



# Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel

Hosted by Somerset County Council Democratic Services



## **Link Member Report – Recommissioning Victims Services/Service Delivery Assurance Priority 1 – Protecting the most Vulnerable from Harm**

The role has provided oversight of the work undertaken by the OPCC to ensure that objectives in the Police and Crime Plan are delivered. There are 2 strands to my engagement as Link Member:-

- Recommissioning of Victims Services; and
- Service Delivery Assurance.

With experience gained as Chair of my LA Health Overview and Scrutiny Board and a clear understanding of commissioning processes through my involvement with the CCG, I hope I brought value to the process. It has also been an opportunity to strengthen accountability and transparency between the Panel and the OPCC by facilitating a reporting mechanism on this key priority.

### **Recommissioning of Victims Services**

In 2014, the Ministry of Justice made £1m available specifically for the Recommissioning of Victims Services. A Recommissioning Board was set up by the OPCC to provide oversight of the commissioning process until the contract awards in 2019. A timetable of Board meetings will take us through to this point. The PCC will not take part in these meetings to reaffirm the independence of the process. The scope of the process does not include Lighthouse, but all other services commissioned for contracts in 2015 including Restorative Justice. In my capacity as Board Member, I attended my first meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2018 and took part in a review of the Victims Needs Assessment, the proposed User Engagement Plan and Commissioning Intentions document.

A data led/evidence-based approach had been adopted to the needs assessment and the consultation involved 101 local stakeholders that represent a range of roles and organisations involved in supporting victims of crime. Feedback suggested:-

- some gaps in provision and a lack of capacity in some areas
- concern that a small pocket of victims may be missed if a model of support based on crime type was adopted
- budget/capacity pressures - how services will cope as more and more victims are identified and referred into services
- that certain groups of people were not attempting to access services (young people, people with mental health issues, BME communities, males and LGBTQ were identified by stakeholders)
- concern that the criminal justice system can have a negative impact on victims

Lighthouse and front-line officers are working together to identify the needs and vulnerabilities of everyone at the scene when attending a call. Plans include training officers to ask 5 key questions to assess vulnerability - a red grading will result in a referral to Lighthouse and Safeguarding Unit and amber/green will be managed locally through signposting with potential for PCSO involvement.

There was an acknowledgment that providers have proven themselves willing to work flexibly to meet the needs of victims. I felt it was important to emphasise that this should not be taken for granted and "goodwill" should be taken into consideration when the specifications were drawn up.

I drew attention to the importance of mental health provision and updated on a pilot of 2 BNSSG/CCG funded 'crisis cafes' in Weston where people in crisis can access the support they need. The plan is for this to be rolled out in Bristol, South Gloucestershire and B&NES.

I recommended the use of gender neutral language in commissioning and service delivery so as not to alienate men and boys – they need to know when a service relates to them.

The volume of cases involving hate crime and support available varies geographically. I raised issues around victims and inconsistent service provision leading to a 'postcode lottery' for victims. The OPCC does not directly commission services to support victims of hate crime as local authorities are the lead commissioners. Some of the services support victims of hate crime as part of their overall service offer. The OPCC's current approach is a baseline of support for all victims across the force area and if gaps are identified the OPCC will look at how they can be filled.

The Board also touched on Looked after Children – it was recommended that this group of children should be referenced as having unique needs and service requirements.

The importance of an Equality Impact Assessment was discussed - it needs to be good quality and started early enough in the process to inform the commissioning strategy.

Voscur was present to provide a VSCE perspective and recommended certain redactions to assist the impartiality/integrity of the recommissioning process, including the editing of reporting data from current providers. It was suggested this could put current services at a disadvantage as it would be available to potential bidders to use in their bids. Conversely, it could place them at advantage if the information were to discourage new bidders.

## **Commissioning Strategy**

The Board think the document would benefit from further clarification around The Lighthouse and why it is out of scope for commissioning.

Using the Sustainable Transformation Partnership as an example, I suggested that the commissioning of similar services should not be done in silo and effective joint commissioning can enable services that deliver mutual benefits. The OPCC agreed to write to the Chief Officer of the BSNNG, Julia Ross to discuss cross over in commissioning. I was able to facilitate an introduction between the CEO and Julia Cross at the Multi Agency Inquiry Day the following day.

Voscur recommended that further details on outcomes and performance monitoring should be included and specific information on contract length. The Board acknowledged that short contracts are difficult for providers and the OPCC agreed to include paragraph on current thinking around contract length.

The Board considered if the OPCC and Local Authorities were sufficiently synched regarding Domestic Abuse.

As a means of prevention, I recommended the provision of perpetrator courses for both genders to address anger issues. The OPCC provided assurance that this aspect of preventative work is being picked up through the Early Intervention Fund, Out of Court Disposals and as part of the Reducing Re-offending Board work. In addition as local authorities are the lead commissioner for domestic abuse services they have also taken a lead on consideration of the commissioning of domestic abuse perpetrator programmes (for higher risk cases).

The OPCC has supported the Constabulary in addressing perpetrators and their offending at the early stages through developments around out of court disposals. The ASCEND scheme aims to deliver perpetrator interventions across a wide range of crime types which will include Domestic Abuse.

### **User Engagement**

The engagement period will run through from 12th March 2018 to 1st June 2018 and will involve current and potential providers, stakeholders and Interest Groups. The Panel is a named consultee in the papers.

The Board takes the view that the plan is comprehensive. We discussed opportunities to share information about the survey with other commissioners and partners and I recommended including the STPs, CCGs, Public Health, Health commissioning boards, and Churches in the stakeholder list for communications.

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### **Board Meeting - 19<sup>th</sup> June 2018**

The OPCC has reviewed existing services and considered what services should be put in place from April 2019 after the current contracts and grants finish. The Board met to discuss the Commissioning Plan and the information used to shape the plan and the procurement process.

It is clear that a key audience for the OPCC throughout this process has been service users as well as victims who have not engaged with services. A specialist organisation undertook consultation and provided feedback from a wide range of service users. By way of a survey, feedback on each section of the Commissioning Intentions document was also sought from current providers, potential providers, stakeholders, interest groups and the general public. The Board acknowledged the work that has gone into the engagement period and the feedback that has been taken on board.

I would like to draw specific attention to the **Equalities Impact Assessment** that was undertaken by the OPCC. This was an exceptional piece of work. I recommended looking at the "Social prescribing" part of health within the delivery of the services once the contract details are finalised.

In response to feedback, a procurement timeline has been added to the plan. This is very helpful and an extended submission window will also be useful for bidders. The contract length has been agreed at

4 years + 1 + 1 and supports the VCSE sector who welcome longer contracts but also want access to opportunities elsewhere.

The Board talked further about joint commissioning and aligning services with partners in areas where expertise is lacked. It was acknowledged that making links with the potential partners can be challenging. However, based on the board recommendations, I am pleased that the OPCC has arranged to meet with Colin Badbury (North Somerset CCG) and Julia Ross (BNSSG CCG) to discuss options of working together.

The Victim Services tender window closed in October and the OPCC have subsequently worked with evaluation panels with a range of expertise, including Victim representatives to score and assess the bids. Contracts were awarded in January 2019.

**Councillor Roz Willis**