

## Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel

21<sup>st</sup> November 2014

### Victims' Services Task and Finish Group

#### Recommendation

That the Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel:

- 1) Considers the final report and recommendations of the Victims' Services Task and Finish Group; and
- 2) Agrees to submit the final report to the Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner for consideration.

#### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015, the Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner will be required to state his commissioning intentions with regard to the future provision of support services to victims of crime, acknowledging the existing services currently delivered by Victim Support and other specialist providers.
- 1.2 The Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel agreed at its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2014 to appoint a Task and Finish Group to undertake a review of existing service provision for victims of crime, identify key challenges and ascertain areas for improvement, in order to contribute key findings to the PCC's commissioning activity ahead of April 2015.
- 1.3 During the course of the review, the Task and Finish Group gathered and received evidence from a wide range of sources, including local representatives of support services and victims of crime; this has resulted in the identification of 19 evidence-based recommendations to address a number of thematic issues regarding the full range of victim support services in Warwickshire. Members believe that the recommendations will help to place victims at the heart of both the voluntary and criminal justice sector and bring greater sustainability to the array of voluntary organisations, who contribute significantly to the recovery of victims of crime in Warwickshire.
- 1.4 A copy of the Task and Finish Group's final report and recommendations is attached at **Appendix A**. Subject to the approval of the Police and Crime Panel, the report will be submitted to the Police and Crime Commissioner who will be asked to give a view against each of the recommendations and approve for implementation. Subsequently, the Police and Crime Panel will

receive periodic updates from the Commissioner regarding progress against the completion of the approved recommendations.

## **2.0 Recommendations**

2.1 Based on the extensive evidence submitted and considered during this review, the Task and Finish Group would like to make a series of recommendations to the Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner which aim to address the issues and challenges that have been identified and highlighted throughout the final report. The recommendations have been grouped into a number of thematic issues which relate to the full range of support provision to victims of crime in Warwickshire.

### **2.2 Protecting Warwickshire Victims**

Recommendation 1 – That the commissioning strategy adopted by the PCC is a Warwickshire-based model, in accordance with the unique crime and victim landscape in Warwickshire and the needs of Warwickshire residents.

Recommendation 2 – That the PCC recognises the valuable contribution of Warwickshire's existing victims' support services and volunteer network in delivering victim support provision and that the PCC retains and builds on this network within his future commissioning activity.

Recommendation 3 – That future contracts with all commissioned organisations stipulates the requirement for effective data collection, management and analysis to ensure that the PCC has a thorough understanding of the victim profile within Warwickshire and can make funding decisions according to evidence of local needs, pressures and priorities.

Recommendation 4 – That the PCC develops a Victim Charter (as a one-page document or leaflet) and makes it available through various community-based locations, such as libraries, as well as through statutory bodies, such as the police, and relevant websites.

### **2.3 Access to Services**

Recommendation 5 – That all victim support services and statutory bodies in Warwickshire are clearly defined and an accurate, logical map of the full network, including referral routes, is developed in order to fully understand the provision across the county.

Recommendation 6 – That information about self-referral is provided to the victims of minor crimes that are dealt with by the crime desk (i.e. not eligible for referral through the National Victim Referral Service).

## 2.4 Partnership Working and Funding

Recommendation 7 – That a multi-agency Hate Crime Strategy for Warwickshire is developed, led by the PCC.

Recommendation 8 – That the PCC explores the opportunity of forming joint commissioning arrangements with the three Clinical Commissioning Groups, Warwickshire County Council, District and Borough Councils and the Community Safety Partnerships in respect of support services for victims of domestic and sexual violence.

Recommendation 9 – That both domestic and sexual violence, as high risk crimes, are the highest priority areas for the PCC's commissioning activity to ensure that there is adequate funding to match the demand for both the Independent Sexual and Domestic Violence Advisors.

Recommendation 10 – That the PCC forms a link with Warwickshire Health and Wellbeing Board and Warwickshire's three Clinical Commissioning Groups to recognise the ability of victim support workers to identify victims with complex mental health needs and explore potential referral pathways.

Recommendation 11 – That the PCC considers partnership working with education, health and local authority partners, and the Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Boards, to address under-reporting of crime amongst young people, including cyber-bullying.

Recommendation 12 – That a review of current arrangements for homicide counselling is undertaken to explore opportunities, and funding requirements, to deliver a holistic package of counselling that encompasses non-homicide elements.

## 2.5 Criminal Justice System

Recommendation 13 – That the PCC reviews training provision to frontline police staff receive, in respect of dealing with victims of crime, and ensure that this is robust and consistently applied so that victims are dealt with due care and sensitivity.

Recommendation 14 – That a review of the low conversion rates for both domestic and sexual violence, and the training provided to front line police officers, is undertaken as a matter of urgency in order to give assurances that Warwickshire Police has a consistently victim-centric approach when dealing with these highly complex and sensitive cases.

Recommendation 15 – That the PCC reviews the issues raised in respect of the victim experience in the criminal justice system, such as the use of Victim Person Statements and "double-listing", and works in collaboration with the Crown Prosecution Service and Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Services to take appropriate action and address those issues.

Recommendation 16 – That the PCC explores the establishment of a Victims' Partnership Forum and the delivery of an annual or bi-annual Victims' Partnership Conference.

Recommendation 17 – That the PCC considers the appointment of a Victim's Champion who can support his commissioning activity, co-ordinate greater partnerships working across the voluntary sector and criminal justice sectors and take an active role in the Victims' Forums and Conferences.

Recommendation 18 – That the PCC reviews the decision taken by the Strategic Alliance to disband the Witness and Victim Information Partnership in Leamington and explores options to provide assurances that the service to Warwickshire victims and witnesses will not be diminished.

Recommendation 19 – That the PCC identifies police improvements to keep victims up-to-date with the progress of their crime and explores the implementation of an IT system, such as Track My Crime in Warwickshire Police, to enable victims to keep themselves informed.

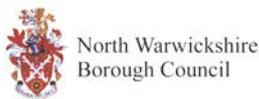
## Background Papers

None.

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# Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel

## Victims' Services Task and Finish Group Final Report



<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>1.0 Introduction</b>	
<b>1.1 Executive Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.2 Members and Contributors</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.3 Evidence Used and Methodology</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.4 Dates and Timescales</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.0 Overview</b>	
<b>2.1 Background</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2.2 Rationale</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2.3 Objectives</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3.0 Key Findings</b>	
<b>3.1 Review of Current Landscape</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3.2 Review of Specialised Support</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3.3 Conclusions</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>4.0 Recommendations</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>5.0 Financial and Legal Implications</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Appendix A – Scoping Document</b>	
<b>Appendix B – Mapping of Support Services for Victims</b>	
<b>Appendix C – Glossary of Support Organisations</b>	

### 1.0 Introduction

#### 1.1 Executive Summary

On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015, the Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner will be required to state his commissioning intentions with regard to the future provision of support services to victims of crime, acknowledging the existing services currently delivered by Victim Support and other specialist providers.

In its capacity as a 'critical friend', the Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel believed that it could offer a valuable role in assisting the Commissioner in the development of his commissioning intentions by using its key links and contacts to third sector and community organisations. A Task and Finish Group was appointed to undertake the review, during which members gathered and received evidence from a wide range of sources, including local representatives of support services and victims of crime, to evaluate the needs and expectations of victims against existing provision in Warwickshire, identify key challenges and ascertain areas for improvement.

Following the completion of the review, the Task and Finish Group has identified 19 evidence-based recommendations to address a number of thematic issues that relate to the full range of victim support services in Warwickshire. Members believe that the recommendations will help to place victims at the heart of both the voluntary and criminal justice sector and bring greater sustainability to the array of voluntary organisations, who contribute significantly to the recovery of victims of crime in Warwickshire.

The Task and Finish Group would like to pay tribute to the commitment of Warwickshire's existing victims' support services, volunteers and support staff and express its gratitude to those representatives and victims of crime who gave up their time to contribute to this review.

#### 1.2 Members and Contributors

The members of the Task and Finish Group were Councillor Peter Morson (Chair of the Task and Finish Group and member of North Warwickshire Borough Council), Councillor Nicola Davies (Warwickshire County Council) and Mr Bob Malloy (co-opted independent member).

During the course of the review, the Task and Finish Group met with Warwickshire County Council officers with responsibility for commissioning specialised services for victims of Domestic and Sexual Violence. The Group also engaged with a range of external representatives who had direct experience of delivering support services to victims of crime and received written submissions from third sector and community organisations. These included:

- Victim Support
- Stonham (Home Group) and an Independent Domestic Violence Adviser
- Victim and Witness Information Partnership (now disbanded in Warwickshire)
- Warwickshire Youth Justice Service
- Anti-Social Behaviour Officers from Warwick District Council, North Warwickshire District Council and Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
- Warwickshire Race Equality Partnership
- Warwickshire County Council Equality and Diversity Team Leader

- Warwickshire County Council Community Safety Project Officer
- Two victims of crime, supported by Victim Support
- ASSIST Trauma Care
- Safeline
- 25 respondents to the Victims' Survey

Members received guidance from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner in respect of the existing and future landscape for the commissioning of victim support services. They also received assistance from Warwickshire County Council's Observatory team, for the creation of a questionnaire for victims of crime, and were supported by Georgina Atkinson, Democratic Services Team Leader.

### 1.3 Evidence Used and Methodology

To gather a robust evidence base, the Task and Finish Group adopted the triangulation method of research and evaluation to compare and contrast three sources of information:

- i) Existing literature and data – this included various publications by statutory, public and voluntary organisations, and statistical data regarding levels of reported crime in Warwickshire and levels of victim satisfaction with Warwickshire Police, as referenced through Section 3.0 of the report (see Bibliography);
- ii) Representations from 'expert witnesses' – statutory and voluntary professionals and organisations who either commission or provide direct support services to victims of crime were invited to either prepare written submissions or attend meetings of the Task and Finish Group to provide an insight into existing provision and the link to victims' needs; and
- iii) Feedback from victims of crime – an anonymous questionnaire was circulated via support organisations to victims of crime, to gain a personal insight into their experience of existing provision, their expectations and needs. There was also an informal interview with two victims of crime, support by Victim Support.

By adopting this approach, the Task and Finish Group was able to identify thematic issues represented within all three sources and identify quantitative evidence at i) to support the qualitative evidence gathered at ii) and iii).

### 1.4 Dates and Timescales

Stage 1 – Understanding the current and future landscape regarding support services to victims of crime (July 2014).

Stage 2 – Evidence gathering session with Victim Support and Warwickshire Youth Justice Service (July 2014).

Stage 3 – Evidence gathering session with an Anti-Social Behaviour Officer, the Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) service and a representative of the Criminal Justice Service (August 2014).

Stage 4 – Evidence gathering session with representatives from the Warwickshire Race Equality Partnership and the County Council's Community Safety and Equality

and Diversity Teams. Also a representative from Public Health in respect of the Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA) service (September 2014).

Stage 5 – Informal interviews with two victims of crime, supported by Victim Support (September 2014).

Stage 6 – A questionnaire circulated to victims via support organisations to capture their views on the availability of support services in Warwickshire (September 2014).

Stage 7 – Analysis of questionnaire results and key findings from the evidence gathering sessions at Stages 1-5 (September 2014).

Stage 8 – Consideration of draft final report and recommendations (October 2014).

Stage 9 – Report and recommendations to be considered by the Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel and, if approved, submitted to the Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner (21<sup>st</sup> November 2014).

## 2.0 Overview

### 2.1 Background

Prior to the election of the Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) in November 2012, the Ministry of Justice annually awarded Victims Support (*“An independent charity helping people cope with the effects of crime, by providing free and confidential support and information”*) £38 million nationally for the delivery of support services to victims of crime under three key national services: the Homicide Service, the Court Based Witness Service and the National Victim Referral Service. The majority of that funding (£25m) is ring-fenced for the National Victim Referral Service – in Warwickshire, this equates to 12,000 crimes per year.

Following the election of the Commissioners, the Ministry of Justice proportionally reallocated the £25m across each of the 41 Commissioners with a view that support services for victims of crime should be commissioned locally and seek to involve the Third Sector.

In light of this, Warwickshire’s PCC is currently conducting research of the current landscape of victim support services, in terms of those currently provided by Victim Support and other specialist providers. The Ministry of Justice requires the commissioning arrangements for each police area to be confirmed by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015.

In respect of crime, Warwickshire Police covers a relatively small area which incorporates the five districts of North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Rugby, Warwick and Stratford-upon-Avon and delivers a service to a population of almost 550,000. In June 2011, Warwickshire Police entered a strategic alliance with neighbouring West Mercia Police in order to ensure ongoing resilience during reduced budgets and austerity measures. Although retaining their independence with their own Chief and Deputy Chief Constables, the two forces have integrated their operational structures and practices.

### 2.2 Rationale

The Office of the PCC recognises the need for the experiences and views of the victims of crime to be a key contributor in the consideration of what support services are required across Warwickshire. The Victim’s Commissioner report *‘Listening and learning: Improving support for victims in Warwickshire’* included a recommendation that the PCC *“should listen to the victims of crime, to determine a Warwickshire standard of service which, as a minimum, meets the requirements of the Victims Code, and which pays particular attention to improving communication between the police, criminal justice agencies, victims and the wider public”*.

The role of the Police and Crime Panel is to act as both a critical friend and support the work of the PCC. In light of this, it was considered that the Panel could offer a valuable role in assisting the Commissioner in the development of his commissioning intentions by using its key links and contacts to third sector and community organisations and also representing the views of its constituents, in order to identify the views of victims. It was agreed that listening to the voice of victims, and evaluating their experiences of existing support services in order to ascertain a picture of local need, would be the key role of the Task and Finish Group. The Police and Crime Panel agreed to appoint the Group at its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2014.

In addition, a crucial part of the commissioning process is to understand the current and likely future needs of victims and whether these are being met by existing services<sup>1</sup>. In light of this, the purpose of the Task and Finish Group was to assist with this stage of the process by mapping local services, identifying the gaps or duplication of services and producing feasible, evidence-based recommendations to inform the PCC's commissioning intentions.

### 2.3 Objectives

The review sought to gather, assess and provide an evidence-based view from the community about the current provision of support services to victims and what support is required going forward. To achieve this, the key objective of the review was to identify the priorities, gaps and best practice of existing service provision in Warwickshire. A copy of the full scope for the review is attached at Appendix A.

The final report of the Task and Finish Group aims to:

- Summarise current support for victims of crime in Warwickshire;
- Identify victims' needs and expectations from local services; and
- Make recommendations to the Police and Crime Commissioner regarding the future of victims support provision in Warwickshire and priorities for inclusion in his commissioning intentions, in order to meet the needs of victims in Warwickshire.

For the purpose of this review, victims were defined according to the Victims' Code of Practice 2013, as follows:

- A person who has suffered harm, including physical, mental or emotional harm or economic loss which was **directly** caused by criminal conduct; and
- Close relatives of a person whose death was directly caused by criminal conduct.<sup>2</sup>

The Task and Finish Group also agreed that the review would include victims of anti-social behaviour including both criminal and non-criminal conduct.

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<sup>1</sup> *Victims' Services Commissioning Framework* (Ministry of Justice, May 2013)

<sup>2</sup> *Victims' Code of Practice 2013*

## 3.0 Key Findings

### 3.1 Review of the Current Landscape

In the first instance, the Task and Finish Group carried out a fact-finding exercise to identify and understand the current landscape with regard to support to victims of crime in Warwickshire. Following discussions with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, and extensive reading of research reports and documents, a summary of the key findings in respect of the current referral system, the latest data and victim profile and levels of victim satisfaction with Warwickshire Police, Victim Support and the Criminal Justice System, is provided below.

#### Victim Profile in Warwickshire

The risk of becoming a victim or a repeat victim of crime varies significantly by demography and lifestyle. For instance, the Crime Survey for England and Wales 2012 identified single males aged 16-25 years-old living in deprived areas as being at the highest risk of victimisation, and older people living in affluent rural areas as being at the lowest overall risk. In Warwickshire, there were 28,538 victims of reported crime<sup>3</sup> in Warwickshire between the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014. Local analysis and research<sup>4</sup> has identified representation of certain groups across key crime categories:

- There was an almost even split between males as victims of crime (54%) and females (46%).
- The majority of victims were white (58%); however, a high number did not disclose their ethnicity (35%) and very low numbers for BMEs. This correlates with local research that this group tend to underreport crime<sup>5</sup>.
- Victims of crime are represented in Warwickshire as follows: violent crime (19%), domestic burglary (6%), vehicle crime (14%) and alcohol/drug-related offences use (10%).
- The age profiles of victims were varied. A key finding for the Warwick district is that the peak age group for both male and female victims was age 20 to 24 years, which is likely to be linked to the high student population. This was very different to other areas of the county where the victim profile was significantly older.

Each district and borough had also been analysed to determine a typical profile of a victim in each area. Overall, victims were more likely to be aged between 40 to 44 years old with a peak age of 41 years, be male British and the victim of a violent crime. Nuneaton and Bedworth was the only borough to show that females were more likely to be a victim of crime, as a result of violence. This type of crime was most prevalent in all areas, apart from Rugby and Stratford, where people were more likely to become a victim of vehicle crime.

In addition to this, there is an Assault Database in place in Warwickshire Accident and Emergency Departments (A&E). The purpose of the database is to capture details of victims of violent crime that present at hospital for treatment but do not report the incident to Police. Focusing on the six month data period of 1<sup>st</sup> October

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<sup>3</sup> "Reported crime" relates to crime reported to the police. Crimes do get reported to other agencies and do not go on to get reported to the police, particularly domestic and sexual violence. Furthermore, not all incidents are recorded as a "crime".

<sup>4</sup> *Key Statistics of Victims of Crime, April 2013 - March 2014* (Warwickshire Observatory)

<sup>5</sup> *Listening and Learning: Improving support for Victims in Warwickshire* (2009)

2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014, there were 159 visits to A&E where a victim had been assaulted in Warwickshire<sup>6</sup>. A summary of the key findings is included below:

- At the time of presentation at A&E, over one third (39%) of victims *had not* reported the incident to police and it was not known whether they intended to report it.
- The peak age range for male Warwickshire assault victims was 19 to 23 years (27%) and females, 31 to 34 years (4%).
- 81% of victims were of White British ethnicity and 4% Asian British ethnicity.
- Almost two thirds (65%) of victims admitted that they had been drinking alcohol before the attack.
- Over half of the victims were attacked by a stranger (53%) with a further 44% advising they had been attacked by someone that they knew. A further 1% were attacked by a partner or ex-partner.

As over one third of victims did not report the incident to the police, it is a fair assumption that violent crime is actually higher than recorded by the police and that there are a range of reasons why victims decide to not report the crime. Because the victims do not report the crime, they are not referred to Victim Support or other specialised services and, consequently, the risk of repeat victimisation increases, alongside a greater risk of health and mental health issues. Furthermore, at present the A&E departments do not routinely refer these victims to the support organisations; for example, the 1% of victims who have been attacked by a partner or ex-partner may not necessarily be referred onto the specialist services for Domestic Violence. Signposting is provided to those that request it, but it is not routinely offered to those that do not. The evidence considered by the Task and Finish Group during the course of the review indicates that under-reporting is prevalent in all categories of crime and this issue is assessed in more detail at Section 3.2.

Unfortunately, data was not available from Victim Support to ascertain whether the victim profile, as identified by Warwickshire Observatory, corresponded with the victims who the organisation supported over the same period. It would have been useful to have this data in order to identify if there were any particular victim profiles who failed to access support. The Task and Finish Group considers it imperative for *all* organisations working with victims of crime, including Victim Support, to effectively collect, manage and analyse data regarding their client base, in order to produce evidence-based reports regarding victim profiles, service needs and outcomes. This is particularly important going forward, as the Commissioner will be required to make significant decisions about funding provision to the voluntary sector. The Task and Finish Group stress that funding decisions need to be based on evidence regarding local needs, pressures, priorities and effective practice and it is not reassured, at present, that this data is readily available across the sector.

### Victim Referral System and Current Services

Due to previous funding arrangements from the Ministry of Justice, Victim Support is currently the only organisation that manages police referrals regarding victims of crime, known at the National Victim Referral Service. All police forces in the West Midlands region refer information regarding victims of crime to the Victim Care Unit in Birmingham. In accordance with the victim referral agreement between ACPO<sup>7</sup> and Victim Support:

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<sup>6</sup> *Key Statistics of Victims of Crime, April 2013 - March 2014* (Warwickshire Observatory)

<sup>7</sup> Association of Chief Police Officers of England, Wales and Northern Ireland

- 1) A crime is reported to the police. In Warwickshire, this relates to approximately 28,000 crimes per annum, with an average 61%<sup>8</sup> dealt with by the crime desk, i.e. 'minor' acts that do not require a Police Officer presence.
- 2) Those crimes that are not dealt with by the crime desk and meet a certain criteria<sup>9</sup> are referred to Victim Support's Victim Care Unit. These predominately relate to the core category of crime where non-specialist support is required.
- 3) The Victim Care Unit contacts each victim and undertakes a needs-assessment to identify if support is required, usually within 48 hours of the crime being reported. Victims who require support are then referred to the Victim Support Volunteer Network at either the Nuneaton or Leamington Justice Centre, who will subsequently contact the individual to undertake a more detailed assessment and offer emotional and/or practical support through its volunteer network, to help the victim to come to terms with the crime.
- 4) As Victim Support does not provide counselling services, it will refer victims to other support organisations for the provision of specialist counselling and therapeutic session, such as ASSIST Trauma Care.
- 5) Victims of either Domestic or Sexual Abuse and Violence are often referred direct from the police to other voluntary organisations for access to specialist support. In the majority of cases, these are referred to Domestic Abuse agencies as 'incidents' and are not recorded as crimes.<sup>10</sup> High risk victims are dealt with only by these specialist agencies; however, in the case of medium and standard risk victims, there may be some contact with Victim Support.

The aim of the National Victim Referral Service is to offer support for victims of *reported* crime and ensure that victims are signposted to the right service for their individual needs. However, members are mindful that 61% of crimes are dealt with by the crime desk, which relate to minor crimes that do not require a Police Officer presence. Although these crimes can include a follow-up visit from a Police Community Support Officer, they are not eligible for referral via the National Victim Referral Service and therefore those victims are not contacted by the Victim Care Unit. While it is safe to assume that some of those victims will not require support, it is not safe to assume that *none* of the victims will not require support and the Task and Finish Group is concerned that many of these individuals are not accessing support when they may need to do so. The cumulative impact of repeated low level crime can be significantly damaging to victims; an example of this is the tragic case of Fiona Pilkington. Self-referral to Victim Support, or any organisation, is an option, but how many victims are made aware of this when they report minor crime to the police and what information or guidance is provided to them at the point of contact? The Task and Finish Group considers that the Commissioner has a duty to ensure that *all* victims of crime are made aware of what support is available within the county

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<sup>8</sup> *An inspection into crime prevention, police attendance and the use of police time* (HMIC, September 2014)

<sup>9</sup> Victim Support 'Victim Referral Agreement (ACPO)

<sup>10</sup> During 2013-14, 1,114 domestic abuse 'crimes' were reported and recorded. However, these crimes came from 7,253 incidents reported to the police alone.

and that the victims dealt with by the crime desk are provided with accessible information about self-referral options.

For the victims of the 39% of crime who are referred, the Task and Finish Group appreciates that Victim Support cannot deliver the full range of support services for all of those victims; however, it is apparent that the methodology used within the Referral Service can result in victims having to speak to several organisations before accessing the right support. Furthermore, if the crime is committed by a young person, the victim will be offered Restorative Justice from the Warwickshire Youth Justice Service, in addition to emotional, practical and counselling support provided through other agencies. Victims of crime who choose not to report to the police are also able to self-refer into any of the support services available. This gives the impression of a very busy network of support services, all connected to one-another (to an extent) via referral routes, yet with no overall co-ordination or structure. The Task and Finish Group has expressed concern regarding this issue, which is assessed in more detail at Section 3.2.

To try to simplify this network, a map of existing support organisations is attached at Appendix B, with a summary of the services provided by each of the organisation outlined at Appendix C. This mapping exercise was achieved following comprehensive research and liaison with numerous voluntary organisations, which highlights how extensive and confusing the network currently is. The Task and Finish Group is conscious that the map only reflects the organisations that have fallen within the remit of its review scope and that there are other statutory bodies and other organisations that may have a role in liaising with victims of crime. Members consider that, as part of his commissioning exercise, the Commissioner needs to clearly define victims' support services and statutory bodies and develop an accurate, comprehensible map of the full network, including referral routes, in order to fully understand the provision across Warwickshire. The document would need to be made available to service providers, as well as the general public, to aid wider understanding of the victim support landscape.

To conclude, the Task and Finish Group requested data regarding the number of victims who had declined support within the National Victim Referral Service and reasons given. Unfortunately, this data is not captured at present and there is no analysis of those victims who declined support. Members consider this to be a missed opportunity to better understand victims of crime and ascertain whether there are certain profiles or characteristics of individuals that increases their chance of declining support. It is widely accepted that victims who are not supported have an increased risk of repeat victimisation and therefore there is value in identifying and understand those who decline support. While members understand that some victims may have the emotional and practical support from within their family or personal circles, it would be wrong to assume that this is the reason why all victims decline support and there may be other factors such as apprehension, insecurity or misunderstanding that influences the victim's decision.

### **3.2 Review of Specialised Support**

Once the current landscape of victim services in Warwickshire had been identified, the Task and Finish Group agreed to focus on the range of specialised support that was provided to key groups of victims as follows:

- Victims of general crime, i.e. theft, burglary, assault
- Victims of anti-social behaviour
- Victims of domestic abuse
- Victims of sexual violence
- Victims of hate crime
- Young victims of crime
- People bereaved by murder or manslaughter
- Support for victims in the criminal justice system

An evaluation of the evidence gathered and conclusions drawn for each of those groups is outlined within this session of the report, which is followed by an evaluation of the Victims' Code of Practice, research regarding Victims' Charters and the valuable role of a Victims' Champion.

### Victims of General Crime

The majority of referrals to Victim Support relate to victims of general crime, such as theft, burglary and personal robbery. Many of these victims require emotional and/or practical support, to help them to accept and come to terms with the crime and effectively deal with the emotional impact. Victim Support does not provide a counselling service, but can signpost to other voluntary organisations (such as ASSIST Trauma Care) for victims who express a need for specialist support. The Task and Finish Group met with representatives of Victim Support to discuss victims' needs and expectations from a support service. While members understand that all victims have different needs, the quantitative and qualitative evidence gathered highlights common needs and expectations, as follows:

- The majority of victims do want to be contacted by Victim Support, even if they choose to decline support.
- Contact has to be timely; the majority preferred contact by telephone within the first 48 hours of reporting the crime.
- Victims required informal emotional support and, in some cases, formal counselling/therapy, in addition to practical information regarding the investigation, financial support and court proceedings, if relevant<sup>11</sup>.

Victim Support reported that a victim's fundamental need and expectation is to be kept regularly updated on the investigation of a crime and any subsequent prosecution process. Victims often find it difficult to deal with the impact of the crime until they know what action is being taken. Furthermore, for all victims the most pressing emotional need was to understand 'why me?', and whether they should have acted differently<sup>12</sup>. A Britainthinks survey of Victim Support in April 2013 also found that the help offered to victims had to be professional and expert with the following three most desired qualities for a support organisation: i) good data security (44%); ii) experience (41%); and iii) professionalism (38%).

When assessing these needs against current provision in Warwickshire, the Task and Finish Group recognise the commitment of the extensive volunteer network and service providers and is reassured that the fundamental emotional and practical needs, as highlighted above, are being met as far as existing resources can allow. Funding is evidently a barrier to greater provision and concerns around the

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<sup>11</sup> Victims' Survey (Warwickshire Observatory, September 2014)

<sup>12</sup> *What Victims Really Think* (Britainthinks, April 2013)

sustainability of the voluntary sector are highlighted in the following sections of this report. The Task and Finish Group emphasises the importance of those needs being at the forefront of the PCC's commissioning intentions post-April 2015.

### Victims of Anti-Social Behaviour

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) refers to behaviour that '*...causes, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household as the perpetrator.*'<sup>13</sup>

Following the tragic death of Fiona Pilkington and her daughter Francessca Hardwick in Leicestershire in 2007, there has been a fundamental shift towards assessing the potential harm to people as a result of their victimisation<sup>14</sup>. This harm-based approach seeks to identify potentially vulnerable victims in order to ensure that their needs are understood and supported. Indeed, in 2011/12 Warwickshire County Council trialled a risk assessment matrix in the Warwick district and developed a multi-agency approach to co-ordinate partners who work with victims of ASB. The matrix was rolled out across the county following the completion of the pilot in May 2012 and the ASB officers based at each District and Borough Council confirmed that the approach taken to implement the matrix is broadly consistent.

The questions used for the assessment include the frequency of ASB, if they know the offenders, if they think they have been targeted specifically and what support they have from family and friends. Victims who score above 27 points are classed as 'high risk' and are referred to a multi-agency Case Management meeting (one per District / Borough) where appropriate action and support is agreed. The victim will also be contacted by Victim Support and signposted to other organisations for specialised support, if necessary. All high risk cases remain on the Case Management database until the risk to the victim had reduced. Low and medium risk victims still have their ASB complaint dealt with through the appropriate agency and there is also discretion for officers to escalate medium risk victims to a high risk status if they have particular concerns about the vulnerability of the individual.

While anti-social behaviour is slowly reducing in Warwickshire (a 1.2% reduction in 2013/14<sup>15</sup>) the Task and Finish Group recognise that, given the potentially damaging impact on victims, it should remain a priority. The members are reassured that the decision to support the victim is not based on the severity of the anti-social behaviour itself, but on the impact of the ASB on the victim and their mental well-being; however, although the impact on mental well-being is assessed as part of the risk matrix, the provision of specialised mental health support for victims of anti-social behaviour appears to be an area of unmet need. Many high risk victims of ASB are at risk of, or already suffer from, mental health issues.<sup>16</sup>

A 2014 survey undertaken by London Councils found that of the 15 borough Community Safety teams that responded, all said that mental health was a significant issue in relation to their ASB caseload. Six of the 15 boroughs included in this analysis said that a *high* proportion of their ASB cases had a mental health dimension and the others stated that mental health was a significant and increasingly common element in their ASB cases.<sup>17</sup> This issue was reiterated by Warwick District

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<sup>13</sup> Crime and Disorder Act 1998

<sup>14</sup> *Listening and Learning: Improving support for Victims in Warwickshire* (2009)

<sup>15</sup> Warwickshire Police End of Year 2013/14 Performance

<sup>16</sup> *ASBOs and young people with learning difficulties and mental health problems* (BIBIC, 2007)

<sup>17</sup> *Anti-Social Behaviour and Mental Health* (London Councils, January 2014)

Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Officer. Despite strong evidence of a connection between ASB and mental health issues, for both the victim and the perpetrator, the identification of a single contact within NHS mental health services (for referral purposes) had not been possible. Members consider that the ability to refer both high risk victims and offenders to mental health services will provide those individuals with the additional support they need, in order to prevent repeat offending and victimisation.

During the course of the review, the Task and Finish Group considered the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, which will reform the existing ASB powers. The main driver behind the changes is to put the victim at the heart of the decision-making process when addressing ASB; part of this includes the Community Remedy document, which will give victims a say in out-of-court punishment of perpetrators for low level crime and ASB. During September 2014, the Office of the PCC carried out a public consultation on the draft Community Remedy document, the results of which were considered by the Task and Finish Group. Members regard this recent development as further encouraging step towards prioritising the needs of the victims; however, they have concerns about the practical delivery of community remedies and how this new area of activity will be sufficiently resourced, managed and monitored to ensure that victims' expectations and requests are realised. The Task and Finish Group will request that the Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel monitors the delivery the Act's new practices as part of its Work Programme.

### Victims of Domestic Abuse and Violence

Domestic abuse and violence is *'Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional'*.<sup>18</sup> This definition, which is not a legal definition, includes so called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

This type of crime kills two women per week and there are an estimated 100,000 victims at high risk of serious harm or murder in the country.<sup>19</sup> In Warwickshire, there are approximately 9,000 individual cases of domestic violence reported per year and it is widely accepted that, as with other types of crime, it is significantly under-reported. The majority of victims who report incidents to the police and also require support are referred to Stonham (part of Home Group; delivers the Domestic Abuse Support Service on behalf of Warwickshire County Council) and, on occasion, Victim Support. Other support organisations in the county include Refuge, Domestic Abuse Counselling Service (DACs), the Sahil Project, ASSIST Trauma Care and DV:RAP, which is specifically for children and young people.

Victims identified as being at a high risk of serious harm or homicide from domestic violence and abuse are referred to the Warwickshire MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences) where information is shared about the current risks, enabling representatives to identify options to increase the safety of the victim and any other vulnerable parties such as children. The MARAC then creates a multi-

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<sup>18</sup> Home Office definition (March 2013) - <https://www.gov.uk/domestic-violence-and-abuse>

<sup>19</sup> *A place of greater safety* (CAADA, November 2012)

agency action plan to address the identified risks and increase the safety and wellbeing of all those at risk.

Evidence gathered by the Task and Finish Group, through evaluating existing research and by listening to the views of representatives and victims, highlighted the necessity of the support being *independent*. The Domestic Abuse Support Service, and a number of respondents to the Victims' Survey, reported that victims often felt statutory agencies, such as the police and criminal justice bodies, did not take their complaint seriously, did not understand their needs and/or tried to hurry them through the prosecution process before they were emotionally ready. Victims also believed that the impartiality of the support services enabled them, and the agency acting on their behalf, to challenge actions that were regarded as inappropriate, unhelpful or damaging to them.<sup>20</sup>

The evidence indicated that contact from several agencies could often be distressing to the victim and could potentially hinder their emotional ability to seek and progress prosecution; therefore, the co-ordination of all aspects of support through one independent contact was identified as a best practice approach. As part of this, the Task and Finish Group considered the role of Warwickshire's two Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) tasked with supporting high risk victims in the Domestic Abuse Support Service, who provide a tailored and intensive, independent advocacy and support service to victim. This includes support through the criminal justice system during criminal or civil proceedings and multi-agency partnership working on behalf of the victim. There was evidence that the intervention and guidance of the IDVAs ensured that the needs of victims were prioritised by criminal justice bodies. The Task and Finish Group heard that, without this, sentencing conditions were often insufficient and not dealt with from a victim-centric perspective. As a result, offenders were often bailed and able to return to the family home, putting the victim at further risk of domestic violence. This assertion was supported by a 2014 study which found significant flaws in the criminal justice system regarding domestic violence cases, as follows:

- 65% of victims indicated that the perpetrator was arrested, but only 37% indicated that the perpetrator was subsequently charged;
- 74% of those who reported to the police found that each incident report was treated separately; and
- 81% indicated that the history or pattern of abuse was not taken into account by the criminal justice system. Some felt that not only was their previous history with the perpetrator not taken into account, but neither was the perpetrator's previous abusive history with other partners. As a result the true pattern of behaviour was not taken into account. Others found that the police were only interested in the physical aspect and asked no questions about the psychological.<sup>21</sup>

Research also indicates that victims supported by an IDVA who report abuse to the police are more likely to experience a cessation of abuse if a decision to charge the offender is made.<sup>22</sup> Not surprisingly, the casework of the IDVAs is extensive. Guidance stipulates that IDVAs should manage 25 cases maximum; at the time of the meeting (11<sup>th</sup> August 2014) the two IDVAs in Warwickshire were managing 64

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<sup>20</sup> Listening and Learning: Improving support for Victims in Warwickshire (2009)

<sup>21</sup> Domestic Law Reform (Paladin, 2014)

<sup>22</sup> [http://www.caada.org.uk/policy/IDVA\\_Insights\\_into\\_domestic\\_violence\\_prosecutions\\_final\\_executive\\_summary.pdf](http://www.caada.org.uk/policy/IDVA_Insights_into_domestic_violence_prosecutions_final_executive_summary.pdf)

each. The Task and Finish Group note that to achieve optimal social and financial impact, there would need to be sufficient provision in every area, with a recommended four IDVAs and one MARAC co-ordinator for every 100,000 of the adult female population.<sup>23</sup> Warwickshire currently has two IDVAs; however, based on the current number of identified high risk victims, Warwickshire should have six IDVAs and would require ten to support all the high risk victims estimated to be at any one time in the county.<sup>24</sup>

The Task and Finish Group is reassured that all victims of domestic violence in Warwickshire do receive a level of support (not just high risk victims, which was the approach in a number of authority areas); however, they acknowledge that this approach stretches resources even greater and therefore the level of resources is insufficient to meet demand. It also reduces the resource for preventative and early intervention work, which can often mitigate victims reaching a crisis point before they seek help. The heavy reliance on IDVAs for positive outcomes and the protection of victims, particularly in the criminal justice system, demonstrates the positive work of the service but is also a cause for concern when resources are insufficient to meet demand. The Task and Finish Group is aware that Warwickshire Police has faced criticism recently by having the lowest referral rate in England and Wales for domestic violence cases. Of the 7,434 cases reported in 2012/13, only 265 cases (3.569%) were referred to the Crown Prosecution Service.<sup>25</sup> In his Annual Report 2014, the Police and Crime Commissioner has pledged to address this low conversion rate. Furthermore, the Task and Finish Group wishes to highlight the recent inquiry by the All Party Parliamentary Group regarding domestic violence which found that 89.2%<sup>26</sup> of respondents felt that there were barriers to women disclosing domestic violence to the police and/or criminal justice bodies<sup>27</sup>. In the report, organisations highlighted that female victims had very low levels of confidence in the police's ability to keep them and their children safe and deal with the perpetrator effectively. The evidence shows that this lack of confidence often comes from women's previous negative experiences of reporting violence to the police.

Indeed, responses to the Victims' Survey found that 71% of respondents who had reported domestic violence cases to the police did not have their case taken to prosecution stages. The Task and Finish Group believe that the evidence indicates that IDVAs, in their role as representing the victim within the criminal justice system, are key to addressing this issue and believes that the Commissioner should look to increase funding to this provision. Members are aware that Warwickshire County Council already commissions domestic violence services. In addition, the Rugby and North Warwickshire Community Safety Partnerships and Stratford-upon-Avon District Council grant funds a number of domestic abuse support provision, as does the Police and Crime Commissioner for short-term locality based projects from the Innovation Fund and the Community Safety Grant fund. This presents an opportunity for joint commissioning arrangements to be formalised across a number of bodies, which will provide greater funding security and sustainability for the provision of IDVAs and support services. As domestic violence is a high risk crime which is significantly damaging to the victim and, on occasion, results in manslaughter or

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<sup>23</sup> *A place of greater safety* (CAADA, November 2012)

<sup>24</sup> Warwickshire County Council Domestic Abuse Manager

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-26521078>

<sup>26</sup> *Women's Access to Justice* (APPG, 2013)

<sup>27</sup> Criminal Justice Agencies include: Police; Crown Prosecution Service, Home Office, Ministry of Justice, Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority, Probation Service, Family Liaison Officers, Victim Care Unit, Witness Care Unit, Her Majesty's Court Service, National Offender Management Service

murder, the Task and Finish Group believes that this should be a priority area for the PCC's commissioning activity.

To conclude, similar to the anti-social behaviour teams, the Domestic Abuse Support Service has experienced difficulty in referring victims to NHS mental health services. A 2009 study of victims and perpetrators<sup>28</sup> found that domestic violence often led to mental health problems and alcohol and drug abuse in victims. In addition, half of the perpetrators sampled had a previous criminal record, including a quarter for a domestic abuse related offence, over half misused alcohol and over a third misused drugs. Furthermore, over a quarter had mental health problems and had threatened suicide. This demonstrates a clear link between domestic abuse and the mental health and well-being of both victims and perpetrators.

Challenges in forming effective links between agencies, for the benefit of the victim, are not just unique to the mental health services. As identified at the 'Victim Profile in Warwickshire' section, victims who attend Accident and Emergency services with assault injuries are not routinely referred to relevant support organisations; for example, the 1% of victims who have been attacked by a partner or ex-partner are not currently referred onto the specialist services for domestic violence. Furthermore, there is a need to work more closely with other victims support bodies to refer victims who may have complex and wide-ranging needs. For example, Domestic Abuse Support Service support victims who have often also attended the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC); however, the Service is unaware of this until the initial assessment has been undertaken. The Task and Finish Group considers the Commissioner to have the required level of authority and influence to raise this issue with Warwickshire's four Clinical Commissioning Groups, in order to raise the profile of those who support victims of crime in identifying an individual with complex mental health needs and explore potential referral pathways that could address the issues identified by the review.

### Victims of Sexual Violence

Rape and sexual abuse have a devastating effect on people's lives and many victims go on to develop damaging mental health conditions: *"Psychiatric disorders are more prevalent among victims of sex abuse, with those with a history of being raped having the most occurrences of depression, eating disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder...Increased incidents of suicide and attempted suicide, anxiety disorders...and even sleep disorders were closely linked with a history of sexual abuse and rape"*.<sup>29</sup> Specialist care is therefore critical. At present, there are four specialist sexual violence support agencies available to Warwickshire residents: Safeline, RoSA, CRASAC and the Terrence Higgins Trust. There is also a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) – known as the Blue Sky Centre – based at the George Eliot Hospital in Nuneaton.

Based on regional data from the British Crime Survey, it is estimated that for an area the size of Warwickshire over 4,000 women and girls aged 16-59 were a victim of sexual abuse in 2010/11.<sup>30</sup> Clearly, this does not capture children aged under-16, male adults and elderly people and, based on the latest statistics from the SARC,

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<sup>28</sup> *Safety in Numbers* (November 2009)

<sup>29</sup> *Psychiatric Disorders More Prevalent Among Sex Abuse Survivors* (Bruce, S. 2010)

<sup>30</sup> *Violence Against Women and Girls Ready Reckoner*

there is evidence that these groups of individuals are also subject to sexual violence.<sup>31</sup>

The Task and Finish Group received quantitative evidence that demonstrated an increase in reporting to the police<sup>32</sup> and the number of self-referrals to the SARC or the voluntary support organisations; for example, Safeline reported an average 19% increase per annum in the number of referrals<sup>33</sup>. The view of the police and specialist agencies is that this increase is a consequence of greater public awareness following Operation Yewtree and the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham (1997-2013). However, despite this increase, members appreciate that under-reporting remains a considerable issue and it is widely accepted that the majority of victims (estimated to be 89%<sup>34</sup>) do not report sexual violence to the police and are more likely to seek support from voluntary organisations. Indeed, Safeline report that only one in ten of its clients have reported the crime report to the police, with the majority of their clients making contact through self-referral. Significant under-reporting is a key area of concern and the Task and Finish Group is conscious of recent media criticism of Warwickshire Police regarding their handling of reported rapes. Recently published figures show that only 6% of rapes handled by Warwickshire Police in 2012/13 resulted in a charge or caution, compared to a national average of 18%<sup>35</sup>. The force referred over 70% fewer cases to the Crown Prosecution Service that year than the year before. The Task and Finish Group does not have the expertise to make assumptions about the root of these issues; however, it is fair to assume that the public *perception* and confidence in Warwickshire Police may be damaged by this. This is particularly concerning when the complexities of sensitive cases, such as domestic and sexual violence, are taken into consideration. For example, one of the key messages the Task and Finish Group had identified from representatives, questionnaire respondents and research documents is the need for the victim, at the first point of contact, to be *believed* and to be dealt with sensitively. The personal approach and response of police officers can be pivotal in the victim's eventual decision to seek prosecution:

*“The women I spoke to were clear that if they are not treated with dignity when first reporting rape, it is unlikely they would continue to support a prosecution. Women felt that the attitudes and response of police officers need to change and rape needs to be treated more seriously; they wanted a greater investment in ensuring that the police provide a believing, sensitive and consistent response.”<sup>36</sup>*

An interview with a victim of historic sexual abuse highlighted this point as she explained the damaging effect of being doubted or disbelieved. The Task and Finish Group considers that the 89% of victims who choose not to report the crime, plus the low referrals rates of reported cases to the Crown Prosecution Service, suggests a significant lack of confidence in the police and/or criminal justice system in respect of sexual violence and abuse. The number of victims coming forward is just the tip of the iceberg and there needs to be a focus on increasing victims' confidence in the ability of the police and criminal justice bodies to handle their case effectively and bring perpetrators to justice. Members consider that a review of the low conversion rates for both domestic and sexual violence, and the training provided to front line

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<sup>31</sup> Blue Sky Centre Annual Report 2013/14

<sup>32</sup> Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner Annual Report 2014

<sup>33</sup> Written submission from Safeline, 28<sup>th</sup> August 2014

<sup>34</sup> *Key Statistics of Victims of Crime, April 2013 - March 2014* (Warwickshire Observatory)

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2014/02/03/prosecutor-intervention-behind-dramatic-falls-in-rape-cases-sent-for-charging/>

<sup>36</sup> *Rape: The Victim Experience Review* (Payne, S., November 2009)

police officers, is undertaken as a matter of urgency in order to give assurances that Warwickshire Police has a consistently victim-centric approach when dealing with these highly complex and sensitive cases.

Synonymous with domestic abuse, the importance of *independent* support was highlighted in the evidence gathered by the Task and Finish Group. The role of the Independent Sexual Violence Adviser is again a key feature in supporting victims through the prosecution process (the role is the same as the IDVA role). The valuable work of the ISVAs is supported by a Home Office study in 2009 which also resonates with the qualitative evidence that was considered by the Task and Finish Group. The study found that victims appreciate having one key worker who co-ordinated the services on behalf of the victim, which helped to prevent them from feeling 'shuttled' between agencies. Although only a small sample, the victims interviewed felt that ISVAs were the one person who could, and did, provide them with the information that they needed about their case, above and beyond other agencies with whom they had come into contact. ISVAs also provide support before a crime is reported, possibly assisting a victim to make a complaint; after the conclusion of a criminal case if one was pursued; and in cases not involving criminal justice bodies.<sup>37</sup>

However, as identified with support to victims of domestic abuse, funding to the ISVAs, the support organisations and the SARC is grant-based, insecure and short-term and therefore cannot guarantee future provision. For example, the ISVA provision is funded through £10,000 per annum from the Home Office which is match-funded by Warwickshire County Council; however, this is time-limited and not guaranteed for future years. While the Task and Finish Group is reassured that voluntary sector support provided to victims of sexual violence is clearly appropriate and victim-centric, it is concerned that resources are already stretched and funding is insecure, and is apprehensive about how the sector will effectively cope with the continued increase in reporting. This is reiterated by the Survivors Trust<sup>38</sup>, who has highlighted concerns over insufficient funds available to support existing and continuation of funding for local ISVAs beyond March 2015.

To conclude, the Task and Finish Group wishes to highlight the financial savings to statutory bodies through early intervention and support. For example, Safeline is a preferred supplier for Warwickshire CAMHS (Children and Adolescents Mental Health Service) delivering counselling to young people. An evidence-based tool, which is used to measure beginning and end results, had identified that young people in receipt of early intervention support have acute needs at the start of the process, yet achieve the greatest distance travelled in beginning/end scores plotted, demonstrating the valuable impact of early intervention which reduces the risk of acute and costly mental health needs in adult life<sup>39</sup>. Members believe that this demonstrates the long-term benefits of increased funding. Furthermore, as sexual violence is a high risk crime, which is significantly damaging to the victim and results in often long-term and severe mental health and emotional well-being issues, the Task and Finish Group believes that this should be prioritised in the PCC's commissioning intentions, alongside domestic violence.

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<sup>37</sup> *ISVAs: A process evaluation* (Home Office, 2009)

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.thesurvivorstrust.org/news/>

<sup>39</sup> Written submission from Safeline, 28<sup>th</sup> August 2014

Victims of Hate Crime

Hate Crime is defined as: “Any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based on a personal characteristic.”<sup>40</sup> This relates to anyone who is victimised due to their disability, gender-identity, race, religion/faith and sexual orientation. In light of this, boundaries between hate crime and ASB can often be blurred, given the nature of the crime.

Given that hate crime was not defined until the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the support network for victims in Warwickshire is less developed and co-ordinated. The Task and Finish Group could identify only two organisations that provide specialised support: the Warwickshire Race Equality Partnership (racial hate crime) and Coventry and Warwickshire Friend (sexual orientation hate crime). Victims can access emotional or counselling support through other organisations, such as Victim Support and ASSIST Trauma Care. Warwickshire Police has recently launched a Hate Crime Helpline for victims who wish to report this type of crime. On the police website, it confirms that “...the staff that answer these calls will be aware that there may be considerations present in terms of language, religion, disability and cultural/lifestyle backgrounds and will do their utmost to meet the diverse needs of each victim.”<sup>41</sup>

Of the victim recorded data held by Warwickshire Police, 1% were a victim of hate-related crime<sup>42</sup> between April 2013 and March 2014. When broken down further, of all hate crime flagged offences, there have been:

Type of Hate Crime		Recorded Proportions of Hate Crime		Nationality Proportions	
Racial	89%	Nuneaton	33%	English	46%
Homophobic	7%	Warwick	33%	Unknown	11%
Disability	3%	Rugby	19%	Indian	6%
Religious	1%	Stratford	8%	Polish	6%
Gender Identity	0%	North Warks	7%	British	6%
				Pakistani	2%
				Scotland	1%
				Turkish	1%
				Cote D'Ivoire	1%

However, it is widely accepted that Hate Crime is significantly under-reported and therefore the data above is not an accurate reflection of the prevalence of this type or crime, nor the number of victims who are affected. Furthermore, the above statistics only reflect hate-related offences where a criminal act has taken place, such as racially-motivated assault. The figures do not include hate-related incidents which, although do not involve a criminal act, still victimise individuals and can be damaging. It is believed by Warwickshire County Council’s Community Safety team that many victims of both hate-related crime and incidents do not report the offence to the police. Under-reported crime leads to unsupported victims, who are then at a higher risk of repeat victimisation and health and well-being issues. The Task and Finish Group believe that there is a need for an accurate assessment of hate-related crime and incidents in Warwickshire, in order to understand the basis of this type of crime in the county and are reassured that the County Council is currently working with the

<sup>40</sup> Challenge it, Report it, Stop it: The Government’s Plan to Tackle Hate Crime (HM Government, March 2012)

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.warwickshire.police.uk/EDHRfolder/HateCrimeHelpline>

<sup>42</sup> Key Statistics of Victims of Crime, April 2013 - March 2014 (Warwickshire Observatory)

University of Birmingham to gain a more accurate picture of the prevalence and nature of hate crime in Warwickshire.

The view that under-reporting is significant is supported by the Warwickshire Race Equality Partnership (WREP) who advised that the most common reasons for choosing not to report hate crime were a) the incident will not be taken seriously; b) the incident is not serious enough to report; and/or c) the authorities will not be able to protect them from further abuse, if they do report it.<sup>43</sup> There was also a sense of misconception about equality issues; for example, a lack of clarity in defining unacceptable behaviour and when an incident becomes hate-related.

And some of these fears are quantified in evidence. During 2013, Warwickshire Police noticed that satisfaction with Racist and Hate crime victims was decreasing. The area with lowest satisfaction was feedback/follow up, although it was low across all areas. The main reasons victims gave for their dissatisfaction were: a) not being updated; b) unhappy with outcome; and/or c) feel that the crime is not being treated seriously. These clearly resonate with the assertions made by the WREP. After gathering evidence from a range of sources, the Task and Finish Group has identified that robust and effective reporting/response procedures and referral systems need to be developed, to ensure that a victim's first experience of reporting hate crime is a positive one; and an experience that will alleviate any initial apprehensions with regard to reporting hate crime (which are often the reasons why victims choose not to report). Members believe that this relies on greater partnership working and co-ordination between the police, WREP, local authorities and other organisations who support victims, with a shared methodology for recording, responding to and supporting Hate Crime cases. However, after assessing the current landscape in Warwickshire, this approach does not appear to be customary for victims of hate crime.

It is evident that support is piecemeal and disjointed, without an overarching steer. For example, Warwickshire Police does have a Hate Crime Initiative and Reach Programme<sup>44</sup> but it is not clear how this is linked to or co-ordinated with the voluntary and community organisations that represent equality groups and/or provide support to victims of hate crime. The Strategic Alliance's Hate Crime Strategy 2014-16 makes a commitment to promoting and supporting Third Party Hate Crime Reporting Centres<sup>45</sup> – a community-based place where an individual can attend to report Hate Crime – however, following a trial in Rugby, the County Council's Community Safety team had found that this was not cost effective way of capturing Hate Crime, as it was not widely used by victims. Again, this indicates a lack of strategic or joined-up thinking to assessing, understanding and addressing hate crime in Warwickshire, with numerous strategies being developed by individual bodies. There is evidently a need for greater partnership working in order to tackle hate crime by responding effectively and supporting victims; as hate crime cuts across different groups and multiple strands it is evidently not the responsibility of a single organisation to understand or address.

In light of this, the Task and Finish Group believes that joint working across voluntary and community sectors, as well as across the criminal justice system, is required to achieve the changes and outcomes needed. Members wish to highlight the successful approach developed in Manchester, where a joint Hate Crime Strategy

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<sup>43</sup> *Challenge It, Report It, Stop It* (HM Government, 2014)

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.warwickshire.police.uk/EDHRfolder/Reach>

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.westmercia-pcc.gov.uk/Document-Library/Alliance-Strategy-Documents/Hate-crime-strategy.pdf>

has been developed by Manchester City Council, Greater Manchester Police and the Crown Prosecution Service, in partnership with key partners from across the voluntary, public and private sectors. The strategy addresses a number of the challenges and issues that are apparent in Warwickshire, as raised by representatives; for example, it provides practitioners from across the public, voluntary and community sectors with a consistent framework, shared definitions and processes for reporting, recording and tackling hate crime across Manchester.<sup>46</sup>

### Young Victims of Crime

The majority of the voluntary support organisations that have been identified throughout this report do provide specialist provision for young victims of crime, or children and young people who are related to a victim of crime. Again, it is widely accepted that crimes involving young people, particularly bullying, are under-reported and the reasons given by young victims resonates with those for other forms of crime, such as fears about whether they would be taken seriously, whether they would be believed if they reported the crime, and whether 'something would be done'.<sup>47</sup> Another factor is a young person's perception of the incident and whether they regard it as a crime. A 2014 ONS survey reported that only a quarter (26%) of violent incidents were viewed by the victim to be a crime, rather than being perceived as either 'wrong but not a crime' or 'just something that happens', and just over half (52%) of all theft incidents were viewed by the victim as a crime.<sup>48</sup>

In addition, offender characteristics are consistent with the findings that most incidents occur around school premises (60%), 79% of offenders were in the same age band as the victim and the offender was well known to the victim in more than half of incidents (56% violence, 57% theft). This indicates that offenders come from within the victims' peer group and provides a valid explanation why under-reporting is so prevalent; it can be assumed that victims are reluctant to report against people within their peer group for fear of reprisals. In addition, the proportion of incidents that come to the attention of the police is much lower than the equivalent adult figure. This is to be expected given that incidents against children, committed by children, may be dealt with by another authority figure and not necessarily reported to the police.<sup>49</sup>

Under-reporting can also complicate more serious crimes and members are conscious of the recent Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham (1997-2013). At its meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2014, the Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel received assurances from the Commissioner that robust procedures are already in place to identify children at risk of sexual exploitation. Members note that a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) will be established in the near future to co-ordinate all of the relevant agencies for information sharing purposes and the identification of risks and incidents.

A further issue which appears to be affecting children and young people at present is cyber-bullying. Although criminality is not always linked to cyber bullying, the impact on victims is often significant, causing low self-esteem, self-harm and in some extreme cases, suicide.<sup>50</sup> It is reported that around a quarter of secondary school age

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<sup>46</sup> Manchester Hate Crime Strategy 2013-16

<sup>47</sup> *Listening and Learning: Improving support for Victims in Warwickshire* (2009)

<sup>48</sup> *Experiences of Crime Among 10-15 year olds* (Office for National Statistics, May 2014)

<sup>49</sup> *Experiences of Crime Among 10-15 year olds* (Office for National Statistics, May 2014)

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-25639839>

children have experienced cyber-bullying.<sup>51</sup> Young people are increasingly also subject to 'sexting'<sup>52</sup> and 'revenge pornography'<sup>53</sup>. The Crown Prosecution Service has recently published revised guidance to reflect the somewhat different nature of these crimes compared to what prosecutors are often working with including guidelines on prosecuting cases involving communications sent via social media.<sup>54</sup>

The Task and Finish Group recognise that more needs to be done to raise awareness amongst young people of crime, CSE and cyber-bullying and encourage reporting, in order to increase the opportunity to support to the victim, to prevent victimisation and long-term issues. It also gives greater opportunity to educate young perpetrators, through Restorative Justice as undertaken by WYJS, which evidently reduces reoffending. Members acknowledge the placement of PCSOs via the Safer Schools programme and how this provides opportunities for education and preventive work, often with the intervention of WYJS at an early stage. However, it is concerning that an accurate picture of crime against young people cannot be achieved due to under-reporting and that, as with victims of other crimes, they are unsupported if unreported. Given that the evidence demonstrates that 60% of incidents occur around school premises, and that 79% of offenders are within the same age band as the victim, there is a clearly role for schools and education partners to raise awareness about crime, and the impact of crime, amongst young people. Again, the Task and Finish Group considers the Commissioner to have the required level of authority and influence to co-ordinate efforts between education, health and local authorities to address the issue of under-reporting of crime amongst young people and would like this to be an area of focus for the Commissioner's wider role.

### People Bereaved by Murder or Manslaughter

At present, support for bereaved victims in Warwickshire is predominately delivered through the Victim Support Homicide Service which assists clients from the incident until after the court case, helping with practical needs, guidance through the legal system, immediate financial needs and compensation. As Victim Support is not a counselling service, it directly funds a specialist agency – ASSIST Trauma Care – to provide counselling and therapeutic support for victims of serious incidents who are suffering traumatic-stress reactions as a result of homicide, for an average 15 counselling sessions per client. This organisation also provides support to victims of violent attacks, rape, sexual abuse in childhood, domestic violence and arson. Other organisations who support bereaved victims are Guys Gift and Cruse Bereavement Care, although these tend to focus on universal bereavement and grief, rather than traumatic bereavement<sup>55</sup>.

After considering the evidence, the Task and Finish Group has identified that referrals to NHS mental health services is again an issue. According to ASSIST, those bereaved by homicide have often known other traumatic experiences, such as rape, sexual abuse and domestic violence. Often the psychological trauma has become entangled, but ASSIST is not permitted to address the non-homicide related needs as part of the therapeutic provision commissioned by Victim Support. Instead,

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<sup>51</sup> <http://archive.beatbullying.org/dox/resources/statistics.html>

<sup>52</sup> 'Sexting' is the act of sending sexually explicit message, primarily between mobile phones

<sup>53</sup> 'Revenge pornography' is where sexually explicit media is publically shared online without the consent of the pictured individual, usually following the breakdown of an intimate relationship.

<sup>54</sup> [http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/a\\_to\\_c/communications\\_sent\\_via\\_social\\_media/](http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/a_to_c/communications_sent_via_social_media/)

<sup>55</sup> Written submission from ASSIST Trauma Care, September 2014

ASSIST is required to refer these individuals into NHS mental health services; however, there is evidence that there is not scope to deal with these victims (as highlighted by other representatives throughout this review) and waiting lists can be very long.

The Task and Finish Group is concerned that trauma-related counselling for bereaved victims cannot encompass the non-homicide elements and consider this to be in opposition to the victim-centric approach which the voluntary organisations are working to achieve. Complications with referrals to the NHS, as identified in most of the categories of crime highlighted throughout this report, emphasise the importance for counselling to be provided by specialist agencies, aside from statutory health services. In addition, the Victim Support Homicide service only supports closely bereaved family members and is not available to relatives considered to be too distant (aunts, uncles, cousins, close friends).

To conclude, that Task and Finish Group is aware that, as identified with all voluntary sector organisations, funding is not guaranteed and, following the reallocation of the grant from Victim Support to the Police and Crime Commissioner, future support to the service is reliant on a commissioning decision. Given that the key message identified throughout this review is the need for holistic support to victims of crime, the Task and Finish Group believes that a review of current arrangements for counselling provision for these victims is required. The review would need to explore opportunities to deliver a holistic package of counselling that encompasses non-homicide elements and ascertain what funding would need to be made available for this provision.

### Support for victims in the Criminal Justice System

When considering what support victims may require within the criminal justice system, the Task and Finish Group considered quantitative evidence which highlighted that victims had clear expectations and needs:

*“In many ways what they want is very simple; they want the right information at the right time in a way in which they can understand it. They want to know who they can contact for help and, if things go wrong, how they can get help to put it right. They want to be treated with dignity, honesty, sensitivity and respect but, more than anything, victims want to be listened to and for their concerns to be taken seriously. They want honest conversations about what is happening to them and if they cannot have what they are asking for then to have a clear explanation to understand why.”<sup>56</sup>*

In addition, the Britainthinks survey in April 2013 found that victims want to be contacted (87%) and within a timely manner, with practical information about what is going on with their case and what help is on offer. The study found that predominately, victims want help from the time the crime is committed (whether they choose to report or not), through to the investigation, court case and the eventual release of the offender.<sup>57</sup> However, receiving updates on case progress and information on the criminal justice system and/or victims' rights were two areas cited as *unmet* need by victims (43% and 46% respectively). While this was a national survey, and not therefore specific to Warwickshire, it does highlight the importance of

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<sup>56</sup> Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses (Report for the Secretary of State for Justice 2013-14)

<sup>57</sup> *What Victims Really Think* (Britainthinks, April 2013)

maintaining effective communication with victims and sharing information with them about proceedings and what they are entitled to.

The evaluation of local evidence indicates that levels of victim satisfaction with Warwickshire Police are reportedly increasing (the only exception to this is hate crime, which is decreasing). In the 12 months to March 2014, 85.1% of victims were satisfied with the overall service provided by Warwickshire Police. This is broadly in line with the England and Wales figure of 85.2%.<sup>58</sup> The Task and Finish Group researched what support was provided to victims during case investigation and, if relevant, subsequent court proceedings through the statutory Victim Care Unit. At the Leamington Justice Centre, this was known as the Victim and Witness Information Partnership (VIP), which had been established in 2004 for both victims and witnesses. The VIP co-ordinated professionals from the full range of criminal justice bodies, and the voluntary sector, to deliver a 'one stop shop' information service to victims and witnesses, including the following services:

- Notification as soon as someone is charged with an offence.
- An agreement with the victim/witness regarding the level of support and information required, tailored to each individual.
- Full explanation and guidance about each stage of the justice process, including the use of Victim Personal Statements.
- Arrangement of visits to the courtroom before a trial takes place.
- A dedicated member of staff to provide guidance and support on anti-social behaviour issues.
- Specialist attention for sensitive cases.

The Task and Finish Group heard that this approach had been considered best practice by the Ministry of Justice in 2006. It could therefore be assumed that high levels of satisfaction were achieved with the contribution of the VIP model in Leamington, which clearly prioritised the needs of victims and witnesses in the criminal justice system; for example, the need to be kept regularly informed through one point of contact is a fundamental need and expectation of the victim. However, during the time of the Task and Finish Group's review, the VIP was disbanded (22<sup>nd</sup> August 2014) and the Witness Care Unit is now delivered from Malvern, as part of the Warwickshire Police collaboration with West Mercia.

The Task and Finish Group has concerns as to how victim and witness care to Warwickshire residents will be delivered from Malvern going forward. Furthermore, as the victim support landscape is in a state of flux, it is difficult to assess what the implications of the disbanding and base at Malvern will be on victims. While there is uncertainty around this, the Task and Finish Group believes that the service delivery model offered by the now disbanded VIP was a best practice model and would like to point out that this model has recently been adopted by the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner. Furthermore, there is increasing media coverage about the importance of a victim-centric criminal justice system, one which keeps victims regularly informed and puts them at the heart of the process<sup>59</sup>:

The Task and Finish Group believes that the work undertaken by the Leamington VIP was of significant importance and assistance to both victims and witnesses and would like to urge the PCC to review this decision and reconsider options to safeguard Warwickshire victims and witnesses, to ensure they receive a good quality

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<sup>58</sup> *Responding to Austerity – Warwickshire Police* (HMIC, June 2014)

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-29193548>

of service if to be based at Malvern for the long-term. This type of approach has recently been highlighted in a letter from Chris Grayling MP to Police and Crime Commissioners regarding the establishment of a Victims' Information Services by March 2015. The letter also includes a range of other measures which Commissioners will be expected to achieve in order to improve the service provided to, and treatment of, victims and witnesses in the criminal justice system<sup>60</sup>. The majority of those measures mirror key areas of improvement that the Task and Finish Group has highlighted throughout this report and so members wish to monitor the Commissioner's implementation of those obligations, going forward.

To conclude, as an alternative solution to addressing the communication issue, the Task and Finish Group suggest that the Commissioner explore the use of IT in enabling victims to keep themselves informed. For example, a Track My Crime online system now enables victims of crime to access their crime report, track investigation progress and communicate with the officer leading the investigation<sup>61</sup>. This system has been adopted by five police forces. If implemented successfully, and integrated effectively within existing databases, a system such as Track My Crime will offer the opportunity for victims to access updates themselves, thereby releasing resources for contact with victims who prefer telephone or written correspondence. Both online and traditional forms of communication, consistently applied, will ensure that a victim's fundamental expectation from the criminal justice system – to be kept regularly informed – can be achieved, thereby increasing satisfaction with both the police and other criminal justice bodies.

### Victims' Code of Practice

The Task and Finish Group has considered the Victims' Code of Practice and is aware that the statutory bodies listed have specific obligations in respect of victim and witness care. It is not within the Group's remit to review and consider whether the service providers listed in the Code are meeting those obligations and such detailed analysis would require a further significant review and involve a range of additional partners to those considered as part of this review.

However, the Task and Finish Group recognise that this is an important document for victims and wishes to highlight the need for effective monitoring in accordance with the Victims' Code of Practice. The inadequacy of the Code is that it only relates to a number of statutory organisations such as the police, Crown Prosecution Service and Probation Service, which are collectively referred to as 'service providers'. Other organisations, including voluntary organisations, may provide services for victims but are not currently covered by the Code. In light of this, there is a need for a shared set of minimum standards which all organisations who deliver services to victims can comply with. This is particularly important for the PCC who, as the direct commissioner, will need to regularly measure the providers' service delivery against the specification, contract obligations, and value for money. It is crucial that the service specifications are focused on the needs of victims in Warwickshire and will deliver positive outcomes. As the Task and Finish Group has undertaken an extensive review of victims' needs, it is recommended that the Group be reconvened following the review, and meet on a regular basis, to continue to support the Commissioner to deliver this major project. This may include assistance in drafting the service specifications prior to the procurement stage, consideration of draft

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<sup>60</sup> [http://members.apccs.police.uk/download-email-attachment/?key=jarxkUYB9RXg&file\\_id=8075](http://members.apccs.police.uk/download-email-attachment/?key=jarxkUYB9RXg&file_id=8075) 15<sup>th</sup> September 2014 letter to Police and Crime Commissioners

<sup>61</sup> <https://www.trackmycrime.police.uk/>

documents for victims, monitoring of the overall commissioning exercise and delivery and attendance at Victims' Forums or Conferences, if the Commissioner chooses to develop these bodies (see next section). This will provide the Task and Finish Group with the opportunity to ensure that the challenges and victims needs identified during this review are accurately reflected, where appropriate, throughout the PCC's commissioning activity and future service delivery of the voluntary and criminal justice sectors.

The Task and Finish Group also considered the entitlement, under the Victims' Code, to make a Victim Personal Statement (VPS) to explain the impact of crime on the individual, whether physically, emotionally, practically or financially. The victim decides whether they would like to read their VPS aloud in court if a suspect is found guilty, or played if recorded, or read for them by a CPS prosecutor. National research indicates that less than half of victims (43 per cent) recall being offered this opportunity.<sup>62</sup> The Task and Finish Group recognise that this is a national issue and one which has attracted media<sup>63</sup> and Government<sup>64</sup> attention in recent months and that there is confusion about the purpose of the VPS and its role in the criminal justice system. Members recognise the importance of the VPS in providing victims with a voice in the criminal justice system and believe that there is room for improvement in the communication of their purpose, value and influence, to effectively manage victims' expectations and accurately inform their decision-making when considering a VPS. The Task and Finish Group also wishes to highlight other issues in respect of the victims' experience of the criminal justice system, such as inconsistency with regard to compensation claims, the impact of court "double-listing"<sup>65</sup> on vulnerable victims and even basic considerations such as the potential intimidation of victims when sharing a waiting area with offenders. While these issues are outside the scope of the review, the Commissioner needs to take appropriate action to review the victim experience in the criminal justice system and champion victims' needs and rights on their behalf (see 'A Champion for Victims in Warwickshire' section).

The Task and Finish Group also remains apprehensive about the extent to which Warwickshire Police is victim-centric. The views presented by representatives and victims, while anecdotal, do indicate a need for increased prioritisation of victims; for example, 47% of respondents to the Victims' Survey undertaken by the Task and Finish Group felt that they had *not* received the right level of support, information and guidance from Warwickshire Police about their case, and therefore their confidence in the police had decreased. Reasons given related to communication issues and a lack of care or sympathy and national quantitative evidence indicates that this issue is not unique to Warwickshire. The Office for National Statistics<sup>66</sup> found that those who had been a victim of crime in the preceding 12 months were less likely to have confidence in the police (65%) than those who were not victims (77%). In addition, victims of crime expressed less confidence in the police and local councils at dealing with crime and ASB (50%) than non-victims (61%). This suggests that an individual's view of the police is affected, sometimes in a negative way, once they have become a victim of crime and thus had direct contact with the police. This altered view may indicate a lack of prioritisation of victims' needs, or a mismanagement of victims' expectations when reporting crime to the police, or both.

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<sup>62</sup> Witness and Victim Experience Survey, 2009–10

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-28644799>

<sup>64</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-29193548>

<sup>65</sup> Double-listing is a practice of over-booking cases at Magistrates Courts to ensure that the maximum number of cases are dealt with per day; this results in 40-50% of cases being adjourned.

<sup>66</sup> Public Perceptions of the Police and Police Visibility, 2012/13 (ONS)

This evidence is compounded by the recent HMIC report regarding crime prevention, police attendance and use of police time. The report highlighted that Warwickshire Police attended 39% of crime scenes compared to a national average of 79%<sup>67</sup> and was the lowest among the 24 forces that were involved in the inspection. While the Task and Finish Group understands that Warwickshire Police has adopted a specific harm and risk-based deployment policy, there needs to be careful consideration of how this may be perceived by the public and how it may impact confidence in policing in Warwickshire. The evidence gathered during this review indicates that frontline police staff need to be appropriately sensitive, sympathetic and supportive to victims when they report a crime. To emphasise this point, the members would like to highlight the following statement made by a respondent to the Victims' Survey:

*"The Police must stop treating victims of crime as just another load of form filling and start treating them as individual people who have been affected by what has happened to them. Officers get very jaded because they deal with crime all day but need to remember that most people are only affected by crime in rare cases and feel very vulnerable and scared as a consequence of what has happened to them."<sup>68</sup>*

In light of this, the Task and Finish Group considers that the Commissioner has a duty to review the training of frontline police staff in respect of dealing with victims of crime, and ensure that this is robust and consistently applied so that victims are dealt with due care and sensitivity and a made to feel an important part of the process. As the first point of contact, and to manage expectations, it is important that the police carefully explain the investigation process to the victim, clarifies procedures and what contact they will receive and outlines the referral process, as undertaken by the National Victim Referral Service, to aid victims' understanding and preparation for the following stages of the process, including further contact from statutory and voluntary organisations. The Task and Finish Group would like the Commissioner to review whether this is consistently applied at present, in order to give assurances to Warwickshire residents.

To conclude, the Task and Finish Group considers that more can be done in Warwickshire to improve the victim experience of the criminal justice system, yet understands that this is a changing landscape in a state of flux. The instability in the statutory sector emphasises the need for stability within the voluntary sector and members wish to highlight the extensive skills, knowledge and expertise of the voluntary support organisations in Warwickshire, as outlined throughout this report. It is essential that the Commissioner recognises that the success of the victim support service is predominately due to the valuable contribution of volunteers and the Task and Finish Group believes that he should both retain and build on this foundation within his future commissioning activity.

### Development of a Victim Charter

As indicated above, the Victims' Code of Practice only makes obligations regarding the role of statutory bodies for victim and witness care and does not relate to the wide range of other organisations that provide support to victims. In addition, at present there is not an overarching policy or strategy within Warwickshire that outlines values relating to how service providers will treat and respond to victims of crime and anti-social behaviour. The Task and Finish Group considered how this

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<sup>67</sup> *An inspection into crime prevention, police attendance and the use of police time* (HMIC, September 2014)

<sup>68</sup> Respondent to Victims' Survey (Warwickshire Observatory, September 2014)

issue had been resolved in other areas and note the increased development of Victims' Charters. For example, Birmingham City Council adopted a Victim Charter in May 2013 which builds on the existing Victims' Code and serves to add value and improvement on a local level for victims in Birmingham, with the following overall aim:

*'We will offer victims of crime timely and appropriate services to ensure that they are treated with care and dignity and will ensure that our communication with victims guarantees that their voices are not lost in the maze of services. Victims' views and experiences will be used to inform service design and shape our work to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour and strengthen the public's feelings of safety.'*<sup>69</sup>

In addition, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent has recently developed a Victim Charter which lists ten minimum standards that he has pledged to victims of crime, in order to clarify their rights, manage their expectations and provide assurances about the services they will receive.<sup>70</sup> If implemented and adhered to effectively, a Victims' Charter should increase the confidence of victims to report crime and enhance their experience of dealing with agencies throughout their 'victim journey'. Both Charters referred to above have a heavy focus on what services the victim should expect to receive in terms of information sharing and response times, being treated fairly and respectfully, and how they will be supported during court proceedings.

As there is not a Victims' Charter for Warwickshire, the Task and Finish Group believes that this could give awareness regarding victims' rights, clarity about expectations and obligations and contact details to make a complaint if they have concerns about the service provided. Similar to the approach of the Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner, a simple, one-page document, or leaflet could be developed and made available through various community-based locations, such as libraries, as well as through statutory bodies, such as the police, and relevant websites. The Task and Finish Group believes that the availability of the document will raise awareness about victims' rights, give confidence about how they will be treated when they report a crime and offer the opportunity to make a complaint to the Commissioner if they do not feel that they have been dealt with in accordance with the Charter (there is clearly a need for a clear complaints system for victims of crime). As a result, victims who have reported a crime will have a greater awareness of their rights, and those that have not reported crime may be encouraged to actually report the crime – which may address some of the under-reporting that is prevalent across all categories of crime. In order to ensure consistency, the Commissioner can include compliance with the Charter as part of contract terms and conditions for those services which he directly funds.

### A Champion for Victims in Warwickshire

As already highlighted throughout this report, the Police and Crime Commissioner has the required level of authority, influence and impetus to challenge, liaise and communicate with a range of statutory and voluntary bodies within Warwickshire; the Task and Finish Group therefore believe that he is best placed to champion the rights of victims across the county to inspire partners to adopt a victim-centric methodology within their working practices. This is of particular importance for the criminal justice system. Members propose that the Commissioner delivers that leadership and vision

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<sup>69</sup> *Victims' Charter* (Birmingham City Council, May 2013)

<sup>70</sup> <http://www.gwent.pcc.police.uk/engagement/victims/victims-charter/>

through a co-ordinated forum of criminal justice bodies, with a focus on victims' rights, victims' needs and the obligations of statutory bodies, consideration of the impact of working policies and procedures on the victim experience, and to discuss complaints and compliments submitted by victims of crime and the voluntary organisations that support them. During the course of this review, the Task and Finish Group has encountered a number of criticisms about partnership working and information sharing in respect of the management of victims within the criminal justice system and its links to the voluntary sector; therefore, members believe that a multi-agency Victims' Partnership Forum would also enable those issues to be addressed.

In addition to this, an annual, or bi-annual, Victims' Partnership Conference could be arranged to bring together the full range of statutory and voluntary bodies that engage, liaise or support victims of crime. Again, this would give the Commissioner the opportunity to embed a victim-centric culture across the county and facilitate greater partnership working and information sharing across the sectors.

The Task and Finish Group is aware that a number of areas have a Victims' Champion – an appointed individual who can provide an independent representation of victims, their needs and their rights. The Commissioner may wish to explore the appointment of a Victim's Champion who can support his commissioning activity and also take an active role in the Victims' Forums and Conferences, as suggested above.

To conclude, the Task and Finish Group is aware that the Commissioner is currently exploring options to develop a commissioning strategy with either West Mercia, as part of the Strategic Alliance, or regionally on a West Midlands basis. Members are conscious of the potentially detrimental impact of Alliance decisions on Warwickshire residents, such as the disbanding of the Witness and Victims Information Partnership at the Leamington Justice Centre, and would therefore like to present their view that the commissioning model chosen by the Commissioner must be Warwickshire-based. As members of the Police and Crime Panel, they understand that there is no intention for a merger of Warwickshire and West Mercia Police forces and appreciates the value in both forces retaining independence in particular matters. In the same vein, the services for victims of crime in Warwickshire should be independent from those in West Mercia, given that the services must be commissioned in accordance with the unique crime and victim landscape in Warwickshire and the needs of Warwickshire residents.

If the Commissioner decides to broaden his commissioning intentions to a wider range of third sector organisations, to do so under an Alliance or regional model would significantly increase the contract value which often makes it harder for small, locally-based organisations to effectively compete when bidding against larger, national organisations. If the Commissioner adopts this approach, there is a high risk that many of Warwickshire's existing support groups would be undermined by the process and, as a consequence, the skills, knowledge and expertise of local volunteers could be lost.

Finally, as pointed out in earlier sections of this report, there is value in formalising joint commissioning arrangements with local authorities within the county; in particular the County Council which already commissions sexual and domestic violence services, in order to strengthen existing voluntary organisations and provide greater security, thereby delivering a sustainable service for Warwickshire victims. This would be challenging to achieve through an Alliance or regional model. Either

the Police and Crime Commissioner, or an appointed Victims' Champion, must ensure that support services to victims of crime in Warwickshire are protected.

### 3.3 Conclusion

In the first instance, the enormous contribution of the Warwickshire's existing victims' services, volunteers and staff in the provision of specialist support services to all victims of crime across the county needs to be emphasised. The evidence gathered by the Task and Finish Group demonstrates that a victim-centric approach is already deeply embedded within a voluntary sector that is dedicated to providing, where possible, a holistic approach to supporting a victim's individual and often complex needs, to effectively aid their recovery and long-term healing. In light of this, the Task and Finish Group stresses that the voluntary sector must have a pivotal role in the future of victim support in Warwickshire.

At the outset, the Task and Finish Group was mindful that victims *"are not a homogenous group; some will report their crimes, some will not. Some will support prosecution and others won't. Victims will respond to crime in many different ways, they will have different needs at different times and they will experience many different journeys. They will come from all sectors of society and be of different genders, ages, ethnicity, sexuality and religions. They will have different educational backgrounds, be of different or no political persuasions and will have different views about the Criminal Justice System and the treatment of offenders"*.<sup>71</sup> In light of this, victims will have very different needs, expectations and experiences throughout their recovery journey. It is crucial that Warwickshire is sufficiently equipped – across both the criminal justice and voluntary sector – to ensure that the victim starts their journey on the right path and is provided with holistic, co-ordinated and seamless support at each milestone.

For those who do report to the police, the sensitivity, response and approach of frontline officers, is critical and fundamental to the victim's confidence in seeking prosecution. The evidence suggests that Warwickshire Police, and other criminal justice bodies, has to give greater priority to the needs of victims, particularly for domestic and sexual violence, in order to address the worrying levels of under-reporting estimated for the county.

At the next stage, when victims demonstrate a need for support, either through police or self-referrals, the support network they enter must be co-ordinated and integrated, with a shared consensus about minimum standards of service and reporting/referral protocols. At this stage, victims are at their most vulnerable; voluntary and statutory bodies must therefore work in partnership for the benefit of the victim, to minimise the risk of victims being shuttled between various agencies or falling between referral gaps. Their needs must be comprehensively assessed at the earliest stage so that the first referral is the right one, with co-ordination from a single point of contact, to the range of emotional, practical and/or counselling support, through to the prosecution process, if applicable. Where appropriate, support must be independent from statutory bodies.

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<sup>71</sup> "Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses: report for the Secretary of State for Justice 2013-14"

Given their pivotal role in the recovery of victims, the voluntary sector must be maintained through longer-term and sustainable funding arrangements that provide an opportunity for strategic thinking, forward planning and partnership working. The provision of preventative and early intervention focus by these organisations is as important as reactive, acute support. The provision must be available to victims until they are fully recovered from the impact of the crime, with the understanding that a number of victims may have a periodic need for support on a long-term basis. For victims whose journey involves a prosecution stage, the criminal justice bodies must also place the needs of the victim at the heart of the process. The criminal justice system is a complex web of agencies and processes, which can be daunting and confusing; victims therefore need one point of contact who can maintain regular communication from the start of the investigation, through the progress of the case, the sentencing of offender and any subsequent parole of the offender. Victims must also be informed about their rights, in particular the value of a Victim Personal Statement.

Underpinning all of this is the need for a clear strategic vision and leadership from the Police and Crime Commissioner about the role of both statutory and voluntary bodies in supporting victims of crime and ensuring that there is a consistent, victim-centric service delivered across both sectors. Constructive data and performance management is fundamental to this and, as the direct commissioner of services, the PCC is ultimately responsible for holding both sectors to account for the quality of service delivery to victims.

### 4.0 Recommendations

Based on the extensive evidence submitted and considered during this review, the Task and Finish Group would like to make a series of recommendations to the Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner which aim to address the issues and challenges that have been identified and highlighted throughout this report. The recommendations have been grouped into a number of thematic issues which relate to the full range of support provision to victims of crime in Warwickshire.

#### Protecting Warwickshire Victims

Recommendation 1 – That the commissioning strategy adopted by the PCC is a Warwickshire-based model, in accordance with the unique crime and victim landscape in Warwickshire and the needs of Warwickshire residents.

Recommendation 2 – That the PCC recognises the valuable contribution of Warwickshire's existing victims' support services and volunteer network in delivering victim support provision and that the PCC retains and builds on this network within his future commissioning activity.

Recommendation 3 – That future contracts with all commissioned organisations stipulates the requirement for effective data collection, management and analysis to ensure that the PCC has a thorough understanding of the victim profile within Warwickshire and can make funding decisions according to evidence of local needs, pressures and priorities.

Recommendation 4 – That the PCC develops a Victim Charter (as a one-page document or leaflet) and makes it available through various community-based locations, such as libraries, as well as through statutory bodies, such as the police, and relevant websites.

#### Access to Services

Recommendation 5 – That all victim support services and statutory bodies in Warwickshire are clearly defined and an accurate, logical map of the full network, including referral routes, is developed in order to fully understand the provision across the county.

Recommendation 6 – That information about self-referral is provided to the victims of minor crimes that are dealt with by the crime desk (i.e. not eligible for referral through the National Victim Referral Service).

#### Partnership Working and Funding

Recommendation 7 – That a multi-agency Hate Crime Strategy for Warwickshire is developed, led by the PCC.

Recommendation 8 – That the PCC explores the opportunity of forming joint commissioning arrangements with the three Clinical Commissioning Groups, Warwickshire County Council, District and Borough Councils and the Community Safety Partnerships in respect of support services for victims of domestic and sexual violence.

Recommendation 9 – That both domestic and sexual violence, as high risk crimes, are the highest priority areas for the PCC's commissioning activity to ensure that there is adequate funding to match the demand for both the Independent Sexual and Domestic Violence Advisors.

Recommendation 10 – That the PCC forms a link with the Warwickshire Health and Wellbeing Board and Warwickshire's three Clinical Commissioning Groups to recognise the ability of victim support workers to identify victims with complex mental health needs and explore potential referral pathways.

Recommendation 11 – That the PCC considers partnership working with education, health and local authority partners, and the Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board, to addresses under-reporting of crime amongst young people, including cyber-bullying.

Recommendation 12 – That a review of current arrangements for homicide counselling is undertaken to explore opportunities, and funding requirements, to deliver a holistic package of counselling that encompasses non-homicide elements.

### Criminal Justice System

Recommendation 13 – That the PCC reviews training provision to frontline police staff receive, in respect of dealing with victims of crime, and ensure that this is robust and consistently applied so that victims are dealt with due care and sensitivity.

Recommendation 14 – That a review of the low conversion rates for both domestic and sexual violence, and the training provided to front line police officers, is undertaken as a matter of urgency in order to give assurances that Warwickshire Police has a consistently victim-centric approach when dealing with these highly complex and sensitive cases.

Recommendation 15 – That the PCC reviews the issues raised in respect of the victim experience in the criminal justice system, such as the use of Victim Person Statements and "double-listing", and works in collaboration with the Crown Prosecution Service and Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Services to take appropriate action and address those issues.

Recommendation 16 – That the PCC explores the establishment of a Victims' Partnership Forum and the delivery of an annual or bi-annual Victims' Partnership Conference.

Recommendation 17 – That the PCC considers the appointment of a Victim's Champion who can support his commissioning activity, co-ordinate greater partnerships working across the voluntary sector and criminal justice sectors and take an active role in the Victims' Forums and Conferences.

Recommendation 18 – That the PCC reviews the decision taken by the Strategic Alliance to disband the Witness and Victim Information Partnership in Leamington and explores options to provide assurances that the service to Warwickshire victims and witnesses will not be diminished.

Recommendation 19 – That the PCC identifies police improvements to keep victims up-to-date with the progress of their crime and explores the implementation of an IT system, such as Track My Crime in Warwickshire Police, to enable victims to keep themselves informed.

**Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel  
Task and Finish Group Scoping Document**

<b>Review Topic</b> (Name of review)	Commissioning of Victims' Services
<b>Task and Finish Group Members</b>	Councillor Nicola Davies, Councillor Peter Morson and Bob Malloy
<b>Key Officers / Departments</b>	Chris Lewis – lead, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
<b>Lead Support Officer</b>	Georgina Atkinson
<b>Timescales</b>	The Task and Finish Group to report its finding to the 26 <sup>th</sup> September meeting of the Police and Crime Panel.
<b>Rationale</b> (Key issues and/or reason for doing the review)	<p>Prior to the election of the Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) in November 2012, the Ministry of Justice annually awarded Victims Support (<i>"An independent charity helping people cope with the effects of crime, by providing free and confidential support and information"</i>) £38m for the delivery of support services to victims of crime. The majority of that funding (£25m) is ring-fenced for victims of the core categories of crime – in Warwickshire, this equates to 12,000 crimes per year, which are referred to Victims Support.</p> <p>Following the election of the Commissioners, the Ministry of Justice split the £25m across each of the 41 Commissioners with a view that support services for victims of crime should be commissioned locally and seek to involve the Third Sector.</p> <p>In light of this, Warwickshire's PCC is currently conducting research of the current landscape of victim support services, in terms of those currently provided by Victims Support and other specialist providers. The MoJ requires the commissioning intentions for each Force area to be confirmed by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015. There is currently no stipulation when services must be commissioned or contracts awarded.</p> <p>The Office of the PCC has organised a practitioner event for 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2014 to explore the provision of services; however, the OPCC recognises the need for the experiences and views of the victims of crime to be a key contributor in the consideration of what support services are required across Warwickshire. The Victim's Commissioner report 'Listening and learning: Improving support for victims in Warwickshire' included a recommendation that the PCC <i>"should listen to the victims of crime, to determine a Warwickshire standard of service which, as a minimum, meets the requirements of the Victims Code, and which pays particular attention to improving communication between the police, criminal justice agencies, victims and the wider public"</i>.</p> <p>Listening to the voice of victims, and evaluating their experiences of existing support services in order to ascertain a picture of local need, will be the key role of the Task and Finish Group in this piece of work and will contribute to the OPCCs determination of its commissioning intentions.</p>

**Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel  
Task and Finish Group Scoping Document**

<p><b>Objectives of Review</b> (Specify exactly what the review should achieve)</p>	<p>The review will provide an evidence-based view from the community about the current provision of support services to victims and what support is required going forward. The review will identify the priorities, gaps and best practice of service provision in Warwickshire.</p>
<p><b>Scope of the Topic</b> (What is specifically to be included/excluded)</p>	<p><u>Include</u> The following will be included in the scope of the review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification and evaluation of the experiences and views of the victims of crime in terms of the support services that are currently provided.</li> <li>• Focus on victims of: anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse, sexual violence, hate crime and young victims of crime.</li> <li>• Consideration of the MoJ 'Code of Practice for Victims of Crime' to determine compliance measures that meet the needs of the victims and accountability procedures for providers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How will the public be involved?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of focus / review groups for victims (if in existence).</li> <li>• General promotion and calls for evidence by the Task and Finish Group, to welcome input from the public.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What site visits will be undertaken (if required)?</b></p>	<p>Possible site visits to service providers (such as the Blue Sky Centre at George Eliot Hospital) if deemed necessary to better understand the needs of victims.</p>
<p><b>How will our partners be involved?</b> (consultation with relevant stakeholders, District / Borough reps)</p>	<p>District/Borough members will be encouraged to contribute their views and/or signpost to victims voice/focus groups.</p> <p>Partner organisations in the criminal justice system and providers with contact with victims will be asked to provide evidence and/or signpost to victims voice/focus groups.</p> <p>Chairs of Community Safety Partnerships</p>
<p><b>What primary / new evidence is needed for the scrutiny?</b> (What information needs to be identified / is not already available?)</p>	<p>Information on existing services including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geographical coverage</li> <li>• Summary of services offered</li> <li>• Service restrictions (i.e. age restrictions)</li> <li>• Client groups and referral routes</li> <li>• Number of referrals</li> <li>• Local issues of concern</li> </ul> <p>Evidence from existing providers about victims' experiences.</p>

**Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel  
Task and Finish Group Scoping Document**

<p><b>What secondary / existing information will be needed?</b> (i.e. background information, performance indicators, complaints, existing reports, legislation, central government information and reports)</p>	<p>The following documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening and learning: Improving support for victims in Warwickshire (VSA project)</li> <li>• Victims' Services Commissioning Framework (Ministry of Justice, May 2013)</li> <li>• Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (Ministry of Justice, October 2013)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Indicators of Success</b> (What factors would tell you what a good review should look like? What are the potential outcomes of the review e.g. service improvements, policy change, etc?)</p>	<p>The review will provide a comprehensive insight and evidence-base into the views and experiences of victims of crime in relation to the support services that are currently provided and an assessment of need going forward.</p> <p>These will be presented in a final report and recommendations. Early indications of support to victims demonstrates that it should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be geographically fair, in terms of access to services</li> <li>• Have a victim-centric approach that puts the needs of the victim at the heart of the system</li> <li>• Have a multi-agency approach, where appropriate</li> <li>• Include victims of anti-social behaviour and hate crime</li> <li>• Have consistent, specialised provision for victims of domestic and sexual violence</li> <li>• Provide specialised support for children and young people.<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Listening and learning: Improving support for victims in Warwickshire (VSA project)

## Map of Victim Support Organisations in Warwickshire

	General Crime, i.e. theft, burglary	Hate Crime	Domestic Violence	Sexual Violence	Young Victims of Crime (under 18)	Anti-Social Behaviour	Homicide / Bereaved
Supporting Organisations	Victim Support  ASSIST  WYJS (Restorative Justice)	Victim Support  WREP  Mediation and Community Support  ASSIST  WYJS (Restorative Justice)  Coventry & Warwickshire Friend  Warwickshire Hate Crime Helpline	Victim Support  Victim Support DV:RAP (for children and young people)  DA Support Services (Stonham)  Refuge  ASSIST  WYJS (Restorative Justice)  DA Counselling Service (DACs)  Sahil Project	Victim Support  Rosa  CRASAC  Safeline  Blue Sky Centre  ASSIST  WYJS (Restorative Justice)  Terence Higgins Trust  Barnardos (children and Young people)	Victim Support  DV:RAP  WYJS  ASSIST  WYJS (Restorative Justice)  Barnardos (CSE and sexual abuse)	Victim Support (only for criminal acts of ASB)  Mediation and Community Support  Bromford (mediation)  WYJS (Restorative Justice)	Victim Support Homicide Service  ASSIST  Guys Gift  Cruse

## Support Services to Victims of Crime – List of Organisations

### **ASSIST**

ASSIST Trauma Care is a Third Sector (not for profit) organisation with its main office in Rugby in Warwickshire, which specialises in providing evidence-based therapeutic interventions for victims of serious incidents who are suffering traumatic-stress reactions as a result. Such incidents range from violent attacks, rape, sexual abuse in childhood, domestic violence, arson and at the extreme end homicide.

<http://www.assisttraumacare.org.uk/>

### **Coventry and Warwickshire Friend**

Coventry and Warwickshire Friend is a voluntary organisation giving information, support and friendship to lesbians, bisexuals, gays or transsexuals, their families and friends. In addition to a telephone helpline, the organisations offer face-to-face meetings, social groups, newsletters and printed information.

<http://cwfriend.co.uk/>

### **CRASAC**

CRASAC (Coventry Rape and Sexual Assault Centre) offer a free and confidential service that provides support for survivors who have experienced any kind of sexual abuse of any kind at any time in their life. Their counselling service is available to women and also to girls and boys aged 5-18 years. Their helpline and ISVA services are also available to men and boys.

[www.crasac.org.uk](http://www.crasac.org.uk)

### **Domestic Abuse Counselling Service**

DACS is committed to the protection of women and children by providing therapy for victims and perpetrators of abuse to enable them to make the changes they need to make in their life.

[www.dacservice.org.uk](http://www.dacservice.org.uk)

### **DVRAP (Domestic Violence and Relationship Abuse Project)**

The DV RAP provides direct support to children and young people who are affected by domestic abuse or are in / at risk of abusive relationships themselves. The project works with children and young people aged between 4 and 18 years old (up to 25 for disabled young people) who have experienced domestic abuse, either through living in households where there is domestic abuse or are experiencing abuse in their own relationship.

<https://www.respectyourself.info/provider/dvrp-domestic-violence-and-relationship-abuse-project/>

### **Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs) and Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs)**

Provide the following support:

- support to high risk victims of domestic/sexual violence and abuse, working with the victim to develop an intensive risk management plan and ensure they are receiving all the support required to keep themselves and their families safe;
- where required, supporting victims through the Criminal Justice System, giving information and support during criminal or civil proceedings;
- multi-agency partnership working on behalf of the victim: liaising with partner agencies in a multi-agency context, providing 'institutional advocacy'; and
- are available for all high risk female and male victims of domestic violence and abuse aged from 16 and accepts both self-referrals and referrals from any agency.

## Support Services to Victims of Crime – List of Organisations

### **Mediation and Community Support**

MACS is a registered training provider specialising in alternative dispute resolution methods. Mediation is increasingly recognised as one of the most positive dispute resolution tools and is widely used in the public and private sector. A team of trained, approved mediators deal with a wide variety of cases, enabling people to find workable solutions in difficult situations.

<http://www.mediationsupport.org.uk/>

### **Refuge**

Refuge supports women and children through a range of services, including refuges, independent advocacy, community outreach and culturally specific services. Their campaigns aim to educate the general public and ultimately prevent domestic violence by ensuring that women have the information and support they need to plan a safe escape.

[www.refuge.org.uk](http://www.refuge.org.uk)

### **RoSA (Rape or Sexual Abuse Support)**

An independent charity who works in partnership with the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (see below). RoSA offer support to both male and female victims of rape, sexual violence and sexual abuse as well as young victims from the age of five years old. Support is also offered to partners, family members and loved ones of victims.

[www.rosasupport.org](http://www.rosasupport.org)

### **Safeline**

Safeline is a specialist support agency for survivors and others affected by the trauma of serious sexual assault crimes covering the whole county and beyond. The organisation delivers a wide portfolio of services and activities – helpline, counselling (face-to-face, text, email, phone), support groups, client workshops, professionals training, young people prevention and keeping safe programmes, ISVA (Independent Sexual Violence Advisor) support to report service, lending library, website, newsletters – providing an holistic approach of supporting prevention of abuse, provision of services, protection of people, in partnership with others. Safetalk, an offshoot project of Safeline has a specific youth focus and is for teenagers who have experienced rape or sexual abuse in the past.

[www.safeline.org.uk](http://www.safeline.org.uk)

### **Sahil Project**

Sahil is a Registered Charity and a Company Limited not for profit Voluntary Organisation. Sahil Project was established to support Asian Women who were suffering from stress and isolation, often arising from unresolved problems and resulting in psychological ill health due to language barriers, racial hostility and difficulties in accessing services or making social contacts and not knowing where to seek the appropriate assistance.

Initially started as a telephone helpline to address the wide range of issues that women were facing, it provides a very broad array of practical and emotional support for women from Black Minority Communities especially from Asian Sub-Continent.

[www.sahilproject.org.uk](http://www.sahilproject.org.uk)

## Support Services to Victims of Crime – List of Organisations

### **Sexual Assault Referral Centre (Blue Sky Centre)**

The Centre opened its doors in March 2013 at George Eliot Hospital in Nuneaton, supporting women, men and children who have been a victim of rape and/or domestic violence. The centre was developed as part of a joint initiative with Warwickshire Police, the NHS, Warwickshire County Council and Coventry City Council. It provides access to emergency medical treatment, emotional support and referrals to other agencies, for people of all ages, gender and ethnicities across Coventry and Warwickshire. Funding received from George Eliot Hospital consists of nine 'crisis' workers, responding to requests 365 days a year. The team are specially trained to meet the needs for each individual case, ensuring that victims receive the best possible treatment whilst at the SARC and once they leave the centre.

[www.blueskycentre.org.uk](http://www.blueskycentre.org.uk)

### **Stonham**

Stonham (part of Home Group) deliver the Domestic Abuse Support Service on behalf of Warwickshire County Council. The Service provides open access, advice and information for anyone concerned about domestic abuse via a specialist helpline, website and drop in sessions. The organisation deliver outreach support for all victims, including males, 16+, LGBT, BME and victims of FGM. Children of DV victims are also supported and signposted to specialised support.

The organisation also co-ordinates the three MARACs (Mutli-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences) – North Warwickshire, South Warwickshire and Rugby – which deals with the highest risk cases. MARACs focus on the safety plan of high risk victims of domestic abuse. Professionals concerned that a victim of domestic violence and abuse may be at a high level of risk of harm can refer cases to the MARAC Co-ordinator.

[www.homegroup.org.uk/careandsupport/stonhamservices](http://www.homegroup.org.uk/careandsupport/stonhamservices)

### **Terence Higgins Trust**

Terrence Higgins, based in Coventry, offers support to people who are living with HIV, know someone who is, or think you might have put yourself at risk of getting HIV.

They are committed to providing a working environment that encourages, and is supportive of, workers with HIV.

<http://www.tht.org.uk>

### **Victim Support**

An independent charity helping people cope with the effects of crime, by providing free and confidential support and information. The organisation supports all victims of crime by providing both emotional and practical support. It is not a counselling service.

[www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)

### **Warwickshire Domestic Violence Support Services (WDVSS)**

A voluntary organisation which exists to support those experiencing domestic violence, offering a range of services to meet the needs of those in need of help and support.

[www.wdvss.org.uk](http://www.wdvss.org.uk)

## Support Services to Victims of Crime – List of Organisations

### **Warwickshire Race Equality Partnership**

The Warwickshire Race Equality Partnership (WREP) is a voluntary sector, charitable organisation that was established in November 2005, following extensive research and consultation to address the racial inequalities and lack of service provision across Warwickshire.

WREP is also a partnership between community organisations and the main public authorities in Warwickshire. Services on offer include Casework, Community Engagement, promoting Good Relations and the provision of Information and Research.

[www.wrep.org.uk](http://www.wrep.org.uk)

### **Warwickshire Victim and Witness Partnership**

Provides a support service for victims and witnesses throughout Warwickshire. Was based in Leamington Spa (disbanded in August 2014) to bring together professionals from a variety of criminal justice organisations to deliver the following to victims and witnesses:

- Notification as soon as someone is charged with an offence.
- Full explanation and guidance about each stage of the justice process.
- Arrangement of visits to the courtroom before a trial takes place.
- A dedicated member of staff to provide guidance and support on anti-social behaviour issues.
- Specialist attention for sensitive cases.

[www.warwickshire.pouce.uk/ineedhelporadvice/VIPFolder](http://www.warwickshire.pouce.uk/ineedhelporadvice/VIPFolder)

### **Warwickshire Youth Justice**

Provides the following:

- acts as appropriate adults for children and young people held at the police station;
- assesses and provides programmes of work for children and young people subject to a final warning;
- provides support for young people on bail;
- finds accommodation for children and young people remanded to the Local Authority;
- prepares reports and other information for courts and criminal proceedings using information from families and schools;
- provides a person who will support and supervise children and young people subject to supervision orders, community rehabilitation orders, community punishment orders, and detention and training orders;
- provides responsible officers in relation to parenting orders, child safety orders, reparation orders and action plan orders;
- implements referral orders;
- offers victims of crime the opportunity to meet the young offender and to relay information to them.

[www.warwickshire.gov.uk/youthjustice](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/youthjustice)