

Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault and Abuse Services Commissioning Framework

Background

1. Victims of crime are entitled to services that help them to cope with the immediate impact of crime, and, as far as possible, recover from its effects.
2. Statutory responsibility for commissioning emotional and practical support services for victims of crime transferred from the Ministry of Justice to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) on the 1st of April 2015 as part of a strategic move towards more personalised services for local people.
3. The victims' funding landscape has changed due to the introduction of Police and Crime Commissioner's with an increased emphasis on commissioning local victim services. The Ministry of Justice has retained responsibility for Commissioning some high impact and specialist victim support services nationally, these include:
 - Rape support centres (not Sexual Assault Referral Centres)
 - Homicide services
 - Court based witness service
 - Victims of human trafficking
 - National Victims Helpline

Domestic Abuse (DA) and Sexual Assault and Abuse (SAA)

4. In accordance with the above, the PCC funds a range of services focused on supporting victims and witnesses to cope and recover from the impact of crime, including specialist services supporting victims of domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse.
5. The services commissioned in the West Midlands form part of a complex and varied network of support that exists for victims. In order to ensure that their needs are met the PCC utilises the expertise of the Victims Commission which is the Commissioners' expert advisory group of representatives from the voluntary and community sector. The Victims Commission makes recommendations for support services that respond to several key areas that the PCC needs to address. Where possible all services offer a West Midlands response across areas of critical need and emerging issues.
6. The PCC remains committed to evolving the support available to victims and ensuring limited resources are being utilised effectively to meet rising levels of demand.
7. Demand for Domestic Abuse Support services increased significantly following the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic. In response to this unprecedented increase in demand for services and due to issues with throughput in the criminal justice system (CJS), many victims have been requiring greater and longer support through the CJS.

8. During this time, small specialist services have found it hard to build capacity and pivot the infrastructure of their services to match the changing nature of support required.
9. Increasing demand for services also continues to out-pace efforts to increase service capacity. Current levels of demand are expected to continue to rise. This strategic context poses a challenge for the commissioning of DA and SAA support services.
10. The Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 brought several reforms to the way services to DA and SAA are commissioned by introducing a duty to collaborate. The duty requires PCC's, Integrated Care Boards (ICB's) and Local Authorities for a police area to work together when commissioning support services for victims of domestic abuse, sexual abuse, and serious violence - excluding accommodation-based support.
11. The new duty aims to provide victims with a more joined up pathway, receiving the right support at the right time, reduced duplication by commissioners and a common understanding of local need and provision.
12. In preparation for the duty to collaborate and the subsequent needs assessment which will follow, the OPCC is seeking implementation of this commissioning framework.

Purpose of the framework

13. The PCC has recently published his [Police and Crime Plan 2025-2029](#) and is subsequently reviewing all commissioned services to ensure alignment.
14. This commissioning framework has been developed to support the PCC to commission streamlined services and to reduce unwarranted variation in the way DA and SAA services are provided and commissioned.
15. This will result in a list of approved suppliers, with pre agreed terms and conditions for future service contracts allowing for faster and more efficient procurement.
16. The Framework is designed to support system leaders, and providers to work in a collaborative way, encouraging open and transparent discussions with providers and other partners to achieve the best commissioned services and best outcomes for victims.
17. Intended benefits of utilising a framework;
 - Reduction in post code lottery.
 - Improved service user outcomes with victims directed to the right service, the first time.
 - Reduction of unwarranted variation in service operational delivery.
 - Reduction in unwarranted variation in service delivery and commissioning arrangements.
 - Consistent and more streamlined commissioning processes and approaches and improved sharing of best practice. This will support sustainable service delivery and commissioning going forward.
 - Reduced duplication and fragmentation of commissioned services through collaborative agreements and joined up commissioning intentions and arrangements.
 - Formalised and improved system integration with alignment through contractual obligations.

18. A consistent provision of services across the West Midlands has been a shared strategic vision across statutory partners. This has also been highlighted by the the Victim’s Commission, as services have relied on grant funding for many years. This need was further highlighted following the increased commissioning of support services during and following the Covid 19 pandemic and continues to be a concern raised by key stakeholders.

The process for joining the framework

19. Following initial application, evaluation and approval onto the Framework, contracts will be awarded following mini competitions for various service needs or direct awards will be made where required.
20. There is no specific number of providers that are to be part of the Framework however the OPCC will require enough providers to cover the entirety of the West Midlands, to avoid any form of post code lottery. Joint approaches such as consortium led applications will be supported. Providers will be able to select the areas they are able to work in.
21. Appendix A of this framework offers a Domestic Abuse Service Specification for providers and Appendix B offers a Sexual Assault and Abuse Service Specification.
22. Service providers are able to join the framework to deliver against one or more of the following lots;
 - **LOT 1** - Independent Domestic Abuse Advocate IDVA
 - **LOT 2** – DA Cope and recover services (advocacy/outreach, counselling and therapeutic services peer support, Helpline, holistic creative services)
 - **LOT 3** -Independent Sexual Violence Advocate ISVA
 - **LOT 4**– SAA Cope and recover (advocacy/outreach, counselling and therapeutic services peer support, Helpline, holistic creative services)
23. The PCC will be seeking applications from prospective providers to join the approved supplier list to deliver on the commitments (outlined in the specifications) to provide support for Victims and survivors across projects and funding streams including; Core Ministry of Justice Victims Funding, Additional Specialist Funding E.g. National IDVA and ISVA Funding, and various pilot project opportunities which arise periodically.
24. Further detailed and associated commissioning documentation will be made available throughout the individual processes.
25. Each process will be split into at least two stages;
Selection Stages: All potential providers must pass specific criteria to be appointed to the Framework.
Award Stages: Mini ‘competition’ opportunities will be held between appointed providers invited to tender for the services required. Interviews and visits will be included where required. Direct awards will also be made where appropriate or required.
26. The Framework will open at least once every 12 months for new suppliers to enter.
27. The following statutory partners (TBC) have been consulted with in the development of this Framework and will have the option to purchase through this framework. By applying you are also agreeing to have your details shared with the other named contracting authorities.

Strategic Context

1. There has been several policy and legislative changes across the DA and SAA landscape which have all shaped the way in which we understand DA and SAA and highlighted many areas of challenge

and requirements for change. Despite these reforms there remain gaps in organisational ability to tackle these harms and there are a variety of improvement mechanisms in place to assist progression in these areas.

2. The Domestic Abuse Act was introduced in 2021 to strengthen support for victims of abuse by statutory agencies, to raise awareness and understanding of the impact of domestic abuse and improve the effectiveness of the justice system. The Act created a statutory definition of domestic abuse which moved away from an act of physical violence and encompassed other forms of abuse such as coercive and controlling behaviour as well as sought further protection and support for victims and their children.
28. Additionally, the Home Office Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan 2022 emphasises the need for a holistic package of support, which enables victims and survivors to access the support most suited to their needs.
29. Locally, in 2022, Linxs consultancy completed a review of the West Midlands MARAC process which highlighted the crucial role of competent IDVAs to support the increasing number of high-risk victims requiring support in the West Midlands region. Additionally, the report acknowledged any changes to a MARAC system may result in a reduction of cases at MARAC but will not reduce the number of victims requiring support.
3. In relation to SAA, the Government's End-to-End Rape Review (2021) and subsequent Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (2021) brought forward a new national operating model for Policing specifically in relation to for Rape and Sexual Offences through Operation Soteria as part of which WMP were a pilot force in 2022.
30. In July 2023, [Operation Soteria was rolled out](#) across all 43 police forces in England and Wales. The evolution of this model required detailed engagement with key stakeholders, for example Independent Sexual Violence Advocates, the third sector, PCCs, as well as the wider policing organisations including the NPCC and [College of Policing](#).
31. The impact of Soteria has led to better engagement with ISVA and victim's services and in the West Midlands we now have scrutiny and engagement processes to better involve services in policy and process improvements for victims within policing and the wider partnership.

Outcomes

32. Deliver outcomes in accordance with the following measures and be able to provide a clear theory of change.
 - Improved health and wellbeing
 - Better able to cope with aspects of everyday life
 - Increased feelings of safety
 - Better informed and empowered to act, including reporting to the Police and supporting criminal justice processes
 - Quality and satisfaction with support provided
33. The provider must be able to record outputs against the following and be able to supply the PCC with regular performance monitoring information in accordance with contractual arrangements.
 - Referrals and sources
 - Crime types

- Demographics, including age, gender, sexual orientation
- Needs and risks
- Support provided and referrals made
- Number of cases reporting to the CJS or leading to Police action
- Number of cases receiving a CJS outcome
- Complaints.
- The above lists are not exhaustive and will be amended or extended over the period of the funding.

Compliance

Performance monitoring

1. The OPCC will nominate a dedicated Policy Officer who will have overall responsibilities for the oversight of the service to ensure that it is delivering to the required standards. The provider must also appoint a similar level Contract Manager who will report directly to the OPCC Contract Manager.
2. A performance monitoring template shall be generated which shall include Outcomes, Outputs and Inputs. Within the performance monitoring template key performance indicators and targets shall be highlighted. The performance monitoring template shall be a summary of performance but there is also a requirement for the service provider to give information at a per person level for less frequent needs' analysis.
3. The service provider shall complete and return the performance monitoring template at quarterly intervals, the exact date for submissions to be negotiated with the provider and shall fall within the first month following the end of the quarter.

Contract management meetings

4. Regular contract management meetings will be undertaken, at a frequency deemed appropriate to ensuring the effective oversight of the service. The overarching aim of service is to support victims of rape and sexual violence to cope with the immediate aftermath of the crime and recover from the long-term impact of the crime.
5. The service provider shall attend quarterly thematic contract meetings.

Added value

6. The provider will commit to regular and ongoing engagement with the PCCs Victim Commission.
7. The provider will commit to representation in victim feedback/consultation exercises.

Social Value

Any contract awarded over £100,000.00 will be required to complete a Social Value Proposal. This will be scored and moderated as part of any award processes, competitive or direct award.