

**Police and Crime Panel Meeting
Friday 3 February 2017**

Evaluation of the Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Victim Care Model

Since the launch of the Victims Care Unit in April 2015 the Panel have taken a strong interest in the development of the service. In October 2016 the PCC provided an update on victim care services in Devon and Cornwall, in particular on progress in evaluating the new arrangements.

The formal evaluation of the victim care services model in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly has been completed by Dr Jacki Tapley of the University of Portsmouth and is presented for consideration.

1. Background

In April 2015, Police and Crime Commissioners across England and Wales took on direct responsibility for the provision of the majority of victims care services within their area¹.

In Devon and Cornwall a comprehensive victim needs analysis was carried out to build a clear understanding of the needs of victims within the area. Detailed engagement and a comprehensive review was carried out to understand the existing victim care landscape, in particular the range of services already providing help to victims of crime within the area. The previous Police and Crime Commissioner Tony Hogg took a decision to move outside the traditional approach to the commissioning of support for victims of crime and to develop a new approach, working with partner agencies, community groups and the third sector to provide choice and tailored support for victims, recognising that the specific needs of individual victims vary considerably.

The current victim care arrangements in Devon and Cornwall went live on 1 April 2015. A new Victim Care Unit (VCU) was established within the force to make contact with all victims of crime, and an innovative new Victim Care Network (VCN) was set up to provide victims with access to a broad network of organisations able to provide support to help people to cope and to recover from the impact of crime. The Network currently consists of over 82 different organisations.

The VCU is staffed by a team of 10 victim care officers and four specialist victim care advocates (VCA) providing intensive outreach support for the most complex cases. The VCU team is supplemented by a seconded mental health senior practitioner providing enhanced support for victims with mental health issues and can also undertake

¹ A small number of victim care services, including homicide support services, continued to be provided on a national basis.

assessments for those who may have an emerging mental health issues related to the impact of crime.

2. Independent Evaluation of the new Devon and Cornwall Victim Care Arrangements

As part of the development of the new victim care arrangements, a commitment was made to carrying out an independent evaluation following implementation and Dr Jacki Tapley, from the Institute of Criminal Justice Studies at the University of Portsmouth was appointed to carry out the evaluation.

The evaluation process commenced in January 2016 and the final report is circulated for your consideration.

The evaluation methodology was comprehensive and included the following:

- Attendance/observation of two VCU Network Days
- Meetings with the Criminal Justice Management Team and attendance at VCU Performance Meeting.
- Visits to the VCU, including shadowing of VCU team members and attendance at VCU team meetings and VCU performance reviews
- Interviews with VCU Advocates, VCU officers and senior police officers
- Online Questionnaire of VCU Network organizations.
- Analysis of VCU Victim feedback survey and performance database.
- Focus groups with Devon and Cornwall Police Officers
- Focus groups with victims.

3. Evaluation Findings

The evaluation report sets out in detail the research findings and offers recommendations for future development of the Devon and Cornwall victim care arrangements.

In summary, the following strengths and recommendations for further improvement are highlighted:

STRENGTHS include:

- The role of the VCU is fundamental in the Constabulary's ability to comply with its responsibilities under the Victim's Code of Practice, by ensuring that all victims are informed of the relevant support services available, and that those identified as victims of serious crime, repeat victims and vulnerable victims are provided with targeted support.

- A pro-active approach following the reporting of a crime ensures that people are provided with information about the support services available, so that they are able to make an informed choice as to when and how they access these. This places the victim at the centre and the choices made are victim led.
- The development of the VCN has actively contributed to the promotion of an integrated mixed model approach to commissioning.
- Membership of the VCN creates an environment where services can be delivered through partnerships, facilitated by co-operation and collaboration.
- The methods used to measure victims' experiences of the VCU indicate high levels of victim satisfaction.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENT include:

- Although the VCU is located within Devon and Cornwall Constabulary, the force needs to demonstrate greater ownership of the initiative. To raise public awareness of the priority given to victim care and the services available, greater prominence should be given to the VCU on the force website.
- Evidence from the data collected indicates that victims' perspectives of the initial police response are mixed and that a greater consistency is required. It is apparent that a more victim-centred approach is required in order to adequately assess the needs of the victim and to assist in the early identification of victims who are entitled to receive enhanced services under the Code.
- There is a need to improve compliance rates in relation to the completion of VNA's and to improve the quality of information they contain.
- Greater collaboration is required between specialist officers, the VCU and VCN members. There do not appear to be clear and specific referral processes for vulnerable and high risk victims, resulting in some victims not receiving the relevant and appropriate support.

4. Next steps

The PCC and CC have both welcomed the findings in the report and will work together to implement them.

Contact for further information

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