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| Victim Services  Annual Performance  Report |
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| STRATEGY &  PERFORMANCE BOARD |
| 2022/2023   1. PURPOSE AND RECOMMENDATION    1. The purpose of this report is for monitoring and information.    2. There are no recommendations made requiring a decision. 2. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND   Victim Services has continued to develop over the last year with the restructure of the department into East and West enabling better support to front line policing by collaborating with the Local Policing area’s and becoming experts in the crime, response, and support landscape in each area. We’ve also welcomed the Special Measures Advisor pilot into our team.  The service area consists of both Gwent Police staff and external agencies who collaboratively support and advocate for victims and witnesses of crime:  Staff structure chart  **Victim Care Unit:** Victim Care Officers (VCO’s) are responsible for contacting victims of crime (with the exception of RASSO, modern day slavery and crime involving a death) to complete a thorough needs assessment and refer for tailored support where required. They are also responsible for completing a regular contact schedule with victims where needed and adhering to this throughout the criminal justice journey while continually reassessing need and ensuring the victim receives their entitlements as per the Victims Code. VCO’s work collaboratively with front line officers and partner agencies.  **Witness Care Unit:** Witness Care Officers (WCO’s) are responsible for contacting victims and witnesses post charge following the first hearing stage of the court process. They ensure victims and witnesses have all the support and information they require to achieve best evidence in court and provide their key stage updates as per the Victims Code. WCO’s work collaboratively with officers, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), the courts and partner agencies.  **Survivor Engagement:** The Survivor Engagement Co-Ordinator (SEC) engages with survivors of domestic and sexual offences, using their lived experience and feedback to improve the forces response to these crimes. The SEC also leads on all our victim engagement, including the survivor network and Victim Reference Group. The SEC works with all service area’s and within the governance structure to help implement strategic and meaningful change.  **Connect Gwent**: is a multi-agency victim support service that aims to provide a range of services to people impacted by crime to support them cope and recover. Connect Gwent is made up of externally commissioned support services. Commissioned support services are funded by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) via the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Victim Services Grant.  Connect Gwent receives referrals from multiple sources, such as self-referrals, schools, and other partner agencies; their main source being from policing.  Being a multi-agency service allows those being supported to access the most relevant and appropriate support according to their needs. Support may be provided by a single agency within Connect Gwent or by agencies working together in a coordinated way.  External commissioned services within Connect Gwent are:  **Age Cymru Gwent** – An Older Person’s Support Worker who provides specialist support to victims over the age of 50.  **Aneurin Bevan University Health Board** – A Mental Health Nurse who provides specialist mental health and wellbeing support, including supported access to community health services.  **Umbrella Cymru** – provides specialist support to people who require support relating to their gender or sexual identity.   * Umbrella Cymru also currently provide the Interim Children and Young People Victim Service which provides specialist support to children and young people impacted by crime.   **Victim Support** – Provide a range of services / teams:   * **Victim Support and Engagement Team** – provides ongoing support to all those affected by crime * **Domestic Abuse Case Worker -** providesspecialist support to victims of domestic abuse  1. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION   Working within the Victim and Witness Care units provides an excellent stepping stone in the world of criminal justice and supporting victims of crime. The roles provide vast experience of the criminal justice process in its entirety and understanding the complexities of trauma from crime; thus, making the team members ideal candidates for progression. We have therefore seen a high turnover of staff as they move onto pastures new within the organisation.  This year we saw the need to recruit 9 members of staff due to Operation Uplift, however this took around 6 months to complete due to the length of the process to do so. While appreciated recruitment can be an arduous process it’s worth noting due to the impact this has on service delivery.  Throughout the year we’ve done a considerable amount of collaborative work with the Well-being team to tailor support for staff as we fully appreciate as a public facing service they are continually emersed in trauma and therefore at risk of burnout/vicarious trauma.  This coupled with the above; consideration is needed around the grade of these roles and whether paying more favourably will encourage staff to stay within the role. VICTIM CARE UNIT PERFORMANCE  * 1. **Overview**   In July 2021 the Victim Care Unit was created change the intake and assessment function from an external provider to an inhouse function, provide regular updates, act as a single point of contact, advocate for victims and quality assure the service provided by front line colleagues; with the aim of improving the service, Victim’s Code of Practice compliance and victim satisfaction.  The unit is partially funded by the OPCC via the MOJ Victim Services Grant, and since the change has provided better value for money in supporting us to meet our strategic and operational objectives both nationally and regionally that wouldn’t be possible via an external provider.  The below provides a snapshot of the business benefits and improvements made:   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | **VCU Business Benefits** | | | | **Measure** | **Baseline** | **Apr-23** | | Improved victim satisfaction | Way treated by the service: 85%   Kept Informed: 46% | VCO 93% OIC 83%  90% | | Improved compliance with the Victims Code of Practice - provide victims with written acknowledgement that a crime was reported | 11% | 94% | | Improved compliance with the Victims Code of Practice - Assess the needs of the Victim | 55% | 84% | | Improved compliance with the Victims Code of Practice - Victims who are updated per update agreement | 65% | 94% | | Improved performance monitoring - Victim Code of Practice- number of cases data relates to | 120 per year | 1552 (largest sample) | | Improved performance monitoring - Victim Code of Practice - number of entitlements able to report on | 6 | 18 |   The unit was recognised for its innovation and service to victims in the recent HMIC inspection.  *“The victim care unit works well to make sure that the force fulfils its obligations regarding the Victims’ Code. Victims of crime are kept informed of developments, referred to external agencies where needed and supported through the criminal justice process. The force conducts surveys to understand how satisfied victims of crime are with their experience of each stage of the investigation process. Survey results are then considered in governance meetings. However, the positive work of the victim care unit must be balanced by the findings from our victim service assessment and other inspection activity.”*  From April 2022 to April 2023 Victim Services received a total of 54,766 referrals. When a crime is recorded on NICHE with an aggrieved attached this is allocated to the unit within 24 working hours; ensuring all volume crime is 100% compliant with right 4 of the Victims Code of Practice.  Despite resourcing difficulties the unit has continued to adapt and grow acting as a single point of contact for both victims and their advocates, enabling an effective collaboration to better support the most vulnerable in our communities.   * 1. **Referrals Received**   The current service model works within the Victims Code of Practice by assessing whether the victim should be receiving a standard or enhanced service, acting as an additional assessment to the ICP01.  Enhanced cases will receive attempted contact within two working days, standard cases within five days. While this is our own service level agreement it works in parity with other elements of the Victims Code of Practice.   * 1. Contacting Victims of Crime   The current model within the unit ensures that all victims of crime received contact from us to offer the support and advocacy required through the criminal justice process and ensure they are aware of their rights under the code.  If we are unsuccessful in speaking to the victim over the telephone, we make every attempt to still provide them with this information should it be safe to do so. This will include sending the victim information packs, whether that be in the post or electronically. Should they have not engaged with us they will still have the necessary information under VCOP and how they can contact us for further help and support, thus accounting for the difference in the table above.  Unfortunately, because of the resourcing difficulties within the unit and enhanced cases taking priority, sending information packs for standard cases fell outside of the service level agreement and accounts for the decrease evidenced above. At the time of writing this report the unit is back to working with the SLA and all victims received a written apology from the Head of Victim Services.  When successful contact is made, a detailed needs assessment should be completed with the victim to enable a tailored support plan and appropriate referrals to partners/ safeguarding pathways where required. The needs assessments focus around the areas of growth/deficiency in the victim’s life outside of crime to ensure an effective approach to help them cope and recover, minimise the risk of them becoming a repeat victim and remain engaged in the criminal justice process. It is pleasing to see in the above graph that the figures remain relatively equal. While 100% would be preferred, it is unfortunate that some victims will refuse to partake and terminate the call.  To safely initiate contact with victims of crime the Victim Care Officers rely heavily on the information provided on NICHE at the time of referral. As evidenced below there is a significant amount of occurrences with missing information halting this process and causing additional work where the VCO will need to continuously check and chase this information daily on each occurrence before contacting the victim.  This has been raised through Victims Board and with the support of senior leaders there has been some improvement, however continuous efforts are required to ensure an efficient service.   * 1. Regular Update Schedules   Under right 6 of the Victims Code, the unit is responsible for creating and maintaining a regular update schedule with the victim. Victim and survivor feedback has continuously confirmed the importance of meaningful communication. Regular contact with the victim builds trust, enables us to continuously reassess need and helps us initiate any advocacy or service recovery they may need to ensure procedural justice.  While a small reduction in the figures below, this is accounted for in the lack of resource and has increased since. WITNESS CARE PERFORMANCE  * 1. Overview   The Witness Care Unit is a core function within the criminal justice process that warns victims and witnesses for court while ensuring they have all the support and information they require to achieve their best evidence. The Witness Care Officer’s workload is allocated through the ‘Witness Management System’ by our CPS colleagues and heavily impacted by both CPS and HMCTS requirements/daily functions.  While the pandemic no longer impacts our everyday lives, the aftermath to the court’s still puts considerable strain on the Witness Care Unit and indeed the department in its entirety. This was further exacerbated by the barrister strikes and departmental resourcing difficulties. However, they have continued to provide an impeccable service to victims and witnesses of crime.  While the unit sits with Gwent Police, their work is administered by our CPS and HMCTS partners which makes the dynamic a complex one but is managed effectively through a proven collaboration.  The case management system the Witness Care Unit use doesn’t provide detailed performance data; we therefore measure their performance through their caseload, the number of victims/witnesses the CPS ask to be warned for trial against how many attends, and their VCOP compliance, the latter of which is detailed further in the annual COT Victims Code report.   * 1. Live Cases   The below details the number of live cases within the unit per month. Once a case has its first hearing in the Magistrates court it is referred into the Witness Care Unit to managed until the end of its criminal justice journey.   * 1. Trials   While the Witness Care Officers manage the necessary arrangements in the lead up to the trial, they are also responsible for managing any changes to the warning of witnesses and provided victims with their key stage updates under VCOP as the trial progresses. Below illustrates the increase in trials and subsequently their workload.   * 1. Post Charge Support   All victims and witnesses within the cases detailed above have their needs assessed by the Witness Care Unit and referred for the necessary support where required and link in with existing partners; the unit will also quality assure case file gaps such as the need for special measures and a VPS.   * 1. Attendance Figures   We monitor the attendance figures based on how many victims and witnesses are requested by CPS to be warned for court by the Witness Care Officer’s and how many attend.  It’s pleasing to see the below which illustrates the vital work of the unit.   * 1. VCOP Compliance Witness Care Unit  SURVIVOR ENGAGEMENT The Survivor Engagement Co-ordinator role was created in November 2019 and was the first of its kind in the country. The role is well established in the organisation and its governance structures. Since its implementation there has been noticeable improvement in both the force culture and response to domestic and sexual offences with the learning being shared nationally through the Criminal Justice Boards and NPCC task force.  The role won the regional VAWG award and has been highly commended by Operation Soteria being recommended nationally as the ‘gold’ model.  The Survivor Engagement Co-ordinator continues to engage with survivors through self-referrals, agency referrals and police referrals and feed these through the governance structure to implement change and ensure the victims voice is at the centre of all we do.   * 1. Survivor Engagement Work Streams   While all survivors are given the opportunity to provide feedback, the SEC will also initiate projects based on said feedback or in line with other areas of work/priority throughout the organisation.   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Work Flow** | **SEC Progress** | | **Scrutiny Panels** | Over the last 12 months the SEC has contacted Victims from cases being presented to enhance the process of improving the service in its entirety. This has then been feedback during the meeting and learning or recognition sent to officers and supervisors. | | **DVPOS** | Work was completed with central PPU around the effectiveness of the DVPO’s to measure the impact these can have for victims. The SEC gave victims who had a DVPO in place the opportunity to provide feedback on the effectiveness of these orders. | | **Social media** | Promotion of the survivor engagement role video was completed with corporate comms and featured on social media sites. A call to action was included for feedback and membership of the Victim Reference Group | | **RASSO Outcome 16** | Survivor engagement co-ordinator was requested to complete a review of offences prior to the commencement of the RIT team and Operation Soteria within Gwent Police. A data review was completed and victims were given the opportunity to complete a survey regarding the reasons for not engaging in the criminal justice process. This was completed for both Rape and sexual offences. The data will then be compared to data over the same time period 12 months later to see what improvements have been made since the implementation of the RIT team. | | **White Ribbon Campaign** | During the 2022 White Ribbon Campaign, the Survivor Engagement role and the Victim Reference group was explained and advertised via the organisation’s social media channels. | | **Investigation Quality Team** | A review by Investigation Quality Team was completed around medium risk DA cases. Victims were given the opportunity to provide feedback, and this was included in the report. | | **Niche Flag for support** | From the professional feedback received a process has been implemented within the VCU to record the Victim’s support worker and agency details on Niche using a flag. This has also been adopted by Assertive Outreach and DAST. | | **Referral Pathway** | Feedback from the VCU is that a clear referral pathway is needed around DA and SV support to ensure that the correct support is put in place. Referrals routes in this area can often be confusing as the referral criteria changes in different local authorities as does the service provider.  SEC has developed a referral pathway document, working closely with partner agencies and the VAWDASV to ensure it is up to date. This will also identify any gaps in provision that can then be fed back to the VAWDASV team. | | **Feedback on Coercive Control offences** | Training had been delivered on coercive control and non-fatal strangulation offences to frontline officers following feedback from victims/survivors that these offences were not being recognised at the initial response and during the risk assessment and statement.  Feedback from the trainer is that when officers discuss support with victims, they were unsure of what support is available for victims of DA. A full breakdown of what support is available has now been updated on the DA toolkit app for officers to view and use when discussing support. | | **DA Stabbing Case Review** | Following the arrest for a potential stabbing, it was highlighted by the Custody Chief Inspector and Head of Victim Services that the offender had been the victim in several occurrences over a 12 month period. SEC completed a review of these occurrences to establish the chronology of these events and what learning there could potentially be for the organisation and partners involved.  The full review has been sent to the Victim Services and Criminal Justice Lead for consultation. This has also been shared with L&D to potentially be used in the investigation workshops. | | **Survivor training videos** | Videos have been completed with Survivors from the victim reference group. These videos will convey the survivor story without survivors being forced to return repeatedly to their memories of abuse or having to use their time and energy to repeatedly retell their story  These videos have been shared with L&D who are looking to incorporate these videos for investigation workshops, PIP training and force DA matters training. |  * 1. Victim Reference Group   The Survivor Engagement Co-ordinator runs the Victim Reference Group which is a regular meeting of victims who volunteer to consult on our work and also initiate projects of their own based on their lived experience.   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Work Flow** | **VRG Progress** | | **Financial Support for working Survivors** | * Survivor stories have been used in the application by Gwent Police for funding from the Ministry of Justice to assist working women with accessing refuge. * Members of the Victim Reference Group were asked to provide their feedback for the application where financial support would be provided to working women who don’t have access to benefits so they can seek refuge without having to change their employment status. | | **RIT team** | The group has also given their input on the business case for dedicated sexual offences team prior to its implementation and the feedback was positive. | | **DA Toolkit App** | SEC discussed with the group the proposed ideas for the DA toolkit to get their feedback. They continued to be involved with the content and development to its completion. | | **VAWDASV Needs assessment and strategy plan** | On 19th October the group met with Amy Thomas the regional lead for VAWDASV; attendees discussed refuge, civil court, gaps in support and awareness raising | | **Domestic Abuse Commissioner** | On 3rd November the group attended Cyfannol’s Newport office and met the Domestic abuse commissioner for England and Wales**;** members of the group were given the opportunity to discuss their lived experience with the commissionerwhich could have potential national impact on services and outcomes of people experiencing abuse | | **Safe Spaces – Welsh women’s aid** | On 16th November the victim reference group took part in a focus group facilitated by Welsh Women’s Aid for the national safe spaces campaign.  The project works with pharmacies and banks around the country to provide confidential, inclusive, and accessible Safe Spaces for survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence to access local and national helplines for support.  An entry on the Beat was circulated raising awareness of safe spaces so officers can include the project in safety advice for victims when appropriate. | | **White Ribbon Campaign** | The group worked collaboratively with VAWDASV, OPCC and Gwent Police for this year’s White Ribbon campaign.  Survivors gave quotes about men who have had a positive impact on them through their criminal justice journey.  This campaign has also highlighted how important positive social media is regarding domestic and sexual abuse and involving survivors with future communication plans. | | **Survivor Panel** | A member of the group has successfully applied to be part of the Welsh Government Survivor Panel; this means that feedback can be given from the group on a national level and any news or action taken by the panel can be fed back to the group. | | **Dating Sites** | The group provided feedback for DI Matthew Clarke, Mosovo who is currently looking at banners on dating sites to direct victims to report to Police.  This is something that has been discussed by the group previously especially around advertisement of Clare’s law and something members feel would be beneficial in regards to safeguarding potential victims. | | **VAWDASV Digital Awareness Project** | During the January meeting, VAWDASV regional team attended to discuss with the group their development of a Gwent wide digital awareness project and how best to reach victims/survivors, family and friends and work places/colleagues to ensure the right and pertinent information and knowledge is accessible for all. |  CONNECT GWENT Although the internal model changed, the Connect Gwent multi-agency hub remain an integral part of Victim Services and provided life changing support to victims and witnesses of crime.  The Victim Care Officers complete a thorough needs assessment with victims of crime to ensure an appropriate referral for tailored support is made to our partner agencies.   * 1. Referrals Received   The below outcome information is obtained from initial and closing assessments through which people are asked to rate themselves in relation to the outcome area in order to measure distance travelled and the impact of support provided by Connect Gwent. The data presented below reflects the outcomes reported by all partner agencies combined:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | Outcome Indicator | Number of People Reporting Improvement | | Better able to cope and recover | 1584 |   \*These assessments are only completed with those who engage with long term support\* DEVELOPMENTS AND IMPROVEMENTS This year has been significantly challenging with many of the staff being successfully recruited through Operation Uplift to join our policing colleagues. However, through continuous effort and commitment by the teams and management we have continued to strive to ensure victims are at the heart of all we do. Below provides an overview of ongoing work that illustrates this:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Post Implementation Review** | Following the development of the Victim Care Unit, it was decided for all of Victim Services to be reviewed following the restructure into East and West. We recognised the Witness Care Unit hasn’t been reviewed since being moved from joint ownership with the CPS 10+ years ago; the criminal justice landscape has changed significantly during this time.  The PIR has been postponed due to resourcing and competing force priorities for the business change department. It was also agreed for Criminal Justice in its entirety would be reviewed together for efficiency which is estimated can start in the summer of 2024.  Considerations of stability to staff and the department are needed given the number of fixed staff supporting the increase in demand until the review is completed. | | **Special Measures Advisor** | The pilot of the SMA role has come to an end with pleasing results and national recognition of the work undertaken. In Gwent we have recommended the role remain but to be bolstered by supporting the Victim Right to Review process and DIP sampling under the new VCOP model. | | **Connect Gwent** | The full specification for the remodel of Connect Gwent is now complete with the recommendation bring all five grants and contracts together under one service or consortium to ensure cost effectiveness and efficient oversight. At the time of writing this report, the specification is with legal/procurement with implementation planned for April 2024. | | **Victim/Witness Framework and Action Plan** | All national and local priority workstreams have been collated into a framework that provides a clear plan for accountability and improvement. This enables accessible updates for portfolio leads to report through each forum on how as a force we are meeting said priorities.  The framework will provide more structure and achievable outcomes at a local level. | | **The Victims Code of Practice** | A model has been created for 23/24 to capture, scrutinise and make meaningful change and will be utilised through the framework as described above and reported through the governance structure along with national forums. | | **Domestic Abuse Attrition** | A collaborative workshop was undertaken with our CPS and HMCTS colleagues to review the DA criminal justice process end to end with a subsequent report and action plan created to enable change and improvement. Work continues on this area and is fed through the LCJB for accountability. |  1. COLLABORATION    1. N/A 2. NEXT STEPS    1. Continue to review and develop Victim Services and wider Connect Gwent processes and procedures to ensure effectiveness and continued development and improvement.    2. Monitor and scrutinise Victim Services and Connect Gwent performance information to ensure victims receive effective support. 3. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS    1. N/A 4. PERSONNEL CONSIDERATIONS    1. N/A 5. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS    1. N/A 6. EQUALITIES & HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS    1. This report has been considered against the general duty to promote equality, as stipulated under the Joint Strategic Equality Plan and has been assessed not to discriminate against any particular group.    2. In preparing this report, consideration has been given to requirements of the Articles contained in the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998. 7. RISK    1. N/A 8. PUBLIC INTEREST    1. In producing this report, has consideration been given to ‘public confidence’? Yes    2. Are the contents of this report, observations and appendices necessary and suitable for the public domain? Yes    3. If you consider this report to be exempt from the public domain, please state the reasons: N/A    4. Media, Stakeholder and Community Impacts: 9. REPORT AUTHOR    1. Elizabeth Lowther - Victims’ Lead 10. LEAD CHIEF OFFICER     1. A/DCC Mark Hobrough 11. ANNEXES     1. None. 12. GOVERNANCE BOARD AND CHIEF OFFICER APPROVAL   This report has been presented to the following meeting:  **Victims Meeting**  Meeting date:  **27.10.2023**  Actions and amendments arising from meeting:  **N/A**  This report has been presented to the following oversight board:  **Scrutiny Executive Board**    Meeting chaired by:  **A/DCC Mark Hobrough**    Meeting date:  **07.11.2023**    Actions and amendments arising from meeting:  **N/A**    I confirm this report has been discussed and approved at a formal Chief Officers’ meeting.  Meeting chaired by:  **CC Pam Kelly**  Meeting date:  **14.11.2023**    I confirm this report is suitable for the public domain.    **Signature:**Signature on white background **Date: 14.11.2023** | | |
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