness of Restorative Justice or the local offer. The number of 'new' referrals for Restorative Justice in 2022/23 was 61. When the Police were asked about their experience in relation to the Restorative Justice service, many felt unable to provide comment due to the service being unknown to them or uncertainty in relation to the Restorative Justice process. Accordingly, many professionals believed that a standalone Restorative Justice service is no longer required. It was suggested that Restorative Justice could potentially be delivered within the adult service, as it is in other OPCC regions. Professionals considered this an opportunity to "*take Restorative Justice mainstream*" and ensure it is offered to all victims accessing the general victim recovery service.

Streamline the landscape of adult victim services: Professionals questioned whether there is a need for separate adult advocacy and general adult victim recovery services. Participants felt this offer could be combined rather than funded separately. This would reduce duplication and overcome the lack of awareness amongst victims of the adult advocacy offer, despite this being raised as a common need.

Current Gaps

Child-to-parent abuse: TONIC spoke to several victims of child-to-parent abuse who highlighted the need for improved specialist support, that is different to that received by victims of intimate partner abuse, with dedicated roles and a greater understanding of the challenges faced by parents in this position.

Non-recent rape and sexual abuse: Individuals who had experienced non-recent child sexual abuse felt that the police response and offer of support was significantly delayed and that they need the

same level of urgency as victims reporting an ongoing or recent crime. Their experience should be validated and explored due to concern that the perpetrator may still be harming others.

Non-domestic abuse related stalking: Many professionals felt that support specifically for non-domestic abuse related stalking is lacking across Avon and Somerset, and on a number of occasions it was suggested that stalking victims require the specialist support of an Independent Stalking Advocacy Caseworker (ISAC). Police recorded incidents of stalking and harassment in Avon and Somerset have increased significantly over the past 10 years, but it is unclear what proportion is non-domestic abuse related.

Hate crime: Whilst not necessarily a gap in provision (as specialist hate crime services support victims across Avon and Somerset through other funding), hate crime was highlighted as a gap in terms of the OPCC commissioned service model. Hate crime has remained consistent over the latest 4-year reporting period averaging 3,226 incidents: increasing in North Somerset, Somerset, and South Gloucestershire but decreasing in Bristol. Victims spoke highly of a local 'by and for' hate crime support service, that the OPCC funded services described working in partnership with and referring clients to. Rather than the OPCC moving towards a model of specialist crime-specific services, professionals felt it would be most appropriate to explore a partnership approach or sub-contracting arrangement within the future adult service that allowed dedicated hate crime support to be offered. This would be in line with the literature that indicates victims of hate crime prefer to be supported by local 'by and for' organisations.

Fraud: Many victims of fraud feel embarrassed and ashamed and may reach out for support, but not report the incident to the Police, or even discuss it with their friends or family. Although the data relating to fraud shows a decrease of approximately 13% from 2021/22 to 2022/23 it was reported by some commissioned services that fraud referrals are steadily rising. Due to the timescale, complexity, and the low charge rates in fraud investigations, it was suggested that a dedicated form of support would further help victims. So far, the feedback received from both victims and professionals in relation to the recently developed Fraud Caseworker role within the Adult Service, has been very positive. Participants said this should be incorporated, and expanded upon, in the future Adult Victim Support Service.

Antisocial behaviour: Many victims who had sought support for antisocial behaviour described having an unsatisfactory experience; they felt there was poor communication and often did not think they were being taken seriously. Professionals believed that the current support offered to victims of antisocial behaviour is inadequate and that due to the complex and ongoing nature of antisocial behaviour cases, a lengthier form of support is required. It was suggested that a tiered approach to support for victims of antisocial behaviour may enable services to better manage expectations, pool resources, and avoid duplication. This would provide greater clarity in relation to what each agency is able to provide and the action they can take on the victims' behalf.

Support for families: It is well documented that crime also has an impact on family members, friends, colleagues, and wider communities. Loved ones often find it difficult to cope with the aftermath of a crime, as they may worry about the victim's safety or feel vulnerable themselves. Victims, as well as professionals, called for more holistic family support for those affected by crime.

*"Support for the whole family, not just for me as the victim is important. We all need support."
[Interview]*

Mental health support: Many victims accessing support from the OPCC commissioned services required some form of mental health support – victims commonly described anxiety and depression as a result of the crime, and some disclosed historical suicidal feelings. Counselling was a need that

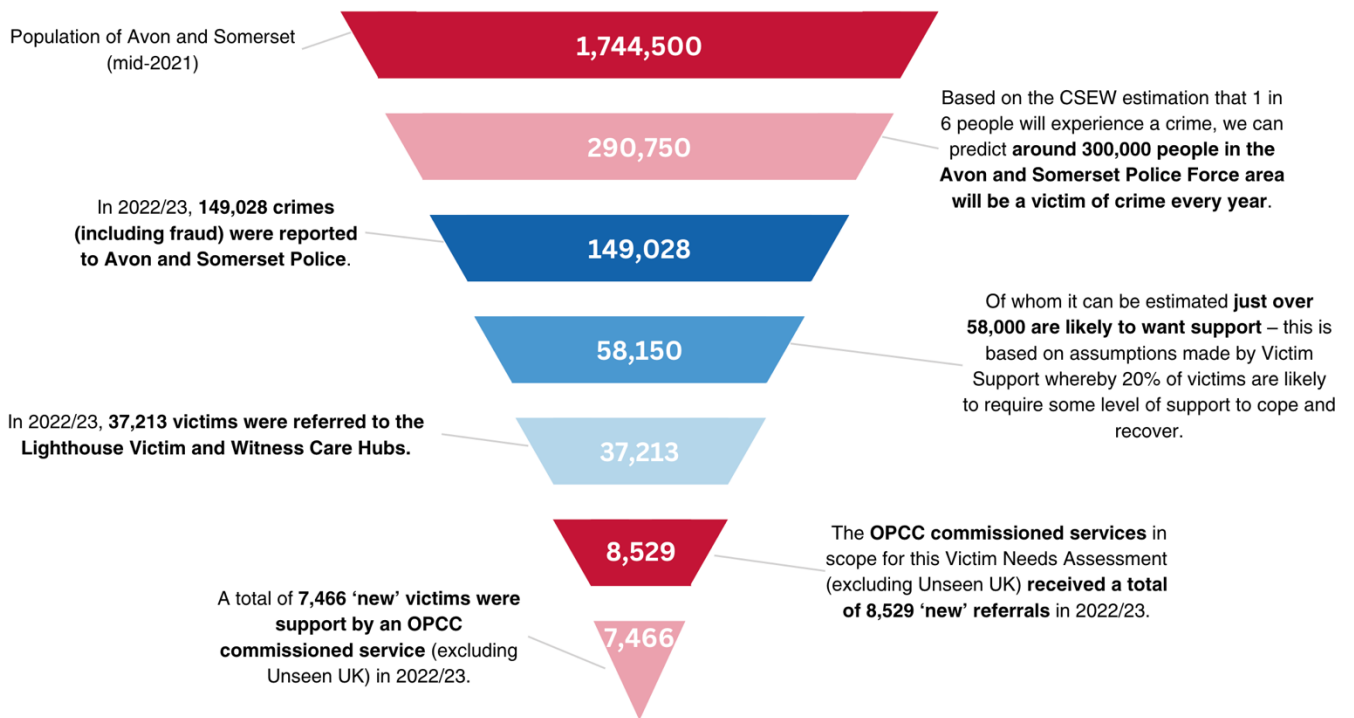
victims identified through both the interviews and survey but stated that the waiting times are lengthy. Whilst it is not the responsibility of the OPCC to fund counselling or mental health support, victim support services have identified this as a significant gap in their own provision as well as in the general landscape across Avon and Somerset. Some service providers feel that as a result, they are having to 'hold' service users until places become available, causing their caseloads to remain high.

"I felt frightened, anxious, suicidal." [Feedback Form]

TONIC also noted a **lack of co-production and co-design in service delivery**. Wherever possible, OPCC commissioned services should consult with service users from a variety of backgrounds and with a range of protected characteristics to hear the voice of the victim and facilitate co-design and co-production of service provision. In doing this, they will ensure the support offered to individuals and communities remains responsive, meets the need, and strives for continuous improvement. Services could benefit from sharing their individual evaluation data and victim feedback to showcase their support, as well as working collaboratively to enhance the overall victim service offer for those affected by crime in Avon and Somerset. Victims responded very positively to being given the opportunity to participate in the Victims' Voice Project and were very appreciative of having the space to provide feedback. TONIC gathered the contact details of over 50 victims who were willing to be contacted by the OPCC for further feedback and co-production work in the future. The majority of victims had a shared aim of wanting to improve services for other people who had been through similar experiences.

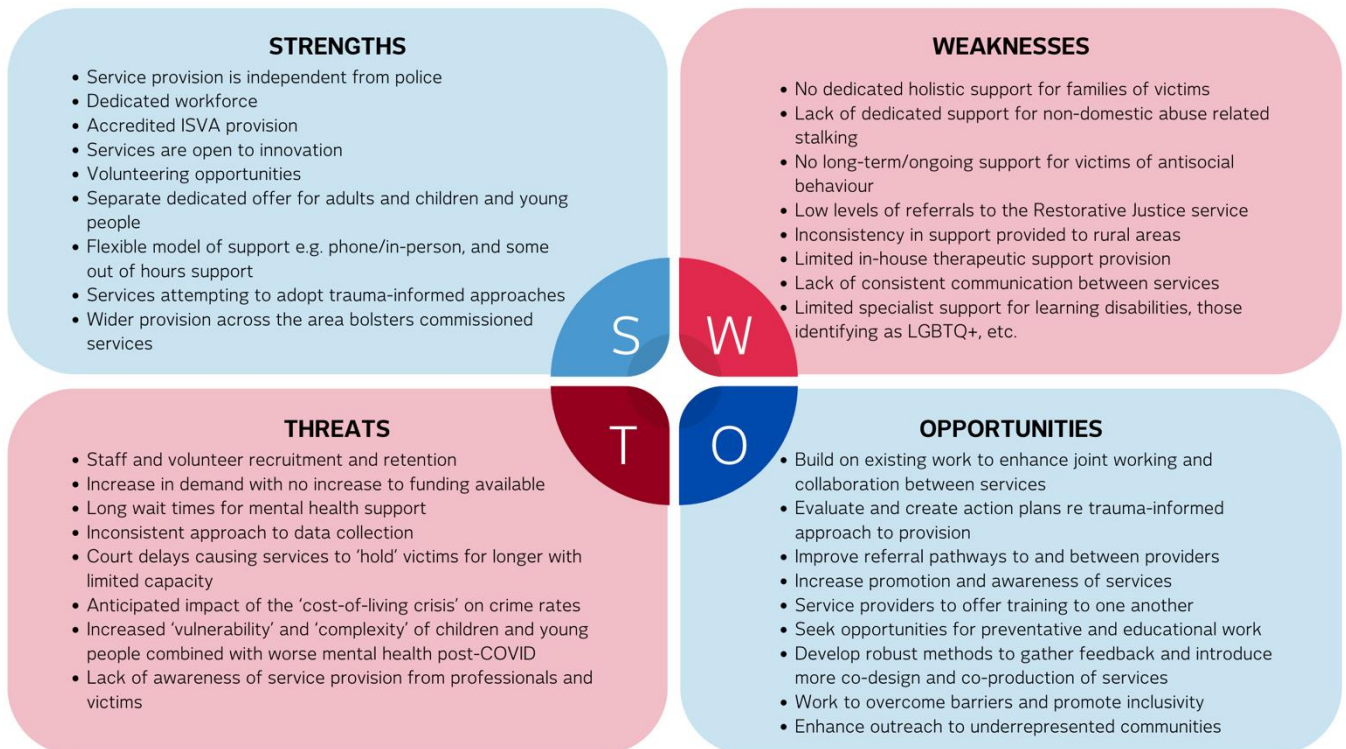
"It was an absolute privilege taking part. I think it's amazing that you are getting the feedback of survivors... I just want to help people who have gone through a similar thing to me." [Interview]

Increasing and unmet demand: Participants continuously described an increasing demand for OPCC commissioned services, and without extra funding, providers said they will struggle to effectively meet this need and be able to simultaneously undertake additional activities. This must be considered alongside the context of significant rises in court waiting times following on from the COVID-19 pandemic, and the 'cost-of-living crisis'. To explore this further, TONIC attempted to map the potential overall level of unmet demand in Avon and Somerset within the diagram below.



Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats (SWOT) Analysis

The following diagram provides a high-level summary of fieldwork findings from the Victims' Needs Assessment across the four key categories of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT).



The feedback received via both the Victims' Voice Project and Victims' Needs Assessment in relation to the current OPCC commissioned services was largely positive, with many participants commending the dedication of support staff. The projects did however highlight areas of duplication and uncertainty in relation to service provision, with a lack of general awareness of what support is available, amongst professionals and members of the public. The areas of improvement identified look to overcome this whilst also addressing gaps in provision, increasing inclusivity, communication, and collaboration, not only amongst the OPCC commissioned services, but across the wider partnership. The Victims' Voice Project evidenced the enthusiasm of victims to want to take part in co-production and service design and TONIC will support the OPCC to ensure ongoing victim and service user engagement in the commissioning and contract management process.

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Annex B– OPCC Response to Engagement Feedback

The table below document outlines the Avon and Somerset Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) response to the feedback received from the Commissioning Intentions Engagement Period (November 2023 to January 2024).

The OPCC has reviewed feedback obtained from the online stakeholder survey, engagement workshops, meetings, and individual stakeholder emails. We have addressed suggestions and relevant feedback pertaining to the recommissioning process in the responses provided below. This document aims to present and address key points, questions, and themes raised during the engagement period and to contemplate any necessary modifications to our Commissioning Plan prior to publication. Our efforts have been directed towards incorporating inclusive and reflective thoughts and feedback, considering the language and terminology utilized in the engagement correspondence.

At the end of this document, you will find a reference table defining any abbreviations used within the below table.

1	Collaboration – Leadership and Equitability	OPCC Response
1A	<p>Overall, feedback from the engagement events and our online survey was supportive of the proposed change in service model. Multiple opportunities were identified within the proposed collaborated service model for services to upskill each other, improve joint working and increase partnership.</p> <p>It was communally recognised during the stakeholder events that there is a need for improved joint working as there are current operational overlaps, as well as it being ‘impossible’ for one provider to serve the population of Avon and Somerset on their own. It was also commented that the collaboration will facilitate better acknowledgement and involvement in smaller by-and-for services.</p> <p>Positive feedback was also received that collaboration would improve victim experience with a more personal support, and services benefiting more from shared training, observations and sharing of good practice across services. Overall contributing to a greater positive impact felt by victims, with fewer victims ‘getting lost in the system’. A strong collaboration approach would facilitate an ‘One Stop Shop’ for victim support which was commented on as</p>	<p>The OPCC welcomes the recognition and support of moving towards improved collaboration by services supporting victims which will be reflected in tender documentations.</p> <p>Multiple benefits were identified through the Victim Needs Assessment (VNA) and supported strongly through feedback from the engagement events, along with the Victim Voice consultancy work undertaken by Tonic as part of the recommissioning process.</p>

	being beneficial to victims at all stages of their journey while coping with potential trauma.	
1B	Concerns collaboration with a smaller organisation might mean they (the smaller organisation) may struggle to grow capacity at the required pace without a larger existing infrastructure already in place.	<p>We recognise there may be difficulties in the initial stages of any collaboration regardless of organisation size, we would also anticipate any collaborations to work through and be aware of potential risks and challenges before making a bid.</p> <p>The OPCC have taken efforts to include factors to support this process including the mobilisation timeframe and allocation of funds to a mobilisation budget for the successful Contractors and acknowledge there will be continual service development over the lifetime of the contract.</p> <p>We would expect the Tendering Contractor to provide a mobilisation plan for how the collaboration will be developed.</p>
1C	There will be an increased need for leadership and management to deliver a collaboration of this size (discussed specifically around the Adult Lot).	<p>We understand there is a need for consideration of management resources within a collaboration model. The OPCC would expect management costs to be planned for by the Tendering Contractor within the financial envelope.</p> <p>The benefits of a collaboration regarding reduced duplication across services, along with the simplified journey for the service user supports this proposed collaboration model. Management costs are accounted for in all individual services at present.</p>
1D	<p>It is important to ensure support offered is of equitable quality and quantity regardless of your postcode or need within Avon and Somerset.</p> <p>Population in rural areas less well serviced might benefit from increased locality of smaller organisations with a partnership / collaboration approach. If the main service provider is Bristol based this should be considered to safeguard equity to service access including for those who live rurally, may have transport issues or the elderly.</p>	<p>Accessibility of services will be evaluated through the tender process, and it will be the responsibility of the Tendering Contractor to ensure this is considered in their bid.</p> <p>Demographic information to inform the development of models will be provided in tender paperwork along with evidence on the potential barriers to accessing support services for different cohorts and proposed solutions. Furthermore, through contract management and service development, oversight and assurance will be sought on service reach.</p>
1E	Collaboration is less emphasised in the children and young person (CYP) lot, but comments were received regarding that there should be as much emphasis on this to ensure diversity of provision.	We welcome collaboration in the CYP Service but recognise the restrictions of doing this to the same degree with a smaller service so will be proportionate in our expectations.

	There were also comments that the CYP lot did not include the provision of restorative justice (RJ).	The Adult Service Specification includes flexibility to provide RJ to those under 18 as per the current specification while taking into account existing provision and responsibilities of Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) and pathways with the CYP Service.
1F	Services will be absorbing extra cost in embedding a collaborative approach and working with / upskilling staff across organisations. Questions were received if there will there be time and resources made available to enable this and to be used to create shared mission statements and shared values?	The OPCC recognises the challenges and resources involved in embedding a collaborative model across services and this has been considered. A mobilisation budget will be available after contract award, along with a mobilisation timeframe of six months. Moreover, we would expect there to be benefits of collaborating that reduce the individual workloads within enabling functions which to some degree offset this cost. Beyond this any costs or impact should be factored into the proposed pricing schedule and service delivery model including any development over the life of the contract. We expect Tendering Contractors to include the full costs of providing services and collaborative approaches their tenders.
1G	There would be a potential requirement for a post dedicated to understanding and governing the legal practice of subcontracting, contract management, and support with the requirements of this arrangement.	It will be for the Tendering Contractor to set out their planned staffing model to deliver the specification requirements.
1H	It has been seen in some collaboration models that there are staff salary discrepancies which can contribute to a low work morale within services and lead to difficulty retaining staff.	It will be for the Tendering Contractor to set out their planned staffing model to enable them to deliver the specification requirements. This would include due consideration into partnership working and staffing models for employees across the model and due consideration of any risks and mitigations.
1I	There is a risk in losing individual service identity as a smaller partner in a collaboration agreement. Smaller organisations might lose their own values and original mission to fit with a larger organisation with a bigger portion in the funding along with losing direct contact with commissioners, partners, and funders.	It would be expected that the Tendering Contractor would work with the partner agencies to ensure that their identity, strengths and own mission values remain part of the delivery of service. The OPCC's remit and therefore commissioning plan is for force-wide services. We invest in smaller organisations through other funding streams as set out in our Commissioning Strategy .

		Moreover, any funding an organisation receives from the OPCC as part of a collaborative bid would not be its only income stream meaning that would continue with activities it undertakes outside of any such collaborative contract.
1J	<p>The OPCC should be explicit about the requirements of subcontracting / grant agreements so providers can make informed decisions whether to bid.</p> <p>There should be an emphasis that each partner is directly accountable as opposed to a lead agency to foster true collaboration and not competition.</p>	<p>The OPCC aims to encourage collaboration, but it is down to the Tendering Contractor to formulate how the relationship and partnership between agencies will work within their tender.</p> <p>We received feedback citing other strong collaborations of victim services in support for introducing this model during our engagement.</p> <p>There will be one contract with a single lead provider for each service with the necessary provisions in tender paperwork.</p>
1K	<p>It is difficult to compare localities as Avon and Somerset is so broad in victim needs and demographic spread across the area. This will be difficult for a single lead provider to work with.</p> <p>The Needs Assessment would have benefitted from a breakdown in data to the small area level.</p>	<p>The VNA provided a breakdown of demographic characteristics (age, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity and disability status) by local authority area which is provided in tender documentation and can be used to gauge proportionality of support across the A&S footprint.</p> <p>In addition, tenderers are encouraged to proactively seek to ensure equitable access to support through engaging with groups or communities that may not be accessing services and working to identify and address barriers which prevent victims from using services. Collaboration, delivery and shared learning with 'by and for' services will improve the reach of the Service.</p>
1L	<p>Regarding the Victim Voice and seeking lived experiences of service users in shaping of services, did this include the most vulnerable, hard to reach victims who often don't find it easy to contribute but have very valid input?</p> <p>How was this captured, did this account for additional learning needs / diverse individuals and was this trauma-informed?</p>	<p>TONIC engaged with a total of 282 individuals through the Victims' Voice fieldwork. Researchers gathered the views of victims from across the five local authority areas of Avon and Somerset who covered a wide variety of age groups, gender identities, ethnicities, and</p>

sexual orientations. TONIC took steps to ensure all participants involved could contribute and had equal access to the opportunity, these steps included:

“Values - *Our trauma informed research practice approach, and commitment to robust analysis, inclusivity and co-production means we approach this work with the utmost rigour and a desire to improve outcomes for all marginalised people*

Choice - *We will offer a choice of ways to participate (including online and in-person) and flexible times and days to remove barriers to being involved*

Safety - *We will only use highly experienced and qualified staff to lead these workshops, who have backgrounds in supporting vulnerable people and victims*

Support - *We will liaise with all participants and local services to ensure suitable support is in place following their involvement in any workshop activities.*

Accessibility - *We will ensure documents are produced in easy read format and enable people to contribute both verbally and non-verbally. We will only use accessible venues or free to use virtual platforms (e.g., Zoom, Teams or google meets)*

Inclusivity - *We will look to recruit from a diverse set of backgrounds. For example, we will look to source interpreters if language is a barrier to involvement.*

Demographic appropriate - *All our materials will be age appropriate, reading level appropriate and use inclusive language and imagery at all times to promote diversity and equality of engagement and minimise the risk of re-traumatisation.*

Intersectionality - *Victims within Avon and Somerset may experience multiple forms of disadvantage or discrimination due to intersectionality, such as the combination of race, gender, disability, or socioeconomic status. Adopting an intersectional approach and understanding the complex interplay of identities is crucial in providing appropriate support and addressing the unique challenges faced by victims with intersectional needs.*

		<p>Barriers - We will ask all groups about barriers they have faced in reporting crime or accessing support”</p> <p>For more information see Annex A.</p>
1M	Did the Needs Assessment factor in the continued impact of Operation Soteria on demand and specialist services that reach out to more victims with protected characteristics who have been less well served?	The Victim Needs Assessment noted that between 2021-2023 rape offences and other sexual offences averaged 29% higher than the years 2016-21, which was noted to have a correlative relationship with the impact from Operation Soteria. Specifically during this period there was a significant increase of reported offences against those aged 10-19. This has informed increased resources for the ISVA Service.
1N	<p>Further work needs to be invested by services to remove barriers to access and engagement to support.</p> <p>There should be resources allocated to ensure services are adequately promoted across communities in Avon and Somerset.</p>	Agreed and reflected in Specifications.
2	Delivery – Modelling, Processes and Development	OPCC Response
2A	Questions were asked how can organisations decline a partnership or show interest in one to build the collaboration required?	<p>The OPCC has shared contact details of those attending online stakeholder events and made time within the agenda of the in-person events to facilitate networking for this reason. Funds have been made available to the sector to support both collaboration and mobilisation.</p> <p>It would not be appropriate for the OPCC to be involved in negotiations between providers beyond this given the requirements under procurement legislation. Organisations may welcome the support and advice of VCSE and/or small business infrastructure organisations on this matter.</p>
2B	Support was received around the Adult Lot containing restorative justice (RJ) pathways to increase awareness and uptake of this support. This included support of the RJ provider would hold, or be working towards, appropriate accreditation.	<p>We welcome the support for including RJ provision within the Adult Service.</p> <p>The OPCC would expect any specialist support provision (such as ISVA support or RJ provision) to be provided by staff who hold the appropriate qualifications or accreditation (or be working towards) to offer this support in a safe and knowledgeable way and for the provider to provide assurance (for example, through a quality standard) of commitment to high quality provision.</p>

2C	There may be differentiating waiting times / waiting lists across partner organisations within the same collaboration.	<p>The OPCC acknowledges that forming a strong collaboration will take time and would like to reassure potential Tendering Contractors that this has been considered.</p> <p>The OPCC, along with Southwest Police Procurement Service (SWPPS), are expecting to allow for a mobilisation period of six months, have factored in a budget for mobilisation as well as partnership development prior to submission of tenders and would anticipate service development across the lifetime of the contract.</p> <p>In addition, waiting times would be monitored as part of the contract and one of the expected advantages of collaborations may be for waiting times, for example, to be effectively and equitably managed across the service.</p>
2D	Some key points were routinely highlighted as examples which enable strong collaboration work, they included but were not limited to; Joint working on cases, Joint sector voice on key issues (e.g. mental health), regular meetings across levels within organisations, Key link person / Champion in each organisation, Commitment to causes regardless of financial 'gain' from providers, agreed information sharing guidance.	<p>It was encouraging to receive feedback regarding how a collaboration would work, but also benefit the partners and the victims they supported.</p> <p>It will be the responsibility of the Tendering Contractor to propose a collaboration / partnership model which will enable benefits to be felt by the providers, and further improve the victims' journey to cope and recover.</p>
2E	There seems to be limited funds to include a Fraud Caseworker as part of the adult service delivery.	Although this point referred to a fraud case worker specifically, the OPCC would like to state that it would be the responsibility of the Tendering Contractor to set out their planned staffing model to enable them to deliver the specification requirements.
2F	Services commented that support from external consultancy would improve any initial 'teething problems' from building a collaborated model.	The OPCC has made available resource for collaboration support prior to submission of tenders as well as mobilisation budget to support the successful Tendering Contractors.
2G	Time is needed upon contract award to integrate and embed a collaboration model.	The OPCC and SWPPS have planned a mobilisation period of six months.
2H	Support was received over the proposed commitment to multi-year contracts to provide security to services and staff, as well consistency in the support services landscape for victims.	Noted.

2I	There is a need for more local ISVAs who can support those living in rural areas due to the varying complexities of accessing support – will the uplift in the funding suggested provide this?	This budget has been increased and it will be down to the Tendering Contractor to decide how to allocate the funding available to meet the requirements of the specification.
2J	Suggestions received that it should fall with the lead provider to complete an enhanced assessment of support needs and risk of the victims along with providing the victim with a continued lead contact person / link person to support with questions and ensure a smooth victim journey.	It will be down to the Tendering Contractor to allocate roles and responsibilities within any collaboration.
2K	<p>More holistic support for victims of ASB needed than is currently offered. With support and awareness of victim's options for the future, provision of orders and advocacy with government agencies how can affect the ASB outcome.</p> <p>Mediation, advocacy and conflict resolution / restorative justice approaches were also mentioned as positive options for ASB support along with brokering the relationship between victim and key services to support the individual to cope, without aiming to 'stop' ASB.</p>	<p>Specifications have been designed to enable providers to offer a holistic range of support to meet the identified needs of the victim as well as encourage links with relevant stakeholders such as council ASB teams.</p> <p>The OPCC have stated that support around ASB should not be focused on stopping the ASB, but rather to support the victim. We would expect the provider to have the necessary links and contacts with LA / housing providers / Police to support victims towards that aim.</p> <p>We understand the value of mediation, but this is out of scope for this funding.</p>
2L	Could a community 'hub' provision be considered with specialist services attached as the collaborated adult model.	It will be down to the Tendering Contractor to design a model to meet the requirements of the specification.
2M	There was support received that there should be a focus on victim need above crime type and comments agreeing that this in turn would enable a more holistic approach to support provision across all crimes.	Noted and reflected in Specifications.
2N	Wide support received for a smoother referral pathway into services and the single referral form for all / any service commissioned.	Noted and reflected in Specifications.
2O	Multiple benefits identified by offering a 'menu of support' suggested. From allowing the support to be more bespoke to the victim and allowing a more trauma informed approach by offering choice and autonomy in support options.	Noted and reflected in Specifications.

2P	<p>There should be more support for families around victims as they are key to a victim's recovery and would have a positive impact on support needs across sector long term.</p> <p>Some feedback was received around including the CYP service in the same lot as the adult service to 'force' improved family support around the victim as this was highlighted as being 'impactful'.</p>	<p>It will be the responsibility of the Tendering Contractor to design a staffing structure, along with any dedicated posts, to meet the demand of the specification. Family support could be included if deemed needed as part of an assessment of victims need to help them cope and recover, as reflected in Specifications.</p> <p>Whilst we recognise the option to include CYP support within one larger lot with adult support there was no consensus. The evidence and feedback from victims supports our decision to keep these two services separate, with the understanding that there will need to be close working relationships.</p>
2Q	<p>Feedback was received that it is difficult to have a victim / perpetrator binary in ASB cases as this is not always clear, and the outcome of supporting a victim to 'cope and recover' is not always realistic in ongoing ASB cases.</p> <p>It was feedback that there was more scope for work with Community Safety Partners, as well as recognising that some ASB is prejudice based and this could be a focus for support where is includes a vulnerability as defined by VCOP.</p>	<p>ASB has been included in scope for these services for cases where the support would be of value rather than this being a blanket offer. It is agreed that there is potential for services to have a greater link up with local authority teams working to tackle ASB and the OPCC would expect the Tendering Contractor to take responsibility for ensuring they can work with the appropriate contacts within other services.</p>
2R	<p>Positive feedback was received regarding the statement within the Commissioning Intentions 'Ensured that lived experience from service users informs and designs the delivery of services', with the hope that this would further increase the understanding of specialist support.</p> <p>Comments were also received that along with specialist support, accessible services are required for those who need specified support linked to their protected characteristics.</p>	<p>We recognise the benefit of ensuring the victim experience is heard and used to inform future service design and this is reflected in specifications.</p> <p>It is down to the Tendering Contractor to decide through their tender any specialist support needs and the OPCC will supply the relevant service demand data to support this decision-making process.</p>
2S	<p>What would the reporting expectations be for a collaborated service as this could lead to more difficult data collation?</p> <p>Is it expected that this would fall onto the lead provider to collate and produce for the OPCC, or would there be each provider reporting individually?</p>	<p>The OPCC would expect one report per service. It is the responsibility of the Tendering Contractor to propose any collaboration and management structure to support this model and requirement.</p>

2T	<p>Could there be further flexibility in the CYP lot to manage the support for young people (18-25) at risk of falling between gaps between CYP and adult support on a case-by-case basis rather than a prescriptive 'tick box' of having additional needs.</p>	<p>We support the focus on the right service to support the victim's identified needs and have responded to this feedback by allowing increased flexibility in the specification wording for the Children and Young Victims Support Service.</p> <p>For this transitional age, we would expect the CYP provider to have strong links with the Adult provider to ensure the support is appropriate for the individual, this may include remaining within CYP support for a little longer.</p>
2U	<p>There was support if there was a possibility for a dedicated resource such as a data analyst.</p>	<p>It will be down to the Tendering Contractor to design a staffing model to enable them to meet the requirements of the specification.</p>
2V	<p>Why was stalking / ISAC support not a separate service to reflect the specialism of this support like ISVA and MDS?</p>	<p>The OPCC receives a specific budget from the MOJ for ISVAs and indeed under the Victims and Prisoners Bill the role is being strengthened.</p> <p>The OPCC's investment in modern slavery is to bolster the NRM pathway and to-date as a grant as opposed to a fully specified commissioned service.</p> <p>Non-domestic stalking is the specific gap that has been identified – domestic-stalking is in scope for local domestic abuse services commissioned by Local Authorities. As such we do not consider it to be efficient or effective to fund a standalone service.</p>
2W	<p>A clear definition of ASB is needed, and support options available to victims, along with the remit of the service around this support.</p>	<p>A definition of ASB has been added to Specifications alongside the requirement for there to be a range of support on offer – this combined with an assessment need will determine the support plan for any given victim. The support available needs to be clearly articulated by the successful provider.</p> <p>We would expect services to have good knowledge of the local landscape to support any additional needs of victims.</p>
2X	<p>There is a lack of reporting for some crimes, and therefore data of this. Resources could be deployed in improving reporting and then thereby evidencing greater need in some categories of crime and victim support.</p>	<p>We are conscious of this challenge in terms of recorded crime and the need to build trust and confidence to report to the Police. Our Commissioning Plan is based on the best evidence we have at the time of writing. Moreover, the contracts will include clauses requiring flexibility over the life of the contracts to adapt to any changes in demand.</p>

		Victim Service providers do – and will continue – to support victims irrespective of whether they report to the police and that support will be focused on victim need above crime type.
2Y	Could the OPCC take more action to foster and grow collaborative partnerships over the life of the contract by hosting networking events for providers in the area?	The OPCC co-chairs a Victims Provider Forum quarterly for commissioned. Beyond this the OPCC would not have a role in any operational partnership working and it would be for the Tendering Contractor to initiate collaboration conversations and proactively seek partnerships which enable them to meet the requirements at laid out in the specifications.
3	Funding and Added Value	OPCC Response
3A	<p>It was felt that victims of modern-day slavery (MDS) often have complex needs linked to crime types which is different to any other support service provider and as such the support shouldn't be entirely separate and isolated due to these complex needs.</p> <p>Overall, individual funding for this service was remarked as positive due to the specialist knowledge required to support victims and provide a lead advocate for their case. However, there should be more collaboration and education with other services to understand more about MDS, how it looks, and referral pathways available for support.</p>	The OPCC supports a continued funding contribution to the support of victims of MDS. Partnership and collaboration are key within this proposed model and the OPCC would welcome partners working closely together, providing reciprocal training and increasing communication with support services to improve the awareness of MDS and the victim's journey. As noted above, the procurement route for this will be confirmed later in 2024.
3B	<p>Concerns were discussed regarding the disparity in funding for the CYP lot compared to the adult lot, knowing that CYP are not only disproportionately affected by crime, but also are known to underreport.</p> <p>Consideration into increasing the funding in the CYP lot to reflect and enable the long-term benefits of providing support not only to the CYP, but to their supporting adult to reduce further victimisation.</p>	See budget rationale for CYP and Adult Support Services above.

	Comments also received to consider that support for children can face barriers as they are often harder to engage, have less support options available to them due and lack transport options to access services.	
3C	<p>Although the benefits of collaboration were noted, there were also concerns raised regarding how far a budget would stretch across multiple, specialist service providers and that combined, the suggested adult lot funding is less than the services currently.</p> <p>There were comments describing that these were therefore ‘tapered’ offers due to reduced funding in some combined lots, along with the current cost of living climate and wage increases.</p> <p>– What is the reason or calculation of this proposed cut in overall adult support provision?</p>	See budget rationale for the Adult Support Services above.
3D	Support noted for the proposed model allowing smaller services to benefit from the ‘funding pot’ and contribute to the creation of unique service models. However, there was also a concern that there may be a lack of funds for smaller community organisations who are outside of any collaboration model.	This Commissioning Plan would see greater opportunity for smaller organisations to deliver services that present. Additional funding such as grants is made available from the OPCC as per our Commissioning Strategy .
3E	Support noted for the proposed individual funding towards an ISVA service and MDS service as these should remain separate due to the bespoke support needs of the service users.	Noted.
3F	It would be good to be clear on the whether the Sexual Violence uplift funding is out of scope in this lot, and the future of this, to understand the impact on the current service delivery of specialised peer support groups.	Please see our published Commissioning Intentions document – ‘out of scope funding’. The DA/SV funds from government were subject to specific requirements in terms of allocation, set by the MOJ and therefore does not afford us the flexibility to include in our recommissioning. That fund currently runs to March 2025.
3G	Will the OPCC set a specific % for a lead provider within a lot and allow flexibility within the providers ITT to state how they feel this would work? As an example, Devon and Cornwall OPCC have a 25% cap for the lead provider.	The OPCC notes that the VNA shows clearly that diversity of provision is desirable and beneficial to victims. Such plurality should be seen in tenders but no cap will be set.

	Regardless of the decision, a justification of budget and % split was requested.	
3H	<p>Flexibility will be needed within the longer contracts to reflect the changed collaborated model, working alongside differently sized organisations whilst also managing the changing requirements and numbers of victims. Without a commitment to budget uplifts this seems challenging.</p> <p>Will there also be flexibility over the life of the contract to move budgets from year to year? For example, increased set up costs in one year with a taper on service, followed by the reverse as the service embeds.</p>	<p>Given the way that the OPCC receives its funding with over 80% of the income coming from the Ministry of Justice at a flat rate, we are unable to build increments into the budget over the life of the contract. However provision has been made within the specification to enable an annual service review including consideration of costs.</p>
3I	<p>It was remarked that it would be beneficial to service providers, the OPCC and victims if inflationary uplifts could be accommodated across future contract years to reduce uncertainty, ensuring that providers can deliver stable and resilient services across the contract period.</p>	<p>A 5% increase has been made to the core baseline budget since the publication of the Commissioning Intentions taking into account inflationary pressures raised by the sector.</p> <p>Given the way that the OPCC receives its funding with over 80% of the income coming from the Ministry of Justice at a flat rate, we are unable to build increments into the budget over the life of the contract. However provision has been made within the specification to enable an annual service review including consideration of costs. It will be down to the Tendering Contractor to propose a staffing and budget model to enable them to meet the requirements of the specification and maintaining a suitable workforce.</p>
3J	<p>Victims of MDS often need specialist support around language, complex trauma, recourse to public funds, understanding and navigating the legal and judicial processes.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>
3K	<p>Feedback was received around Trauma Informed Practices, including that there would be value in encouraging and ensuring services are linked in with Trauma Informed initiatives, as well as noting that service governance needs to be as trauma informed to understand and support with the complexities of support victims.</p>	<p>The OPCC recognises the benefits of Trauma Informed Practice, both externally in supporting victims and internally benefitting the staff within a service.</p> <p>The specifications include the expectation that services are trauma informed and that over the life of the contract any services commissioned would remain abreast of any local and national trauma informed developments and approaches to delivery and stay aligned with the OPCC and any Trauma Informed requirements to office may implement.</p>

3L	Local authorities have limited capacity to fund hate crime services, why are these not part of the core funding strategy when there is not equitable service delivery across all areas?	<p>The financial climate impacting on the budgets of all public sector bodies is well known and understood. Over a number of years Local Authorities - to differing levels - have invested in local specialist services including those for victims of hate crime. Such local investment is valuable and complements provision commissioned at a force-wide level by the OPCC.</p> <p>The OPCC's strategy seeks to commission in the most efficient and effective way, meaning that we must work around existing provision to reduce duplication and maximise our impact. Moreover, the OPCC invests in specialist local services through the separate Police and Crime Grant awarded to the five Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) across Avon and Somerset.</p> <p>Given the inclusive all-crime nature of the OPCC's Commissioning Plan for the adult and CYP services, by their very nature they have – and will continue - to provide a level of support to victims of hate crime. Any enhancements to this level of provision from local investment will support in further meeting the varied needs of the communities we serve.</p>
3M	<p>Regarding other funding - There seems to be no focus on prevention work within the recommissioning of victim services which could dramatically reduce the number of victims in the first instance.</p> <p>Could it be made clear when and where future prevention funding will be available as this could impact the decision of smaller organisations being willing to bid on this tender.</p>	<p>The OPCC understands to value of prevention when it comes to crime and ASB however the current service funding in scope relate primarily to the funding we receive from the MOJ for the specific purpose of supporting victims.</p> <p>The OPCC provides other funding as per our Commissioning Strategy. Services can also seek funding from other commissioners/funding streams.</p> <p>Please refer to our Commissioning Intentions document – Out of Scope funding.</p>
3N	Support was received for the statement from the OPCC that providers would not be expected to provide training over and above reciprocal training and service awareness for free, along with and costs accrued through co-locating at police offices wouldn't fall on the provider.	Noted.
4	Procurement and the Tender Process	OPCC Response
4A	There should be transparency for potential providers regarding the scoring and decision-making process of the evaluation of bids, including external oversight (including knowing who the 'top runners' are for the tenders.	Transparency will be provided regarding the scoring and decision-making process of the evaluation of bids through the tender documents in line with relevant procurement legislation. However, this would not include information of who the 'top runners' are which

		would be classed as commercially sensitive. There may for example be organisations that do not wish to disclose that they are tendering.
4B	If collaboration is intended (specifically the Adult Lot), then this should be recognised and scored accordingly as part of the invitation to tender (ITT) documents with service diversity and collaboration remaining the focus, irrespective of who the primary provider is / the collaborators are.	Each lot will be scored separately using the agreed weighted award criteria against the requirements of the specification. This is a fair and transparent process pursuant to PCR Regulations 2015.
4C	Will there be external and diverse representation throughout the evaluation process?	Evaluation Panels will include subject matter experts as required to assess proposals against the Specification, including victims (supported by TONIC).
4D	Positive comments were received regarding the timescales laid out for this process. However, emphasis was on the OPCC sticking to these timescales and mitigate delays to increase trust with services from the beginning. The impact of delayed commissioning processes can be off putting to professionals trying to engage, have an adverse effect on incumbent services and as a result the impact on victims is phenomenal.	Noted.
4E	Support and direction needed from the OPCC regarding expression of interest process and specific understanding of the tender documents.	There will be a period allocated for tender clarification questions where bidders can submit questions, via the Bluelight tendering portal as per the timetable above to clarify any details included within the ITT document that will be published.
4F	Questions were taken regarding what documentation would be available as part of the tender. Stakeholders commented that services would need clear specs and guidance on the outcomes and outputs required and how these will be measured, along with current data and outcomes of the current services. This would also help ensure services partner up with right providers to build a strong collaboration.	Full details of the specification will be provided within the ITT documentation, along with relevant data to inform the Tendering Contractor's proposed model.
4G	The commissioning process should ensure services are fit for purpose and not just contract 'the cheapest' service. There should be a larger focus on the	Evaluation has been weighted with the focus on quality pursuant to PCR Regulations 2015.

	scoring of bids to the 'quality' of a service above the cost of a service proposal.	
4H	Could there be a pre-tender opportunity for providers to register an interest in working in partnership on the portal?	<p>The OPCC designed the engagement events to facilitate networking which has been successful. Time was allowed within the agenda for this, and contact details were shared following attendance at the online stakeholder information event.</p> <p>Along with the engagement window on our Intentions that commenced in November 2023 this is considered to be ample time for discussions to commence ahead of the tender opening in March 2024.</p>
4I	The procurement and evaluation process should include a focus on understanding the benefits offered by known, local, trusted and respected organisations versus national suppliers as part of any collaboration offered.	Noted.
4J	<p>Feedback was received that the commissioning intentions was circulated without the inclusion of the victim voice feedback.</p> <p>There were also comments noting the lack of victim voice representation on the Governance Board to reflect the importance of this throughout the recommissioning of victim services.</p>	<p>The decision was taken to sequence detailed engagement with victims <i>after</i> the intentions were published to ensure meaningful involvement and to build on the initial needs assessment findings. A detailed report has been provided to the OPCC which has shaped the final Commissioning Plan and tender documents as outlined elsewhere in this document. This demonstrates how the views of victims have added valuable and actionable detail to our plans, supporting our aim to improve the experience of those accessing services.</p> <p>The Governance Board was established to coordinate, guide and oversee the recommissioning of Victim Services with the necessary authority to sign off key documents. Membership is therefore limited to key decision makers for sign off purposes. Beyond this, the Board Terms of Reference states that it may 'call upon support from the following stakeholders as required: Service Users (via consultancy if required by the Board).'</p> <p>Victims will be involved in a meaningful way during the tender process in consultation with TONIC where their lived experience will be best utilised while also seeking to provide a positive experience for them in turn.</p>

4K	Will the PCC election pose any risk to the tender process, can information be shared in how these are mitigated.	<p>The PCC election is on the 2 May 2024 and the timing of this procurement has been discussed at the OPCC Election Board.</p> <p>The OPCC considers the recommissioning part of the core business of the OPCC and so a decision was taken that the tender process would go ahead but commence <i>before</i> the pre-election period (set to begin on 18 March 2024).</p> <p>The OPCC Chief of Staff has written to all PCC candidates for Avon and Somerset to alert them of this programme of work and the process which will go beyond the PCC election.</p>
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Annex C - Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Response
<p>1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed</p>	<p>The OPCC Victim Services Recommissioning for Services commencing April 2025</p>
<p>2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/ funding activity/event</p>	<p>The OPCC commissions services for victims of crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) across Avon and Somerset with new contracts due to commence in April 2025.</p> <p>Both the OPCC Commissioning Intentions and Plan set out our approach to commissioning services and outcomes. Our commissioning is guided by our values of openness, partnership, compassion and courage. It sets out how we make the decision to commence with a new commissioning cycle and the four types of commissioning roles we can play. For the commissioning of victim services in scope for this process we are acting as Lead Commissioner.</p> <p>The OPCC is bound to requirements attached to Ministry of Justice funding under the MOJ Formula-based Grant to ‘provide or commission dedicated emotional and practical support services for Victims of Crime to help them cope and, as far as possible recover from the effects of crime’.</p> <p>The OPCC is tendering for victim support services to bid for the following force-wide victim services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Adult Victims of Crime and ASB Support Service b) Children and Young Victims of Crime and ASB Support Service c) All Age Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) Service <p>The services will offer a range of interventions delivered by a suitably broad range of provision/organisations/staff who can efficiently and effectively meet the diverse needs of victims of across Avon and Somerset. This diversity may be in the form of protected characteristic, vulnerability, geography or crime type. As a matter of principle the service will actively seek feedback and input from its service users and in turn benefit from being a truly co-produced service. Where possible, providers both within this contract and beyond will seek to do things once rather than many times to enable efficient and effective use of resources while at all times having the experience of the service user at the heart of the design of any processes or functions.</p>

	<p>The process will be put out to tender as per procurement regulations. A set of questions will scored by an Evaluation Panel designed to be able to assess against the requirements of the specifications.</p> <p>The delivery of this funding is supported by procurement to ensure a fair and professional approach according to relevant legislation. Information will be communicated throughout the process on the OPCC's website.</p>
<p>3. What is the purpose of this Assessment?</p>	<p>The purpose of an Equality Impact Assessment is to assist decision makers in understanding the impact of proposals as part of their duties under the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p><u>The Duty to Eliminate Discrimination</u></p> <p>The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 it amended the Equality Act 2010 to drive improved public sector equality, this included holding PCCs as one of the responsible authorities accountable for delivering this duty. PCCs and their offices are required to exercise the General Equality Duty and must have regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination • advancing equality of opportunity • fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. <p><u>Protected Characteristics</u>⁷</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. age 2. gender reassignment 3. being married or in a civil partnership 4. being pregnant or on maternity leave 5. disability 6. race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin 7. religion or belief 8. sex 9. sexual orientation

⁷ Discrimination: your rights: Types of discrimination ('protected characteristics') - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

	<p>The Association of Police and Crime Commissioners' Guidance states ways in which PCCs may exercise this duty, this could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement and co-production with local communities • Leadership and organisational commitment to the duty • Commissioning and delivery of services responsive to need • Developing a diverse and engaged workforce <p>In delivering on these areas, in this instance commissioning and delivery of services, it is vital that we undertake an Equalities Impact Assessment to ensure that decisions and any impact of our Commissioning Plan does not disproportionately affect groups and individuals, who already face disadvantage or underrepresentation.</p>
<p>4. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)</p>	<p>The OPCC victims recommissioning team designed and delivered a robust engagement plan to engage as far and wide as possible on its commissioning intentions for victim services post-April 2025.</p> <p>This included a number of in person and on-line events with victims, their families, professionals and stakeholders:</p> <p>Victims: The victim voice engagement was conducted by Tonic consultancy and captured the views of victims and their families, those that had used our current services and reaching those that had not. Several options were provided to enhance engagement;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative semi-structured interviews and focus groups with 136 individuals, including 37 victims, 8 participants on behalf of a victim, and 90 professionals. • Surveys that reached 461 individuals, including 157 victims, 38 respondents on behalf of a victim, and 266 professionals. • Feedback forms from 77 victims of rape and other sexual offences. • Site visits and ethnographic observations of local victim support services. <p>TONIC researchers gathered the views of victims from across the five local authority areas of Avon and Somerset who covered a wide variety of age groups, gender identities, ethnicities, and sexual orientations.</p> <p>Professionals and potential providers:</p> <p>The OPCC was keen to receive input from a wide range of stakeholders including current and potential providers. As such, the OPCC arranged events across the force area and online to gather feedback. The programme of events was designed to enable participation across both the north and south of the area, on different dates as well as offering an online option to increase</p>

	<p>participation. All events saw good attendance demonstrating the success of the approach. Both in-person events were hosted at community venues selected for their good transport links.</p> <p>Across the three events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 27 agencies were represented with over 50 attendees across front line and management roles • Largely voluntary sector agencies • Organisations had a range of specialist expertise in different client groups / crime types • A mix of current and other providers <p>To enable wider participation in engagement, a survey was hosted online through Microsoft Forms to facilitate further stakeholder input. This was circulated widely to stakeholders at regular intervals which included interest groups, potential providers and current providers with encouragement to further share within their networks.</p> <p>Throughout the duration of the engagement period, the OPCC took opportunity to brief partners and stakeholders on its intentions, and to invite feedback via the survey or engagement events through the attendance at boards and meetings occurring during this time.</p> <p>The above stakeholder engagement has been arranged by theme with the OPCC responses provided (see Annex B).</p>
<p>5. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Users • Other victims and related members of the A&S community • The PCC • The OPCC • Current contracted providers • Potential Providers • Professionals delivering services • The Police • Other Stakeholders
<p>6. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual</p>	<p>As part of contractual arrangements with any appointed providers, robust reporting requirements will be enlisted as part of the service delivery requirements and specification. As indicated in the specifications, a number of data requirements are set by the</p>

<p>impact of the policy/funding activity/event?</p>	<p>MOJ as part of the Victims Funding Strategy. A set of KPIs will be agreed with provider/s following appointment but all services will be working to deliver against the core MOJ outcomes, which are that services must work to help victims to have:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coped and built resilience to move forward with daily life. 2. Feeling more informed. 3. Received all the support they needed, when they wanted it. 4. Increased engagement with the criminal justice system (additional). <p>Beyond this a range of quantitative and qualitative measures will be monitored including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Risk and Needs assessment completed (inc. communication and access needs linked to demographic data capture) - Demographic information - Information or insights which may assist the police and other relevant partners in improving and shaping their services to support victims of crime and ASB including barriers that victims may face in reporting or engaging with the criminal justice service.
<p>7. What Information do we have? This includes what data or evidence we can learn from which tells us who is, or could be impacted.</p>	<p>As set out under question 4 of this assessment, consultation and engagement methodologies have been built in throughout the cycle of this re-commissioning cycle as well as a Victims Need Assessment (VNA) conducted by TONIC. This has provided a range of evidence to consider and input to the Commissioning Plan, Specifications as well as this assessment.</p> <p>Quantitative and qualitative data was reviewed as part as an independently commissioned Victims Needs Assessment (VNA), which reviewed local demographic data, literature review, current service provider reporting, local and national crime, interviews with stakeholders and use of open-source data. Feedback from victims and stakeholders took place throughout the engagement period.</p> <p>The key information therefore inputting to the assessment are the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victim Needs Assessment (VNA) • Victims Voice (VV) report • ‘You Said, We Did’ (YSWD) • Less formally noted professional insights (PI) that have been accrued through current service delivery and local knowledge/sector skills, also will influence this assessment. Further to this desk- based research has also been undertaken to provide supporting literature to some of the assessment points.

Assessment by protected Characteristics and Additional Themes

<i>Characteristic or theme</i>	<i>Key evidence and findings</i>	<i>Response and future service considerations</i>
<p>1. Age - Older people; middle years; early years; children and young people</p>	<p>All ages:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We know from current services' data that there are people of all ages who become victims of crime and ASB. 	<p>As per commissioning model set within the plan – separate specialist Adult and a Children and Young People Services are proposed which received support from a significant number of stakeholders as well as victims who were consulted.</p> <p>The ISVA service is all age and it is good practice to have CYP ISVAs.</p> <p>Given the inclusive all-crime nature of the OPCC's Commissioning Plan all services, by their very nature, will continue to provide a level of support to victims who may experience any crime or ASB whatever their age including the need for any specialist approaches where there may be barriers resulting from age.</p>

	<p>Children and young people:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Through consultation it was recognised that a specialist CYP service should be maintained (YSWD). 2. For a number of reasons children and young people find it difficult to recognise themselves as victims and even when they do, find it difficult to reach out for help and advice (VNA). 3. “Young people feel overwhelmed with lots of different professionals to keep in touch with and it's a really difficult time for them anyway, particularly if they are in secondary or higher education.” (Survey) (VNA) 4. We know from professionals and national research that there are complexities and trauma that has particularly manifested for CYP over and post covid. (PI) 5. The current CYP service has seen a growth of over 50% in need from 2018-2023 (VNA). 6. On average between 2018/19 and 2022/23, of those accessing the CYP Service 50% were aged between 13-17 years (VNA). 7. There is an increased prevalence of sexual offences impacting children and young people in Avon and Somerset, with approximately 33% of RASSO victims being aged 10-19. ISVA service referral data corroborates this trend showing a marked increase in referrals from victims ages 13-24 years old in recent years with support for 13-24 year olds making up 47.2% of ISVA caseloads compared with 38.8% in previous years. (VNA) 8. On average between 2018/19 and 2022/23, of those accessing the ISVA service, 28% aged between 18-24 years.(VNA) 9. CYP raised the importance of having the freedom to choose whether appointments were conducted in school 	<p>The Commissioning Plan sets out the decision to maintain a specialist CYP service. This service has seen increased investment due to increasing demand and needs.</p> <p>All services will be expected to have the expertise and resources to meet their clients’ needs. Where specialist support or training is required this should be considered by Tenderers.</p> <p>We have amended our plans to include flexible provision for the most suitable service for transition years 18-24 within either the CYP or Adult Services. This will improve the victim journey.</p> <p>Services will respond to individual need and consider other professionals and/or statutory processes running alongside the needs of the victim. In some instances, support may be delivered through a consultative approach where other professionals may be taking a lead.</p> <p>Young people in particular rely on technology and social media on a daily basis and therefore as per Specifications consideration should be given to the ways in which service providers communicate, reach out to victims, and promote their services.</p> <p>Increased flexible opportunities of evening appointments and consideration to school-based support, to give young people the confidence and privacy or accessing support within the school premises and hours is within the scope of the specification.</p> <p>Consideration of family support offer is within service specifications and for successful provider to reflect on within the bid and service model.</p> <p>The ISVA Service budget has been increased to meet this demand in support, particularly for CYP.</p>
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or in the evenings, allowing them to feel more in control of their support. (VV)

10. Young people regularly mentioned the benefit of a family support officer, or their parent needing support in addition to them. Whilst keeping the independence of a separate CYP service. (VV)

11. Information sharing may present barriers to working with specialist young people's services. (PI)

	<p>Middle – Adult years</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On average between 2018/19 and 2022/23, of those accessing the Lighthouse Victim and Witness Care Hubs, 23% were aged between 25-34 years (VNA). 2. On average between 2019/20 and 2022/23, of those accessing the Enhanced Adult Service 24% were aged between 45-54 years and in the Adult Service 20% were aged between 25-34 years. (VNA) 3. Outside of office hours was a common theme amongst victims, navigating time around work and childcare was challenging. (VV). 4. Child to parent abuse was recognised as needing a dedicated post to support this type of abuse, the current model includes this and it is deemed positive. (VV). 	<p>Adults make up the largest cohort of victims, whilst this is known, perceptions can often view this age category as less vulnerable or possibly more resilient. We know this is not the case and must continue to provide dedicated Adult support service as reflected in the Commissioning Plan.</p> <p>By combining the Enhanced Adult service and the Adult service elements, the array of support options available to all adult victims of crime and anti-social behaviour will be extended and more diverse to meet the needs of all protected characteristic groups.</p> <p>This group in particular may face challenges in accessing support in the day due to work and childcare commitments and so a flexible service offer outside of 9am-5pm should be considered as per Specifications.</p>
	<p>Older people</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is likely that older people may be less able to access and use technology to seek support advice or online support methods (PI). 2. Older people may be reluctant or unable to travel to access support (PI) 	<p>All services will be expected to have the expertise and resources to meet their clients’ needs. Where specialist support or training is required this should be considered by Tenderers. Services need to ensure their physical location is accessible to all victims, with options to access the support locally, or slightly further from their area of residence depending on their preference, with assertive outreach being focused on the most rural parts of Avon and Somerset where barriers to access may be compounded.</p> <p>The Specification asserts that Providers will ensure information about the Service is made available in forms reflecting the diversity of the local population. This may include, but is not limited, to other languages, easy read, large print, Braille, visual or audio and other formats accessible to people with communication and cognitive impairment. Information should be personalised to meet the needs of the Individual. This information will be made available through multiple methods and channels, not limited to online.</p>

<p>2. Disability: physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Those with a disability raised several times experiencing difficulty when accessing and engaging with support, some were due to buildings not being accessible (VV). 2. Understanding around an individual’s disability needs may become more apparent as support goes on, where increasingly complex the support service may be unable to respond to individual's needs. (PI) 3. It has been found that between 21% and 33% of victims of violent crime develop symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). (VNA) 4. Victims of violent crime may be left with a chronic physical condition or even a disability. (VNA) 5. Although mental health support is not the responsibility of the OPCC, victims have still regularly identified this as a need, suggesting that better communication and knowledge of local mental health services is required by support providers, so they can pass on the relevant information to victims. (VV) 6. Nearly 50% of victims supported by the current Enhanced Adult Service had a mental health support need. (VNA) 7. An average of 41% of ISVA and Enhanced Adult cases were recorded as having a disability. (VNA) 	<p>The Commissioning Plan makes clear the value we place on increasing by-and-for resources for victims within provision. All services will be expected to have the expertise and resources to meet their clients’ needs. Where specialist support or training is required this should be considered by Tenderers.</p> <p>Although some specific examples cited in the VNA such as refuge buildings are out of scope for this project, it is still important to recognise the physical barriers some victims may face in accessing services. Therefore, services need to ensure their physical location is accessible to all victims, with options to access the support locally, or slightly further from their area of residence depending on their preference, with assertive outreach being focused on the most rural parts of Avon and Somerset where barriers to access may be compounded.</p> <p>Confidence must be built into the workforce in relation to mental health support, there is a need to increase confidence and the ability through the training of commissioned services to support with mental health concerns and suicidal ideation/intent following crime and to be able to discuss to most suitable level of intervention. This requirement is reflected in Specifications.</p> <p>Support services must continue to offer both face-to-face as well as online appointments to cater for those with learning difficulties or mental health disorders to support with communication which is reflected in Specifications.</p> <p>Given the inclusive nature of the OPCC’s Commissioning Plan with an emphasis on diversity of provision, all services, by their very nature, will continue to provide a level of specialist support to victims who may experience any crime or ASB who have needs arising from their disability.</p>
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<p>3. Gender reassignment and/or people who identify as Transgender</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transgender hate crimes have increased nationally by 11% (VNA) 2. Transgender and gender-diverse individuals are three to six times more likely than cisgender adults to be diagnosed with a neurodiverse condition like autism (Warrier & Greenberg, 2020).⁸ 3. Research suggests that support services should implement outreach support and awareness raising so that LGBTQ+ victims are able to acknowledge their experience and seek support. (VNA) 	<p>The Commissioning Plan makes clear the value we place on increasing by-and-for resources for victims within provision.</p> <p>All services will be expected to have the expertise and resources to meet their clients' needs, including those which are intersectional. Where specialist support or training is required this should be considered by Tenderers.</p> <p>There is a need for services to be inclusive of transgender and non-binary individuals by using gender neutral language and having the option to engage with staff of the same gender identity.</p> <p>Given the inclusive nature of the OPCC's Commissioning Plan with an emphasis on diversity of provision, all services, by their very nature, will continue to provide a level of specialist support to victims who may experience any crime or ASB who have needs arising from their gender identity.</p>
<p>4. Marriage and civil partnership: people married or in a civil partnership.</p>	<p>There are no figures relating to people's marital or civil partnership status in the Needs Assessment, or in the providers' own datasets. However, it is not anticipated that there is a particular impact on access to or outcomes from interventions with any of the services in scope. (PI)</p>	<p>All services will accept referrals from all victims and will be expected to have the expertise and resources to meet their clients' needs. Where further staff upskilling is required this should be enlisted.</p>
<p>5. Pregnancy and maternity: being pregnant or on maternity leave</p>	<p>There are no figures relating to pregnancy or maternity in the VNA, or in providers' own datasets.</p>	<p>All services will be expected to have the expertise and resources to meet their clients' needs. Where specialist support or training is required this should be considered by Tenderers.</p>

⁸ [Elevated rates of autism, other neurodevelopmental and psychiatric diagnoses, and autistic traits in transgender and gender-diverse individuals - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)

	<p>However, Women’s Aid quote the Department of Health figure that 40-60%⁹ of women are abused whilst pregnant. NHS also explain that Pregnancy can be a trigger for domestic abuse.¹⁰</p> <p>Lime Culture’s Risk and Needs Assessment Toolkit for ISVA Services states that ‘Pregnancy is a significant risk to women who are in domestic abuse situations, so will need to be carefully considered by the ISVA to determine whether there are any safeguarding risks to the client or their unborn child. The ISVA should identify whether a pregnant client has access to or is currently attending maternity services (midwifery or antenatal services)’.¹¹</p>	<p>Maternity services are included in list of key health stakeholders in Specification.</p> <p>Given the inclusive nature of the OPCC’s Commissioning Plan with an emphasis on diversity of provision, all services, by their very nature, will continue to provide a level of specialist support to victims who may experience any crime or ASB who have needs arising from their pregnancy or maternity status.</p>
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⁹ [The impact of domestic abuse - Women’s Aid \(womensaid.org.uk\)](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

¹⁰ [Domestic abuse in pregnancy - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

¹¹ [Lime Culture’s Risk and Needs Assessment Toolkit for ISVA Services](#)

<p>6. Race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The population in Avon and Somerset is much less ethnically diverse than the national average, with around 9.2% of residents being from Asian, Black, Mixed or Other ethnic minority backgrounds, compared to 19% in England overall. This figure has increased from 6.7% in 2011. In Bristol, however, Asian, Black, Mixed or Other ethnic minority backgrounds constitute 18.9% of residents, equivalent to the national average. (VNA) 2. The majority of victims accessing OPCC services are recorded as White. (VNA) 3. Language barriers may prevent and deter some victims from accessing support (PI) 4. Insecure immigration status can be a barrier to accessing support (VNA) 5. Lack of trust, particularly from Black Minority Ethnic groups towards the Police is prevalent locally and nationally. Whilst the services we commission are independent, perceptions of association could be made. (PI) 	<p>The Commissioning Plan makes clear the value we place on increasing by-and-for resources for victims within provision.</p> <p>All services will be expected to have the expertise and resources to meet their clients' needs. Where specialist support or training is required this should be considered by Tenderers.</p> <p>Commissioned services will work to increase awareness of their services by those with protected characteristics or any other under-reported groups as identified through management data.</p> <p>Victim services should speak to and build relationships with the heads of minoritised communities in order to raise awareness and build trust. (VV) Additionally, through prioritising local community engagement to build trust and awareness, services should work towards changing messaging from 'hard to reach communities' to 'not yet found', in doing so, increasing reporting and access to support all seldom groups. ¹²(PI)</p>
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¹² | am not 'hard to reach' | UpRising

	<p>6. National research has found that victims from minoritised ethnic communities were more likely to need advice on safety and protection from re-victimisation, and often want to be supported by someone with which they can identify (i.e., someone from the same background as them). (VNA)</p> <p>7. It was identified that individuals from minoritised ethnic communities are less likely to report crime and seek support from commissioned services. (VV)</p>	<p>Upon referral, Specifications require that the needs assessment process should understand the background of the Service User, identify any access or communication needs to be addressed in the delivery of the Service to the Service User e.g. translation or adjustments to access meeting places.</p> <p>Emphasis on support services highlighting their independence from the police is required and outlining their confidentiality agreement clearly and is reflected in Specifications.</p> <p>The OPCC will support providers to connect with local 'Tackling Disproportionality' work and ensure that victim services are contributing to this important agenda and ensuring that the victims voice is part of the strategic response.</p> <p>Given the inclusive nature of the OPCC's Commissioning Plan with an emphasis on diversity of provision, all services, by their very nature, will continue to provide a level of specialist support to victims who may experience any crime or ASB who have needs arising from their race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin.</p>
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<p>8. Religion or belief: people with different religions/faiths or beliefs, or none.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Religious hate crimes have increased nationally by 9% (VNA) 2. “Racial and religious background can certainly be a barrier to a victim accessing support. There needs to be professionals within services from all different backgrounds and/or who are trained in complex family and cultural dynamics.” (VNA) 	<p>The Commissioning Plan makes clear the value we place on increasing by-and-for resources for victims within provision.</p> <p>All services will be expected to have the expertise and resources to meet their clients’ needs. Where specialist support or training is required this should be considered by Tenderers.</p> <p>Given the inclusive nature of the OPCC’s Commissioning Plan with an emphasis on diversity of provision, all services, by their very nature, will continue to provide a level of specialist support to victims who may experience any crime or ASB who have needs arising from their religion or belief.</p>
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<p>Sex</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On average between 2018/19 and 2022/23, of those accessing the Lighthouse Victim and Witness Care Hubs, 62% were female and of CYP Service users, there is a near to equal split of male:female service users. (VNA) 2. In contrast, on average those accessing the ISVA service 88% were female. (VNA) 3. Moreover, there are almost four times as many female victims of sexual assault as male victims, with females being significantly more likely than males to be victims of each type of sexual assault. ¹³ This figure links the national agenda and strategy for tackling Male Violence Against Women and Girls¹⁴. 4. Male victims of abuse require tailored support: <p>“Male victims of sexual assault and domestic violence are still the same, it’s so difficult for them to overcome the social construct that they shouldn’t be a victim because they’re male” (VNA)</p> <p>Male victims of domestic abuse may require different prevention and intervention approaches as they can be more likely to experience shame or embarrassment. (VNA)</p> 	<p>The Commissioning Plan makes clear the value we place on increasing by-and-for resources for victims within provision.</p> <p>All services will be expected to have the expertise and resources to meet their clients’ needs. Where specialist support or training is required this should be considered by Tenderers.</p> <p>The specification states that where relevant, service delivery should be sensitive to facilitate engagement e.g. where a mixed-sex environment for example may be a barrier.</p> <p>Given the inclusive nature of the OPCC’s Commissioning Plan with an emphasis on diversity of provision, all services, by their very nature, will continue to provide a level of specialist support to victims who may experience any crime or ASB who have needs arising from their sex.</p>
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¹³ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/sexualoffencesinenglandandwalesoverview/march2020>

¹⁴ [Tackling violence against women and girls strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls)

<p>Sexual orientation</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. According to the latest Census data, 96% of residents in Avon and Somerset identify as straight or heterosexual, 1.6% as gay or lesbian, 1.9% as bisexual, and 0.5% as either pansexual, asexual or queer. Bristol has the highest proportion of residents identifying as gay or lesbian, bisexual, and pansexual (2.4%, 3.4%, and 0,5% respectively), while Somerset has the lowest proportion of residents identify as a sexual orientation other than straight or heterosexual (just 2.7% in total). (VNA) 2. On average between 2018/19 and 2022/23, of those accessing Adult support services were recorded as 50% heterosexual, in the ISVA Service this was 69%. (VNA) 3. 81% if of CYP service users did not have their sexual orientation recorded and so specific needs for this service are unable to be considered and therefore likely impacting need (VNA). 4. It was identified that individuals from LGBTQ+ communities are less likely to report crime and seek support from commissioned services. (VV) 	<p>The Commissioning Plan makes clear the value we place on increasing by-and-for resources for victims within provision.</p> <p>All services will be expected to have the expertise and resources to meet their clients’ needs. Where specialist support or training is required this should be considered by Tenderers.</p> <p>Support services should prioritise local community engagement to build trust and awareness amongst the LGBTQ+ community and ensure service co-production with this group is committed to.</p> <p>Given the inclusive nature of the OPCC’s Commissioning Plan with an emphasis on diversity of provision, all services, by their very nature, will continue to provide a level of specialist support to victims who may experience any crime or ASB who have needs arising from their sexual orientation.</p>
<p>Other groups or themes around vulnerability or risk of inequality</p>		
<p>People Experiencing Deprivation</p>	<p>Services, particularly the CYP Service have reported increasing use and need for families to manage lives by using food banks (VNA).</p> <p>This is supported by a wealth of national research concerning the current ‘cost of living crisis’. A recent campaign by The Children’s Society demonstrates the impact particularly on children and how</p>	<p>Services are to be free to service users as per VCOP.</p> <p>All services will accept referrals from all victims and will be expected to have the expertise and resources to meet their clients’ needs. Where specialist support or training is required this should be considered by Tenderers.</p> <p>The Service should identify the Service User’s support needs relating to their experience including finance and benefits as per the Specification.</p>

	4.2 million children were in families who struggle to afford essentials. ¹⁵	
Stigma	Individuals may fear judgement from others, or even judge themselves and feel embarrassed, they may worry about not being believed, or blame themselves, and may have past experiences or have seen/heard about examples of victim-blaming which puts them off reaching out. This can be further exacerbated if they experience difficulties with their physical or mental health or have a learning disability. (VNA)	Services must work to build trust and confidence. High quality training should be available for frontline practitioners, highlighting the importance of language, combating stereotypes and myths.
Looked after children and young people	There is no reference to young people being looked after in the victim voice report, however we know that some children and young people will come from a looked after background. We also know that children and young people from these backgrounds tend to be more vulnerable and likely to be victimised. (PI) The Independent Inquiry to Child Sexual Abuse support this, explaining that 16% of all assessments of children in care referenced child sexual exploitation. ¹⁶	All services will be expected to have the expertise and resources to meet their clients' needs. Where specialist support or training is required this should be considered by Tenderers. The CYP and ISVA services will require links and expertise with local care settings and social care processes as reflected in the Specification.
People Experiencing Homelessness	Homelessness is known to be a barrier to accessing services due to difficulties communicating, having a stable address, access to money, phone, online services and often living a chaotic lifestyle. Homeless people are also prone to being vulnerable and less likely to report when victimised. (PI)	Providers will need to be able to flex their delivery models to work with people who are homeless and that may move around the service delivery area. All services will be expected to have the expertise and resources to meet their clients' needs. Where specialist support or training is required this should be considered by Tenderers.

¹⁵ [The life-changing effects of homelessness on children | The Children's Society \(childrensociety.org.uk\)](https://www.childrensociety.org.uk)

¹⁶ [D.2: Children in care | IICSA Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse](#)

		<p>Support services should consider local community engagement to build trust and awareness amongst the homeless community and ensure service co-production with this group is included as appropriate.</p> <p>Support services should consider relevant good practice guidance¹⁷</p>
Barriers around Literacy, speech and language	<p>Illiterate people can often be trapped in the cycle of deprivation and vulnerability and this may in this context present a barrier to support. DfE suggest that 1 in 5 children who left primary schools in 2018 were unable to write properly. 9 million adults in the UK are said to be illiterate.¹⁸</p> <p>Children who suffer speech and language difficulties are more susceptible to relationship challenges with peers, subsequently more likely to be bullied¹⁹ or criminally exploited.</p>	<p>Services must work to build trust and confidence. High quality training should be available for frontline practitioners, highlighting the importance of language, combating stereotypes and myths. Plain English documentation and any other necessary adaptations to provision to meet the individual's needs should be considered as part of care plans.</p> <p>Services must ensure victims have access to clear information including the services offered, eligibility criteria, access arrangements, service standards, complaint arrangements, and support available to those with language or communication needs as per the accessibility requirements set within the specification.</p>
People living in remote, rural locations	<p>Avon and Somerset's geography can result in accessibility challenges for those living in more rural and remote areas, where transport and support venues are particularly limited. The 2021 Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Plan states that Avon and Somerset covers around 4,800 square kilometres of rolling hills, national parks, levels, market towns, and cities. Overall, 22.8% of the population live in rural areas, however this varies greatly by</p>	<p>Services will be required to offer a range of options include face to face, telephone, digital and other channels as required by the person receiving the service. All delivery channels will be available to people receiving the service living in remote and rural locations with issues such as digital poverty and any other communication issues to be considered.</p>

¹⁷ For Example [Context | Integrated health and social care for people experiencing homelessness | Guidance | NICE](#)

¹⁸ [Britain's battle to get to grips with literacy is laid bare in H is for Harry | Literacy | The Guardian](#)

¹⁹ [Vulnerability to bullying in children with a history of specific speech and language difficulties: European Journal of Special Needs Education: Vol 23 , No 1 - Get Access \(tandfonline.com\)](#)

local authority, ranging from Bristol, which is wholly urban, to Somerset which has almost half the population living in rural areas.

Demographic information has been provided with Specifications to inform Tenderer's Responses.

3. Who might the proposal impact based on the evidence?

- From the evidence, it is assessed **there are no adverse impacts expected** on any protected characteristic group/s as a result of this Commissioning Plan.
- The Commissioning Intentions (and VNA) and design of the Engagement (including VV) has led to a Commissioning Plan that opens up funding to the by-and-for sector, is flexible and responsive to need, whilst meeting the requirements of the MOJ Funding.
- While the corresponding changes and principles relate to all proposed Services, the decision to develop the Adult service response in particular means that there will be a broader array of support options available to all adult victims of crime and anti-social behaviour, which will be extended and inclusive to all protected characteristic groups benefitting from a collaborative response including by-and-for expertise.
- The aim is that this will simplify access to the right support, improve victims' experiences and ultimately, outcomes.
- Whilst we have determined that there is no adverse impact, this does not mean the proposed model and future service delivery is to be complacent. There continues to be a need to ensure all interrelated needs of victims are met on the basis of their protected characteristics, this must be continually reviewed and developed. As part of this, the future provision and professionals within it, must be critically aware when responding to the needs of victims, that they understand and are equipped to respond to issues concerning intersectionality and trauma. These are very often related and can often require a deep and specialist understanding in any given response.
- There are some over-arching areas that through this assessment, have been considered as continuous improvement requirements for the future providers delivering these services and the OPCC in supporting the delivery of equitable and accessible services. These are set out below (but not limited to):

4. Improvements as a result of this Commissioning Plan

Improvement and action required

Who is responsible?

A. Services will routinely gather and use demographic data in order to ensure they understand who is accessing support and who is potentially being missed, in doing so developing a strategy to respond to unmet need.

Service providers
Key Service specification reference – 5.1.43

The OPCC, through service oversight and contract management will review and assess data and potential unmet need.

Both Avon and Somerset level demographics and service level data has been provided to tenderers. Similarly, following a literature review, a documents outlining barriers to

	accessing and engaging with victim support services and the impact of crime on victims and their support needs has been provided.
B. To promote genuine inclusivity of service provision, wherever possible, services should consult with potential service users including those who have protected characteristics to facilitate co-design and co-production with these individuals and communities to ensure services are meeting their needs accordingly.	Service providers Key Service specification reference – 5.1.36 and 5.1.41 The OPCC and PCC, will continue to undertake its function of community engagement and awareness raising to support in achieving genuine inclusivity and reaching seldom heard groups.
C. Services should ensure to build a network and relationship with other specialist services and pathways, to enable and develop abilities to respond to all needs, vulnerabilities and protected characteristics.	Service providers Key Service specification reference 5.1.29 and 5.1.50
D. Peer support groups for minoritised groups would be an important addition to support victims feeling safe and supported through their journey.	Service providers Key Service specification reference 5.1.80 (d)
E. Services may consider developing the response beyond specification requirements to design specialist roles to respond to particular needs or groups.	Service providers (added value, not in specification)
F. Trauma informed approaches, acknowledging intersectionality as part of this must be upheld and continually developed. Co-production must also be part of developing trauma-informed responses for service continuous improvement.	Service providers Key Service specification reference 5.3.13 The OPCC will share local/national Trauma Informed developments or best practice.
G. Achieve a truly diverse workforce by opening up recruitment processes that are considered and targeted and partnering with by-and-for organisations.	Service providers Key Service specification reference 5.3.16 and 5.3.17
H. It will be the service providers’ responsibility to overcome information sharing barriers and work in partnership with other agencies will be tested at tender stage to ensure integration and information sharing is not a barrier to achieving effective outcomes for all people who use our services, including young people.	Service providers Key Service specification reference 5.4.21
I. Drive system and cultural change to tackle inequality and disproportionality of victims and their needs.	The OPCC will support providers to connect with local ‘Tackling Disproportionality’ work and ensure that victim services are contributing to this important agenda and ensuring that the victims voice is part of the Avon and Somerset strategic response.

Specifications reference the role of Services in providing sector leadership.

5. Review

This Assessment has been reviewed and approved by the Victims Recommissioning Board.

The improvements and action set out in this assessment will be reviewed as part of contract management of services and where necessary, the OPCC's Business Plan.

Signed by: 

Date: 5 March 2024

Marc Hole
Director of Policy and Partnerships
Chair of the Victim Services Recommissioning Board
Avon and Somerset Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

For further information on the recommissioning of victim services or to contact the OPCC see the [OPCC website](#).