

Report to the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel

Title: Victims First
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Objective of the item

The reason for this item is to look at the first year of operation of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Victims First Scheme which was established in April 2018.

The Panel will receive a presentation from Shona Morrison, Head of Policy and Commissioning at the Office of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner.

Background

'Victims First' is the overarching brand name for all the PCC's activity aimed at improving the overall experience of victims of crime. Emotional and therapeutic support for victims is one important stand of Victims First. Victims First Support Services are available across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire and provide free emotional and therapeutic support to all victims and witnesses of crime, as well as family members of victims if they require it.

At the end of March 2018 Thames Valley PCC moved the former referral service provided by Victim Support from a regional centre based in Sussex to an in-house PCC run Victims First Hub. Referrals are received into the Hub from the police, partners and self-referrals from victim themselves.

Victims First allows for one front door for all victims in the Thames Valley who require support and is available regardless of:

- Crime type
- If the crime has been reported to the police
- Whether they were a victim of a recent or historic crime
- Wherever the crime happened.

The aim of the service is to help people cope and recover from the impact of the crime by ensuring that they have access to a range of services depending on their needs, including: telephone

support, face to face support, advocacy, including, help to access other services such as sexual health clinics, drug and alcohol services and legal services, support through the criminal justice system and therapeutic counselling.

In addition to support, Victims First involves strategies to improve access to services and awareness among the public and other professionals who may wish to know about and access support. Victims First's website at <https://www.victims-first.org.uk/> provides information on all PCC commissioned support services as well as a service directory for victims to find other organisations in their area to help them cope and recover from the impact of crime. It enables victims or third parties to refer directly to the PCC services regardless of whether they have reported the crime to the police and also has a Victims Code section which should victims decide to report the crime, explains their rights and entitlements from organisations such as the Police and Crown Prosecution Service. Victims First also has a facebook page and has run a number of campaigns to help raise awareness, and increase access to support for, victims of specific, lesser known crimes.

Raising awareness of victim's rights is the final strand of Victims First. Using a number of different mediums, content or information is produced to inform victims of their rights under the Victims Code of Practice, including their right to provide a Victim Impact Statement, rights to be kept updated on progress of their case, right to complain or request a review of a police or CPS decision, as well as their right to be referred for support. Furthermore, a new responsibility for PCC's is to hold to account all criminal justice agencies who are required to abide by the Victim's Code of Practice. This is expected to take place through Criminal Justice Boards and a new framework which has recently been provided by the Ministry of Justice.