

What future for victims of crime in Nottinghamshire?

Consultation feedback

August 2014

Introduction

On 8 July the Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commission held a conference to share the findings of recent research into victims' views and to consult with stakeholders on his draft Victims' Strategy and outline plans for future service delivery.

Almost 60 people people attended, including providers of victim support and restorative justice services, chairs and board members of community safety partnerships and the local criminal justice board, managers from criminal justice and other organisations with an interest in victims' services.

We also received comments on the strategy and model via on-line consultation and through the Nottinghamshire Integrated Victims' Services Transition Programme Board, which consists of representatives from Nottinghamshire Police and community safety partnerships.

Below we summarise the consultation findings and set out what action we will take as result of what people said.

Consultation findings

Whom we should support: victims, vulnerability, prioritisation

Many comments were made on the need to be inclusive and victim focussed. The impact of crime is not related to crime type. The strategy and delivery model must be victim-centred, meeting the needs presented by victims, not the crime type, or where they live.

Victims who are offenders should be supported but on a case by case basis with risks carefully managed.

We should consider extending the definition of victims to people who have been harmed by crime, this could mean supporting the wider community and victims' and offenders' families. Families need help too to support the victim and build resilience

Victims must be supported regardless of whether or not they have reported to the police.

The Code's definition doesn't cover all vulnerable victims. We should use the Victims' Code definition but allow room for flexibility.

Vulnerable and intimidated victims should be prioritised – particularly as vulnerable victims are often re-victimised. We need to be clearer though on what "prioritisation"

means. One suggestion is that we take a tiered approach, with priority support given to the most vulnerable victims. Another suggestion was that we provide more funding to specialist services.

Vision for victims' support services

There was feedback that the vision needed to refocus onto individuals rather than agencies. Victims must be at the centre of service, with the service focus on building victims' resilience, and communities' strength and resilience to support victims, to prevent re-victimisation.

Other comments suggested that the vision should include early intervention work and that "timely" should also include "co-ordinated".

Delivery model

We asked people to tell us whether the draft delivery model would enable victims, including vulnerable, intimidated and targeted victims, to cope and recover; and whether and what changes should be made. The key points made were:

1. Victim-centred: the model should be refined as it was agency rather than victim led. It should enable victims and avoid putting them into categories.
2. Access to services: there was strong support for a central/one stop shop approach for information about victims' services, which should be accessible by phone, on paper, possibly as a directory, and on-line.

Many comments were also made about the importance of easy access to the service. There should be "no wrong door". Victims must be able to access the service quickly and easily, regardless of whether or not they have reported the crime to the police. Victims who have not reported to the police were highlighted as sometimes being the most vulnerable, in greatest need of support. Other communities were victims of crime but through mistrust of the police would not report and therefore be less likely to access support services. The following action was suggested by participants to address this:

- Conduct a targeted communications campaign to ensure that everyone in external agencies, including police officers, understand how the hub and referrals to it work
 - Use social media to publicise the service
 - Publicise across communities, employing tailored approaches across different communities to ensure all victims would access it
 - The service should have community representatives as a key element within it, so that people can build trust in service and approach it even if they haven't reported the crime to the police. This is particularly relevant in BME communities
3. Needs assessment: many comments were made from relating to confusion about current needs assessments and the vital importance for delivery to be needs led. Victims' risk assessments were also critical.

4. Building resilience: the service should deliver the vision for victims' services – ie to build individual and community resilience for victims to recover. The model needed re-framing to reflect this. There should be stronger wording to focus on practical support and the service should conduct an entry and exit definition of vulnerability.
5. Sign posting, referrals and case management: the victims' support service should link in with police service so that victims know that the police case is being dealt with effectively and/or resolved.

The service should publish re-contact times so when victims leave a message they know when they will be phoned back. It would be helpful if the communications supplier for the hub could provide a mechanism to ensure that complex messages left for support could be managed effectively

There was consensus that a case management approach was required for some victims in order to ensure that they got the support they needed. This should be provided by a named person for consistency of support and should include tracking of the victims' journey to cut down on victims being passed on and having to re-explain the service.

The case management service should be supported by a central database across all victims' services.

6. Outcomes – cope and recover: it should be recognised that not all victims will recover. This means that services should be open-ended so that victims can return for further support when needed (see below). Outcomes assess the impact of support on each victim and should be different for each person.
7. Support provided, timing: the victims' service should be independent of other criminal justice services. However, it would be helpful to have a bridge between support voluntary sector service providers and Nottinghamshire Police to ensure that victim support services were aware of the progress of the case.

The timing of support is critical. Often support to recover is required years after the crime. Open ended support should be provided, with the victim able to re-engage at any point. Support should also be provided for the families of victims who may also be dealing with the impact of the crime.

Social media/technology should be explored as a way to support service delivery.

There were lots of comments about the need for people working with victims to be highly skilled and have the insight and to understand victims' needs. Police officers working with victims should be trained appropriately. However, people also commented that services should also be delivered by people who have themselves been victims of crime; and that any volunteer service should reflect the community it supports.

8. Hate crime: in general, it was seen as helpful that the model could improve reporting on hate crime, as it would provide a recognised service for people to refer and approach for support. However, reporting must remain independent of the police. One comment was made that hate crime requires a distinct unit.

Ensuring the strategy and model work for equalities groups

We asked people to tell us what the PCC should do to ensure his vision, strategy and model worked for people from different equality groups. Suggestions were that the model should be refocused on individuals and their communities – ie become more inclusive. Comments were made in particular about access to services – see detail under no 2 above.

In addition, smaller organisations that support small diversity groups need to be supported through commissioning to ensure access to a quality service

Collaboration

Many comments were made about the need to exploit opportunities to join up with other services and co-commission, aligning and sharing services such as advocacy where desirable, considering co-located hubs and satellites. The community safety partnerships were suggested as a crucial “add on” service provider. There were also several comments about the need for the service to align to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation was seen as critical. Victims’ service providers should build in regular checks to review victims’ needs. Suggestions for monitoring the service were to use an IT solution to monitor the service; ask victims what they think of service – rolling programme of monitoring/measuring victim satisfaction; and conduct an annual audit and scrutiny survey to ensure victims’ services were not missing any victims, that victims’ needs are being met and in particular vulnerable victims and victims from equalities groups are getting the support they need

There were also comments about the need for the service to be accountable to victims.

Restorative Justice (RJ)

Many comments were made that victims’ services needed to ensure the victim had in-depth knowledge and understanding of what RJ is and how it could help. Positive stories should be available for victims (and offenders) to challenge myths. RJ options should be fully explained, allowing victims to make an informed choice, without pressure. RJ should always be a victim focussed process. It should be flexible, with the victim able to re-engage at any point through their cope and recovery journey.

Quality assurance of RJ services was vital. The quality of service provided would affect victims’ ability to cope and recover. Professionals should be well trained and highly skilled. All parties involved in RJ should be risk assessed and well prepared.

There should also be training for police officers to understand the RJ process and discuss with offenders.

Some people thought that there should be independence between the victims’ service provider and the RJ service. Otherwise there might be some issues of impartiality which could potentially damage the process and rates of involvement.

Action as a result of the consultation

There was broad support for our vision, strategy and delivery model. However, some areas were identified of particular importance or for improvement. These were that we should:

- Commission victim-centred support
- Prioritise vulnerable victims
- Refocus our vision and model onto individuals
- Redraft our model as it is too agency led
- Empower individual and community resilience
- Support families as well as victims – so they can help victims
- Set up a strong audit and accountability mechanism.

We have incorporated the above areas into our final strategy and delivery model. We have amended our vision to put a stronger focus on individuals and the delivery model has been redrawn to set victims and the support service into local communities.

Over the next three months we will:

1. incorporate as many of the suggestions detailed in the Consultation Summary Findings as possible into our specification for the core victims' service;
2. work with our public sector partners to identify collaboration opportunities to commissioning and delivery of victims' services;
3. commission further work to engage with victims from equalities groups to identify how future victims services should best work with different communities;
4. commission work to develop an outcomes framework for victims' services, working with providers and other stakeholders; and
5. work with our partners in the Local Criminal Justice Board and community safety partnerships to set up an accountability mechanism for victims' services. This will include representation from victims and communities