

Victim Needs Assessment in Gloucestershire

A report for the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

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November 2018



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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the people who provided their time and expertise to help complete this victim needs assessment. Particularly, the stakeholders who so generously gave their time to interview and members of the public who provided detailed insight into their experiences, we are very grateful for this assistance.

A special thanks to Kirsten Fruin and Alana Greenway from the OPCC for their continuous support and advice throughout the project, and to Chris Hanson for facilitating and supporting our fieldwork with Gloucestershire Constabulary.

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Section 1. Executive Summary

The approach

- 1.1 Perpetuity Research was commissioned by the Gloucestershire Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) to undertake a victim needs assessment. The assessment was carried out through a review of national and local documents and data, interviews with local stakeholders, and an online survey of victims of crime in Gloucestershire.

Purpose

- 1.2 The main aims and objectives of the research were:
- To understand the level and type of victim referral and support service needs across Gloucestershire.
 - To carry out an assessment of the current end-to-end process that victims of crime experience (excluding those who qualify for specialist support services). That is, the experience of victims from reporting to police to access and use of Victim Support services.
 - To provide insight into whether a specialist service is required for young people.

Overview of Findings

Context

- 1.3 In general, the stakeholders felt that Gloucestershire was *'moving in the right direction'* and that there were good services available, but that there were improvements to be made. Some of the stakeholders felt that there was inconsistency in provision across different areas in Gloucestershire and that there needed to be a more concerted effort to raise awareness of the statutory and voluntary services that were available for victims. Many of the stakeholders felt that statutory services were failing to offer appropriate services to some of the victims they were working with.
- 1.4 The stakeholders' accounts reflected that there was an improving picture of services working together across Gloucestershire, but that in some areas there remained a culture of silo working and a number of challenges to effective partnership working across victim services in Gloucestershire.
- 1.5 The most frequently mentioned unmet need was for specialist emotional support. Stakeholders reported that services often had high thresholds, and lengthy waiting lists for one-to-one support. Some of

the stakeholders reported that they had found access to services for male victims of domestic violence and sexual offences to be challenging.

- 1.6 The results showed that 75% of the respondents wanted to be able to receive face-to-face support. However, large proportions of respondents found other types of support acceptable. While demand for access to support during the afternoon and evening was highest, it is interesting to note that the desire to have access to support services overnight was almost as high as for access to services in the morning. A few participants reported that a lack of timely offer had been a barrier to them wanting and accessing support, though some of the stakeholders accounts suggested that an offer of support would be better timed a few weeks after the crime. A few of the responses showed how a bad experience with one local service may impact on the way that local services as a whole are viewed, creating a barrier to access for some victims of crime.

Victim Support

- 1.7 Victims described valued aspects of the service they received, including; being believed, having someone to listen, and the practical support that staff offered. Though the majority of Victim Support referrals came from the constabulary, Victim Support played an important role in providing a positive first contact for people disclosing crimes for the first time. Victim Support staff felt that their organisation had been well managed, and that they had good relationships with the OPCC that had allowed them the flexibility to tailor their service to meet the needs of victims in Gloucestershire.
- 1.8 Victim Support described good relationships with a number of agencies, and how these had been developed and established in the last few years. The stakeholders felt that it was sometimes difficult to work with statutory agencies, particularly Social Services, and that more recognition of the important role that Victim Support played was required.
- 1.9 Stakeholders were positive about developments that Gloucestershire Constabulary were making in regards to putting victims at the centre of their service. The primary challenge that Victim Support staff reported in regards to working with the police was inadequacies in police systems that failed to capture the data needed by Victim Support. There were also concerns that not all victims who should be referred to Victim Support were being referred and that hate crimes were not always being correctly identified by the constabulary.

Police

- 1.10 Stakeholders within the constabulary and community recognised the commitment of individual police officers, and the continuing development of a victim-focused service but reported that the service