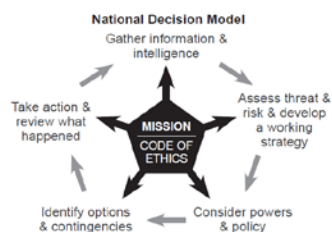




Victim and Witness Care Unit Update

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Title:	Victim and Witness Care Unit Update
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ACPO / Strategic Lead:	T/ACC Barlow
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What are the Policing Principles?

Accountability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Fairness	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Honesty	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Integrity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Leadership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Objectivity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Openness	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Respect	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Selflessness	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

1. Background

- 1.1. This paper has been created at the request of the PCC's Office to highlight the current 'as is' status of the Victim and Witness Care Unit (V&WCU), six months post implementation.
- 1.2. In April 2019 Surrey Police launched an internally delivered Victim service provision, ceasing the existing contract with the charity 'Victim Support'. The Victim and Witness Care Unit (V&WCU) provides a generalist assessment and support service to take victims through the initial "Cope" and later "Recovery" phases of their experience, coordinating the initial response and any subsequent referrals for specialist support, according to a care plan that is tailored to the needs of the individual victim.
- 1.3. The decision to move to an internally delivered model was a shared vision of both the OPCC and the Surrey Police Chief Officer Group as part of a wider ambition to ensure that services commissioned by the OPCC are best placed to support the complex needs of victims, that they reflect the changing face of policing and are able to adapt to future demand and needs. Whilst the OPCC was reasonably satisfied with the performance of 'Victim Support' and no critical failings were identified, concerns about fragmentation, responsiveness and user attrition became apparent during the course of the contract that the PCC hoped to address as part of the re-commissioning process.
- 1.4. The new model offers an opportunity to harness organisational learning and drive and coordinate improvement in this area, making use of all available intelligence gathered through interactions with victims.

2. Content

- 2.1. The Victim and Witness Care Unit is resourced with fully trained staff and a network of volunteers who provide telephone and face-to-face support to victims, as well as providing information to, and supporting all victims and witnesses from the point of charge through to the conclusion of a court case. The staffing model can be seen in Appendix 1. I have highlighted those roles where there is any discrepancy between proposed, and actual establishment. The Victim Liaison Co-ordinator post, highlighted in green, is a new post which has been created since implementation in response to a need which was not incorporated in the original project model. This post has been created through reallocation of resources and funding, and was agreed and signed off by the Project SRO, the OPCC and the senior management team in the V&WCU.
- 2.2. The total budget for V&WCU is £1,029,493 of which £571,098 is force contribution and £458,395 is PCC contribution per annum, with a slight annual uplift to account for inflation.
- 2.3. Full staffing has not yet been realised in the unit. We are currently recruiting to fill the final vacant Caseworker and Volunteer posts, with a planned recruitment campaign for a 'pool' of Victim and Witness Care Officers to follow. It is accepted that there will always be a level of staff turnover going forwards, as business as usual. Despite the small number of vacancies staffing levels are not considered a risk. Five members of staff from Victim Support, successfully came across to the new unit as part of a TUPE process. The current establishment of Victim and Witness Care Officers is made up of 6x FTE existing and experienced staff members, and 13x FTE are new joiners to Surrey Police.

- 2.4.** Resourcing has been one of the biggest challenges the unit has overcome since implementation. For a number of reasons, including robust recruitment and vetting processes, and restrictions around the TUPE process, the unit was under-staffed at 'go live' in April. Support was sought from six divisional Officers and staff on restricted duties for a period of three months, to support the initial launch period. Staffing numbers have increased month on month since launch and as can be seen in Appendix 1, establishment has almost been realised.
- 2.5.** Despite the significant challenges caused by under-resourcing and lack of experience in the team (with so many new staff members), performance has not been adversely affected and witness attendance at Court has remained above the national average since April 2019. Civilian witness attendance rate, FYtD (April-Sept 19) is 91.4%. The national attendance rate is 86.9%. This is a testament to the hard work and aptitude of the team in exceptional and extenuating circumstances.
- 2.6.** Referrals to the V&WCU are received via police crime reports, from third parties, and via self-referral that is independent of police crime reporting for those not wishing to report their crime to the police. From 1st April to 30th September 2019 there were 79, 311 referrals into the Unit. Of these 79, 311 referrals contact was made by either, letter, SMS or call.
- 2.7.** 10% of victims referred (8,507) were determined as having 'enhanced' needs. This classification is denoted by the nature of the crime (i.e. Rape and Serious Sexual Offences), age or any other vulnerability marker including flags on Niche. For enhanced victims the agreed contact methodology is three phone call attempts, within 48 hours of the V&WCU receiving the referral. The unit are currently operating two phone call attempts within this time period – and if both attempts are unsuccessful these attempts are followed with another form of contact (detailed in 2.8). This is a mitigation that was agreed with the OPCC whilst the unit was embedding and staff were in training. The management team in the V&WCU are regularly monitoring and reviewing workloads and the capability of staff and are looking to increase to the 3 call attempts as soon as possible.
- 2.8.** All contact attempts are recorded on Niche so that the Officer in the Case (OIC) or anyone else with a policing purpose to be reviewing the crime, is fully sighted of action taken. Where both contact attempts are unsuccessful, staff in the V&WCU will conduct a risk assessment to determine if it is suitable to make contact through another method; letter, email or text, as well as proactively notifying the OIC that contact has not been made and there is a gap in service. Therefore whilst not all enhanced referrals eligible for calls will have successfully received contact by phone, suitable measures are in place to allow for at the very least, OICs to be made aware to be able to reintroduce or reoffer the service to the victim as part of their ongoing communications and investigation. All communication to 'non-enhanced' victims either via letter, SMS or email is considered as 'successful' contact.
- 2.9.** Where contact is made with victims a needs assessment is undertaken, and if needs are identified, the Victim and Witness Care Officers allocate a Caseworker or Volunteer to undertake a more detailed needs assessment and create a support plan. Victims can remain with the service for as long as they need.
- 2.10.** Much closer, joint working with internal staff has been a real benefit of bringing the service provision in-house. The V&WCU liaise daily with OICs to ensure that all support is tailored to the needs of the individual. Another example of the benefit of joint working we are seeing is the channel of communication and feedback between the unit and operational teams investigating cases. A good demonstration of this is

where one caseworker raised concerns with the quality of an investigation of the victim she was supporting, where it appeared medical evidence had not been obtained. She flagged this to supervisors to review, which identified some failings in the investigation and positively for the victim resulted in the case being re-opened.

- 2.11.** To compound the challenge of resourcing, IT issues have also affected the delivery of service, including the accurate data transfer of referrals from Niche. In the first few months, it was identified that a number of duplicate records and referrals were transferring into the team from Niche. This created unnecessary demand which was difficult to identify due to volumes of referrals, and naturally caused dissatisfaction from victims who were receiving multiple contacts from the unit. Working with the IT and Niche teams to find a resolution took some time – to identify the cause and rectify this, however the problem was finally resolved in July and we began to see a drop in referrals from approximately 15,000 referrals a month to circa 10,000 which was the true and accurate number of referrals. Although there were interventions in place to circumvent duplicate contact being made, where identified, potentially up to 5,000 more contacts were being made with victims in the first four months of implementation than was required. This had a significant impact on staff capacity. Since the matter has been resolved workloads are much closer to what had been estimated as part of the project research. In August and September there were 16,791 referrals – approximately 8,000 referrals each month.
- 2.12.** In conjunction with our partner agencies, a comprehensive website, with supporting information and a directory of support services available for victims of all crime types, was designed and launched with the unit in April 2019. The link to the website; <https://victimandwitnesscare.org.uk/> (as well as alternative contact details for those victims without internet access) is sent with all letters, SMS and emails. Since 1st April 2019 3,933 individuals have made use of the website, with 12,200 page views. Google Analytics data suggests that approximately 2,000 individuals have visited the website after receiving a SMS, and 1100 as a result of receiving a letter. This indicates that contact from the unit has generated a healthy level of ‘self-service’ for those victims who may not want or feel ready to seek dedicated support from the team, but are seeking support in some capacity. We are continuing to expand and refine the website with our partners to improve the quality and wealth of information available to those victims, or friends and family members, who choose to ‘self-service’. The website has also been positively received by internal staff, particularly in the Contact Centre and teams who are in frequent contact with victims. We have received feedback that many staff members have benefited from the material available on the site and been able to direct victims to services from the directory and provide useful information that they historically had not had access to.
- 2.13.** Since the unit launched in April 2019, 359 victims have been provided with ongoing, one to one support from Caseworkers and Volunteers. There are currently 92 active cases; 39 victims are being supported by caseworkers and 53 by volunteers. 267 victims have been supported, and their cases closed. There is also a larger cohort of victims who are supported by the unit within one contact – but do not require ongoing support. We are working with IT and the OPCC to try and establish how we record and obtain these figures through Niche.
- 2.14.** Post implementation governance of the V&WCU has been shared by both the OPCC and the Force. Monthly Governance boards are chaired by the Head of Policy and Commissioning from the OPCC. Any risks and issues are identified, recorded and actioned through a risk and action log. Local performance measurement is also reported into the monthly Criminal Justice Performance Meeting chaired by Superintendent Clive Davies and to the monthly Local Policing Board, chaired by Assistant Chief Constable Local Policing, to ensure there is

regular Chief Officer oversight. The Governance Board are currently working with IT to identify how to extract Key Performance Indicators (KPI) from Niche to provide assurance to the Ministry of Justice that the national requirements are being delivered.

- 2.15.** Regular performance dip checks are undertaken by the team leaders to allow for real time service recovery and feedback. To formally test the success of the model, the Governance Board are in consultation with the Surrey Police Business Change team to undertake an informal, in-house post-implementation review. This will be supported by an external audit commissioned by the Joint Audit Committee, by the Southern Internal Audit Partnership which is being undertaken in October. Any learning or issues identified from these will be actioned in readiness for a formal post implementation review which will be commissioned next April.
- 2.16.** With the contracted service outcomes being delivered (albeit with a current mitigation in contact methodology), the focus for the Governance Board and V&WCU management team going forwards is to improve the 'quality' of the service being provided and the interactions being had with victims. This will include the introduction of satisfaction surveying of those victims who have been supported by the service in January 2020, and working closely with partners to improve the management of Domestic Abuse victims and de-fragment the service offered. This will be supported by continued investment in training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for the department to ensure staff remain skilled and motivated.
- 2.17.** The collaboration between the OPCC and Surrey Police allows greater agility of service provision to meet priorities and changing needs, and demand. The Ministry of Justice are currently consulting with a number of organisations including criminal justice practitioners to review and reform the legislation of the Victims Code of Practice. The Senior Management team in the V&WCU are involved in all national discussions concerning this consultation and will therefore be well informed and in a position to ensure the unit will respond to and meet any changes under proposed reforms. We are also working in conjunction with the OPCC to expand the current V&WCU model to incorporate a dedicated Fraud 'caseworker' into the unit, to provide additional and tailored support to vulnerable victims of fraud to help them cope and recover from the crime. This is based on best practice from Sussex Police, who already have Fraud Caseworkers post. It is planned that the Caseworker role will be supported by Volunteers who will make contact with all victims of fraud in Surrey.

3. Conclusion[s]

- 3.1.** Day to day delivery of service provision and outcome delivery is being provided by the V&WCU, as per the contract with the OPCC. Service provision is underpinned with policies and procedures which have been tested, reviewed and fine-tuned over the last six months in response to staff feedback and identified gaps. Recruitment is almost complete and a comprehensive training programme for staff has been delivered to all staff in the unit. The governance boards and management team have proactively recognised risks and issues and rectified them where identified. There are a few outstanding, low risk actions and issues (such as KPI data), which are being managed and reviewed regularly. Next steps for the unit are to meet the contact methodology fully, refining the quality of the service, expansion of services and to close the few remaining outstanding project actions.

4. Decision[s] Required

4.1. None, this paper is for information only.

5. Attachments / Background Papers

Appendix 1

