



**VICTIM
SUPPORT**

NORTH YORKSHIRE

 North Yorkshire
Police, Fire & Crime
Commissioner



North Yorkshire Victims' Voice

Understanding victims' needs

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www.victimsupport.org.uk

Acknowledgements

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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)

¹ Ministry of Justice. (2020). *Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales*. London: Ministry of Justice.

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:**

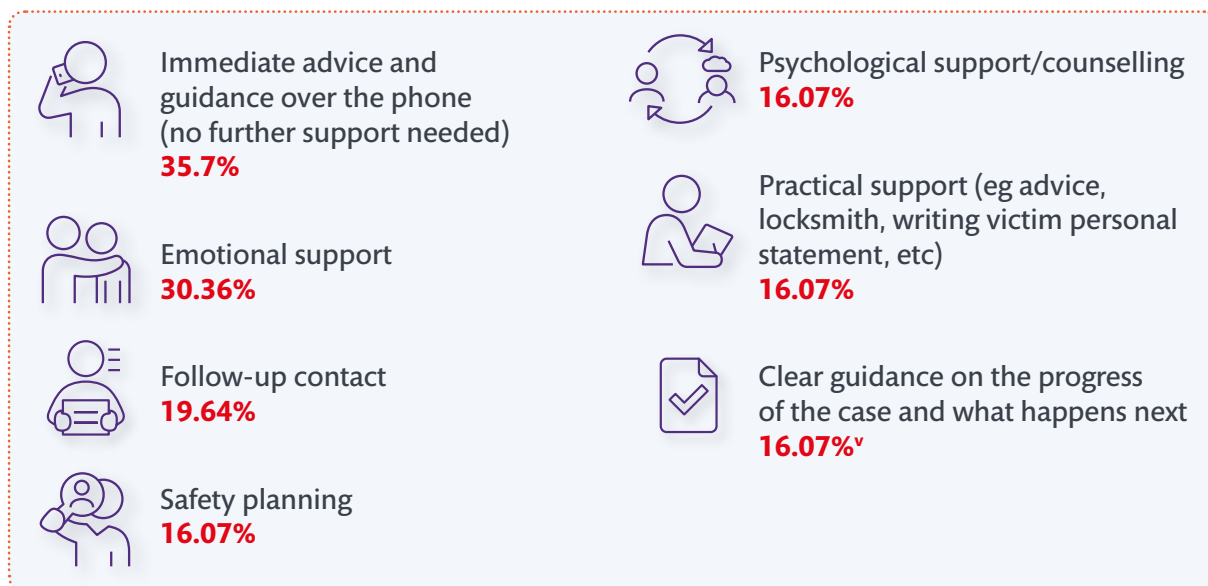


The research also found four additional effects of crime:



^{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

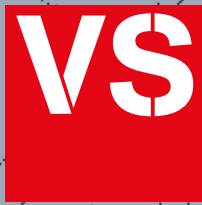
Our specialist advisor services have it written into the specification that onward referral to peer support should be actioned where a need is identified following completion of the actions within a victim's cope and recovery plan. This has been more effective for domestic abuse victims, and IDAS offers 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.



VICTIM SUPPORT

NORTH YORKSHIRE

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- using our 24/7 live chat service:
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