

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date:</b>
Economic Crime Board	20 <sup>th</sup> October 2017
Information report	
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Public</b>
Economic Crime Victim Care Unit (update report)	
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>For Information</b>
Commissioner of Police	
<b>Report author:</b>	
<b>Pauline Smith, Action Fraud</b>	

### Summary

The Economic Crime Victim Care Unit (ECVCU) is an initiative being run by a partnership between the City of London Police (CoLP), the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and Action Fraud (AF). It has been funded for the past three years through the Mayor's Office for Police and Crime (MoPAC). A group of victims (living in London) who are currently outside mainstream victim support provision, and who are assessed through AF and the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB) as vulnerable, are contacted by a member of a specialist team and given support/advice over the telephone.

Just over 4000 victims have been assessed and supported through this process. Survey evidence suggests that this contact makes them feel safer and more confident, and to date only a single person of those contacted has reported being a repeat victim after contact.

This is now seen as a proof of concept that this type of contact with a cohort of victims, who are currently outside mainstream victim support services, and who may be indifferent to the level of service received, can be made to feel safer and also have the likelihood of their being a repeat victim substantially reduced.

The Home Office have indicated that the ECVCU model will be supported as a model that can be followed by other Forces in England and Wales. Work has commenced to pilot this roll out in West Midlands Police and Greater Manchester Police.

The London specific project will remain as a standalone piece of work – and will be chaired as a separate sub group by MOPAC

### Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report and the continued work of the ECVCU in London
- Note the proposed roll out of the project nationally, and the resulting support to a wider group of vulnerable victims of economic crime.
- Note the progress of the development of the project in West Midlands and Greater Manchester Police areas

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. In 2014/15 an application was made by MoPAC to the Ministry of Justice competed application fund to test out the viability of making contact by way of specialist support with a group of victims who fell outside of mainstream victim support provision, because their allegation of crime (when considered through the NFIB process) did not merit further investigation/referral to either the MPS or CoLP. This was a group that concerned a wide range of partners within the application – as it was thought that many of them were vulnerable and potentially at high risk of becoming repeat victims.

Following the successful application, a project board was established chaired by Pauline Smith (AF). Other members were: CoLP, MPS, Victim Support (VS), and The Fraud Advisory Panel (FAP). A small team (5) of advocates were recruited, trained (by VS), and established within CoLP premises. Processes and policies were written and the team had victims referred to it from AF. Victims were contacted and given advice and support. The outcomes of this process were monitored. A learning event following this pilot phase was held at the Guildhall in April 2015. MoPAC have subsequently funded, following an annual resubmission of the business case, the ECVCU for three years. The project is registered and reported through the CoLP Force Change Board. The Project Board has overall governance of the work.

Business case submissions to MoPAC have sought to expand the work of the ECVCU by dealing with an increased number of victims each year (culminating in over 4000 to date); to utilise the insight and understanding of what works for victims across a wider scale; and to be able to respond to apparent vulnerabilities/safeguarding needs that cannot be adequately addressed by contact on the telephone.

A joint application with Age UK has recently been successful in receiving funding from the City Bridge Trust (CBT) to work collaboratively through Age UK partners to provide advice to particular groups of elderly victims through a variety of mediums and methods at three locations in London. This is a major step in achieving the objective of widening and properly understanding the learning and insight gained from the ECVCU project. This project has now commenced. Work has begun on: data sharing arrangements; selection of local partners within London to deliver agreed services and products to victims; and design of evaluation methods to capture the experiences of victims within the project.

Survey evidence from victims themselves has suggested that the contact is beneficial. On a number of occasions victims themselves have assisted in the improvements and design of the service. Although there are a number of other potential factors which might inhibit repeat victimisation, the fact that only one victim of those contacted over three years has subsequently reported being a victim is a significant feature of the ECVCU work.

## **Current Position**

2. MoPAC have indicated that the next tranche of funding for this project will be over a three year period. This will alleviate a continuing practical operational difficulty in both retaining and developing the team, and placing the ECVCU on a sustainable and longer term footing. The London project will maintain its own governance arrangements – within the overall project structure. This step was taken to ensure that MoPAC (as the funders) can maintain confidence that the London issues continue to be addressed within the national rollout. Work will continue, and the partnership within the Age UK project will be a particular driver for the future direction of the service, exploiting the insight that has been gained over three years of operation.

The Home Office have had a long standing interest in the project. Work is now currently underway to provide two other Forces – West Midlands Police and Greater Manchester Police – with a service that similarly supports a small group of vulnerable victims who are not being provided with any service at the current time. Funding to support this expansion will be from the Home Office and will follow the ECVCU model. This is seen by both Forces as a significant supplement to a number of other initiatives they are running to improve support to victims in general and victims of economic crime in particular. This work will be a precursor to a wider roll out to other Forces.

## **Options**

3. The continued development of the service in London will be funded and monitored through the MoPAC three year funding. The grant for the Age UK project will similarly sustain the development of the wider prevention strategy. This will preserve the overall ambition and objective of the ECVCU which is to understand the best way to support victims of economic crime in London and to provide them the best advice to avoid their becoming repeat victims.

The expansion of the work across other Forces represents a significant opportunity to use the learning and understanding gained to a wider group of victims nationally. This can be done in a controlled and practical way – and the cost can be managed under the Home Office allocation.

## **Proposals**

4. The Committee should note the progress of the ECVCU project. Further reporting of details and outcomes can be provided as the work expands nationally.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

5. This project is a significant strand within the CoLP strategy to support vulnerable victims. It will also further support and inform any national proposals to support the victims of economic crime and dealing with vulnerable victims generally.

## **Implications**

6. Funding for this project is primarily through the MoPAC award and the CBT grant. The Home Office will fund the national roll out. CoLP have provided support costs for the advocate team – and two staff are posted from (and funded by) the MPS. Overall supervision for the team is provided by AF management.

The longer term funding arrangement agreed with MoPAC has alleviated a problem of continuity within the team – and key members of staff are now able to be retained

A key risk to the project has always been that the contact with victims is only by contact through the phone. Given that this is a potentially very vulnerable group, there is a risk that other matters such as safeguarding and other immediate vulnerabilities will not be apparent. This is mitigated by clear policy of emergency activation (through 999) if any threat to life is apparent, and an established arrangement (supported by training) through both the MPS and CoLP that a face to face follow up can be arranged by police officers/PCSO's where it is thought necessary to do so. This arrangement has also been made a specific requirement of the two Forces in the first phase of the national roll out.

## **Conclusion**

7. The ECVCU has been running since 2014. It has proved the concept that contact with vulnerable victims of economic crime can be made through the phone and can be beneficial to them and reduce the potential of repeat victimisation. It is now in a position to further enhance the service in London – both by way of being put on a sustained footing, and through an innovative project in partnership with Age UK. The model will also be the basis for informing the approach to supporting victims across other Force areas in England and Wales. It is also a significant method of utilising the insight of both AF and NFIB in supporting victims of economic crime in London and nationally.

## **Appendices**

**None**

Pauline Smith  
Head of Action Fraud  
T: 07970 922 745  
E: [Pauline.Smith@cityoflondon.pnn.police.uk](mailto:Pauline.Smith@cityoflondon.pnn.police.uk)]