



**VICTIM
SUPPORT**

NORTH YORKSHIRE

 North Yorkshire
Police, Fire & Crime
Commissioner



North Yorkshire Victims' Voice

Understanding victims' needs

Ania Moroz
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START >>

Acknowledgements

We would particularly like to thank the victims who generously gave up their time to share their experiences with us, as well as the practitioners from The Children's Society, Community Counselling IDAS, Pace, Restorative Solutions, Supporting Victims, Survive, and Victim Support in North Yorkshire, who not only completed our survey and shared their knowledge and expertise, but also kindly helped facilitate the undertaking of this research. We would also like to thank Wendy Green, Sally Lynch, Nicole Hutchinson, Leaders Unlocked, Dr Tamar Dinisman, Rachel Almeida, and Chris Davies for their valuable contributions to this report. Finally, we would like to extend our gratitude to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) in North Yorkshire, which funded this research project.



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Executive summary

Recognising the wide-reaching impact that crime can have, all victimsⁱ are entitled to access support services under the Victims Code of Practice.¹ Police and crime commissioners (PCCs)ⁱⁱ have a duty to commission victim services in their police force area and make sure support is available to all victims of crime, whether or not they choose to report to the police.

In 2014, following a research project that looked at the needs of victims and local demand,ⁱⁱⁱ the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) for North Yorkshire commissioned eight targeted referral and support services for victims. These include:

- independent victim advisor (IVA) – multi-crime service provided by Victim Support
- community-based support services for victims of domestic abuse provided by Independent Domestic Abuse Services (IDAS) (jointly commissioned with North Yorkshire County Council and City of York Council)
- independent sexual violence advisor (ISVA) service for victims of sexual abuse provided by IDAS (jointly commissioned with North Yorkshire County Council and City of York Council)
- service for parents/guardians of victims of child sexual and criminal exploitation provided by Pace (Parents Against Child Exploitation)

i This report uses the term 'victim' to cover both victims and survivors of crime. However, we recognise that some people prefer the term survivor.

ii Some PCCs also have fire and rescue services within their remit: police, fire and crime commissioners.

iii <https://www.northyorkshire-pfcc.gov.uk/content/uploads/2016/09/Victim-Needs-Assessment-2014-Full-Final-Report.pdf>

- service for children and young people at risk of child sexual and criminal exploitation provided by The Children's Society ('Hand in Hand' project)
- counselling/talking therapy services provided by Survive and Community Counselling
- restorative justice service provided by Restorative Solutions.

An in-house PFCC referral and assessment service for victims of crime (initially piloted with Victim Support) called 'Supporting Victims in North Yorkshire' was later established in 2016.

This research provides valuable insight into the often changing needs of victims and survivors of crime, their experience of accessing support services, good practice, and the gaps in the current service provision in North Yorkshire.

To meet the aims of the research, a multi-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods, was used. The approach consists of five methods: review of the findings from the 2014 victim needs assessment research; two focus groups with victims; 40 in-depth semi-structured interviews with victims of different crime types; and quantitative analysis of findings from online surveys with victims and practitioners from the services commissioned by the North Yorkshire PFCC.

Summary of key findings and recommendations

Crime has significant and widespread consequences for victims of crime, their families, friends, and communities. While the effect of the crime varies greatly between victims depending on the individual circumstances and types of crime, four primary effects were identified.^{iv} **These effects touched all aspects of their lives:**

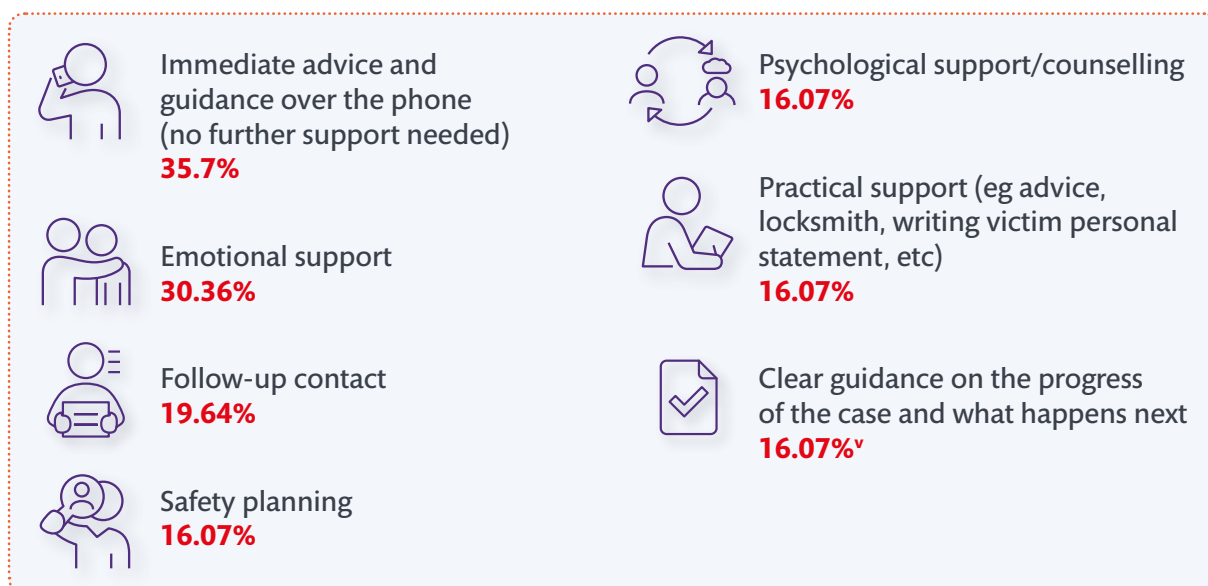


The research also found four additional effects of crime:



^{iv} All percentages presented are based on the online survey with 92 victims.

This research also adds to an understanding of the most frequently expressed needs following victimisation of all crime types. These are a wide range of needs, which are not necessarily presented at the same time. In addition, victims told us that their needs change over time, for example as a result of the progress of the case in the criminal justice system. As such, the assessment of victims' needs should be a continuous exercise, with support adjusted accordingly:



All participants acknowledged the importance of victim support services in providing vital help to overcome the impact of crime. We were told that existing support services are providing very good support in North Yorkshire. Nevertheless, four gaps in service provision were identified:



Recommendations

- The Office of the PFCC (OPFCC) should discuss the provision of specialist support for certain groups, including LGBTQ+, males, older people, and CYP, with providers in regular contract and performance meetings and via the provider group to ensure there is sufficient coverage and expertise available and that this is reflected in service delivery.
- Undertake work with the Delivery and Assurance Team in the OPFCC to ensure feedback from victims accessing OPFCC support services, Supporting Victims Team (SVT), and service providers contributes to intelligence already being captured on public trust and confidence in North Yorkshire Police, particularly in relation to:
 - keeping victims updated of progress on the investigation
 - victims' need for reassurance from police – actions and language
 - the importance of providing sufficient and accurate victim contact details on police systems to enable a timely offer of support to be made.
- Ensure that services understand the needs of CYP to support them effectively; through regular contract and performance meetings, identify solutions to appropriately resource specialist support as required.
- Ensure supportive transitional processes to adult services are built into service delivery specifications for CYP turning 18.
- Continue to work with specialist providers developing interventions to meet the needs of CYP living in households where domestic abuse occurs.
- Monitor access to sufficient counselling sessions for CYP who require counselling as a result of crime, based on need.
- Where applicable, ensure a whole-family approach can be offered to cases where crime has impacted on those who may have witnessed traumatic events.



Our survey found that despite **88% of victims reporting the crime to the police, for unknown reasons, 73% of them never accessed victim support services.** As will be shown in following chapters, the effect of crime – not only on victims but also on their families – is immense and wide-ranging.

A variety of reasons and circumstances influencing access to support services were identified by this research. Some barriers stifle both access to, and engagement with, services. There are a number of ways barriers can be overcome.

Barriers and solutions:

Knowledge of services and the referral process:

- Increase the visibility of victim support services in North Yorkshire and raise awareness of the range and type of support that is on offer and how to access it quickly and efficiently at the point of need.
- Increase the knowledge and understanding of access routes into services for both victims and professionals.
- Police should continue to refer all victims to Supporting Victims, regardless of the individual officer's perspective in relation to perceived victim need, and contact should be made with all victims where contact details are shared.
- Raise awareness of the need for referring agencies to provide correct contact details to enable an efficient offer of support to be made through regular contract and performance management meetings with providers.

Resourcing:

- Review allocation of funding to effectively manage service demand.
- Consult with providers to understand staffing challenges they may be experiencing and how these might be overcome.

Tailored support:

- Services should be accessible to victims who would benefit from language or communication support.
- There needs to be some out-of-hours provision for victims who are unavailable during the working week.
- Support should be offered through a variety of methods, including face-to-face, telephone, or virtually, recognising the importance of victims having a safe space to talk.

Independence from the police:

- Support services should be independent from the police.
- Independence of the support services from the police should be clearer/more transparent and promoted effectively.

The data collection showed that participants who have fewer needs and less complex needs and/or a less complex case are more satisfied with the support received than participants who have more complex needs and/or a complex case, with the latter cohort being much less satisfied with the support received. Victims with complex needs and/or cases need to be supported, not only by victim support services, but also by other local services, as their needs are often not merely crime-related. They also need to be supported in the long term to address as many needs as possible by using several agencies. People with complex cases who have received longer-term support tailored to their needs were very satisfied with the support.

Many people who accessed support and took part in this research found the services mostly helpful. The factors that facilitate coping and restoration for victims following the crime include:

1. Facilitating successful contact:



Timing of the support



Smooth and easy access

2. Elements in the service:



Clear explanation of available service and remit of the service



Having a designated support worker



Approach to support provision

Recommendations

- Practitioners should provide a clear explanation of the support offered and the remit of the support when referring to the services, as well as at the beginning and during support.
- Support services should offer support in the first few days after victimisation; if someone declined support in the first instance, reoffer support a few weeks later, once the full impact of the crime is processed.
- The referral process needs to be simplified and clear to all, with all professionals being able to refer to different agencies.
- Support services should offer different means of support, such as face-to-face, over the phone, or online; support should be tailored to victims' needs and delivered by a designated, highly trained support worker.
- Support services should conduct regular needs assessments to establish if victims' and survivors' needs have changed.
- Services should provide high-quality training to support workers to carry out needs assessments, especially over the phone.
- All support services should offer the possibility of re-accessing support when and if it is needed in the future.
- Practitioners should clearly explain the route of re-accessing support to victims and survivors, if and when needed in the future, once the support finishes.



Foreword

Commissioner Zoë Metcalfe, North Yorkshire PFCC, wanted to seek out and listen to the voices of victims and survivors to understand what has worked well since 2014, when the first victim needs assessment was undertaken. Core existing services were established in 2014 based on the recommendations that were made in that report. The PFCC wants to understand if current services still meet the needs of victims locally and identify any areas of improvement to enhance services in the best interests of those using them.

Commissioner Metcalfe would like to thank all those who took part in this research and to reassure victims that, by sharing their experiences as part of this research, they have contributed to ensuring that services continue to meet the needs of victims, both now and in the future.

Barriers to accessing and engaging with support services

No one wants to be a victim of crime, and when it happens it is often a confusing and complex time.

We acknowledge that this report highlights a number of difficulties victims have experienced in relation to access to services, and we commit to working in partnership with North Yorkshire Police (NYP) and service providers to address the specific issues identified and improve access.

If a victim reports a crime to NYP, there are established referral routes which should ensure that all victims are offered support, regardless of crime type (see Figure 1 for referral routes). These referral routes should ensure that those who report crime to NYP receive the option of a referral to support services.

NYP also issues the booklet, *Information for Victims of Crime*, to ensure that victims are informed at the earliest opportunity after the crime of the support that is available to them. This may be sent out by text, email, or post.

However, we accept it may be more challenging to know about and access the services available if a victim does not want to report directly to the police or wishes to access support later.

We will work closely with the PFCC Communication and Engagement Team to increase the visibility of victim support services in North Yorkshire, raise awareness of the independence of our support services from the police, promote the range and type of support that is on offer, and explain how to access services quickly and efficiently at the point of need.

The PFCC regularly brings support services together to identify common themes and to solve issues they are facing in delivering effective services to victims in North Yorkshire. However, the report suggests that these services are not actively working together as a collective to ensure that victims receive seamless support across services once a specific need is identified.

As a result, we will strengthen the profile and visibility of the Supporting Victims team as a victims hub to providers and wider agencies to ensure that all services and agencies understand that they can make direct referrals to Supporting Victims, who will identify the most appropriate service to meet victim need.

While this will not necessarily simplify the current referral routes, it will strengthen the understanding of Supporting Victims as an independent 'one-stop shop' for both victims and professionals to access all victim services and to ensure that victims are triaged and receive the most appropriate support to meet their needs.

NYP already refers all victims (excluding victims of sexual and domestic abuse crime) directly to Supporting Victims, and an offer of support is made via telephone call, text, or email to all victims, where accurate contact details are available. Sexual and/or domestic abuse victims are referred directly to support services by NYP. Any victim who does not wish to report to the police is able to access support by calling Supporting Victims on 01609 643100 or by accessing the team online at www.supportingvictims.org. In relation to sexual or domestic abuse crime, support can be accessed by contacting IDAS directly on 0300 011 0110 or online: [Make a referral - IDAS](#) (see Figure 1 for referral routes).

The PFCC invests in providing a dedicated Supporting Victims service for North Yorkshire, which triages over 30,000 victims a year. While we would ideally like to be able to offer support after the initial referral from NYP, this would impact on the ability of the service to make an offer to victims at the point of crime. Victims are given the details to be able to opt in at any time.

Public trust and confidence: North Yorkshire Police – victim reassurance

Some of the feedback from this research in relation to NYP's interaction with victims of crime matches that highlighted in the original victim needs assessment in 2014: this is really disappointing for the PFCC. However, we have already started to address the need to measure public trust and confidence in NYP, and the feedback gathered in this research will provide further valuable intelligence to the Delivery and Assurance Team in terms of:

- keeping victims updated of progress on the investigation
- the need to reassure victims – in police actions and language
- the importance of providing sufficient and accurate victim contact details on police systems to enable a timely offer of support to be made.

Holistic approach to supporting victims, families, and witnesses

Key findings in this report have highlighted the impact that crime has, not just on the person identified as a victim but also on those who are closest to the victim.

While our services focus mainly on supporting the victim directly (to ensure we meet victims' rights as detailed in the [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime](#)), where we are made aware of witnesses to traumatic events in relation to a crime, we will support those individuals, whether they are related to the victim directly or not. We will continue to review this approach to ensure we are getting it right for those who are impacted by crime.

In relation to a number of services we already acknowledge that support cannot be solely directed at the victim, as the impact is on the whole family. For example, Pace has been specifically commissioned to work with parents and carers of children who are being exploited or at risk of being exploited by individuals from outside the family.

From July 2021, a wider domestic abuse whole-family approach to supporting CYP affected by domestic abuse was established, providing cope and recovery support services for CYP affected by domestic abuse in North Yorkshire and the city of York. It may have been too soon to fully capture the voices of victims who had accessed this service when this research was commissioned. The service, in addition to providing tailored support directly to CYP and their parents or guardians, is also working in collaboration with key stakeholders to significantly improve the overall evidence base of the actual needs of CYP living in households where domestic abuse occurs and identify the most effective interventions to meet these needs and inform future service development and strategic planning.

We also continue to be responsive to changing national legislation. As a consequence of the new Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (legislation.gov.uk), which defines children who witness domestic abuse as 'victims', our counselling services now specifically support CYP countywide who have witnessed domestic abuse.

Note: Adults aged 18 and over who witnessed abuse as a child are not covered by the new legislation and not eligible for support under current arrangements.

Supporting specific groups

Feedback from victims in this report highlights gaps in support for victims who have specific needs, such as those with language barriers, LGBTQ+ victims, and male victims of domestic abuse.

We had already identified that language barriers presented an issue to victims in terms of equality of access to support and ensure that access to translation or interpreting services is available to our commissioned providers as required. We are now developing this further and have been working in partnership with NYP to access the force-wide translation and interpretation (including sign language) service, which we can deploy when a need is highlighted by any of our providers to ensure that victims with language or communication barriers are able to access the same quality of support as all other victims. Our providers have fed specific victim needs into the future design of this service to ensure it is fit for purpose, and full access is expected from May 2023. We will continue to respond to requests on a case-by-case basis until the new service is available and, at this point, we will work with all our providers to ensure they are aware of the translation services available and how to access them.

IDAS already has specialist staff who are trained to support specific groups, including males, LGBTQ+, and older people, but some of the victims who have participated in this research have not experienced such targeted service delivery.

For those with specific needs – and specifically those who have been highlighted in this report – we will work closely with our providers through established contract and performance meetings, and collectively through our provider group to ensure that their approach to managing specific needs meets our requirements, and that this is reflected when assessing victim need and delivering against that need.

More generally, the data collection showed that participants who have fewer needs and less complex needs and/or a less complex case are more satisfied with received support than participants who have more complex needs and/or a complex case, with the latter cohort being much less satisfied with the support received.

We accept that, where services are presented with complex needs and/or cases that require support to be provided by a range of statutory or other services, satisfaction may not be as high as for those who enter services with less complex needs. The PFCC acknowledges the limitations of commissioned services, contracted to specifically support those who are impacted by crime to, as far as is possible, cope and recover from the impact of that crime. Pre-existing complexities that are not related to the crime itself, eg pre-existing mental health conditions, cannot form part of the service offer. However, where a pre-existing need is identified, we expect the service to make clear to victims at the outset of the support what they are able to offer, as well as what they are unable to support them with. Services should also be able to advocate with wider services on behalf of a victim to address issues that have arisen because of a crime, such as liaison with GPs, schools, or housing authorities. This may also involve referring on to other commissioned services (eg counselling) or to wider statutory agencies where a commissioned service is not appropriate.

We will work closely with our providers through established, comprehensive contract and performance meetings (which already include discussion on funding, demand, resource, training, and performance against key performance indicators, including continuous needs assessment and outcomes) and collectively through our provider group to ensure that our requirements in relation to managing victim expectation are clearly understood. This will also include ensuring that a needs-led, flexible approach is taken to support victims who are unable to engage in standard office hours.

Children and young people (CYP)

The PFCC wants to ensure that all our services support CYP effectively. The majority of services we commission deliver an 'all age' service, which ensures that CYP in North Yorkshire are able to be supported after any crime. We accept, however, that in some services, dedicated specialist expertise in relation to the needs of young victims is not as easily accessible as it could be. As a result, the PFCC will work with our existing services to ensure that adequate access to dedicated, specialist CYP advisors is available within services to effectively support all CYP who have been victims of crime. We are already working with IDAS to establish dedicated child ISVAs and, with Victim Support, to establish dedicated, specialist independent victim advisors who will be able to support those CYP who have been victims of general crime, such as harassment, bullying, assault, or hate crime.

Additionally, we are already working in partnership with NYP and providers to identify gaps in referral and support for CYP who have been victims of crime with the intention of developing an enhanced approach to child exploitation. To better manage transitions to adult services, in all new specifications (eg the Child Exploitation Service) we will specify the requirement to support children up to the age of 25 where there are special educational needs.

Counselling – waiting times/additional sessions

It has been highlighted in the report that, despite the arrangements that we have in place to minimise waiting times, victims have still experienced delays to accessing services, particularly counselling services. This is something that we will explore with our providers during regular contract and performance meetings to ensure that waiting times are minimised and access to services is victim-led.

While we acknowledge victims' feedback on the availability of increased counselling sessions for more complex cases, the PFCC has a clear rationale in place that relies on a counsellor's professional judgement in circumstances where more than ten sessions are required.

Additional work

Peer support

Our specialist advisor services have it written into the specification that onward referral to peer support should be actioned where a need is identified following completion of the actions within a victim's cope and recovery plan. This has been more effective for domestic abuse victims, and IDAS offers group work and peer support 'Next Steps' sessions facilitated by trained volunteers. This is harder to provide where there are fewer victims of the same crime types, but we will discuss with our providers how to develop more innovative ways to access support from those who may have had similar experiences.

Fraud

There are measures being taken in NYP to establish an Economic Crime Victim Care Unit (ECVCU) to issue crime prevention advice and advice on how to recover monies lost in fraudulent situations. The Supporting Victims team already offers support to those victims who have reported fraud to NYP, and they work closely with NYP on fraud matters. We are keen to ensure that victims receive the best support from the new ECVCU team once it is live (anticipated to be 1 May 2023). We also continue to highlight the impact of the current financial climate at a national level through the [Victims Commissioner](#) and with the [Association of Police and Crime Commissioners \(APCC\)](#).

Road victims

The PFCC has successfully piloted an independent road victim advisor service. A new specialist road victim service aimed at supporting those bereaved or seriously injured as a result of a road traffic collision is planned for launch in winter 2023.



Introduction

Recognising the wide-reaching impact that crime can have, all victims^{vi} are entitled to access support services under the Victims Code of Practice.² Police and crime commissioners (PCCs)^{vii} have a duty to commission victim services in their police force area and make sure support is available to all victims of crime, whether or not they choose to report to the police.

In 2014, following a research project that looked at the needs of victims and local demand,^{viii} the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) for North Yorkshire commissioned eight targeted referral and support services for victims. Table 1 details the current provision of commissioned services, including who they support, the geographical area they cover and referral pathways.

A PFCC referral and assessment service for victims of general crime,^{ix} called 'Supporting Victims in North Yorkshire', was initially installed in partnership with Victim Support but

vi This report uses the term 'victim' to cover both victims and survivors of crime. However, we recognise that some people prefer the term survivor.

vii Some PCCs also have fire and rescue services within their remit: police, fire and crime commissioners.

viii <https://www.northyorkshire-pfcc.gov.uk/content/uploads/2016/09/Victim-Needs-Assessment-2014-Full-Final-Report.pdf>

ix All crime excluding domestic abuse and sexual abuse.

was brought in-house in August 2016. Supporting Victims makes direct contact* with enhanced entitlement and Ministry of Justice crimes to offer immediate advice and guidance over the phone and then onward refer to specialist services in their community. Supporting Victims assesses victim needs, provides initial support, and then informs, facilitates access, or refers them to available services. The vast majority of victims who access this service do so following automatic referral from North Yorkshire Police (NYP) after an incident has been reported. This currently excludes victims of sexual and domestic crimes, who are referred (with consent) directly to other commissioned support services by NYP. Supporting Victims also acts as an independent hate crime reporting centre, including onward referral for additional support where required. The Supporting Victims team responds to an average of almost 2,000 referrals a month.³

Five crime-specific services are commissioned by the PFCC to provide tailored, wide-ranging support to victims. These services provide a single point of contact for victims, including advocacy and face-to-face support in the community, as required, to help victims cope with and recover from the effects of crime:

- independent victim advisor (IVA) – multi-crime service provided by Victim Support
- community-based support services for victims of domestic abuse provided by IDAS (jointly commissioned with North Yorkshire County Council and City of York Council)
- independent sexual violence advisor (ISVA) service for victims of sexual abuse provided by IDAS (jointly commissioned with North Yorkshire County Council and City of York Council)
- service for parents/guardians of victims of child sexual and criminal exploitation provided by Pace
- service for children and young people at risk of child sexual and criminal exploitation provided by The Children’s Society (‘Hand in Hand’ project).

The following services are also available in North Yorkshire:

- counselling/talking therapy services provided by Survive and Community Counselling
- restorative justice service provided by Restorative Solutions.

These services are accessed following a referral from Supporting Victims. Restorative justice can also be accessed directly (self-referral). Figure 1 presents the referral routes to Supporting Victims and the other commissioned services.

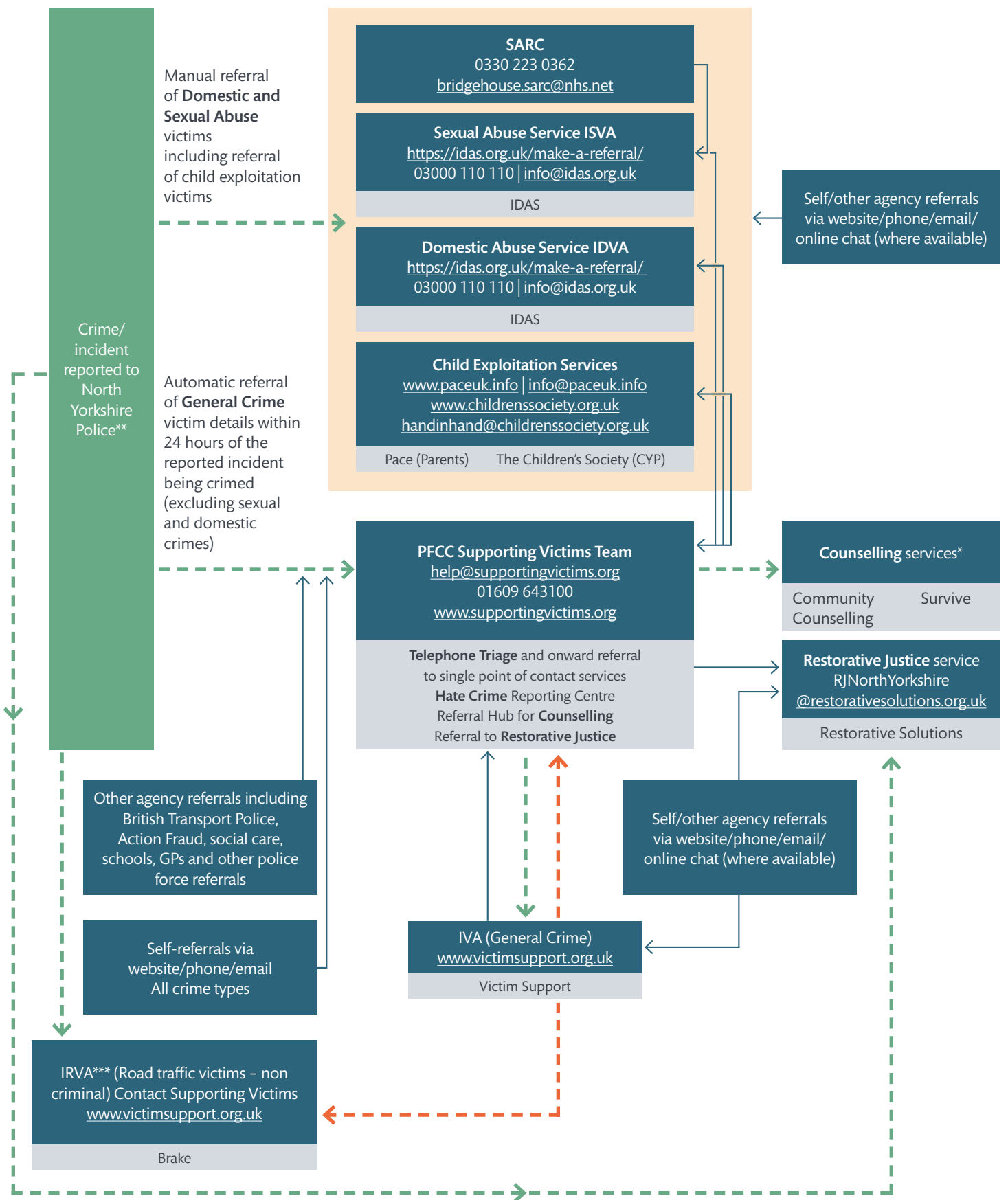
x Supporting Victims’ referral routes and contact methodology differs by crime type and demographics. General crime victims who have demographics or characteristics that may indicate a vulnerability are prioritised. Victims of enhanced entitlement (EE) crimes are prioritised for contact as per the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime. These include being under 18 years old at the time of the offence, having mental health problems or significant impairment of intelligence and social functioning, and/or suffering from a physical disability or physical disorder.

Table 1: Current provision of services commissioned by the PFCC in North Yorkshire*

		Supporting Victims	Pace	Survive	Community Counselling	Restorative Solutions	IDAS	Victim Support	The Children's Society
Who is supported	Adults	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
	CYP	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Crime type	All crime types	Child sexual and criminal exploitation	All crime types	All crime types	All crime types	Domestic abuse and sexual abuse	All crime types excluding domestic abuse and sexual abuse	Child sexual and criminal exploitation
Type of support		Immediate advice and guidance over the phone, basic needs assessment and onward referral and signposting to other specialist victim services and other support organisations as appropriate	The service works with parents and carers of children who are, or who are at risk of being, exploited by individuals from outside of the family. The support offered includes one-to-one and group work in addition to targeted awareness raising in schools. Parents can also access a secure online forum and befriending scheme. The aims of the service are to: Safeguard exploited children Support the successful prosecution and disruption of perpetrators by providing specialist witness care Recognise the impact child exploitation has on the whole family Build co-productive relationships with services and statutory agencies Empower parents to increase their resilience to provide long-term support for their child	Counselling/ Talking Therapy	Counselling/ Talking Therapy	An opportunity for a victim to communicate with those responsible for the harm enables everyone affected by the incident to play a part in repairing the damage and finding a positive way forward	Providing triage, immediate advice, support and safety planning including arranging personal or home security equipment as required. For those that require further support, the hub team will refer on to a specialist community-based worker (Independent Domestic /Sexual Violence Advisor Accredited Workers) to provide specialist one-to-one support/ peer support/ referral to an external agency	The service provides face-to-face support in the community for victims of serious crime, vulnerable, persistently targeted and young victims (excluding sexual or domestic) whether or not they have made a report to North Yorkshire Police. The service provides a range of practical and/ or emotional support for victims of crime in order to help them to cope and recover	The service works with children and young people affected by, or at risk of, child sexual and criminal exploitation. The support offered includes one-to-one and group work in addition to targeted awareness raising in schools. The aim of the service is to reduce the harm and incidence of child exploitation and provide support and safety planning for those affected
Location covered by the service		All of North Yorkshire	All of North Yorkshire	Craven, Hambleton, Harrogate, Richmondshire, York and Selby	Adults (aged 18 and over) in Scarborough and Ryedale only. All of North Yorkshire service for young people (aged 17 and under)	All of North Yorkshire	All of North Yorkshire	All of North Yorkshire	All of North Yorkshire
Referral pathway	Self-referral	Yes	Yes	Yes – via Supporting Victims	Yes – via Supporting Victims	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Referrals from Supporting Victims	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Referrals from other agencies	Yes	Yes	Yes – via Supporting Victims	Yes – via Supporting Victims	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Referrals directly from police	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

*All of North Yorkshire includes York

Figure 1: Referral routes to support services^{xi}

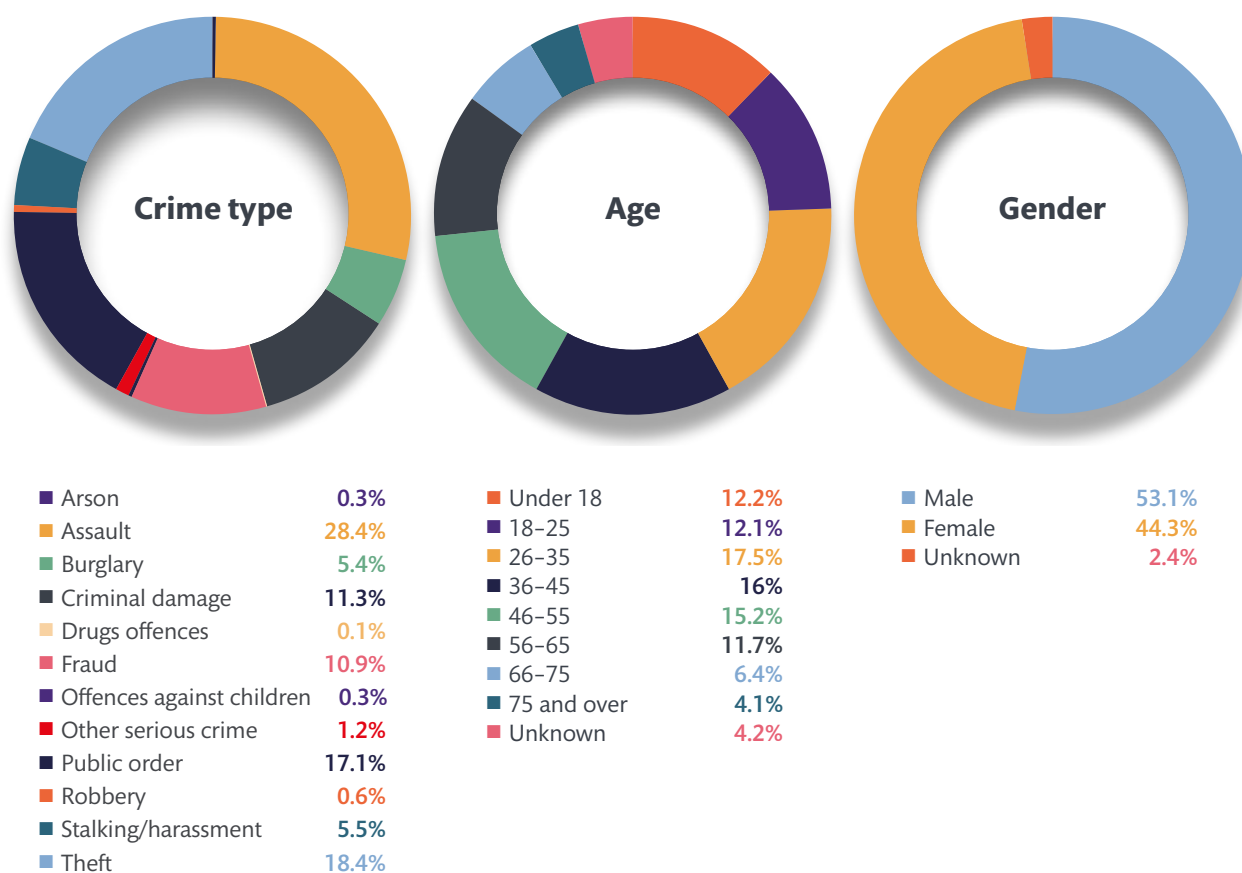


*All counselling referrals from commissioned services routed via Supporting Victims
 **Victims do not have to report crime to receive a service
 ***Currently seriously injured and those bereaved by RTC

^{xi} More details on each service can be found at <https://www.northyorkshire-pfcc.gov.uk/for-you/services/commissioned-services>

Who are the victims of crime in North Yorkshire?

Figure 2: Crime type (excluding sexual and domestic crimes), age and gender distribution of Supporting Victims cases (May–October 2022)



Methodology

This victim-focused needs and demand assessment was commissioned by the North Yorkshire PFCC. The research provides valuable insight into the often changing needs of victims of crime, their experience of accessing support services, good practice, and the gaps in the current service provision.

A multi-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods, was used, including:^{xii}

1. Review of the findings from the 2014 victim needs assessment research

2. Online survey with victims

Ninety-two victims who experienced crime in the past five years completed an online survey. The survey was promoted to victims across North Yorkshire who may or may not have reported a crime to the police and/or accessed support services.

^{xii} All victims of crime who took part in the qualitative data collection were recruited by the services commissioned by the PFCC in North Yorkshire. Any identifying details have been omitted, and victims' responses were coded using thematic analysis. All survivors of domestic abuse were out of the relationship at the time of qualitative data collection.

3. Online survey with practitioners

An online survey was completed by 49 practitioners from the services commissioned by the North Yorkshire PFCC.

4. Focus groups with victims

Two focus groups with domestic abuse victims recruited by the IDAS support service were conducted. All victims were female and had been subjected to domestic abuse perpetrated by their partner.

5. Semi-structured interviews with victims

Forty in-depth semi-structured phone interviews were conducted, 38 with adults (6 from Survive, 5 from Pace, 4 from Restorative Solutions, 5 from Community Counselling, 1 from IDAS, 13 from Victim Support, and 4 from Supporting Victims) and 2 with young people (The Children's Society – Hand in Hand). Seven victims were male and 33 were female. Participants had fallen victim to various crime types, including domestic abuse perpetrated by their partner, children, or other family members, sexual violence or abuse, child sexual and/or criminal exploitation, fraud, criminal damage, anti-social behaviour (ASB), hate crime, harassment, assault with and without injury, threats to kill, malicious communications, public fear, alarm or distress, theft, and bereavement by a road traffic collision.

Findings are taken from the cumulative results of all of the above research methods and are presented in six thematic chapters:



1. What is the effect of crime on victims?



2. Support needs of victims



3. Gaps in the service provision



4. Barriers in accessing and engaging with support services



5. What victims currently experience and are offered by the services



6. What factors facilitate coping and restoration for victims of crime?



What is the effect of crime on victims?

Figure 3: Most common effects of crime^{xiii}



Crime has significant and widespread consequences for victims of crime, their families, friends, and communities. While the effect of the crime varies greatly between victims, depending on the individual circumstances and type of crime, four primary effects were identified (see Figure 3). These effects touched all aspects of their lives.

Nevertheless, due to the high proportion of missing information in the survey looking at the crime type people have fallen victim to, we are unable to report differences in effect between victims of different crime types and/or demographics. Further research is needed to explore this in detail.

^{xiii} All percentages presented are based on the online survey with 92 victims.

^{xiv} Mental health involves processing information, storing it in memory, and understanding this information, while emotional health involves the ability to control and express emotions.

Emotional

Victims who took part in this study reported many different emotional responses as a result of being a victim of crime, which affected them greatly. Many of them felt angry, stressed, upset, and had no energy. Some reported impact on their memory. In addition, parents of children who were exploited felt guilty, as they did not always know how to help their child or fully understand what was going on with them.

“The stress, the sleepless nights, the not eating, the anxiety, the not daring to drive down certain roads or go out certain ways in case people see you or in case he [offender] knows where I am, it’s awful.”

Domestic abuse

“I’m anxious leaving the house. I’m anxious if somebody’s walking behind me because the dog attacked me from behind, and dragged me to the floor. I’m anxious with men approaching me, because the man was shouting.”

Dog attack

For some victims the emotional impact was made worse by the response of the police. This included a lack of compassion, not coming out to the reports of crime, or victims feeling like the police were not taking reports of crime seriously. We heard how this also led to a loss of trust in the police.

“My car being damaged, you’re naturally very, very upset about it all... I know this wasn’t the crime of the century, but it was to me. The fact nobody came out [police] just heightens the emotion, the frustration that these people can get away with this and nothing will be done about it.”

Criminal damage

Psychological/mental health

Many victims shared that the crime affected their mental health. Many of them were diagnosed with depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) following the incident(s). Some felt suicidal and suffered visual hallucinations, such as seeing things that are not there.

“I got really ill. I started to see things. I started to feel worthless, and like I didn’t belong... I had a really high score of PTSD and a very high score of anxiety... I’d have suicidal thoughts.”

Domestic abuse

Sense of safety

Victims of all crime types reported an impact on their and their family members’ sense of safety and security. Some victims shared how they felt afraid to go out by themselves, while others found it very difficult to feel safe in their own homes. Victims were especially afraid for their children. One victim of harassment and threats to kill told us how they felt so scared that they bought a bulletproof vest to feel safer.

"I was very, very frightened for my life... He was threatening to stab me every day... After going more and more into hiding, it was almost like I was being kept a prisoner."

Harassment

Finance

A negative effect on finances was also reported by victims of various crime types. Many people had to replace stolen or damaged goods, incurred cost due to moving house because of the impact of crime, or had to pay off loans because of economic abuse.

"Financial difficulties that he [offender] left me in... He'd opened a loan, like a guarantor loan, and put me down as the guarantor."

Domestic abuse

"And we've just been put somewhere really remote that's quite expensive to live, and we've no transport, a limited bus service, very limited..."

Child exploitation

Wider effects

The research also found four additional effects of crime, as shown in Figure 4.

Victims' **physical health** was affected by the crime, mainly in incidents of violence, but also pre-existing conditions were negatively affected as a result of the emotional impact. The **impact on work** was linked to physical injuries, for example if they prevented the victim from leaving their house, or to the emotional and psychological effects. This is also likely to link with financial effects victims have experienced because of not going to work due to the effect of the crime.

Relationships with family members were often damaged as a result of the crime as well, with family members breaking off contact and not speaking to each other. Moreover, we were told of a negative effect of crime on victims' and survivors' family members. Many family members were scared of leaving the house, started having panic attacks or were worried for their siblings or parents.



Figure 4: Additional effects of crime^{xv}



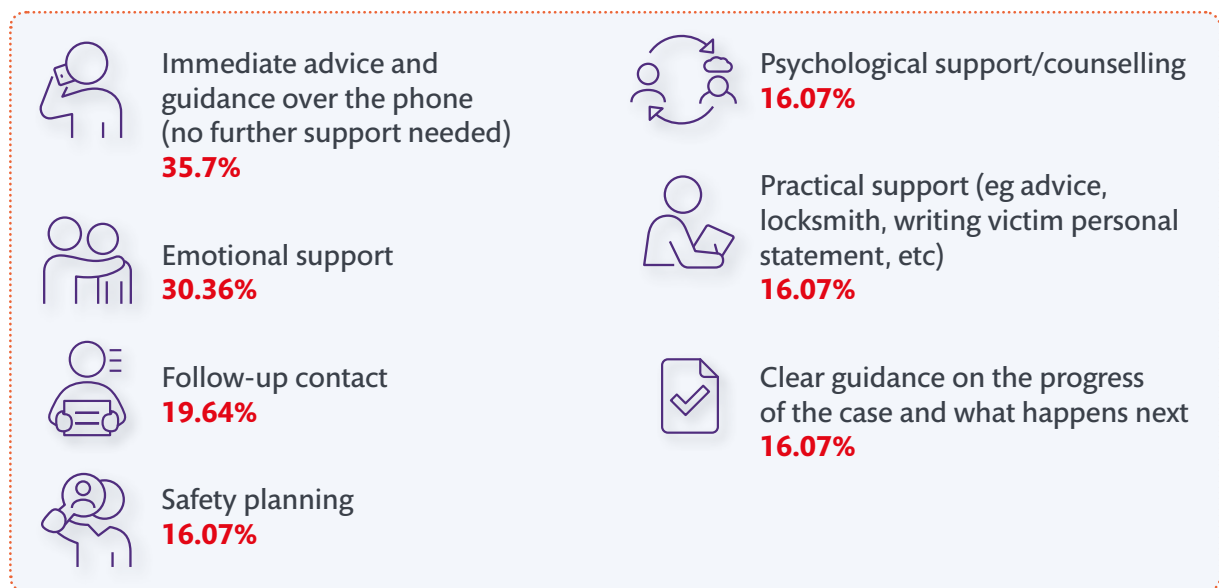
xv Percentage of 92 victims who completed the online survey.



Support needs of victims

Figure 5 shows the most frequently expressed needs following being a victim of crime in all crime types.

Figure 5: Support needs^{xvi}



These are a wide range of needs, which are not necessarily presented at the same time. In addition, victims told us that their needs change over the time, for example as a result of the progress of the case through the criminal justice system. As such, the assessment of victims' needs should be a continuous exercise, with support plans adjusted accordingly.

Immediate advice and guidance over the phone

Victims expressed a need for short-term support for both CYP and adults that is available soon after the incident or report of the crime. There was a desire for this support to be easily accessible and personal, rather than offered by a letter or text message. Victims wanted access any day and time of the week. Even though some of the commissioned services provide out-of-hours support with a dedicated free helpline, not many people who took part in this research were aware of this.

“And then the situation that you're struggling to deal with and that's very difficult has changed completely in that time [when cannot get immediate advice] or deteriorated. So yes, it would just be the availability that I would say could be better.”

Childhood abuse

Emotional support

As mentioned earlier, being a victim of crime can have a severe impact on different aspects of victims' lives, including having a profound emotional impact. Therefore, it is not surprising that most of the victims expressed a need for emotional support, often in the form of a designated, trustworthy, and knowledgeable person to talk to. Victims need to be able to share what they are going through, to be heard, and for their feelings to be validated.

“I just needed to speak to somebody... it reassured me as well. I mean, I just needed to talk it out. I was in limbo. I was shaken up and nobody was helping me. I just needed to talk things out and get things off my chest and say my point of view.”

Assault

“I think it's mainly having your voice heard... it's just getting the recognition that someone has listened to you and appreciated what has gone on. That has been more of a support than anything.”

Criminal damage

Many people needed advice about what to do and how to cope with the situation they were in. Victims of particular crimes, such as domestic abuse and child exploitation, needed to understand what constitutes as those crimes and learn techniques for dealing with difficult emotions and how to move forward with their lives.

“Well, just getting advice on how I try and connect with my daughter and it not get out of control, and then she's gone forever.”

Domestic abuse

“That's the advice you need – how to cope with the future, isn't it, really, to move forward.”

Criminal damage

Follow-up contact

Victims needed and very much appreciated follow-up contact a month or so after the service had finished, as well as having the option to re-access support if and when it's needed. This was due to the changing nature of victims' needs. The purpose of the follow-up call would be to establish if they need any final push in the right direction and additional help and advice.

"I think it would be good if the same people could contact you in, I don't know, six months or so, just to get a reflection on how you're doing and whether you need more. Because when you're in that mood, when you're depressed, the anxiety takes over and you forget everything."

Domestic abuse

Safety planning

Many victims needed advice on how to feel safe when at home, outside and also online. This included having a risk assessment and support worker assisting in making a safety plan. Victims also wanted swift access to personal alarms or window and door locks depending on the incident(s).

"I needed to learn how to safely use online and just someone to talk to as well."

Young person, child exploitation

"I don't think I've ever had a victim safety assessment. I am not sure how much of a threat I'm under. But nobody has ever given a victim risk assessment. And it's concerning, because it's my personal belief that this woman has got serious mental health issues."

Harassment

Psychological support and counselling

As outlined in the previous section, many victims reported that the crime affected their mental health. As such, victims, including those who did not have complex needs, needed psychological support and access to free counselling sessions. Victims with complex needs needed access to the free sessions for much longer.

"It would be useful if I could have the choice of perhaps more [counselling] sessions."

Childhood abuse

Practical support

All victims who took part in this research needed advocacy, information about the justice system, or practical support.

Despite communication rights in the Victims Code, victims expressed frustration about a lack of information they received about the case. This meant that the victim services were approached to help address needs that should be met by statutory agencies and the police. We heard that, despite contacting the police on a regular basis, some victims still could not get any updates on the case's progress and therefore wanted support services to liaise with

the police on their behalf. Victims whose case went to court also needed information about court process and what to expect. Some victims expressed a need for the support worker to come to the meetings with them or help when reporting a crime, as well as information about where and how to access legal advice.

Other practical needs included help with replacing damaged items and support with food and clothes vouchers, for example.

“I think more practical things. So, things like she’s chasing the police, that’s what I need. I’ve not heard from the police, at all. I’ve not seen a police officer face-to-face. So, things like that I found more helpful that she can do on my behalf.”

Dog attack

“For somebody to be with her [victim], I think, when reporting it to the police. Somebody from [support service name] or somebody would say, ‘I’ll come with you, I’ll support you with that.’ And for that person to be there all the way through.”

Domestic abuse

Peer support

In addition, this research found a need for peer support. This was expressed by victims of various crime types. While some of the services offer peer support, this is limited to specific crime types, but should be offered to victims of all crime types, if and when needed. Victims felt it would be beneficial to meet people who went through a similar situation and to learn that they are not alone. Not only could they talk and share emotions with people who completely understand them, but they could also share information on other services that provide support to people in similar circumstances to them. For peer support to be beneficial, victims felt that they should be small in numbers and offer a safe space to share their feelings and emotions. They should also be facilitated by an experienced person.

“Even though you have lots of friends and family visiting, no one understands, so to be able to be in touch with people that understand what you’re going through and the process of it all.”

Road traffic collision

“Knowing that you’re not the only person going through that, and they get to talk about the guilt that you feel when it’s your own child. Maybe they are accessing somewhere else, you know, services that they may be accessing, and also share information.”

Child exploitation

Intensity of support – victims with complex needs

The findings from the qualitative data collection indicated that there is a group of vulnerable victims with more complex needs. These include having mental health conditions as a result of being a victim of crime or pre-existing mental health conditions, having no social support network, and victims of high-harm crime such as child exploitation. They require more-intensive, extensive, and long-term support. Victims with complex needs also reported a need for their family members to receive support.

Victims with complex needs often required more than one type of support at the same time, and those who had it found it very helpful.

"I have found the combination of the groups that I'm doing and the counselling quite good, because I feel like, in the groups, it is opening women's eyes to different experiences. And they're explaining the situation as a whole. Whereas in the counselling for myself, I was talking more about my own life on a personal level."

Domestic abuse

Joined-up approach

Victims felt that there should be a more joined-up, holistic approach to support and information-sharing between all the agencies involved, so they work more effectively and collectively. This was reported by all victims, but even more so by victims with complex needs where many agencies are involved.

A joined-up approach was wanted to reduce the burden on victims. We heard that, as a result of not sharing information between agencies, victims had to recall distressing events many times to different agencies. Many found this traumatising.

"I just think there needs to be more collaboration and communication sort of thing between the councils, the police and charities like [name of support service] so that everybody's on the same page. Because it just feels like nobody knows what the other one's doing, and they're all kind of working against each other more than with each other."

Child exploitation

"When you're actually going through that, you're exhausted, and the phone calls did start from the beginning. They're just exhausting, and I think that as well, sharing information is not very good because you have to talk about distressing things, but on repeat."

Child exploitation





Gaps in the service provision

"I think the support needs to fit the problem."

Road traffic collision

All victims acknowledged the importance of victim support services in providing vital help to overcome the impact of crime. We were told that existing support services are providing very good support in North Yorkshire. Nevertheless, four gaps in service provision were identified:



Services for specific groups



Holistic support for all family members and witnesses



Additional services for children and young people (CYP)



Extended access to mental health support/counselling

Services for specific groups

Although victims may be eligible for services currently commissioned, victims reported that there is a lack of dedicated services for specific groups, such as for male victims of domestic abuse, LGBTQ+, or victims of economic abuse. These groups have unique needs and thus can benefit from specialised and knowledgeable support – for example, by having a dedicated support worker specialising in a particular group or with a crime specialism. When a specialist, dedicated service is not provided, victims feel overlooked and mistreated.

“I don’t think there’s any support for men in domestic trouble... I think more should be done for the people like me. I don’t fit a particular pigeonhole... If you’re not a target group, then people don’t care. That’s how people like me get overlooked.”

Harassment

“I’m bisexual, and my abusive relationship was with another woman. I do find that the support is very – I think it is directed at people who have been through heterosexual abusive relationships. I think it would be good to have more specific LGBT support.”

Domestic abuse

All parents who took part in this research and whose children were victims of grooming and child exploitation told us that there is a need for the services to provide support to parents and guardians after their child turns 18. We were told that once the child turns 18, all the support they as parents have been receiving ends abruptly because their child is considered an adult. Yet the need for specialist support in child exploitation and grooming remains.

“Unfortunately, what happened is my son then reached 18 and all services then ended. So then you are left with nobody... They [support service] can’t do it anymore. We haven’t had any support after that. [Name of support service] said they couldn’t [support parents] because he’s classed as an adult, so it all stops.”

Child exploitation

Additional services for CYP

Many people who took part in this research told us that there is a need for more support services for children and young people (CYP). This is not only for the CYP who are victimised themselves, but also for CYP who witnessed the crime happening. Indeed, previous research has found that, for example, witnessing domestic abuse in the household can severely impact different aspects of CYP’s lives.⁴ The need for support and access to support services for CYP witnessing domestic abuse in the household is recognised by the Domestic Abuse Act.⁵

Parents thought that a more sensitive approach should be offered, either by offering longer-term support or ensuring other support is in place. We also heard that children aged 16 and 17 sometimes fall between the cracks, since some services classify them as adults and do not include them in their services, while adult services will only offer them support from the age of 18.

“There’s this arbitrary cut-off and it means that if a child’s been receiving a lot of... good support, suddenly all of their provision is going to change overnight and there needs to be a softer transition. But the other thing that’s really, really been a massive issue for us is 16-, 17-year-olds fall right between the gap... 16, 17 is a very vulnerable age in terms of services.”

Child exploitation

In addition, often CYP who are victims of grooming and child exploitation are perceived as offenders by some statutory agencies and are not offered any help at all. All parents told us that even though the available support is very good, there needs to be more recognition by statutory agencies that those children are victims, and more support and early intervention support for the children that are groomed and exploited is needed.

“When we first moved here, my son was very aggressive. I rang Childline, because I just didn’t know who else to ring. So they then said to me, ‘Please visit your doctor. This line is only for children, not for the parents.’”

Domestic abuse

“So perhaps somebody who specialised in exploitation sitting down with [name] and helping him to see that he was being groomed because he couldn’t see it. I think actually once a child is in the grip of groomers, then it’s going to take one-to-one, it’s going to take someone to sit down and very sensitively help them see how all the stuff they heard in assembly that they didn’t think was happening to them, is grooming.”

Child exploitation

Many survivors of domestic abuse and victims of child exploitation wanted to see more preventative actions taken in the form of early education at school. Victims who took part in this research expressed a need for CYP to be educated about online safety, grooming and domestic abuse, and how to access support – for example, during an assembly led by a support worker from a specialist support service. In their opinion, reaching out to children in this way can educate not only CYP but their parents and teachers.

“I think schools should be teaching children, ‘These are the signs. This is a healthy relationship. This is not healthy. You get out.’ But they don’t, which is quite sad.”

Domestic abuse

“For people who are like me, from my kind of background, I think work in schools, to raise more awareness of these issues [domestic abuse], would be absolutely amazing, especially for Asian women. I didn’t have a voice at all... When you’re from an Asian background, you are very much told not to speak or say anything.”

Domestic abuse

Holistic support for all family members and witnesses

As mentioned earlier, in some circumstances it is not only the victims of crime who are impacted by what happened, but also other family members are impacted, and therefore the offer of support should be extended. These include family members who have witnessed the crime, had to give evidence against a sibling who was a victim of child exploitation and broke a law, or were living in a property that was damaged. Also, while the adults got support to deal with the loss of their child following a road traffic collision, their other children did not.

We heard that because of the lack of support and services offered to all family members who needed support, the person who was getting support was then supporting their family.

"She's [wife] never been offered anything, it has never been offered to her. I presume it's because I reported the incidents in my name. When the lady [support worker] said about this panic alarm for my wife walking the dog when I'm not here and all that, she's never emphasised the fact that it is available to my wife to talk to someone in that way, it never got offered or explained or to approach it. So, that maybe is something that should be looked into... I have had to provide additional support to my family following the incident."

Criminal damage

Extended access to mental health support/ counselling

All victims who took part in this research and accessed mental health support and counselling told us that the quality of the current provision is very good and is valuable in the victim's journey to move on from what happened to them. However, we were told that there is a need for the services that provide mental health support and counselling to extend capacity to meet demand. Additional capacity is needed to reduce waiting times and enable the number of free sessions offered to increase if required.

Eligibility for counselling should also be reviewed. Some witnesses of crime, such as serious violence, were in need of counselling due to the profound impact it has had on them. Furthermore, we heard about CYP who witnessed an assault on their loved one or domestic abuse at home, are bereaved by the crime, or live in the household where their sibling is groomed. All of these CYP could benefit from dedicated mental health support or a counselling service for CYP.

"I don't think anyone takes mental health seriously enough... I do think the children's side of it has been let down a lot more. I think a lot of people think kids can just get on with it and deal with stuff. But really, they can't."

Assault

Recommendations

The OPFCC should discuss the provision of specialist support for certain groups, including LGBTQ+, males, older people, and CYP, with providers in regular contract and performance meetings and via the provider group to ensure there is sufficient coverage and expertise available and that this is reflected in service delivery.

- Undertake work with the Delivery and Assurance Team in the OPFCC to ensure feedback from victims accessing OPFCC support services, SVT, and service providers contributes to intelligence already being captured on public trust and confidence in NYP, particularly in relation to:
 - keeping victims updated of progress on the investigation
 - victims' need for reassurance from police – actions and language
 - the importance of providing sufficient and accurate victim contact details on police systems to enable a timely offer of support to be made.
- Ensure that services understand the needs of CYP to support them effectively; through regular contract and performance meetings, identify solutions to appropriately resource specialist support as required.
- Ensure supportive transitional processes to adult services are built into service delivery specifications for CYP turning 18.
- Continue to work with specialist providers developing interventions to meet the needs of CYP living in households where domestic abuse occurs.
- Monitor access to sufficient counselling sessions for CYP who require counselling as a result of crime, based on need.
- Where applicable, ensure a whole-family approach can be offered to cases where crime has impacted on those who may have witnessed traumatic events.





Barriers in accessing and engaging with support services

Our survey found that despite **88% of victims reporting the crime to the police, for unknown reasons, 73% of them never accessed victim support services**. As outlined in the previous chapters, the effect of crime – not only on victims but also on their families – is immense and wide-ranging.

A variety of reasons and circumstances influencing access to support services were identified by this research. Some barriers stifle both access to, and engagement with, services. There are a number of ways barriers can be overcome.

Barriers and solutions:

Knowledge of services and the referral process:

- Increase the visibility of victim support services in North Yorkshire and raise awareness of the range and type of support that is on offer and how to access it quickly and efficiently at the point of need.
- Increase the knowledge and understanding of access routes into services for both victims and professionals.
- Police should continue to refer all victims to Supporting Victims, regardless of the individual officer's perspective in relation to perceived victim need, and contact should be made with all victims where contact details are shared.
- Raise awareness of the need for referring agencies to provide correct contact details to enable an efficient offer of support to be made through regular contract and performance management meetings with providers.

Resourcing:

- Review allocation of funding to effectively manage service demand.
- Consult with providers to understand staffing challenges they may be experiencing and how these might be overcome.

Tailored support:

- Services should be accessible to victims who would benefit from language or communication support.
- There needs to be some out-of-hours provision for victims who are unavailable during the working week.
- Support should be offered through a variety of methods, including face-to-face, telephone, or virtually, recognising the importance of victims having a safe space to talk.

Independence from the police:

- Support services should be independent from the police.
- Independence of the support services from the police should be clearer/more transparent and promoted effectively.

Barriers to accessing help and support can be wide-ranging and include individual circumstances, in particular for victims of domestic abuse, which are out of the scope of this research. For example, in line with findings from previous research,⁶ many victims of domestic abuse reported being scared of the perpetrator as a barrier to seeking help as well as lack of awareness of what forms domestic abuse can take.

Knowledge of services and the referral process

Many victims who took part in this research told us that they were not aware of any victim support services available in North Yorkshire. As such, they themselves, if able, tried to look for support, which proved to be a challenging task. We heard that a simple search in Google did not always provide the victim with the available support.

“You have to Google everything under the sun and phone ten phone numbers before you get any help and all of that, we’re already maxed out as parents of high-needs kids, we’re already really working an awful lot more hours than other parents, and yes, chasing your tail trying to get the right information.”

Child exploitation

“We were on our own for quite a few months before we found out about any support that we could get. But there isn’t a lot of advertising, really, is there?”

Harassment

Victims are also relying on being referred by, and information from, agencies they were already involved with. We learned that these agencies, such as social services, doctors, or housing associations, have a key role in providing information. However, many agencies, including some police staff, are unaware of the full range of services available in North Yorkshire.

“You just don’t hear of any of it, do you? Even if you go to the doctors, they don’t tell you about different services that are available.”

Actual bodily harm

Awareness of the existence of a service is not enough; victims need to be told what type of support is available, as it can make a significant difference in accessing services and encouraging engagement. For example, victims said they would find it helpful to know that domestic abuse services support any abuse between adults within a family, not just between intimate partners. Also, testimonies from people they have helped would be helpful to learn of the benefits of using the service.

“I couldn’t really find much about them [counselling service], even when I Googled them... They have a website, but there isn’t much about it. They should have a few more reviews about people they have helped. Because I think, if you’re reading stuff like that, you want to see what they’ve done. Like an overview of what they do, how many people work there and how big it is, the company.”

Road traffic collision

Victims who took part in the data collection told us that more resources should be allocated to advertising and promoting support services. Suggestions included having more posters in GP surgeries or hospitals, or advertising services on social media. It is also essential to make sure practitioners who are in contact with victims, either in the community or in the criminal justice system, have awareness of the full range of services available to victims and how to make a referral or signpost.

Victims shared how the first interaction with the police can be very stressful, and they struggle to process or remember all the information that is passed to them. Therefore, information about available services should be provided in a clear and simple way, and a follow-up contact should then be made or victims should be provided with information in a tangible form, such as a card or flyer.

“I do think it’s good that, when the police are involved, they do give out those cards with the names on. That’s really helpful to women, who are in a real state at the time and they’re not thinking straight really. And they certainly did that for me; they gave me leaflets and all sorts of things. So yes, I would say that’s a good thing.”

Domestic abuse

“If you’ve never been a victim of crime before, how would you know? Yes, and I think a lot of it should come down to that initial contact with the police. Because it’s all well and good them being online, but would you access... how would you access that online? You’d have to do a Google search. You’d have to be looking for something very specific, which people may do. But I think if the police officer... and they might need to re-offer it. Because your mind is not going to be working as it should, you’re not going to have a great memory.”

Dog attack

Many victims who took part in this research told us that, despite reporting crime to the police, they were not referred to victim support services. However, it might be that the police did refer them to Supporting Victims, but they were not contacted directly by them because of the lack of accurate contact details. Where accurate contact details are provided by NYP, victims are contacted by phone, text, or letter. Nevertheless, victims who were not referred to the support service were made to feel that the police didn’t understand how serious the impact of crime was and, as such, that they are not being taken seriously.

Victims should be contacted by Supporting Victims with an offer of support and onward referral if and when needed. Nevertheless, resources and accurate contact details can impact on the number of victims the service is able to contact directly. As a minimum, Supporting Victims prioritises enhanced entitlement victims for direct contact. Data looking at the referrals from Supporting Victims showed that during a six-month period (May–October 2022), 18.9% of victims and survivors were not contacted with an offer of support for a number of reasons, including, for example, insufficient contact details. Out of those contacted, 67% were contacted by letter and 32% by phone. During this period, 499 referrals were made to three services commissioned by the PFCC (458 to IVA services, 35 to IDAS (excluding victims referred directly to IDAS via NYP, which is the main referral route) and 6 to counselling services).

"No, the police made no referral to anything because they didn't think that it was serious enough... They just treated me like I was a waste of time from start to finish. They never even said anything about [name of support service]."

Harassment

"I think the police should have informed me about helping me, because I didn't get any help. But yes, I think it should've been down to the police to say, 'You need help, here's a contact number for [name of support service],' sort of thing. But nobody told me anything... they never mentioned [name of support service] to me when I was there. Like I say, it was my brother that told me about Victim Support."

Theft

Even families bereaved by road traffic collision were not referred by the police to support and had to find support themselves.

"The only thing they [police] told us about was MIRT, is it Major Incident Response Team, or something like that, which is with the police. And they gave us a counsellor for a couple of weeks, from the police team, but I didn't really feel that that helped. So then we got in touch with Brake ourselves. And then as soon as they got the statement from us, they sort of just left us. They didn't give a family liaison officer or anything like that. We wanted someone to support us, but they didn't, really."

Road traffic collision

Moreover, victims told us that the support services struggle to contact them with an offer of support as they don't have their correct contact details. This was also echoed by practitioners. We heard that it is not uncommon that referrals from the police are incomplete and lacking basic information on how to contact victims. Practitioners also told us that the police are very slow in responding to their requests regarding contact details, which delays much-needed support. They felt that the police do not realise the impact this has on their ability to contact and provide support.

"He [victim] wasn't offered any help, at first. But maybe about in August, he did get a letter from somebody because they couldn't get in touch with him because they didn't have his phone number. Saying that they were from [name of support service], and he did respond back."

Assault

We also learned that the self-referral process can sometimes be a challenging route. Many victims didn't know if they could self-refer to services, and the ones who tried to self-refer found the process difficult. Practitioners were frustrated that they could not refer victims to Supporting Victims directly and had to tell the victim to make the contact.

"When they [support service] rang, the number was always a withheld number, so I had no way of contacting them. I didn't know if there was another way, whether you emailed, or anything like that? I don't know about that. I thought it was actually done through the police, obviously, initially. But I wasn't quite sure whether I had to contact the police to say, 'I still need support.' So, I never really bothered because I didn't know what to do."

Assault

Resourcing

While most victims were satisfied with the support they received, we also heard that some support services cancelled their appointments and victims were unable to get hold of the workers when they needed help. This not only caused emotional distress but also a loss of faith that the service is there when they need it. As a result, many victims did not try to access support again and were left without any help. We also heard of occasions, especially when transitioning between support workers, where the support finished abruptly. Changes in their support worker also meant that victims needed to build rapport with a new person, which made them feel like the service lacked empathy; they were reluctant to explain everything that happened from the beginning. As such, even though they still needed support, they disengaged.

“I’ve used [name of support service]. For me, they weren’t helpful because they were cancelling [appointments]. They were saying they couldn’t turn up to a meeting. About three times they said that to me, so it wasn’t helpful for me.”

Child exploitation

“This lady was going on holiday, and then she was poorly, so I never spoke to her, and then she left. So, after she left, I never had any contact. And then, all of a sudden, someone else rang to say that the lady that was dealing with my case had left, and was I alright? But of course, I dealt with this one lady, I felt I had a connection with her because I’d dealt with her from the start, and she knew everything. So, the second lady, just said, ‘Oh, are you alright now?’ And that was it, basically. I was just sort of left... I felt I still needed support because of the case, and both myself and my partner still feel threatened.”

Public fear, alarm or distress

“It could be several weeks between each phone call. And when you’re in a crisis moment, you call up, and then you’ve got someone completely new, and you have to tell the story all over again. And you just can’t do it. You can’t keep telling the same story; it’s exhausting. And you just give up.”

Domestic abuse

Another aspect of overly stretched services is long waiting lists to access support services and counselling. Many victims had to wait for several months, some for as long as seven months. Victims told us that the gap between finishing support and accessing counselling was often too long. Not only victims felt this way; practitioners also felt that the waiting list is too long. They felt that shortening and speeding up the process of vetting counsellors, for example, and increasing staff numbers would reduce waiting lists.

“Yes, I had to wait quite a few months I think, from when I finished [name of support service]. I think it was about three or four months. Yes, it would have been nice to maybe not have had such a big gap [between finishing support from a support service and accessing counselling].”

Domestic abuse

Nevertheless, victims appreciated having regular check-ups while on the waiting list and found it very useful.

“There is quite a waiting list. In the November I did an assessment, and then somebody would ring me every four weeks just to have a chat and check in with me. I think that was for three or four months, they [counselling service] did that. And then I just had to wait. I should have been seen within three to four months and then, they were so far behind, I was like 54th on the list.”

Domestic abuse

Victims who live in rural areas told us that there is a lack of support services in their area. Accessing support for many meant travelling a long distance, which is costly and time-consuming. As such, many cannot access and engage with the support services.

“Where we live, in [place], it is not a very big place. So I think there would be more to offer in the nearest city, which would be [place]. And, obviously, that includes a lot of travel to [place]. And, obviously, there are no bus routes or anything like that. And there are five of us that live in this house. And everyone relies on me, because there is only me that drives. So it is difficult sometimes.”

Harassment

Tailored support

Some victims felt that support was not tailored to them or didn't meet what they needed, and as a result they disengaged with the support services.

“It didn't work out... We were getting support in that time, but it was like what we needed and things weren't really listened to. It was just whatever support they felt that they would give, and even if it wasn't the correct support.”

Child exploitation

The services must be accessible to all victims, including those with disabilities or who have limited English-language skills. Options need to be in place for victims who require adaptations to how a service is provided, such as interpreters. Without the option to use a language service or communication support, including British Sign Language, some victims cannot access much-needed support.⁷

“Obviously I'm not English. And sometimes it's difficult, some words. So for me maybe it's better to explain face-to-face with the person what I mean than explain by phone.”

Fraud

“My parents, but they can't speak very good English at the moment. I have to help them for everything. I do all the communication and things... I actually have asked her [support worker] about this, but not for me, but for my parents – and then nothing, because I think she cannot find someone to speak Hong Kong Canto.”

ASB, hate crime

“Needed language support which was not offered to me. I re-approached them after one support worker did not provide a BSL interpreter and they have since improved and I now go back to them. More experience/BSL support needed.”

ASB

Moreover, victims who work full time told us that most services were offered during working hours, so they found it difficult to access services and as a result cannot engage with the service at the time when they need support, or indeed at all.

“They are open Monday to Friday, the classic work hours. Obviously, quite a lot of people are busy during those times. Offering maybe a later service, like one evening a week or something like that could maybe be useful... if they had had an evening available or something like that, then I think I probably would have started [counselling] earlier.”

Domestic abuse

Another barrier to engagement with the support services is concern over privacy. To open up, many victims need a quiet, safe place where their families and peers cannot hear them or see that they are accessing support. A variety of methods of receiving support should be offered to address individual circumstances.

“Well, I spoke to my daughter and she turned round and said a lot of the kids don’t like being taken out of lessons, because the teacher will come in and they’ll turn round and say, ‘[Name], can we just?’ sort of thing, and everybody knows. Kids are so clever, they can pick up on what’s going on... So I think there needs to be a bit more discretion about it. Because kids, they do feel embarrassed about it.”

Actual bodily harm

“There was no face-to-face support, and I personally didn’t like the phone calls. I was in a situation where I had my son living at home and he was not in a good place. So even finding some space to have a phone call, I would have preferred face-to-face.”

Child exploitation

“I would say Zoom would be a good option, but just because of how my circumstances are at the moment I wouldn’t be able to open up. Just because my partner is here and my toddler. Well, I am upstairs at the minute, but they can hear me downstairs.”

Harassment

Independence from the police

We learned that victims prefer to have support that is independent from the police. This can be due to lack of trust in the police or because of a negative experience or low satisfaction with the way the police have handled their case. Support services’ independence was particularly important to the people who did not want to report crime to the police. Victims and practitioners told us that this can deter victims from accessing and engaging with support services. Therefore, the independence of the services should be clearly explained to all victims, particularly when the police are offering it to the victims and when the first contact is made with Supporting Victims.

“Not everybody wants to go to the police, do they? ... The general public are completely losing faith in them. So if the only way of getting these services is through the police, these people are going to suffer because people aren't going to waste their time. ... There does need to be independent ones [support services]. Especially, people might not have the confidence to go to the police either. So yes, definitely independent. Definitely.”

Domestic abuse





What victims currently experience and are offered by the services

All victims acknowledged the importance of victim support services. The data collection showed that victims who have fewer needs and less complex needs and/or a less complex case are more satisfied with the support they received than victims who have more complex needs and/or a complex case. Victims and survivors with complex needs and/or cases need to be supported not only by victim support services, but also by other local services, as their needs often are not merely crime related. They also need to be supported long term to address as many needs as possible using several agencies.

The two examples on page 46 and 47 illustrate two different cases that require different support responses. The first example looks at a victim of criminal damage with few needs, whereas the second example presents a case with complex needs and/or a complex case of a parent whose child was exploited.

Overview: Adam* is a victim of criminal damage to a vacant property. His case was straightforward with simple needs – emotional support and restorative justice.



VICTIM ACTIVITY	☺ Needs met well	☺ Called the police, police referred to support service	☺ Support service called	☺ Victim was satisfied with methods of support offered	☺ All needs met, victim is feeling confident with system
	☹ Neutral				
	☹ Needs not met				

VICTIM ACCOUNT

The police arrived at the scene of crime and looked at the evidence. They referred victim to support service.

"I contacted the police. They came out. A few people on the street have got CCTV so the police were able to access that and establish, fairly quickly, who was responsible... so the police came, they did a good job... Yes, it gave me confidence in the system. It's been taken seriously. That makes me feel better... police constable referred the case to [Name], the restorative justice guy."

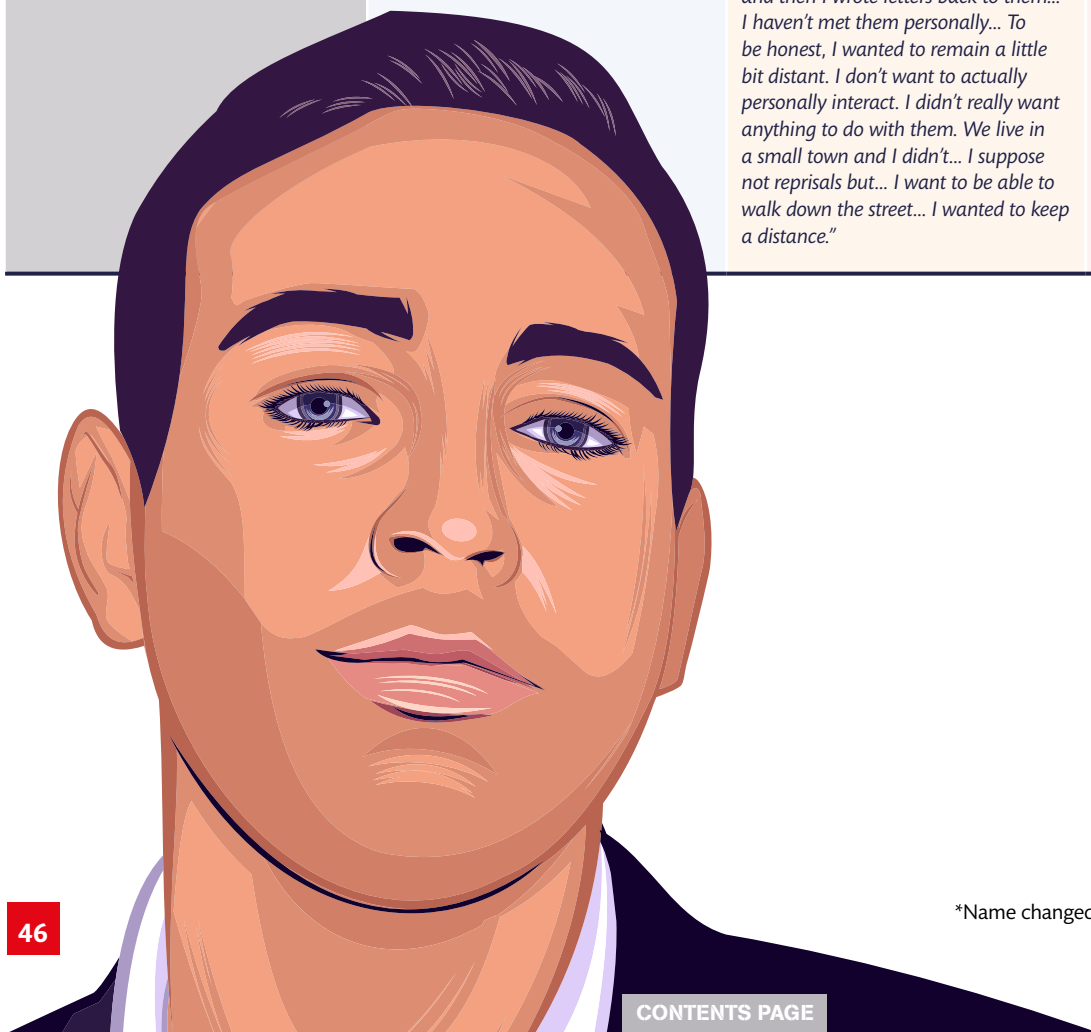
The support service contacted victim promptly following referral and clearly explained the remit of the service and what help they can offer. Offered support which was very much tailored to victim's needs.

"So [support worker name] got in touch with me and explained what he could do... I think, originally, it was over the telephone and we made an appointment to meet up. Yes, I met him. I spoke to him on the phone a few times and I think I met him twice. It worked well. It worked well for me. Because the crime... you know, it was damage to property, it wasn't damage to me or any of my loved ones or family."

"They [perpetrators] wrote letters to me and then I wrote letters back to them... I haven't met them personally... To be honest, I wanted to remain a little bit distant. I don't want to actually personally interact. I didn't really want anything to do with them. We live in a small town and I didn't... I suppose not reprisals but... I want to be able to walk down the street... I wanted to keep a distance."

Following the prompt response and investigation from the police and support from the support service all victim's needs were met.

"The process has given me some confidence in the system... I'm happy with everything really, it worked for me."



*Name changed to protect person's identity

Overview: Lucy* is a victim of criminal damage and a mother to a child who was exploited.

		SEEKING SUPPORT	RECEIVING SUPPORT	END OF SUPPORT		
VICTIM ACTIVITY	☺ Needs met well	☺ Told social worker about concerns who referred to support services	☺ Lucy was offered support ☺ Offered another longer-term support tailored more to her needs ☺ Some support and check-ups on other family members			
	☹ Needs not met	☹ Reported crime to the police and told about concern she had about her son, police did not refer to support services ☹ Other incidents reported to police, no referral for support	☹ Gap in support, offered support not adequate to victim's needs ☹ Her daughter reported support, lack of support as a family	☹ End of support, although offered support was good it has ended, despite a need for support, as the child that was exploited turned 18		
	☹ Neutral					
VICTIM ACCOUNT		<p>The police did not take reports of crime and concerns about son seriously. They did not refer Lucy to any support service.</p> <p><i>"It was a social worker that referred to [name of support service]. Police didn't really take some of the things serious at first... Our windows were put through and we were just left really without support to us in that situation... I've researched things myself... but the police have been to the home numerous times and the police didn't know the Crisis number... One police team that came didn't know what [support service name] was."</i></p>	<p>Despite reports of other incidents police still did not refer Lucy for support and did not understand that her son is exploited.</p> <p><i>"I don't think the police are equipped with enough information of dealing with the family aspect."</i></p>	<p>Lucy was offered support, unfortunately not tailored to her needs. She disengaged with the support service.</p> <p><i>"I feel like we were referred to [name of support service] several times for support for myself. I didn't feel [name of support service] was the right support because we needed it as a family. I felt like the only advice I had was to throw my son in the street. I understand what they mean, but they didn't understand the impact that that would still have on us as a family. So there's something missing."</i></p>	<p>Lucy was referred to another support which was more suitable to her needs. They have offered much needed face-to-face support and understood her situation and needs.</p> <p><i>"The person that supported me gave guidance of how to deal with things... [Name of support service] were understanding. They did come to the home and talk face to face. They contacted me. They did a home visit and they kept in contact, texting and checking on me. So they were the best service. I can't fault them really and they talked through and understood what we were going through. Yes, and I felt really listened to and, yes, that they could understand really, not that they could fix it, but they kept checks about my daughter. If we had a court appearance or anything, they checked in on us as well. Just the understanding of what we were actually going through and feeling believed, and help with guilt, how this has happened to your own child."</i></p>	<p>Lucy found the support helpful not only for herself but also other family members.</p> <p><i>"We found [name of support service] to be one of the very few support agencies that actually supported. They were one of the very few very useful ones."</i></p> <p><i>"My son then reached 18 and all services then ended. So then you are left with nobody. We haven't had any support after that. I do think there should be still somebody there to support family."</i></p>

*Name changed to protect person's identity

People with complex cases who have received longer-term support tailored to their needs were very satisfied with the support.

Case study: Contrasting good and bad practice

Kate* is a survivor of coercive control and economic abuse reaching thousands of pounds and many loans taken in her name. This has had a negative effect on many aspects of her and her family's life. Not only was her emotional and mental health affected, but also her physical health.

The crime was reported to the police by her parents, with several units involved. Due to the complexity of the case and need to get evidence, Kate was *"asked to act normal with my ex-partner, but I had to keep him [offender] at arm's length"*.

During this time she was referred by the police to support services. Initially she had a mixed experience with the support offered to her, with one service offering 'tailored to needs' support and the other not so much. *"I was put in touch with [name of support service] by the detective at [place]. It was amazing. I was also given the number of [name of support service]. I, personally, didn't find they helped me. I think they're more for physical and domestic abuse, whereas, because mine was financial and emotional abuse, they obviously hadn't come across people like me, as much. So, they maybe didn't have the experience in dealing with the people with cases such as myself..."* As a result, she disengaged with one support service that did not have the expertise and knowledge to address her needs.

However, Kate stayed engaged with the service that had extensive knowledge and expertise and that was able to offer her a combination of interventions that were tailored to her needs, including, among others, information and assistance on how to get her money back, emotional support, and liaising with the police. At the start of the service the support worker explained clearly what support is on offer. The support was very much tailored to Kate's needs from the start to the end of the process. Among other support, Kate was offered advice on contacting lenders as well as help with writing not only to the offender but also to different agencies.

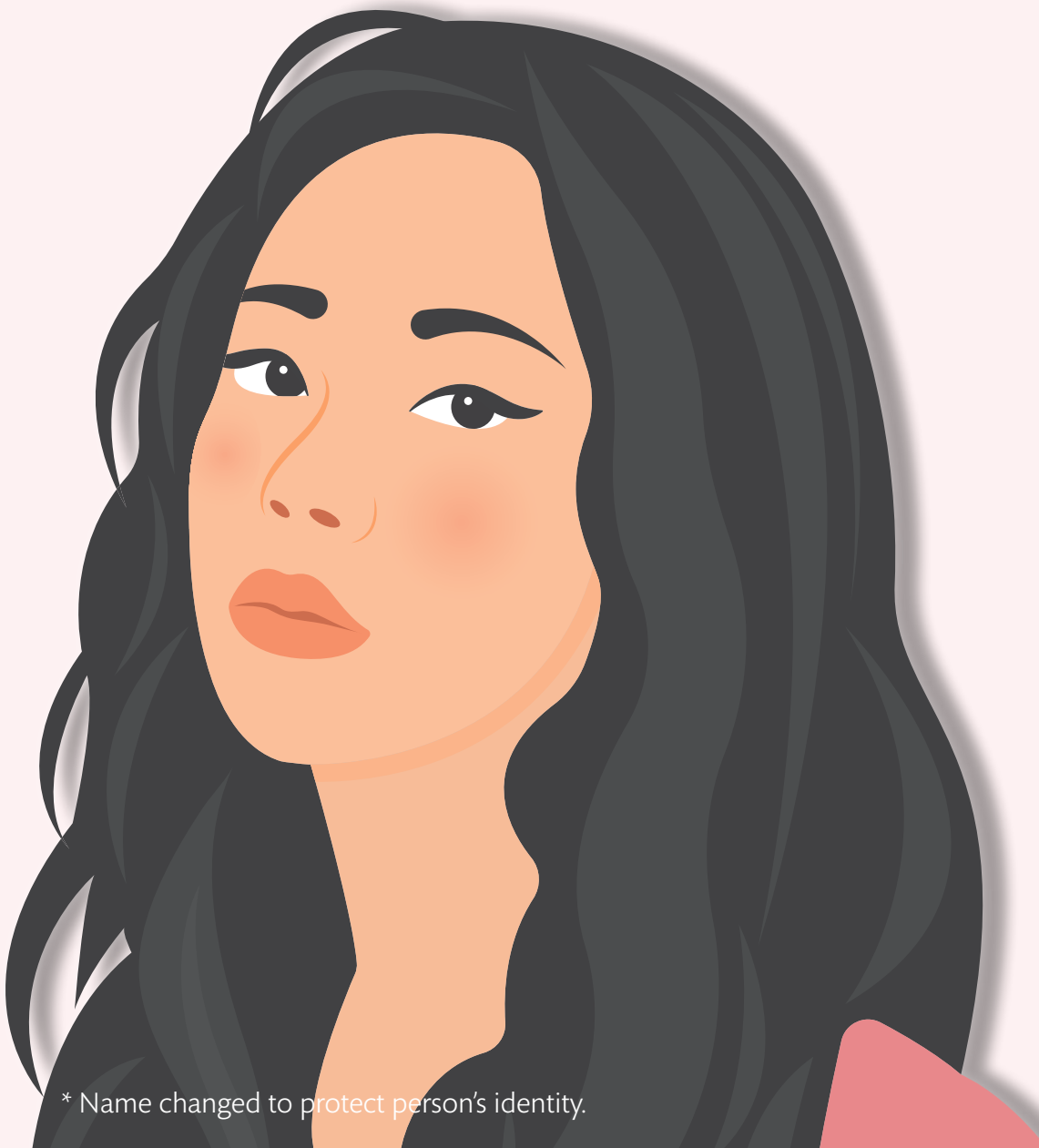
"He [support worker] was really helpful. He advised me to pursue the cases through the different banks and creditors. He was there if I needed any advice, or anything of how to word things, or what I needed to not say. Sometimes, it's hard to put things into words when you're upset. He also came and we decided that we would write a letter [to the offender]. So, I actually ended up writing, I don't know if it was two or three letters that were hand-delivered to the offender in prison. I found that so helpful. Because you could say all the things that you needed to say and get it out in the open... I felt like it gave me a voice. I've had replies from the offender that concluded what I needed. I felt that I got closure from doing the restorative justice programme, definitely."

The support worker was also available if and when she needed help.

"If I needed to ring [support worker name] at any time, that was also fine. He said he was there for me, whenever I needed to contact him for anything, or if I needed to call for some support, that was also okay. So, yes, I found it, honestly, absolutely invaluable... I felt like I wasn't rushed, and things were done to suit me, timing-wise, and I could work it around work."

Kate felt that the support she received helped her and gave her much-needed closure. After the support service came to an end, Kate had a follow-up call to check if she needed any further support.

"I have had a follow-up with [name], to make sure that I'm happy. He asked me if I needed anything further. I was quite happy to say, 'No, I feel I've got all I need from this. I'm in a much better place than I was when we first started the process.'"



* Name changed to protect person's identity.



What factors facilitate coping and restoration for victims of crime?

As mentioned, many people who took part in this research and accessed support found the services mostly helpful. This chapter looks at the factors that facilitate coping and restoration for victims following the crime. These include:

1. Facilitating successful contact:



Timing of the support



Smooth and easy access

2. Elements in the service:



Clear explanation of available service and remit of the service



Having a designated support worker



Approach to support provision

Facilitating successful contact

Timing of the support

Time of contact was considered relevant. Sixty-eight per cent of victims who completed the survey told us that support should be offered within two days after being a victim of crime. This was also supported by the findings from the qualitative data collection, with many people appreciating the support services contacting them promptly after being a victim of crime. It not only offered much-needed support at that time, but it also validated their experience and reassured them that someone is caring and available.

“They [support service] rang me and I was really struggling... I did appreciate that they got in touch really quickly. So, for me, I felt reassured that somebody was, at least, acknowledging the impact that this crime had had on me. So, although it was difficult for me to speak on one occasion, or a couple of occasions, yes, I did appreciate that they’d contacted me, quite soon after the event.”

Dog attack

However, some victims told us that even though someone declined the support initially, they should be contacted again after a few days, or even weeks, as it takes time to process what has happened and to fully realise the effect of the crime on them. In addition, victims’ needs might change as the case progresses through the criminal justice system. As such, to address their changing needs, it is crucial to conduct needs assessments on a regular basis. Moreover, as some support services conduct assessments over the phone, it is vital that high-quality training to support workers in carrying out needs assessments is provided.

“Sometimes, you need it a bit down the line as well. It’s maybe not needed immediately because you don’t know what impact it’s had, but it’s like when the incident’s over and it could be even a couple of months later, it’s when it hits you then.”

Child exploitation

“If you’d have waited two or three days and then come back to me, I’d have been in a better position. When you’re in a heightened state of emotional distress, then you’re not really thinking rationally or logically. I’m not hearing that there is help and support out there... on the second occasion I was offered, I could get help from Victim Support. I didn’t take that up because of the reasons I’ve said about my stupid male pride. Then a few weeks later, I rang back and said, ‘How do I get in touch with Victim Support?’ and then it was processed.”

Criminal damage

Smooth and easy access

Both victims of crime and practitioners told us that the referral pathway is complicated and difficult to navigate. Practitioners told us that the referral routes between the agencies should be simpler and that often practitioners cannot refer victims to other services. While it is possible for practitioners to refer to support services, we have heard that some of them find it difficult to refer victims to Supporting Victims, for example. This put more pressure on the victims as they were expected to self-refer, which some may find difficult because of the effect of the crime and the distress they are in. If agencies are able to share information

when referring, it will also reduce the number of times that victims need to retell their story. Moreover, we also heard that victims are unaware that they can self-refer and, when they are aware, they often don't know how to do it.

"Instead of getting bandied around like I have done. It's been an absolute nightmare just trying to access anything. When you ring them up, you don't have to go round all the houses and get referred into different areas before you can actually get support. I think it took seven referrals before I even got support."

Domestic abuse

"Multi-agency approaches can get really messy and disorganised and lots of assumptions that somebody else will make the referral, and so there was far too long a lag between the problem and the support. There was a huge, huge lag."

Child exploitation

The report has already acknowledged that the long waiting time presents a barrier for victims to access and engage with support services; therefore, a smooth and quick start to support is essential and was appreciated by victims.

Elements in the service

Clear explanation of available service and remit of the service

Many of the victims who used the support services were new to them and were unsure about what to expect – including not understanding the range and remit of support available to them. Hence the offer of support should be clearly and concisely communicated to them at initial contact. As victims of crime may find it difficult to remember all of the options because of the impact of crime, especially when many agencies are involved, they need to be reminded of the support as and when it is needed, or be provided with material they can take away. Once the remit of support services was explained to victims, they appreciated it very much. We also heard from those who had complex needs and were involved with many agencies that their remits were not always clear, so they struggled to understand who should provide what support.

Many victims also expressed being unaware of the objective of the initial call and were unclear about what outcomes they should expect as a result of engaging with the Supporting Victims service. Furthermore, some practitioners shared that victims sometimes have the impression that the service can offer support that is not in their remit, such as mental health support or counselling. They think that those who signpost the victims, mainly Supporting Victims and the police, should have more knowledge on what support the service can and cannot offer and therefore manage the victims' expectations of the service prior to referral.

"I'm very woolly on what everybody's remit is. We had 17 agencies involved at one stage. Yes, so we had a lot of agencies involved and I'm not entirely clear on who should have been doing what... When they outsource all this to different smaller charities. No matter how good the charity is, you really have created quite a confusing network."

Child exploitation

Approach to support provision

All victims told us that they would appreciate a service that allows flexibility and a range of methods of support offered to meet their needs. Some people prefer online support or over-the-phone support because it fits their work commitments and doesn't involve travelling long distances, while others would rather have face-to-face support because it gives them a safe and quiet place to fully unroll how they feel. The offer of face-to-face support was particularly important for people who could not take phone calls because of their personal circumstances, such as lack of a quiet and confidential space to talk. We have also been told that some victims would appreciate the offer of face-to-face support, at least for the initial meeting.

"I think the Zoom helped, I really do, because when you have a lot of things to say to a stranger that are obviously extremely difficult to say but you can still do it and be in the safety of your own home, I did find that very helpful, which then gave me the confidence obviously now, to go and see her [face-to-face] when I can. She did offer me the choice."

Childhood abuse

"[Name of support service] is one-to-one support, they come into school... For me, school is the best place because it's only me and [support worker] in a room and no one else can bother you. If it's out of school, like home or anywhere, there are people around you."

Young person, child exploitation

Moreover, to cope with the effect of crime, the support offered should be tailored to victims' needs. However, many victims told us that the offered support was generic.

"And then she offered me very generic online support. So, she sent a link through with lots of mental health support things. So, it was support with COVID, support with anxiety and depression, support with financial worries, and you could click a link and do an online course. So, that phone call, although I did answer the questions, it made me feel a bit deflated. Because I just thought, 'It's just a tick-box exercise. You don't actually have that personalised support that you've initially offered.'"

Dog attack

Once support was personalised according to victims' needs and taking into consideration the impact of the crime on them, victims saw the benefits of support and felt much better. Furthermore, for many people, knowing that they can access support again if and when it was needed was very reassuring.

"They gave me loads of resources, relevant to my situation, that I could read through. It was just reassuring to know that there were things that I could do to protect myself. If they were taking it seriously, then it meant that I knew I didn't have to put up with the situation any more, and it was okay for me to do the things that I needed to do to protect myself."

Domestic abuse

"They [support service] left their numbers with me and said if you ever need to call, just let us know. Just call and obviously if you leave a message when we're not there, we'll ring you back. I felt they gave me all the support they could, but they left the option over to me, if I wanted to continue, she would continue to call me, but I just felt that they couldn't do any more, and I was happy with the service that they gave me."

Fraud

Having a designated support worker

All victims said that having a designated support worker was very beneficial. Victims told us that they felt they were listened to, that their experience was understood and validated, and that the emotional impact of the crime was lessened. The designated support worker also provided much-needed advice. This was also paramount in gaining trust with CYP, to encourage and facilitate their engagement with the support. Victims also appreciated that they could contact a specific person if and when needed.

"I was assigned a support worker [name] who was fantastic. Seemed to understand the issues very quickly, gave very clear, straightforward advice, was never judgemental. ... She also came in on some of the meetings to try to see what the direction was of the multi-agency approach, and she really spoke up for us in those meetings... it meant a lot to have someone actually fighting your corner."

Child exploitation

"If you want to gain trust with somebody, you've got to see them for a long time."

Young person, child exploitation



Recommendations

- Practitioners should provide a clear explanation of the support offered and the remit of the support when referring to the services, as well as at the beginning and during support.
- Support services should offer support in the first few days after victimisation; if someone declined support in the first instance, reoffer support a few weeks later, once the full impact of the crime is processed.
- The referral process needs to be simplified and clear to all, with all professionals being able to refer to different agencies.
- Support services should offer different means of support, such as face-to-face, over the phone, or online; support should be tailored to victims' needs and delivered by a designated, highly trained support worker.
- Support services should conduct regular needs assessments to establish if victims' and survivors' needs have changed.
- Services should provide high-quality training to support workers to carry out needs assessments, especially over the phone.
- All support services should offer the possibility of re-accessing support when and if it is needed in the future.
- Practitioners should clearly explain the route of re-accessing support to victims and survivors, if and when needed in the future, once the support finishes.



Commissioner Zoë Metcalfe, North Yorkshire PFCC, wanted to seek out and listen to the voices of victims and survivors to understand what has worked well since 2014, when the first victim needs assessment was undertaken. Core existing services were established in 2014 based on the recommendations that were made in that report. The PFCC wants to understand if current services still meet the needs of victims locally and identify any areas of improvement to enhance services in the best interests of those using them.

Commissioner Metcalfe would like to thank all those who took part in this research and to reassure victims that, by sharing their experiences as part of this research, they have contributed to ensuring that services continue to meet the needs of victims, both now and in the future.

Barriers to accessing and engaging with support services

No one wants to be a victim of crime, and when it happens it is often a confusing and complex time.

We acknowledge that this report highlights a number of difficulties victims have experienced in relation to access to services, and we commit to working in partnership with North Yorkshire Police (NYP) and service providers to address the specific issues identified and improve access.

If a victim reports a crime to NYP, there are established referral routes which should ensure that all victims are offered support, regardless of crime type (see Figure 1 for referral routes). These referral routes should ensure that those who report crime to NYP receive the option of a referral to support services.

NYP also issues the booklet, *Information for Victims of Crime*, to ensure that victims are informed at the earliest opportunity after the crime of the support that is available to them. This may be sent out by text, email, or post.

However, we accept it may be more challenging to know about and access the services available if a victim does not want to report directly to the police or wishes to access support later.

We will work closely with the PFCC Communication and Engagement Team to increase the visibility of victim support services in North Yorkshire, raise awareness of the independence of our support services from the police, promote the range and type of support that is on offer, and explain how to access services quickly and efficiently at the point of need.

The PFCC regularly brings support services together to identify common themes and to solve issues they are facing in delivering effective services to victims in North Yorkshire. However, the report suggests that these services are not actively working together as a collective to ensure that victims receive seamless support across services once a specific need is identified.

As a result, we will strengthen the profile and visibility of the Supporting Victims team as a victims hub to providers and wider agencies to ensure that all services and agencies understand that they can make direct referrals to Supporting Victims, who will identify the most appropriate service to meet victim need.

While this will not necessarily simplify the current referral routes, it will strengthen the understanding of Supporting Victim as an independent 'one-stop shop' for both victims and professionals to access all victims' services and to ensure that victims are triaged and receive the most appropriate support to meet their needs.

NYP already refers all victims (excluding victims of sexual and domestic abuse crime) directly to Supporting Victims, and an offer of support is made via telephone call, text, or email to all victims, where accurate contact details are available. Sexual and/or domestic abuse victims are referred directly to support services by NYP. Any victim who does not wish to report to the police is able to access support by calling Supporting Victims on 01609 643100 or by accessing the team online at www.supportingvictims.org. In relation to sexual or domestic abuse crime, support can be accessed by contacting IDAS directly on 0300 011 0110 or online: [Make a referral - IDAS](#) (see Figure 1 for referral routes).

The PFCC invests in providing a dedicated Supporting Victims service for North Yorkshire, which triages over 30,000 victims a year. While we would ideally like to be able to offer support after the initial referral from NYP, this would impact on the ability of the service to make an offer to victims at the point of crime. Victims are given the details to be able to opt in at any time.

Public trust and confidence: North Yorkshire Police – victim reassurance

Some of the feedback from this research in relation to NYP's interaction with victims of crime matches that highlighted in the original victim needs assessment in 2014: this is really disappointing for the PFCC. However, we have already started to address the need to measure public trust and confidence in NYP, and the feedback gathered in this research will provide further valuable intelligence to the Delivery and Assurance Team in terms of:

- keeping victims updated of progress on the investigation
- the need to reassure victims – in police actions and language
- the importance of providing sufficient and accurate victim contact details on police systems to enable a timely offer of support to be made.

Holistic approach to supporting victims, families, and witnesses

Key findings in this report have highlighted the impact that crime has, not just on the person identified as a victim but also on those who are closest to the victim.

While our services focus mainly on supporting the victim directly (to ensure we meet victims' rights as detailed in the [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime](#)), where we are

made aware of witnesses to traumatic events in relation to a crime, we will support those individuals, whether they are related to the victim directly or not. We will continue to review this approach to ensure we are getting it right for those who are impacted by crime.

In relation to a number of services we already acknowledge that support cannot be solely directed at the victim, as the impact is on the whole family. For example, Pace has been specifically commissioned to work with parents and carers of children who are being exploited or at risk of being exploited by individuals from outside the family.

From July 2021, a wider domestic abuse whole-family approach to supporting CYP affected by domestic abuse was established, providing cope and recovery support services for CYP affected by domestic abuse in North Yorkshire and the city of York. It may have been too soon to fully capture the voices of victims who had accessed this service when this research was commissioned. The service, in addition to providing tailored support directly to CYP and their parents or guardians, is also working in collaboration with key stakeholders to significantly improve the overall evidence base of the actual needs of CYP living in households where domestic abuse occurs and identify the most effective interventions to meet these needs and inform future service development and strategic planning.

We also continue to be responsive to changing national legislation. As a consequence of the new Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (legislation.gov.uk), which defines children who witness domestic abuse as 'victims', our counselling services now specifically support CYP countywide who have witnessed domestic abuse.

Note: Adults aged 18 and over who witnessed abuse as a child are not covered by the new legislation and not eligible for support under current arrangements.

Supporting specific groups

Feedback from victims in this report highlights gaps in support for victims who have specific needs, such as those with language barriers, LGBTQ+ victims, and male victims of domestic abuse.

We had already identified that language barriers presented an issue to victims in terms of equality of access to support and ensure that access to translation or interpreting services is available to our commissioned providers as required. We are now developing this further and have been working in partnership with NYP to access the force-wide translation and interpretation (including sign language) service, which we can deploy when a need is highlighted by any of our providers to ensure that victims with language or communication barriers are able to access the same quality of support as all other victims. Our providers have fed specific victim needs into the future design of this service to ensure it is fit for purpose, and full access is expected from May 2023. We will continue to respond to requests on a case-by-case basis until the new service is available and, at this point, we will work with all our providers to ensure they are aware of the translation services available and how to access them.

IDAS already has specialist staff who are trained to support specific groups, including males, LGBTQ+, and older people, but some of the victims who have participated in this research have not experienced such targeted service delivery.

For those with specific needs – and specifically those who have been highlighted in this report – we will work closely with our providers through established contract and performance meetings, and collectively through our provider group to ensure that their approach to managing specific needs meets our requirements, and that this is reflected when assessing victim need and delivering against that need.

More generally, the data collection showed that participants who have fewer needs and less complex needs and/or a less complex case are more satisfied with received support than participants who have more complex needs and/or a complex case, with the latter cohort being much less satisfied with the support received.

We accept that, where services are presented with complex needs and/or cases that require support to be provided by a range of statutory or other services, satisfaction may not be as high as for those who enter services with less complex needs. The PFCC acknowledges the limitations of commissioned services, contracted to specifically support those who are impacted by crime to, as far as is possible, cope and recover from the impact of that crime. Pre-existing complexities that are not related to the crime itself, eg pre-existing mental health conditions, cannot form part of the service offer. However, where a pre-existing need is identified, we expect the service to make clear to victims at the outset of the support what they are able to offer, as well as what they are unable to support them with. Services should also be able to advocate with wider services on behalf of a victim to address issues that have arisen because of a crime, such as liaison with GPs, schools, or housing authorities. This may also involve referring on to other commissioned services (eg counselling) or to wider statutory agencies where a commissioned service is not appropriate.

We will work closely with our providers through established, comprehensive contract and performance meetings (which already include discussion on funding, demand, resource, training, and performance against key performance indicators, including continuous needs assessment and outcomes) and collectively through our provider group to ensure that our requirements in relation to managing victim expectation are clearly understood. This will also include ensuring that a needs-led, flexible approach is taken to support victims who are unable to engage in standard office hours.

Children and young people (CYP)

The PFCC wants to ensure that all our services support CYP effectively. The majority of services we commission deliver an ‘all age’ service, which ensures that CYP in North Yorkshire are able to be supported after any crime. We accept, however, that in some services, dedicated specialist expertise in relation to the needs of young victims is not as easily accessible as it could be. As a result, the PFCC will work with our existing services to ensure that adequate access to dedicated, specialist CYP advisors is available within services to effectively support all CYP who have been victims of crime. We are already working with IDAS to establish dedicated child ISVAs and, with Victim Support, to establish dedicated, specialist independent victim advisors who will be able to support those CYP who have been victims of general crime, such as harassment, bullying, assault, or hate crime.

Additionally, we are already working in partnership with NYP and providers to identify gaps in referral and support for CYP who have been victims of crime with the intention

of developing an enhanced approach to child exploitation. To better manage transitions to adult services, in all new specifications (eg the Child Exploitation Service) we will specify the requirement to support children up to the age of 25 where there are special educational needs.

Counselling – waiting times/additional sessions

It has been highlighted in the report that, despite the arrangements that we have in place to minimise waiting times, victims have still experienced delays to accessing services, particularly counselling services. This is something that we will explore with our providers during regular contract and performance meetings to ensure that waiting times are minimised and access to services is victim-led.

While we acknowledge victims' feedback on the availability of increased counselling sessions for more complex cases, the PFCC has a clear rationale in place that relies on a counsellor's professional judgement in circumstances where more than ten sessions are required.

Additional work

Peer support

Our specialist advisor services have it written into the specification that onward referral to peer support should be actioned where a need is identified following completion of the actions within a victim's cope and recovery plan. This has been more effective for domestic abuse victims, and IDAS offers group work and peer support 'Next Steps' sessions facilitated by trained volunteers. This is harder to provide where there are fewer victims of the same crime types, but we will discuss with our providers how to develop more innovative ways to access support from those who may have had similar experiences.

Fraud

There are measures being taken in NYP to establish an Economic Crime Victim Care Unit (ECVCU) to issue crime prevention advice and advice on how to recover monies lost in fraudulent situations. The Supporting Victims team already offers support to those victims who have reported fraud to NYP, and they work closely with NYP on fraud matters. We are keen to ensure that victims receive the best support from the new ECVCU team once it is live (anticipated to be 1 May 2023). We also continue to highlight the impact of the current financial climate at a national level through the [Victims Commissioner](#) and with the [Association of Police and Crime Commissioners \(APCC\)](#).

Road victims

The PFCC has successfully piloted an independent road victim advisor service. A new specialist road victim service aimed at supporting those bereaved or seriously injured as a result of a road traffic collision is planned for launch in winter 2023.

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