Initial Contact, Assessment and Referral Service

Improvement Plan 2019/20

Contents

1.   Introduction

1.1   The West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner's Office (OPCC) requested a review of the contact methodology for the Initial Contact, Assessment and Referral service currently being delivered by Victim Support. Alternative contact methodologies were proposed by Victims Support and this Improvement Plan details the agreed change and details the actions expected of Victim Support, the OPCC, WMP and third-sector specialist services in order to implement the new model effectively.

1.2   The purpose of the new model is to ensure that:

- Victim Support are delivering a support service that has the most effective outcomes for victims

- Contact methodology is used in a way that is more likely to engage with victims than the current model

- The volume of non-productive work is reduced by targeting resources on those who most need support

- Victim Support build effective partnerships with specialist services

- There is better quality of information and communication of the Victim Support brand across the West Midlands

- The model deliver best value for money.

2.   Priority victims

2.1   Under the current model Priority Victims are defined as **victims of the most serious crimes** including domestic abuse, hate crime, terrorism, sexual offences, human trafficking, attempted murder, kidnap, imprisonment, arson with intent to endanger, wounding or causing GBH with intent. **Vulnerable and intimidated victims** which includes victims under the age of 18, suffering from mental disorder, significant impairment of intelligence and social functioning, physical disability or disorder, quality of evidence will be affected by fear or distress of testifying and finally those that are **persistently targeted.**

2.2   Under the new model Priority Victims will include that which are outlined above as well as those who access Specialist Services including child abuse, child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, honour based violence, modern slavery, fraud, cyber-crime and serious violence.

2.3 The Priority Victims categorisation is in line with both Victim Code of Practice and the PCC's priorities.

3. Referral from West Midlands Police

3.1 At present Priority Victims data are automatically transferred to Victims Support by WMP. Other victims can opt in to having their data transferred. This process will continue.

3.2 When Connect goes live there will be an additional capability for the force to automatically transfer victims to specialist services (such as Domestic Abuse services).

4. IVA, VCA and LiveChat

4.1 Independent Victims Advocate (IVA) offers a single point of contact, providing immediate emotional support and undertaking a structured needs and risk assessment in order to develop a full end to end cope and recovery support plan. The IVA is also responsible for the case management of volunteers.

4.2 VCA's are responsible for the assessment of automated referrals and triage of cases for appropriate contact and support. They also offer immediate and on-going support to victims via the telephone or via online methods; they can receive inbound calls from victims requiring support or information and make outbound telephone calls to victims to identify support needs. The VCA will make onward referrals to appropriate support agencies or services and complete and maintain accurate case management records.

4.3 LiveChat makes support more accessible and will enable people who may find it difficult to access support over the phone or in person to get help more easily. The LiveChat service offers a safe online space for people to talk openly about the impact of crime and is free, confidential and staffed by trained supporters, who offer emotional and practical support tailored to each person's needs.

5. Referral and contact methodology

Priority victims

Current model:	New model:
• IVA service • Contacted by phone call (withheld number) within 24 hours • 3 attempts then letter (different process for DV)	• IVA service • Personalised pre-text to explain VS will be calling, will ask if there is a time that suits • 3x call attempts from none-withheld number

Other victims who have opted in

Current model:	New model:
• VCE service • Contacted by phone call (withheld number) within 24 hours • 3 attempts then letter • If accept support transferred to IVA	• Text, email, letter – information will include who VS are, what they do, how to get in touch should the victim want support. If a victim identifies as needing support, they will receive this from an IVA. • Information on their rights and entitlements as detailed in the Victims Code of Practice • LiveChat offer

5.1 Under the new model the VCA team will become 'triage' and introduce a sifting of cases using key-word searches as an extra check that police data hasn't misclassified priority cases that need contact.

Other victims who have not opted in

Current model:	New model:

• Literature given out by officers • Information available on websites	LiveChat offer • Literature given out by officers • Advertising in key locations • OPCC and VS website signposting • Partnership work to encourage self-referrals e.g. learning disability, hate crime

6. Additional service improvements

6.1 Victim Support will ensure more effective and joined-up partnership working with **specialist services** to ensure that the (two-way) referral processes are working appropriately.

6.2 Change of one post from IVA to **Partnership and Outreach** Officer. Outreach activity is to be targeted determined by local knowledge including hot spots of criminal activity and by gaps/trends identified in monitoring and evaluation information. Outreach activity will involve more than awareness raising and will include drop in surgeries.

6.3 The OPCC will work to improve the provision of information on the **PCC's website** and review **force materials and knowledge** with respect to VS.

7. Resource implications

7.1 Victim Support will re-designate roles to reflect the new model proposal and therefore there will be no increase in contract price to the OPCC.

8. Desired Outcomes

8.1 The current Victim Support service contact methodology in the West Midlands is multiple call attempts to every victim and repeat attempts have displayed a diminishing level of success. The new model will see resources shift from staff calling repeatedly calling non-priority victims to IVA's calling priority cases following a pre-text to agree time of contact. This is expected to make victims more likely to respond to the support offer, as enhanced cases are more likely to take up support and therefore further demonstrates the necessity to focus on specific case types.

8.2 Non-priority victim will receive a text, email, or letter (depending on preferred contact method info received) informing them of who VS are, what they do, and how to get in touch. This will alleviate the burden on resources of calling all victims, as some may not wish to be contacted for support and would prefer the option.

8.3 It is expected of Victim Support to promote the brand to a much higher degree with informative literature and advertising, and through partnership and outreach work it is anticipated that self-referrals should increase.

8.4   The desired outcome is that the Victim Support service can meet, with high levels of confidence, the proposed visions and aims through improved leadership, management and performance. This in turn should allow for Victim Support to deliver an effective and efficient service to victims of crime and for the service to reflect the full benefit and value for money to the OPCC.

9.   Implementation Actions

9.1   VS and OPCC will meet on a monthly basis until the revised model is up and running. The meetings will include a review of progress against the following actions.

Victim Support		
1.	Agreement with OPCC new contact methodology: ➢ categorisation of cases ➢ frequency of calls ➢ timing of calls	June 2019
2.	Agree text message content information with OPCC	June 2019
3.	Agree website content information with OPCC	June 2019
4.	Send and agree with OPCC financial breakdown of changes	June 2019
5.	Agreement with OPCC on performance measures	June 2019 to October 2019
6.	Prepare staffing team: ➢ Remodel projected case numbers by locality ➢ Change of one post from IVA to Partnership and Outreach Officer (to be buddied with existing P&O for training) ➢ Local management posts to change to "Operations and Relationships" managers, with amended job description ➢ Network session with Outreach workers from other regional victim services to share resources and techniques	June 2019

7.	Amend case management systems / ICT: ➤ Control team to sign off auto text format (x2 – priority and non priority) ➤ Implement auto text formats onto case management system	June 2019
8.	Change of one post from IVA to Partnership and Outreach Officer (to be buddied with existing P&O for training)	June 2019
9.	Local management posts to change to "Operations and Relationships" managers, with amended job description	June 2019
10.	Triage – Redesignate 2 VCA's into IVA's	June 2019
11.	Upload new text to website	June 2019
13.	LiveChat pilot	July 2019
OPCC		
14.	Issue VS Implementation Plan with details of responsibilities	
15.	Issue Grant Conditions	