

Victim Services Recommissioning: Strategy and Intentions for Services Commencing April 2025

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The OPCC welcomes feedback on this document during the engagement period which will remain open until 31 January 2024. Feedback can be shared online via our [survey](#).

If you would like to attend one of our provider events, [click here](#).

The OPCC will also seek to brief partners at key meetings and events. Should you want the OPCC to attend any existing meetings to provide this update please contact [Holly Watson- Hill](#)



Victim Services Recommissioning: Strategy and Intentions for Services Commencing April 2025

Introduction

The OPCC has commissioned services for victims of crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) across Avon and Somerset since April 2015. This document sets out the context, strategy and intentions for services due to commence in April 2025 and is published at the start of an engagement period during which we seek feedback before finalising a Commissioning Plan.

National context

Legislative Framework

The [Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011](#) includes provision for the PCC to make crime and disorder reduction grants to any person. (Section 9). The Act also places a mutual duty on PCCs and responsible authorities in Community Safety Partnerships to cooperate to reduce crime, disorder and reoffending.

The [Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004](#) includes provision for the Secretary of State to pay grants to any such person he considers appropriate in connection with measures to assist victims, witnesses or others affected by offences i.e. government grants to PCCs.

The [Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014](#) includes provisions for local policing bodies to provide or commission services and make grants to help victims or witnesses or others affected by offences and ASB or other crime and disorder reduction e.g. misuse of drug, re-offending. (Section 143).

The [Equality Act 2010](#) Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies to have a due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

The [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) places a duty upon Local Authorities to have a strategy for the provision of accommodation-based support for victims and their children (Section 57) and a local domestic abuse partnership board (section 58).

Procurement Legislation and Public Sector spending rules including Public Contract Regulations 2015, the future Procurement Reform Bill, Social Value Act, Contracting Standing Orders and evidence of Value for Money guide how we purchase services.¹

Agreements

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'.

Similarly, funding from NHSE England towards the Avon and Somerset ISVA service is awarded under the conditions set out in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two funding partners.

¹ Public sector procurement is governed by Public Contract Regulations 2015 which encourages open competition and value for money. There are key principles of equality of treatment, transparency, mutual recognition and proportionality that underpin competitive procurement procedures. Procurement competitive tender procedures will usually be based on a combination of quality and price, weighted accordingly and proportionality in relation to the specific nature of the services or goods to be procured. Provider tender submissions are usually evaluated by a multi-disciplined evaluation panel in accordance with the scoring methodology detailed in the procurement competition, to evaluate and identify the Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT) usually on the basis of Quality and Price combined.

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Victims and Prisoners Bill

The Government published a [Draft Victims Bill](#) on 25 May 2022. The Bill has since undergone [pre-legislative scrutiny](#) with the Justice Committee which published [its final report on the draft Bill](#) on 30 September 2022. The government [responded](#) to this on the 19 January 2023 and when it entered parliament it was expanded to be known as the [Victims and Prisoners Bill](#). Once enacted this will impact upon the OPCC's commissioning intentions as follows:

Definitions – under the proposed legislation, 'victim' will mean a person who has suffered harm as a direct result of being subjected to, or witnessing, criminal conduct. 'Harm' includes physical, mental or emotional harm, and economic loss. This includes witnesses who are harmed, bereaved family members and persons born as a result of criminal conduct. Moreover the status of children as victims is recognised more clearly throughout the Bill.

Commissioning – The Bill introduces a joint statutory duty on PCCs, Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and Local Authorities to work together when commissioning support services for victims of sexual abuse, domestic violence, and other serious violence, so that services can be strategically coordinated and targeted where victims need them.

Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) – The Bill will require that statutory guidance is published about the roles of ISVA and Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs), to increase awareness and consistency of these roles. The OPCC will therefore ensure that ISVAs commissioned under this strategy are compliant and in-line with this guidance (once published).

Victims Code of Practice

The [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime \(Victims' Code\)](#) sets out the services and a minimum standard for these services that must be provided to victims of crime by organisations (referred to as service providers) in England and Wales. This Code acknowledges that victims who are considered vulnerable or intimidated, are a victim of the most serious crime (including a bereaved close relative) or have been persistently targeted are more likely to require specialised assistance (some victims may fall into one or more of these categories). The services we commission are therefore focused on this cohort.

Victims are eligible for Enhanced Rights under this Code as a vulnerable victim if:

- under 18 years of age at the time of the offence or
- the quality of evidence is likely to be affected because they suffer from mental disorder within the meaning of the Mental Health Act 1983
- they have a physical disability or are suffering from a physical disorder.

Victims are also eligible for Enhanced Rights under this Code as an intimidated victim if the service provider considers that the quality of evidence will be affected because of fear of distress about testifying in court.

When assessing whether a victim is intimidated, the service provider must consider:

- the behaviour towards the victim on the part of the suspect, members of their family or associates, or any other person who is likely to be a suspect or witness in the case;
- the victim's age;
- if relevant, the victim's social and cultural background, religious beliefs or political opinions, ethnic origin, domestic and employment circumstances;
- the nature and alleged circumstance of the offence to which the case relates (victims of a sexual offence or human trafficking will be considered to be intimidated); and
- any views expressed by the victim.

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Victims of the most serious crime

Victims are eligible for Enhanced Rights under this Code as a victim of the most serious crime if they are a close relative bereaved by a criminal offence, a victim of domestic abuse, hate crime, terrorism, sexual offences, human trafficking, modern slavery, attempted murder, kidnap, false imprisonment, arson with intent to endanger life or wounding or causing grievous bodily harm with intent.

Persistently targeted victims

Victims are eligible for Enhanced Rights under this Code as a persistently targeted victim if they have been targeted repeatedly as a direct victim of crime over a period of time, particularly if they have been deliberately targeted or are a victim of a campaign of harassment or stalking.

Victim Funding Strategy

The government's [Victim Funding Strategy](#) sets out the context in which PCCs commission services. It also sets five standards commissioners are required to meet. The OPCC's intentions to meet these requirements throughout this process as set out in italics below:

Victims at the centre of commissioning

Encourage victim involvement at every stage of the commissioning process, including shaping objectives or performance indicators for services. The greater the victim engagement, the better suited services will be to meet their needs.	<i>Added to specification for victim voice work being delivered by Tonic.</i>
Commission the appropriate services in response to victim needs, which can be identified using needs assessments and other local tools. Commissioners will be expected to provide a justification of their commissioning decisions.	<i>Needs Assessment has informed this document</i>
Ensure that needs assessments include all the data required to commission appropriate services, including for victims with tailored need. Local needs assessments should happen regularly to ensure that victim needs are continually being met.	<i>Part of Needs Assessment Service Specification Requirement</i>
Build an understanding of their local area through available data and evidence, using this to identify which groups or communities are harder to reach - including those who are currently not engaged with services, or have less access to existing support.	<i>Part of Needs Assessment Service Specification Requirement</i>
Ensure that safeguarding for service users is given due consideration in all services.	<i>Specifications and Safeguarding expertise in process to be secured</i>
Reflect best practices adopted during the pandemic, particularly around how commissioning processes can be adapted or flexible to emergency need.	<i>Noted.</i>

A whole-system approach to commissioning

Work with other commissioners and agencies in their area to agree what is needed locally and to ensure different agencies who may be supporting individuals do so in a sensitive and joined up way – taking account of necessary requirements as part of any relevant statutory duties. Partnerships should	<i>Other commissioners consulted for Needs Assessment and this document will be shared with them during Engagement Plan.</i>
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include Police and Crime Commissioners, local authorities, Clinical Commissioning Groups or Integrated Care Systems, and other local commissioners, agencies and providers.	<i>The OPCC chairs the Sexual Assault and Abuse Strategy (SAAS) Board which includes these partners.</i>
Involve organisations who are not already funded by the commissioner - such as charities, trusts, voluntary organisations and otherwise. These organisations will hold expertise and understanding of the support sector, which can be used to help inform the service development process, even if they are not bidding for funding.	<i>Wide range of partners included in stakeholder list for Needs Assessment and Engagement Plan.</i>
Communicate and work together with partners to prevent duplication of service activity, recognising that both national and local commissioners will set a strategic direction for the services that they commission, and that these should complement each other.	<i>Intentions of other commissioners requested and existing pathways taken into account in this document.</i>
Engage in data and information sharing between themselves and services in a local area, with the expectation that agencies in England will sit on at least one local partnership board with a standing agenda item on victim support services. [footnote 10]	<i>The OPCC chairs/co-chairs both the SAAS Board and Victim Services Provider Forum respectively. This will be reviewed when looking at compliance with the new Commissioning Duty.</i>
Engage in collaboration across local service boundaries, to reflect the knowledge that victims move between areas but do not always get the same level of support.	<i>Avon and Somerset wide commissioning intention which includes five Local Authorities and three ICBs.</i>

Victims receive equitable access to services

Ensure that needs assessments capture the diverse range of support that is required in any local area - including victims with specialised need, victims who have accessibility requirements (such as language differences or disability), and offenders who are also victims who may require support in prison or otherwise.	<i>Part of Needs Assessment</i>
As much as possible, identify and address barriers which prevent victims from using services they are entitled to, with consideration for victims with a disability or victims for whom English is not their first language.	<i>Service Requirement Specification</i>
As much as possible, identify and address problems with referral routes, particularly for services supporting children and young people following sexual violence or domestic abuse.	<i>Part of Needs Assessment</i>
Encourage services to promote themselves to the communities they are supporting.	<i>Service Requirement Specification</i>
Ensure funding stream applications are accessible, particularly to smaller or 'by and for' organisations.	<i>Proportionality of purchasing is part of the OPCC's Commissioning Strategy. We will design a tender process that guides victim service providers to</i>

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	<i>include/develop by-and-for² resources for victims through partnership or sub-contracting arrangements with local specialist organisations to improve the expertise and reach of victim services.</i>
Ensure services do not discriminate against service users and staff and have well promoted processes in place to deal with any potential incidents.	<i>Specifications</i>
Clear and consistent mechanisms for reporting and evaluation	
Be compliant with the proposed level of reporting and metrics. Where new requirements are identified, we [i.e. government] will consult with local commissioners and the victim support sector on any changes in advance of implementation.	<i>Service Requirement Specification</i>
As far as possible, ensure and encourage collection of demographic and equalities data of the victims being supported.	<i>Service Requirement and Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) Specification</i>
Ensure that escalation routes in the event of unacceptable performance are clearly communicated to providers, including reporting back to central government.	<i>Service Requirement Specification</i>
Mandate clear timelines on reporting and escalation should services be at risk of failure, to avoid any breakdowns in service provision.	<i>Service Requirement Specification</i>
Ensure there is a clear and collective understanding of what success looks like at the start of a service. This will be in the form of clear outcomes and performance indicators.	<i>Service Requirement and use of outcomes and metrics. KPIs to be developed. Specification</i>
Ensure evaluation plans are included in any contracts or grants and made clear to providers. Services will be assessed on their impact and benefit to victims.	<i>Service Requirement (if relevant) Specification</i>
Promote sustainable funding	
Pass multi-year funding commitments on to their providers, to encourage stability in the sector.	<i>Contract length set in Intentions document is longer than the funding duration from government.</i>
Ensure where transformational or innovation funds^[footnote 13] are offered, a clear and sensitive exit strategy is in place.	<i>Noted for broader OPCC work</i>
Encourage the retention of staff with experience to prevent loss of knowledge and information.	<i>Include Knowledge Banking and transitional knowledge sharing in service specifications</i>
Encourage and promote seeking multiple funding sources for services, including the availability of funding from foundations and trusts.	<i>Service Requirement Specification</i>
Ensure that the application processes for funding streams are proportionate to the amount of funding on offer, and that the process for applying for funding is consistent across comparable funding amounts.	<i>Proportionality of purchasing is part of the OPCC's Commissioning Strategy.</i>

² 'Specialist services that are led, designed and delivered by and for the users and communities they aim to service (for example, victims and survivors from ethnic minority backgrounds, deaf and disabled victims and LGBT victims)'. Source: Victim Funding Strategy

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National services

The OPCC’s commissioning of victim services in Avon and Somerset considers the availability of nationally commissioned services and seeks to complement, not duplicate these resources:

Service	Description
<p><u>Adult victims of modern slavery (under the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) contract)</u></p>	<p>Adults in England and Wales who are recognised as a potential victim of modern slavery through the NRM have access to specialist tailored support for a period of at least 30 days while their case is considered, which may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ access to relevant legal advice ○ accommodation ○ protection ○ independent emotional and practical help <p>Support in England and Wales is currently delivered by the Salvation Army and a number of subcontractors. The Salvation Army will assess each potential victim to determine what support is most appropriate.</p>
<p><u>Independent Child Trafficking Guardians (ICTGs)</u></p>	<p>Independent Child Trafficking Guardians (ICTGs) are an independent source of advice for trafficked children, somebody who can speak up on their behalf. The service was formerly known as Independent Child Trafficking Advocates (ICTAs), but this was amended following the recommendations of the independent review of the Modern Slavery Act.</p> <p>From May 2021, ICTGs are available in two-thirds of local authorities in England and Wales, locally this includes Bristol.</p>
<p><u>Homicide Service</u></p>	<p>The service is offered to bereaved families by their police family liaison officer (known as the FLO) or the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) country caseworker. The FLO is an essential part of the investigation and a key link to the bereaved family. FLOs are key partners with Victim Support in the provision of support.</p> <p>Once the service has consent, a homicide caseworker is assigned and a meeting is offered; this can be face-to-face, by telephone or online depending on preference.</p> <p>The National Homicide Service supports people bereaved by murder and manslaughter in England and Wales. This vital service helps people in a number of ways, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ navigating and knowing what to expect from the criminal justice system; ○ helping with their immediate needs, such as accessing financial assistance; and ○ providing help through our trusted partner services including bereavement and/or trauma counselling, restorative justice, debt, legal and housing advice.
<p><u>Victims of Terrorism</u></p>	<p>The Home Office funds three organisations as part of a victim and survivor pathway to help victims and survivors cope with, and recover from, the impact and consequences of a terrorist attack.</p>

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- Victim Support - conducts terror incident needs assessments (TINA) for each survivor - they refer individuals on to the following services if appropriate;
- South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLAM) – provides clinical mental health assessments and onward referral for those affected by terrorism; and
- Tim Parry Johnathan Ball Peace Foundation – facilitates a long-term, peer support network to help victims and survivors of terrorism support each other

All victims and survivors are first referred, or can self-refer, to Victim Support. Victim Support conducts a terror incident needs assessment (TINA) to make sure all the individual’s needs are identified and addressed.

The victim or survivor owns the TINA and takes it with them as they access each support organisation in the pathway, so that they don’t have to repeat their story.

These support services are available for victims or survivors of attacks in the UK, or when returning to the UK following an attack overseas, as well as those affected by historic attacks who would benefit from more support.

The pathway is only one potential route to support. It does not replace the support already provided by these or other organisations.

Support for those affected by fatal and serious injury road traffic collisions

At the time of writing, the OPCC understand that the Road Safety Division within the [Department for Transport](#) is reviewing the provision of post collision victim care, which falls within the fifth pillar of the Safe System ‘post-crash response’.

Specialist services have been directed to the ringfenced [Road Safety Fund](#) held by the Avon and Somerset Police Community Trust.

Victims of Fraud

The Fraud and Cyber Crime Reporting and Analysis Service (FCCRAS) has been re-procured in 2023. This project is being led by the Home Office and City of London Police to replace the national Action Fraud service. The service will provide a single point of contact for all victims of fraud and cyber-crime to report their offences. It will use an interactive dashboard where victims can track the progress of their case and receive tailored fraud protect advice. It will refer the victim to the National Economic Crime Victim Care Unit, where an individual may receive support from the national service provided by the City of London Police. This support will mostly take the form of the virtual / telephone-based support. Where the victim requires more intensive support they will be referred to their local police force. The new service is due to launch in April 2024 and is independent from any local commissioning.

[Victims and witnesses at criminal courts](#) (Court-based Witness Service)

Trained volunteers provide practical information about the court process. They can also give emotional support to help witnesses feel more confident when giving evidence. The service can:

- provide information about the court process
- show witnesses the courtroom before the trial
- be there to talk to in confidence
- accompany witnesses when they give their evidence
- give support on the day of the trial - at verdict and sentencing
- help prepare witnesses who need extra support - at their home or another safe place
- help witnesses claim expenses
- work with other agencies to make sure the right support is provided

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ refer witnesses to our partner organisations - including local Citizens Advice, for support with other issues before, during or after the trial
Victims of rape and sexual violence	<p><u>Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Fund</u></p> <p>The overarching aim of the Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Fund (RASASF) is to provide holistic, trauma-informed, survivor-led support to victims-survivors who have experienced rape or sexual abuse at any point in their lives, regardless of where they live in England and Wales or whether they report the crime to the police. This means providing support that is specifically tailored to meet the needs of victims-survivors of rape and sexual abuse - to help them to cope, build resilience, and move forward with their lives. The local recipients of this award are part of the Avon and Somerset Sexual Violence Alliance.</p> <p><u>24/7 Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Line</u></p> <p>This is service provided by Rape Crisis England and Wales for anyone aged 16+ in England and Wales who has been affected by rape, child sexual abuse, sexual assault, sexual harassment or any other form of sexual violence – at any point in their life. This includes people who have experienced sexual violence or abuse themselves, as well as their friends, family or anyone else who is trying to support them.</p>
Other Government grants	The government awards other specific grants or contracts directly to providers from time to time.

Local context

Police and Crime Plan

The [Police and Crime Plan](#) sets the overall direction for the Avon and Somerset Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Constabulary. Specifically on commissioning the Plan commits to:

- *Remain outcomes focused so we know the impact we are having on service users and communities while maximising the positive social and environmental impact we have in delivering services.*
- *Work with the market to enable best service delivery and put in place proportionate and transparent commissioning and outcomes monitoring*
- *Ensure that lived experience of service users informs the design and delivery of services*
- *Work in partnership with other commissioners on shared outcomes and issues of joint priority in order to ensure the most efficient and effective approach. Wherever possible take a co-commissioning approach.*
- *Undertake effective planning so we have a clear rationale for commissioning activity with resources allocated according to need and in line with the areas of focus set out in this plan.*

In addition, the OPCC’s stated purpose is ‘to lead improvement in efficiency and effectiveness of policing, victim support and criminal justice services on behalf of local people’ and our vision is ‘Excellent victim support, accountable policing, and fairer criminal justice services for all’.

OPCC Commissioning Strategy

The OPCC Commissioning Strategy sets out our approach to commissioning services and outcomes. It 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

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victim services in scope for this process we are acting as Lead Commissioner. For an overview of all funding allocated by the OPCC please see our [website](#).

Current Victim Services in Avon and Somerset

Under the Commissioning Plan that runs to March 2025, the following services are in place. Since the contract were first awarded, the MOJ has made uplift funding available for core and ISVA services. The funding shown below is how this is spent in 23/24 i.e. at the time of writing. These services/funds are in scope for recommissioning.

Service	23/24 Budget	23/24 total by Provider
A Practical and Emotional Support Service for adult victims of any crime or Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) [contract]	£327,670	£337,670 <i>Victim Support</i>
Practical and Emotional Support Service for adult victims of any crime or Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Alarms Budget	£10,000	
An Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) Service [contract]	£411,011	£906,979 <i>Safelink</i>
ISVA UPLIFT	£495,978	
Enhanced adult support crime and ASB	£254,932	£281,032 <i>VOCAS</i>
CORE UPLIFT - Enhanced adult support crime and ASB	£26,100	
A Children and Young People Support Service for victims of any crime or ASB up to the age of 18 (or 25 where there are additional needs) [contract]	£165,000	£207,866.84 <i>Young Victims Service, North Somerset Council</i>
CORE UPLIFT - Children and Young People Support Service	£42,866.84	
A Restorative Justice Service for victims of any crime or ASB [contract]	£179,000	£179,000 <i>Resolve West</i>
Modern Slavery Support Grant [grant]	£40,000	£40,000 <i>Unseen UK</i>
Funding towards Prevention Work [grants administered by Community Foundations]. The wider OPCC will consider the future of this funding stream beyond March 2025 separately to the recommissioning exercise. As such this funding is within the envelope for services recommissioning.	£45,000	
<i>Unallocated</i>	£4,446	
TOTAL ANNUAL EXPENDITURE inc. UPLIFT	£2,002,003.84	
TOTAL ANNUAL EXPENDITURE excl. UPLIFT	£1,437,059	

Out of Scope

The services that the OPCC commission operate within a broader context of provisions that are outside of the scope of this commissioning exercise. Some key examples are given below to provide context to the way we use our funding.

Victim Referral Hub

The Avon and Somerset Victim Referral Hub (Lighthouse Safeguarding Unit) includes victim and witness care both pre and post charge as well as safeguarding functions. It is therefore funded from a variety of sources – Constabulary core budgets, OPCC core commissioning budget and MOJ victims funding. The safeguarding element is funded by the Constabulary. At the time of writing the OPCC and Constabulary are currently reviewing the model in Avon and Somerset, alongside the recommissioning of our core external services.

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The OPCC will seek assurances during the redesign of the Victim Referral Hub around the suitability of referrals to services so to maximise the OPCC's investment. This should include those outside of OPCC commissioned services so victims aren't passed between providers when their broader primary needs could be met at first point of contact.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) Services

Local Authorities lead the commissioning of exploitation services and the OPCC provides an annual grant to these pooled budgets. The majority of local authorities are bolstering their in-house services (child social care) to meet the needs of survivors of CCE and CSE while Bristol and South Gloucestershire for example are commissioning a strategic delivery partner. As such we consider the specific needs of victims of CSE and CCE to be out of scope this this commissioning exercise but would expect successful providers to work closely with specialist services as required.

Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)

The SARC is commissioned by NHSE along with the OPCC and Constabulary. It offers medical care, emotional and psychological support, and practical help to anyone who has been raped or sexually assaulted. The specialist team at The Bridge supports:

- Adult or children, living in Bristol, South Gloucestershire, North Somerset, Bath & North East Somerset or Somerset.
- Children living in Gloucestershire, Wiltshire or Swindon.

This service and its functions are therefore out of scope.

Specialist Sexual Violence Therapeutic services

The Sexual Violence Alliance is commissioned by NHSE along with the OPCC, Bristol City Council, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG) and Somerset ICBs to provide therapeutic and specialist support services to survivors of sexual violence and child sexual abuse across Avon and Somerset. This service and its functions are therefore out of scope.

Other Mental Health and Therapeutic Services

Beyond this, the OPCC believes that the commissioning of any therapeutic service should have health commissioner involvement meaning that any formal therapeutic or mental health intervention is out of scope of this commissioning.

Specialist Domestic Abuse Services inc. IDVAs

Specialist domestic abuse services are commissioned by the five Local Authorities in Avon and Somerset. The [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) places a duty upon Local Authorities to have a strategy for the provision of accommodation-based support for victims and their children (Section 57) and a local domestic abuse partnership board (section 58). These partnerships also commission specialist community-based services such as IDVAs. The OPCC contributes to local DA services via both its Police and Crime Grant to Community Safety Partnerships and its allocation of funding for IDVAs from the Ministry of Justice general grant.

Overall, we consider specialist local services to be the primary route for domestic abuse referrals. However, we accept that there may be some standard risk cases where there are support needs that may not be otherwise met through specialist services and therefore require support from all crime services.

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In addition to the Formula-based grant, the OPCC receives a General Grant to 'provide or commission dedicated emotional and practical support services for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence to help them cope and, as far as possible recover from the effects of domestic abuse and sexual violence'. The requirements for this funding are prescribed by the MOJ and are as such are presumed to be out of scope for this Commissioning Intentions and Strategy document.

Specialist Hate Crime services

Local Authorities are the lead for commissioning specialist hate crime services and understanding local need. As a result, some local authorities commission or contribute funds towards specialist hate crime services (with one using the OPCC Police and Crime Grant to do so). Moreover, the National Lottery Community Fund also makes a significant contribution to local support services. As such we consider specialist local services to be the primary route for hate crime referrals. However, we accept that there may be some cases where there are support needs that may not be otherwise met through existing capacity in specialist services and therefore require support from all crime services.

Police and Crime Grant

The OPCC provides a Police and Crime Grant to Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), to support their work in assessing local community issues and commissioning local services and projects to deal with community concerns. Services supported through the Police and Crime Grant include but are not limited to drug and alcohol services, domestic homicide reviews, hate crime support, youth offending teams and many other initiatives relating to local authority community safety priorities. This locally allocated funding is out of scope for this Commissioning Intentions and Strategy document.

Victims Prevention Fund and Commissioner's Crime Prevention Fund

The OPCC works with Somerset and Quartet Community Foundations to deliver the *Commissioner's Crime Prevention Fund* (CCPF) and the *Preventing Victims Fund*. Through the CCPF, the OPCC awards small grants of up to £5000 to charities and community groups with the aim of preventing crime across Avon and Somerset. The fund aims to make direct awards to leaders within communities affected by crime. The initiative launched in April 2021 and will run for three years. The Preventing Victims Fund provides grants of up to £20,000 to groups that already provide services to victims of crime, enabling them to explore approaches that could prevent people from becoming victims in the first place. This funding is out of scope for this Commissioning Intentions and Strategy document.

Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP)

The Serious Violence Duty requires councils and local services to work together to share information and target interventions to prevent and reduce serious violence. Supporting this, VRP funding is provided to the OPCC by the Home Office and funds the Avon and Somerset hub and spoke model. This sees the hub allocate funding between the five area spokes (based on Local Authority areas). Moreover, there is a contribution from the Youth Endowment Fund.

The Avon and Somerset Strategic Needs Assessment outlines all five spokes' local problem profiles, demonstrating what each area requires to meet local need. Each area then decides what interventions or staff costs to fund. Prevention and reduction in serious violence is driven through a variety of sports provisions, to mentoring, reaching larger numbers of young people. Additionally, one-to-one interventions helping families to support prevention and reduction in serious violence. As such, this work is out of scope.

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Support for Offenders

Overall, we consider the specific needs of offenders related to their offending to be out of scope for this commissioning exercise but would expect successful providers to work closely with relevant sectors as required. Specifically of note, the MOJ is funding work to support the whole system approach to women in the criminal justice system up to March 2025. The funding covers a strategic lead to oversee the delivery of the female offender strategy and recommendations on how to improve the justice system for women.

Similarly, Drive is funded by the Home Office and some Local Authorities to March 2025. This is a behaviour change programme for high risk, high harm perpetrators of domestic abuse (as well as some support for the corresponding victims). It is based on MARAC referrals and is inclusive to male and female perpetrators. The service began supporting in South Gloucestershire in February 2021 and expanded to cover Bristol and North Somerset in August 2023.

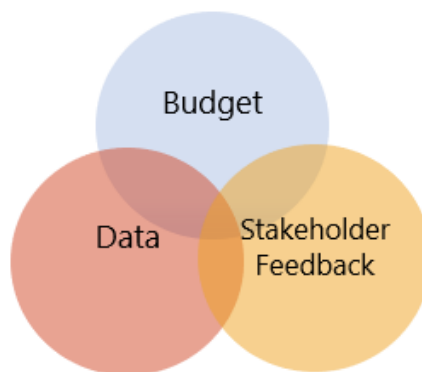
The [ASCEND](#) team manage Out of Court Disposals within the Constabulary. Their role is to support staff and officers by gate keeping cases that take an alternative route to a conviction by checking suitability for an Out of Court Disposal which may include referral for behaviour change programmes or tailored support services. The ASCEND workers also support with writing letters of apology to victims in line with restorative practice. The remit of this work and the support pathways are out of scope for this commissioning exercise.

Mediation Services

While Mediation shares some characteristics with Restorative Justice, it is a different type of intervention. In some cases this forms part of the Local Authority response to ASB. It is out of scope for this process. ³

Developing Our Intentions

Within the context set out above, the OPCC has developed its commissioning intentions by considering three key factors:



³ More broadly on ASB, the government has announced that under the new Anti-Social Behaviour Plan, which includes measures to provide law enforcement and other agencies with additional tools to combat anti-social behaviour. The 'Immediate Justice' pilot will be rolled out across England and Wales, with implementation for Avon and Somerset in April 2024. The scheme will target those found committing ASB and will make perpetrators repair the damage they have inflicted on victims and the community. This will work towards providing support to reducing ASB in Avon and Somerset.

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Budget and Financial Planning

The total funding envelope available for this recommissioning exercise is set out below:

Total PCC Funding p.a.	<i>OPCC budget</i>	£245,550.96
Total partner funding p.a.	<i>NHSE contribution to ISVAs This sees an inflationary increase to the 23/24 period indicated above</i>	£128,139
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. UPLIFT		£2,008,475.84
TOTAL ANNUAL INCOME excl. UPLIFT		£1,443,531.00

It is important to emphasise that while there have been sizeable uplifts from government for domestic and sexual abuse services over recent years, this has not been the case for the MOJ formula grant that funds the majority of victim services within scope. As such we are commissioning services from a budget that has remained flat. Moreover, note that we are able to extend support to victims of ASB through the addition of local OPCC funding as MOJ funding is for victims of crime only.

Changes

The £45k p.a. earmarked for prevention under the last Commissioning Plan will be retained in the support services budget. This funding has been confirmed with Community Foundations to March 2025 under a 'Preventing Victims Fund' and was originally allocated due to recommendations made in the 2018 Needs Assessment. The scope, budget and priorities of OPCC Prevention Funds will be considered outside of this recommissioning process. Therefore, the overall budget available for support services will increase by £45k p.a.

The £10k p.a. allocated to the current *Adults* Lot for alarms and personal safety equipment as noted elsewhere is to be re-allocated so enable equity of this provision.

NHSE's investment in an Avon and Somerset ISVA service under this new commissioning period has been confirmed under a MOU with the OPCC at £128,139 p.a. (pending confirmation of any future standard NHS uplifts) up to and including 2029/30.

Future changes

The contract(s) will be designed to allow increases the budget of any Lot over the life of the contract should relevant funding be made available e.g. from the MOJ. This will give the OPCC and commissioned providers the ability to respond to emergency funding. However, to enable an inclusive approach this would not be the default route for any additional funding meaning that consideration will be given to open grants processes should that be required, possible or a better means of achieving the aims of any given fund.

In terms of inflationary uplifts this is not something that the OPCC is able to commit to over the length of such long contract(s). However, we are considering building in the ability to have an annual discussion about cost pressures and mitigations including additional funding by exception.

Uplift funds shown above will be removed from the commissioning budget if not continued by the MOJ beyond March 2025.

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Working with Avon and Somerset Constabulary

Providers will not be expected to provide Avon and Somerset Constabulary (ASC) with formal training for policing qualifications over and above reciprocal training about services. Instead, additional resources will need to be allocated by ASC so that OPCC funding for support provision is sufficiently ringfenced for its purpose. Beyond this, the OPCC supports providers to seek fair recompense for any formal training offered **over and above** what might otherwise be reasonably expected to raise awareness of the service and enable partnership working.

The OPCC do not expect providers to cover the cost of collocating with Avon and Somerset Constabulary from service budgets.

Current Service costs

South West Police Procurement (SWPP) have undertaken analysis of current contract funding breakdown (from original proposals).

Needs Assessment

As part of the recommissioning process, the OPCC contracted [TONIC](#) to conduct a Victim Needs Assessment, which engaged 392 victims and professionals local to Avon and Somerset and considered findings from:

- **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.
- **Surveys** that reached 302 individuals, including 29 victims, 7 respondents on behalf of a victim, 189 key stakeholders and 77 service providers.
- **Qualitative, semi-structured interviews and focus groups** with 90 professionals conducted both virtually and during in-person site visits.
- **Site visits and ethnographic observations** of local victim support services.

The following findings are taken from their Executive Summary.

Needs Assessment Headlines - Data

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 Crime Survey 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.

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 also be considered alongside the context of significant

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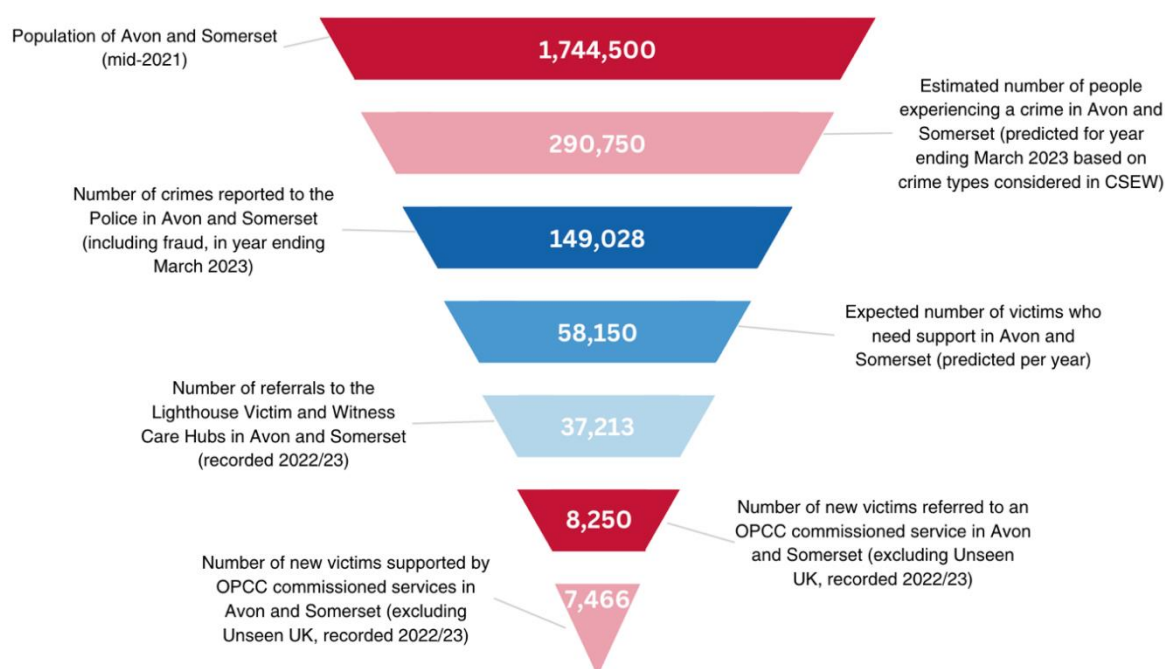
rises in court waiting times following on from the COVID-19 pandemic, and the ‘cost-of-living crisis’, which has impacted everybody across the country and continues to have a large effect on people's day-to-day lives.

Quantitative data analysis uncovered that referrals to the Lighthouse Victim and Witness Care Hub, Victim Support, SafeLink, and the Young Victims’ Service have all increased notably in recent years. Specifically, the number of victims referred to SafeLink over the 8-year reporting period increased by 122% from an average of 861 between 2015-18 to an average of 1,824 between 2018-22. Similarly, the average number of users referred to the Young Victims’ Service between 2019-23 (777) was almost exactly double the average number between 2015-19 (387).

To explore this further, we attempted to map the potential overall level of unmet demand in Avon and Somerset:

- Based on the CSEW estimation that 1 in 6 people will experience a crime, we can predict **around 300,000 people in the Avon and Somerset Police Force area will be a victim of crime every year.**
- Of whom it can be estimated **just over 58,000 are likely to want support** – this is based on assumptions made by Victim Support whereby 20% of victims are likely to require some level of support to cope and recover.
- In 2022/23, **149,028 crimes (including fraud) were reported to Avon and Somerset Police.**
- In this time, **37,213 victims were referred to the Lighthouse** Victim and Witness Care Hubs, and **the OPCC commissioned services** in scope for this Victim Needs Assessment (excluding Unseen UK) **received a total of 8,250 ‘new’ referrals.**
- This means **a total of 45,463 victims were referred to some form of support**⁴.
- A total of **7,466 ‘new’ victims were support by an OPCC commissioned service** (excluding Unseen UK) in 2022/23.

While is not an exact estimate, this indicative figure – depicted in the figure below – can be used to demonstrate the potential level of unmet demand in Avon and Somerset.



⁴ Please note: some victims may have been referred to the Lighthouse and a commissioned service – or indeed multiple commissioned services including non-OPCC services. The most notable in terms of volume would be specialist domestic abuse services commissioned by Local Authorities.

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Needs Assessment Findings – Stakeholder Feedback

Working Well

Most participants spoke highly of the current commissioned services, their staff, and trusted the support offered to victims. In particular, professionals referenced the flexible approach and dedication of staff teams. These views are reinforced by the service activity and outcomes data 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 also in many cases, their experience of the CJS.

Furthermore, within the Victim Needs Assessment survey, professionals were asked to rate different parts of a victim's journey through the OPCC commissioned services they were familiar with. The results from this were overwhelmingly positive. On average, 71% of professionals rated the referral processes into the OPCC commissioned services as 'good' or 'very good', this was 75% for both joint working and accessibility of services and was 80% for services ability to support victims to 'cope and recover, as far as possible'. The overall quality of support was rated as 'good' or 'very good' by 85% of professionals, and almost all professional respondents (98%) said they would recommend the OPCC commissioned services to victims in need of support.

The current model of provision was viewed positively as participants valued having separate support services for children and young people and adults. Respondents also highlighted that the separation between support services and the Police and wider Criminal Justice System (CJS) was important to victims, and said that it is crucial that victims can access support regardless of whether or not they have reported the crime. There was substantial evidence of services attempting to implement trauma-informed approaches to their provision, which could be enhanced by conducting reviews and evaluating approaches, whilst looking for areas for development.

Current Gaps

Generally, the existing provision of support for victims across Avon and Somerset was described positively by participants; however, key themes emerged in terms of gaps in provision for certain crime types:

Non-domestic abuse related stalking: Police recorded incidents of stalking and harassment in Avon and Somerset have increased from an average of 1,241 during 2013-15 to an average of 11,964 during 2016-20, and then further to an average of 17,477 during 2021-23. 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). This is a role practitioners already working within the current victim services could be upskilled and accredited in at a cost of £1,500-£1,900 per person. This was considered by professionals, with relevant knowledge of this crime type, to be the ideal solution moving forwards into this next round of OPCC commissioning. Whilst Police data clearly demonstrates an increase in stalking and harassment reports, it could be beneficial for the OPCC to undertake further work with relevant stalking leads within the Police, to try to ascertain the scale of non-domestic abuse related stalking exclusively, so as to make informed decisions about allocating proportionate levels of funding.

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. Generally, Police reported incidents of hate crime have remained at a consistent level over the latest 4-year reporting period, averaging 3,226 incidents. Although, Police recorded incidents of hate crime did increase by 16.8% from 2022/23 compared to 2021/22 in North Somerset; by 6.9% in Somerset; and by 6.2% in South Gloucestershire. In the same period, hate crimes fell by 8.7% in Bristol. Nevertheless, hate crime, and in particular, a local specialist provider not currently directly funded by the OPCC, was mentioned in the majority of the interviews and all of the focus groups carried out as part of this Victim Needs Assessment. The majority of OPCC funded services described having worked in partnership with, and referring clients into this service, as a more

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specialist form of support relative to hate. Of note, approximately 17% of adult advocacy referrals in 2022/23 were for victims of hate crime.

Fraud: Although the data relating to fraud shows a decrease of approximately 13% from 2021/22 to 2022/23 it was suggested by some commissioned services that fraud referrals are steadily rising. The feeling from case workers was that this is largely due to advancements in technology, social media, and relationship 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. 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 practically, in their attempt to recover what has been lost, as well as emotionally, to overcome the stress and upset experienced.

Antisocial behaviour (ASB): Antisocial behaviour was raised throughout the surveys and in many of the interviews and focus groups as a major gap in the current support model locally. The annual number of recorded incidents of antisocial behaviour has shown a fairly consistent trend of decline since 2014/15, at an average rate of -9.2% per year. However, with the exception of theft, antisocial behaviour is the crime type (in scope for this Victim Needs Assessment) with the highest number of incidents reported to the Police, with 23,269 incidents of antisocial behaviour in Avon and Somerset recorded in 2022/23. Service providers and stakeholders felt that the current support offered to victims of antisocial behaviour is inadequate and that a lengthier form of support is required due to the complex and ongoing nature of antisocial behaviour cases. In recognition that the OPCC commissioned support services are not there to intervene or stop the problem, there is potential for them to work more closely with the Local Authority antisocial behaviour teams, via a tiered approach to antisocial behaviour support, to identify those in most need of further support, pool resources, and avoid duplication.

Support for families: It is well documented that crime also has an impact on family members, friends, colleagues, and wider communities. Relatives and friends 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. Throughout the fieldwork, the lack of holistic support for family members, both of victims, and where the family as a whole have been targeted, was raised. It was highlighted that there is a lack of help and advice for families who are trying to support a victim and it was suggested that a valuable addition to all current services would be a dedicated family case worker. It was also recognised that where multiple family members are victims, such as in domestic abuse cases, they are often not given support at the same time, which can cause distress and re-traumatisation. A family-centric approach to these situations was suggested to tackle these issues, in which families are able to access support at the same time.

Mental health support: 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. It was suggested that many of those accessing support from the OPCC commissioned services required some form of mental health support. The waiting times for access to counselling and other forms of therapeutic intervention were reported to be lengthy. 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. Service providers, particularly those working for SafeLink, also commented on the threshold clients need to meet in order to have access to some form of mental health support, stating that they often find their clients 'fall short' or are categorised as 'too severe'. This is an important point to consider as the literature describes how victims of crime experience a variety of short and long-term emotional and psychological effects. The Office for National Statistics has reported that 81% of victims of violence expressed being emotionally affected by the incident, and it has been found that between 21% and 33% of victims of violent crime develop symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. This figure is typically believed to be significantly higher for victims of rape and sexual assault.

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

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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.

Barriers to Access and Engagement

There were several barriers to victims accessing or engaging with support services that were identified by participants. Barriers could be classified as personal, structural/organisational, or sociocultural. 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: Importantly, most 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 – those who may not trust the Police or CJS. 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.

Currently, within the OPCC commissioned services' data returns, most of the providers lack accurate demographic data capture, especially in terms of sexual orientation, ethnicity, and disability status. Utilising demographic information and comparing this to the latest available Census data for the local community, to inform service design and improvement has been recognised as best practice. By routinely doing this, services will undoubtedly widen the scope of their provision and become more inclusive. This is vital, as while the population in Avon and Somerset is much less ethnically diverse than the national average, this figure has increased since 2011, and in Bristol, Asian, Black, Mixed or Other ethnic minority backgrounds constitute 18.9% of residents, equivalent to the national average.

Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that some services have already begun to look at what is required outside of their original service design with specialist posts.

Areas for Improvement

Streamline the landscape of adult victim services: Professionals sometimes 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 this would streamline the landscape of support available to adult victims and create efficiencies.

Increase promotion and awareness raising of victims' services: The feedback received via all forms of engagement demonstrated a lack of knowledge relating to victim services from the Police and other CJS partner agencies. Many service providers also highlighted a lack of promotion and awareness of victim support services within the community to the general public. There was a feeling that if you are victim of a crime in Avon and Somerset, you would not have a clear idea of how to access support, particularly if you did not want to report to the Police. Ideas amongst the commissioned services of how to raise their profile amongst the public were present, but they state that their capacity to do so is limited due to resource. There was a suggestion about having a dedicated website – potentially organised and hosted by the Lighthouse Victim and Witness Care Hubs – to advertise all victim support services across Avon and Somerset. The idea behind this is that it would be easier for victims to have access to advice, self-help resources, and contact information for all support services.

Enhance communication and collaborative working between service providers, the Police, and case workers: Despite the majority of service provider staff and managers saying they felt partnership working between the

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commissioned services is strong, it is clear from the feedback that improvements can be made. Not least, because at present, collaboration between providers appears to primarily be initiated and led by the OPCC team. Service managers liked the idea of coming together and collaborating more and case workers expressed a desire to meet, and work more closely, with those from other services. They felt that having the opportunity to do so would enhance their knowledge of other areas of support and help to iron out any reoccurring issues relating to inappropriate referrals or lack of understanding relating to service remits.

A further area for improvement relates to the communication between support services, the Police, and other statutory agencies. From external organisations, there was mixed feedback in relation to partnership working with the OPCC commissioned support services and in some cases a real lack of understanding or even knowledge of what support is available to victims across Avon and Somerset. There are some examples of promising practice where reciprocal training has been offered and received well, but due to the staff turnover within social care, the NHS, and mental health services, plus the ongoing recruitment of new Police Officers, the maintenance of this is difficult. The communication and relationship between the Police and support services needs to be better to ensure victims receive the right level of support along with investigation/case updates whilst journeying through the CJS. It is known that, particularly in regard to 'vulnerable' victims, without the right level of engagement with and between professionals, they are likely to drop out of the CJS process. Some service providers suggested that having an allocated resource to do this work along with some community engagement and outreach with the public would be hugely beneficial.

Improve data collection and information sharing: During interviews and focus groups it was highlighted that not only do the OPCC commissioned services need to improve their data collection, but some consideration is needed around how they use this information to steer service improvement. Work needs to be done to educate service provider staff and volunteers on why this information is required and how integral this can be in relation to future service success. Future providers may wish to explore the potential to employ a data analyst / administrator, whose responsibility it would be to drive more accurate data capture. During a focus group with the Lighthouse Victim and Witness Care Hub staff, it was suggested that a better way to refer into the OPCC commissioned services would be via one common referral form that encapsulates all of the relevant information needed by all providers.

Restorative Justice: Whilst the current providers are very passionate about Restorative Justice, the wider understanding in relation to suitable cases, Restorative Justice practices, and the service Resolve West provides is limited, leading to low referral and uptake rates. The total number of 'new' referrals for Restorative Justice in 2022/23 was 61. When survey participants from the Police were asked about their experience, many felt unable to provide comment due to the service being unknown to them or uncertainty in relation to the Restorative Justice process. As such, many professionals believed that a standalone Restorative Justice service is no longer required. It was suggested in some of the 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 to all adult victims accessing the general victim recovery service.

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Commissioning Strategy

Vision

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.

Inputs

- MOJ, OPCC and NHS England resources to commission services - under this commissioning plan

Other resources we are reliant upon for our investment to succeed in achieving our vision:

- *Other funded specialist victim services (national e.g. Home Office, local e.g. Local Authority, charitable)*
- *Statutory services including the Police and Victim Care Hub*
- *Non-specialist resources to support victims*

Outputs

- Referrals into services (inc. demographic information and crime category)
- Repeat victimisation/referral
- Waiting time before intervention delivered
- Cases opened (inc. demographic information and to monitor disengagement)
- Support Plans developed (by intervention) and onward support needs actioned
- Confidence to engage with CJS – reported to Police before/during support
- Service Exit (inc. length of support)
- Coproduction impact
- Staff satisfaction/feedback
- Evidence of partnership working

Outcomes

The government's Victim Funding Strategy sets the outcomes that victim services will be expected to work towards and will form the bedrock of the OPCC's commissioning:

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).

Impact

- OPCC resources are used to commission efficient and effective support services that meet the needs of victims in Avon and Somerset and provide a coordinated victim experience.
- OPCC commissions good quality services evidenced by quantitative and qualitative data.

Rationale

- Our strategy relates directly to the evidence presented in the Needs Assessment and the requirements upon us set by the Ministry of Justice.

Assumptions

- OPCC resources are used for supporting victims and not for elements outside of this scope.
- The Lighthouse Safeguarding Unit correctly assess needs and make appropriate referrals to services.
- People who do not report to the Police are able to find out about support services.

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- There are shared and common definitions of important elements e.g. ASB, those who require enhanced support as defined by VCOP.
- The MOJ will continue to provide funding for victim services at current levels beyond March 2025.
- OPCC commissioned services cannot make the crime or ASB stop, that is the role of other statutory services.
- Victim support services are not a replacement for other services or agencies with statutory responsibilities.
- In terms of recognising the importance of prevention, the funding in scope for this commissioning is to provide support for people to cope and recover. While building resilience and increasing awareness through services does have a preventative impact, this is not the primary focus as set out in our grant agreement with the Ministry of Justice.

Risks

- Disinvestment by other commissioners for services listed as out of scope impacts demand upon OPCC services.
- Reduction in the MOJ victims grant to OPCC, in particular the ending of the uplifts after March 2025.
- Changes in demand for services due to increases in certain types of crime/ASB and other landscape changes e.g. Police Officer uplift, Investigative approaches such as Bluestone, increased awareness and confidence to report.
- Continued inflation makes services undeliverable within the OPCC's budget.
- Impact of events outside of support provided do not allow for achievement of outcomes – we must accept that recovery is not always linear.
- Needs beyond those arising from the crime or ASB are greater than those within scope for our services.
- MOJ funding is used outside of its scope leading to non-compliance for the OPCC's government grant.
- Expectations about resources and the services we are able to commission do not reflect our government grant value or agreement.

Principles

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 we want to commission support according to need not crime type and as such it is proposed that the services to be commissioned will continue to include support for victims of ASB where needs are identified (this may be because they are priority victims under VCOP for example).

The OPCC would like to see more accurate recording of the primary crime/ASB type from providers to be able to ensure the support is appropriate and resources are being spent in an efficient and effective way. In many instances what is recorded as ASB may include criminality.

Collaboration can improve efficiency and effectiveness of OPCC investment - We will require providers to work more closely together both operationally and strategically to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the OPCC's investment which will in turn lead to an improved experience for victims who access services. We want to see our valued specialist support sector do more of what they are the best at - service delivery - and bring efficiencies to enabling functions. We want to see greater reach of services across a menu of interventions.

We think this model could see smaller providers benefit from working with larger organisations and strengthen important VCSE provision. We would also like to see stronger sector leadership for the all-crime and ASB services in engaging with other services as well as a focus on co-production.

Beyond our services, we want to encourage collaborative working across the broader victim support sector with both operational and strategic engagement and for example, targeted and connected referrals (rather than simple sign posting) to partner organisations. Following the evidence gathered in the Needs Assessment, we

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support development of a common referral system and considers that collaboration on back-office processes such as this may support a more accurate assessment of need and then planning of interventions.

Specifically, we would like to see providers and the Constabulary work together to increase efficiency and effectiveness of engagement activity as well as develop a multi-agency Dedicated Victim Services' Website (Consideration should be given to the best way to do this across both OPCC providers and the Victim Referral Hub which already hosts a website). Specifically, we would like to see services increase awareness of their services by those with protected characteristics.

To enable this collaboration, the OPCC will hold one-off funding from our Commissioning Project budget available for any providers who require support working together from a VCSE Umbrella organisation. Please contact the OPCC should you wish to access such funds.

Where specialist resources are already in place, this should be the first port of call – we do not want to duplicate important existing specialist resources as outlined elsewhere in this document. While some needs may technically be in scope for OPCC commissioned services 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.

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.

Service design should be evidenced by high quality data capture including feedback from victims over the life of the contracts.

OPCC services are there to provide support – we want to safeguard our investment to maximise provision of the much needed and valued support to victims and not fill gaps left by others or perform activities outside of this scope. We are clear that support services are not responsible for stopping the crime or ASB. They should also be fairly recompensed for their expertise e.g. providing training (over and above service promotion) to partners.

In terms of mental health, we would like to see increase confidence amongst providers in relation to Mental Health Support given the needs services are seeing. The OPCC also supports providers to work more effectively with mental health services. However, in terms of any specific posts, we believe that any commissioning of therapeutic or mental health interventions requires health commissioner involvement/investment to ensure the necessary clinical governance.

Quality standards – we will expect providers to evidence the quality of their services by achieving relevant national quality standards. Service quality will be evidenced through accurate management data. Moreover, we would like to work with providers and others to ensure that there is a benchmark level of understanding and implementation of trauma-informed practice.

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Commissioning Intentions



A. An Adult Victims of Crime and ASB Support Service [Indicative budget: £738,000 p.a.]

- To assess needs resulting from the crime or ASB and deliver a support plan of practical and emotional support to meet those needs.
- To provide a range of interventions to proportionally meet service users' needs from self-help through to more intensive 1:1 support. We welcome providers thoughts on extending this to families.
- Incorporate Restorative Justice into this mainstream adult support offer to increase awareness, knowledge, confidence and use of RJ amongst stakeholders with the overall benefit being felt by victims.
- To provide a service designed allow access to a range of specific expertise and capacity to meet needs / increase accessibility of the service resulting from a service user's Race, Religion, Sexuality, Gender Identity, Mental health issues, Learning difficulties, Physical disabilities, Problems associated with old age or Problems associated with social exclusion or isolation.
- Specific expertise of issues/needs (either through targeted recruitment, training, formation of partnerships or sub-contracting approaches) to respond flexibly to demand not met elsewhere. While this service will be for all crime types, we expect where existing specialist support exists that would be the primary service for delivery.
- To include by-and-for or specialist resources to meet the diverse needs of victims either through targeted recruitment, formation of partnerships or sub-contracting approaches.
- Collaborative working with the CYP service to support transition between services and build resilience and enable efficiencies in that smaller service.
- To provide systems leadership and represent the voice of the victim support services sector.

B.A Children and Young People Victims of Crime and ASB Support Service [Indicative budget: £250,000 p.a.]

- To assess needs resulting from the crime or ASB and deliver a support plan of practical and emotional support to meet those needs.
- To provide a range of interventions to proportionally meet service users' needs from self-help through to more intensive 1:1 support. We welcome providers thoughts on extending this to families.
- Specific expertise of issues/needs (either through targeted recruitment, training, formation of partnerships or sub-contracting approaches) to respond flexibly to demand not met elsewhere. While this service will be for all crime types, we expect where existing specialist support exists that would be the primary service for delivery.
- To include by-and-for or specialist resources to meet the diverse needs of victims either through recruitment, partnership or sub-contracting approaches.
- Collaborative working with the Adults service to support transition between services and build resilience.

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C. An All Age Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) Service

[Indicative budget: £990,000 p.a.]

- To assess need resulting from the sexual violence or abuse and deliver a support plan of practical and emotional support to meet those needs according to the nationally recognised ISVA model. We welcome providers' thoughts on the extent to which existing models support family members.
- To include by-and-for or specialist resources to meet the diverse needs of victims either through recruitment, partnership or sub-contracting approaches.
- To include specialist CYP ISVAs.

D. A contribution of £30k towards specialist pathways for survivors of modern slavery, to complement nationally commissioned services.

The OPCC has been pleased over the life of this grant to observe expansion of national provision and a corresponding reduction in the gaps in support we have sought to fill. We would like to explore how best to award this funding through the engagement period.

Notes

Support pathways and funding arrangements for those affected by fatal and serious injury road traffic collisions is complex and we aspire for more efficient and effective local pathways through either possible national, or local roads income investment over the commissioning period.

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The OPCC would value feedback on the following key questions during the engagement period:

Engagement Questions

1. **Model**

The above sees a change in how we organise services and therefore the lotting strategy for the procurement of services.

Please provide feedback about both the potential benefits/drawbacks of this new approach and the services we intend to procure. We are keen to understand any impact this change may have upon both individual providers and any particular cohorts of victims e.g. those with protected characteristics.

2. **Collaboration**

For the Adult Service in particular we are considering specifying that only a certain percentage of funding may be held by any single provider and the rest must be sub-contracted/delivered via a collaborative partnership to foster collaborative working and delivery of specialist and diverse provision.

Please provide feedback about both the potential benefits/drawbacks of this new approach and the services we intend to procure.

What support or information would you require in order to collaborate or engage with this tender?

3. **Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)**

This model relies on a common understanding of ASB and the most effective support to support needs arising from it. Our intention is to draw a boundary around services focusing on support needs rather than seeking to stop the crime or ASB. Please share your thoughts about where services' focus for supporting victims of ASB should be in the new model.

4. **Value for Money**

How else could the OPCC adapt or clarify its use of resources to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of support for victims? Please provide feedback on the apportioning of funds across the three services above. If you would like to see an increase in any funding allocations please say what would be reduced to allow this.

5. **Modern Slavery**

Do you have any feedback on how the OPCC could best complement national provision for this cohort? Would there be value in including this in the Adults Lot, running a specific process to award funding or routing through other parts of OPCC or partner business (i.e. outside of the victim services portfolio due to the nature of the current use of this grant).

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Victim Voice

The OPCC have contracted Tonic consultancy to independently reach out to victims to gain their views of what they need in terms of support and how they obtain this. The consultancy will liaise with victims in both person and online and listen to their feedback.

This Commissioning Intentions document will form the basis of that engagement. In listening to victims, we will be able to understand how we can make it better in terms of support, engagement, accessibility and inclusiveness. The findings of this work will inform the development of our Commissioning Plan and tender documents.

Tonic will also support the OPCC to feed the voice of victims into the procurement process.

Governance

A Victims Services Recommissioning Governance Board was formed in the summer of 2023 to coordinate, guide and oversee the recommissioning of Victim Services in Avon and Somerset up until new contracts commence in April 2025. The Board's responsibilities are:

- a. To ensure a coordinated and consistent approach between Victim Services Recommissioning and other strategic priorities in the Police and Crime Plan;
- b. To provide guidance, scrutiny and direction to the Project Team and oversee delivery;
- c. To sign off workplan, timeline and Key Deliverables;
- d. To ensure consideration of necessary legal, financial and other issues; and
- e. To manage and mitigate risks and issues as they arise.

Key Deliverables to be signed off at the Board are:

- i. Needs Assessment
- ii. Service User Involvement Plan
- iii. Commissioning Strategy and Intentions including budget and lotting strategy
- iv. Engagement Plan
- v. Commissioning Plan
- vi. Equalities Impact Assessment
- vii. Tender documents
- viii. Decision notice
- ix. Mobilisation Plan(s)

The Board is made up of the following members:

- Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner
- OPCC Chief Finance Officer
- OPCC Director of Policy, Partnerships and Commissioning (Chair)
- Avon and Somerset Constabulary Head of Victim Care, Safeguarding & Vulnerability
- South West Police Procurement
- VOSCUR

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Procurement Approach

Lotting Strategy

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

The anticipated approach is to procure via tender process three distinct Lots as set out above with the best route for the modern slavery contribution subject to a question set out for the engagement period.

To maximise the capability, capacity and variety of service options available to Service Users there will be a consideration made as to the limitation of the maximum percentage of funding that can be retained by any Lead contractor. This scenario is considered to be most likely for the Adult Service.

Where this is the case, whilst all funding for the service will be directed through the Lead contractor, they will be required to collaborate with the wider supply market, to foster a collaborative approach to service delivery through sub-Contracting, Market upskilling and development in order to facilitate smaller specialist suppliers to be an effective part of the delivery model approach.

The Lead Contractor would not “top slice” any of this funding passing through to the wider supply chain and collaborative partners and would instead take a management fee (as part of their % allocation) to monitor, manage and develop and report upon the delivery of the wider supply market they collaborate with in order to share best practice, knowledge share and capability / capacity build with their collaborative partners thereby upskilling the entire market and as such realising the capability options and offers to the Service Users themselves putting victim needs at the centre of delivery.

Contracts

The current planning assumption is that contracts would be between 5-7 years with the availability of Break Clauses for convenience (with Notice) should funding streams change or strategic direction of the OPCC change. We plan to purchase under Light Touch Regime method as detailed within Regulations 74 to 77 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

Contracts will be drafted as outcome focussed and allow for the adaptation and evolution of the service over the life of the agreement both in terms of changes to need and budgets/costs. Given recent trends in government funding for victim services, it is a planning assumption that we may get extra resources over the life of the contracts so they will be designed to take this into account by giving a Maximum Potential Spend Threshold which whilst not a guarantee of expected funding allows the PCC to direct further funding through the contract legally and compliantly without the fear of exceeding the Contract value thresholds.

To enable collaboration, the OPCC will hold one-off funding from our Commissioning Project budget available for any providers who require support working together from a VCSE Umbrella organisation. Please contact the OPCC should you wish to access such funds.

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Timescales

These are subject to change but given for information at this stage.



The OPCC welcomes feedback on this document during the engagement period which will remain open until 31 January 2024. Feedback can be shared online via our [survey](#).

If you would like to attend one of our provider events, [click here](#).

The OPCC will also seek to brief partners at key meetings and events. Should you want the OPCC to attend any existing meetings to provide this update please contact [Holly Watson- Hill](#)