

Committee(s): Strategic Planning and Performance Committee	Dated: 12 th January 2022
Subject: Victim Services - Deep Dive	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Commissioner of Police	For Information
Report author: Det. Supt. Richard Waight, Head of Investigation Services, Specialist Operations	

Summary

The Chair of the Strategic Planning and Performance Committee has, at the next meeting scheduled a 'deep dive' in to the area of victim services. This report is to update Members on the current victim services delivered by the City of London Police (CoLP) supported by local authority, regional and National partners.

National focus in support of victims is particularly high at this time with significant steps being taken towards the introduction of a 'Victims' Law' that will build on the foundations provided by the Victims' code to substantially improve victims' experiences of the criminal justice system. This report will summarise this and the current process of consultation that the CoLP is engaged with.

Victims are a key priority in service delivery and span all aspects of policing response. This breadth of services will be summarised in the following areas that articulate the victim journey from initial reporting to judicial outcome.

- A. Initial contact and crime reporting
- B. Investigative phase
- C. Judicial process

Service summaries will include reference to bespoke victim services and those provided by officers and staff in the delivery of their respective roles. The report will also provide oversight of strategic governance, compliance with the Victim Codes of Practice and current performance level in respect of victim/public confidence and satisfaction.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. **National perspective**; “Every year, one in five people in our country will become the victim of a crime. Some will be bewildered by what’s happened to them. Others will be left picking up the pieces of their lives. All victims should feel confident to pursue justice. We have a moral duty to protect these victims of crime. It is the right thing to do.”¹ Government ambition is to improve the service and support that victims receive – from the moment a crime is committed through to their experience in the courtroom.

2. **The Government plan** for delivering a “world-class service to victims” has five critical elements:
 - Amplify victims’ voices in the criminal justice process
 - Increase the transparency of the performance of our criminal justice agencies
 - Make sure that there are clear lines of accountability for when victims do not receive the right level of service
 - Support victims to rebuild their lives through accessible and professional services, and ensure that criminals pay more to support these
 - Ensure there are better tools to protect victims and prosecute culprits

This plan will deliver against a ‘Victims’ Bill’ that will build on the foundation of the Victims’ Code with the aim of substantially improving victims’ experience of the criminal justice system. The intention is to place a number of key principles from the code in to primary legislation with a clear signal to all relevant agencies that they must comply with delivering it. The proposed principles (subject of live consultation at time of writing) are¹

- **ensuring victims are informed** – to ensure that victims can fully understand the criminal justice process, criminal justice agencies must pay due consideration to providing victims with the information they need throughout the entirety of their case, from reporting through to post-conviction
- **ensuring victims are supported** – although victims do not have to report a crime to access support, when they do, the Code stipulates that victims must be referred to a service that helps them cope and recover, supported during their journey at court, and assessed as to whether they need any specialised assistance, such as eligibility for special measures

¹ Delivering justice for victims – A consultation on improving victims’ experiences of the justice system December 2021

- **ensuring victims have their voices heard** – victims must have their voices heard in the criminal justice process and be offered the opportunity to make a Victim Personal Statement to explain how the crime has had an impact on them
- **Victims’ right to review** – victims must be able to challenge decisions that directly impact them, and the Code specifies that they have the right to ask for a review under the National Police Chiefs’ Council or CPS Victims’ Right to Review Schemes, which allow complainants to request a review of certain decisions not to pursue a prosecution or to stop a prosecution

3. **Existing expectations for victims: the Code;** The Victims’ Code² sets out the legitimate expectations for all victims of crime. The code centres around twelve key rights that victims have and requires specified agencies, including the police to deliver services that support these rights that are listed below:

- To be able to understand and be understood.
- To have details of the crime recorded without unjustified delay
- To be provided with information when reporting the crime
- To be referred to services that support victims and have services and support tailored to your needs.
- To be provided with information about compensation
- To be provided with information about the investigation and prosecution
- To make a victim personal statement
- To be given information about the trial, trial process and role as a witness
- To be given information about the outcome of a case and any appeals
- To be paid expenses and have property returned
- To be given information about the offender following a conviction
- To make a complaint about your rights not being met

4. **National context of harm;** At its highest the impact of harm can be seen in many cases and notably in the tragic murder of Sarah Everard. Trust and confidence in policing, and in particular linked to the loss of Sarah Everard has reduced. The National focus on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is fully supported by the CoLP who are working closely with the National Police Chiefs Council, City of London Corporation (CoLC), our partnerships, our communities and our workforce to develop a comprehensive action plan that rebuilds the trust and confidence internally and externally. This victim/public focused work has a local structure and governance. The related strategy has already been presented to PAB.

² Victims’ Code – GOV.UK (April 2021), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974376/victims-code-2020.pdf

5. **Lead force context;** The City of London (CoL) has a relatively low volume of crime and as such victim numbers are likewise low compared to other forces. That said the CoLP have significant lead force responsibilities for fraud, cyber and economic crime, and the delivery of services associated with these crime types attracts significant volumes of victims across the UK and globally. Victim services are delivered proportionate to demand with areas of high volume having bespoke teams supporting victims. Examples of bespoke teams include; a) the Economic Crime Victim Care Unit (ECVCU) who provide victim support services aligned to the Action Fraud (AF) fraud and cyber reporting service; and b) the Victim Contact Unit (VCU) that support National Lead Fraud Investigations that currently have an average of 144 victims per operation.
6. **Local high harm victims;** Additional to the high harm linked to our economic crime (that also, in the main represents our serious organised crime demand) is the harm associated with the management of sexual offences and violent offenders. This is an area that received some scrutiny in the 'Vulnerability deep dive'. The majority of victims in this area are also non-City resident who are either visiting or working within the CoL. Through close partnership working with surrounding Metropolitan boroughs, County Forces, the CoLC and the Vulnerable Victim Advocate (VVA), the CoLP ensures that any risks relating to both residents and non-resident victims and offenders are effectively managed. This is achieved through multi-agency safeguarding meetings that are embedded within CoLP/CoLC processes, including the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) for domestic abuse, the Community MARAC, the Multi-Agency Child Exploitation meeting (MACE) and statutory child protection meetings. This activity is governed via local, regional and national strategic governance arrangements. This is further complemented through close working with the London Victim and Witness service to offer support and signpost specialist services to victims of crime.
7. **Investigator responsibilities;** Officers and police staff in the course of investigations deliver against the VCOP and signpost victim services as appropriate. There are specialist victim services provided by the Victim Care Unit and the Cyber Crime Unit, alongside the Public Protection Unit (PPU) who provide the investigative and safeguarding response across vulnerability issues, made up of specially trained detectives in dealing with domestic abuse, sexual offences and child protection. FLOs
8. **Victim location;** Additional to the lead force context, the demographic of victims in the CoL is also a largely transient one due to their being, in the main, a mix of commuter, tourist and leisure/night-time economy visitors. This can present additional challenges due to victim proximity to the CoL when maintaining contact. Also, as presented during the Vulnerability 'deep dive' mitigation of these challenges is supported by cross border and cross agency collaboration.

9. **Future developments;** In line with HMG objectives around the Victims Bill work locally is underway to review how we deliver victim services. This includes delivery of the agreed (Transform Programme) implementation of two roles; a) Victim service manager; and b) Victim service coordinator. The introduction of these roles will ensure a consistency of approach to victim services, ensure victim services are at the forefront of any strategic policy, manage performance, maximise shared learning and ensure every victim contact matters.
10. **Other key role of note;** CoLC fund the Vulnerable Victim Advocate (VVA) post 2 days a week, with the remaining 3 days a week currently funded for 12 months through Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) funding. The VVA plays a crucial role in supporting any vulnerable victims from report to court, providing emergency safety planning and referrals to specialist support. In addition, the VVA provides training to police and partners and delivers engagement and prevention initiatives across the CoL partnership. The implementation of this role has been recognised as national best practice and commended to other organisations for their consideration. Discussions are taking place to ensure permanent funding remains in place for the VVA role.
11. **Priority and application;** The CoLP place victim services at the centre of all police activity. Victim services in this report will be summarised and aligned to the following strands of operation:
 - Governance, performance and continuous improvement
 - Initial reporting, assessment and allocation
 - Response, including investigation, victim management and judicial process

Current Position

Governance, performance and continuous improvement

12. Senior oversight of performance is maintained via the CoLP Performance Management Group (PMG) with delegated responsibility to the Crime Standards Board (CSB) who monitor and manage the Force response in support of the Victim Code of Practice (VCOP). Managers receive monthly reporting to aid their monitoring of VCOP compliance. A crime scrutiny group also operates and is tasked by the CSB to assist with more qualitative assessment of areas that require a deep dive to assist continuous improvement in this key area.
13. **Crime Scrutiny Group;** A monthly group that reviews investigations on a pre-determined theme (directed by CSB) that includes an assessment of VCOP compliance. Their work is supported by monthly performance information from the Performance Information Unit (PIU) that is used to identify compliance issue

14. There are specific guidelines on the management of vulnerable victims that are governed by management of vulnerable victims is documented in the November 2021 vulnerability report.
15. Operational prioritisation is also made considerate to victim impact/harm. Senior governance for operational decisions is maintained by the monthly Tactical Tasking and Coordination Group (TTCG) who ensure appropriate operational delivery cognisant of threat, harm and risk and current demand. Risk associated with victim services are recorded on the force risk register and managed inline with force risk governance structure
16. A key tool in support of performance monitoring and management are Victim Satisfaction Surveys. They are used to improve our understanding of needs of the public and are an indicator as to whether the Force is meeting victim expectations. These statistics are reported to the PAB and considered against the achievement of our policing plan objectives. They are an important barometer of victim/public satisfaction/confidence that aids the delivery of quality services by feeding organisational learning that drives continuous improvement. The insight gained can typically be used to inform 'Integrity and Standards' and 'Equality and Inclusion' boards; potentially revealing discriminatory practices, processes or system based bias.
17. **Victim Satisfaction performance;** A statutory reporting measure, it is a key measure within the new National Crime and Policing Priorities, and the forthcoming Policing Plan 2022/23. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) also provide a periodic layer of scrutiny for VCOP compliance and service delivery. The current Policing Plan 2021/22 performance measure is currently (Q2) assessed as Satisfactory.

Treatment 85% Satisfied 	 Follow Up 65% Satisfied
Overall Service 62% Satisfied 	 69% Would Recommend in Future

18. CoLP is typically achieving a 10% response rate to the current victim of crime survey; 789 text message requests have been successfully delivered since November 2020 and the Force received 78 responses. All measures have increase in Q2, notably those Satisfied with how they were treated has risen from 76% to 85%. Whilst people are generally satisfied there is still room for improvement; both in service standards at point of contact and during subsequent updates.

19. A change to the statutory duty to conduct the Victim Survey occurred in 2017 shifting expectations by the Home Office and HMICFRS towards gaining a deeper insight led understanding of the victim journey. A change in survey design at this time was hampered by the Force being locked into an existing contractual agreement; with amendment fees which made substantial change unaffordable.
20. The Force was also concerned over a perception of limited response rates vs value for money and the increasing forecast of costs; for continuing to conduct telephone based surveys. The Force would typically experience a response rate of 15.5 % (2017/18) to 18% (2018/19); at an annual cost of £45k.
21. As a result of the PMG action and review the Force moved to the current SMS text based service; delivered by an external company (Esendex). The Force also engaged a second partner to deliver a Domestic Violence and Abuse Survey; largely as the requirement arose out of sync with the commissioning of the Victim Satisfaction contract (Snap Surveys).
22. The Force is striving to improve response rates and to date has not developed a universal communication strategy for surveying. The communication events to date have been survey specific and time limited due to resource constraints. The investment in a dedicated post would provide support to ensure a communications effort was underway (and tracked) throughout the reporting year; rather than for a few short weeks ahead at the end of the year as was recently necessary for delivery of the Community Survey.
23. A wider adoption of other communication channels, both private and public sector; has led to improved engagement with hard to reach groups. The annual communication strategy should include proactive scheduled use of ward meetings, Dedicated Ward Officers, KINs and the Corporation's access to the business community. The Force has the option to make greater use of SMS mobile messaging, Internet site Pop-Ups, QR Codes at Force and CoL public locations and the digital media boards; as well as routinely integrating survey links into the Force's publications. To date efforts to implement these options have been hampered by an absence of available professional resource; rather than a lack of Force innovation.
24. The Force's focus on placing the victim at the heart of its service approach will raise demand for improved survey services. This aligns well with the renewed focus on victims and vulnerable victims being demonstrated by government. A deep dive into victim services is expected by the Police Authority early in 2022.
25. The Force's delivery of the DVA Survey has a dependency on the maintaining of funding for the Vulnerable Victims Advisor; who conducts the DVA survey questioning on behalf of PIU.
26. There is an opportunity to use the ward panels and meetings to improve general survey uptake; and a measure to support this approach is being proposed in the forthcoming Policing Plan (Draft) 2022/23.

27. Further Policing Plan (Draft) survey measures in development : a proposal to survey the business community in order to understand their perceptions of the Force's efforts to effectively manage return to normality following large scale public order incidents, impact of testing and exercising events and some counter terrorism measures.

Initial reporting, assessment and allocation

28. All officers and police staff have a responsibility to ensure that every victim contact matters. Every interaction with a victim is part of the holistic service the CoLP offer. Victim contact takes many forms:

- Interaction in the street and face to face reporting
- On-line reporting
- Phone reporting
- Trans crime into the FRC
- Action fraud

The victim code of conduct is followed in these interactions.

29. The next stage following crime reporting is crime assessment which involves significant interaction with the victim. The force has two distinct functions to carry out crime assessment; the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau/VCU and The Force Resolution Centre. The initial ? of the Victim Code of Conduct are met during this process.

30. **Force Resolution Centre;** The Force Resolution Centre (FRC) is a dedicated function servicing crime reporting and allocation across the CoLP (excluding NLF matters that are dealt with by the Lead Force Ops Room). Specialist resources provide the city of London with a clear victim focused approach to investigation, beginning with a transparent crime screening policy. Victims are at the heart of this process using the THRIVE+ methodology, which aligns to the Code of Ethics and National Decision Making Model enabling the CoLP to respond appropriate to the level of harm.

31. Each crime reported is subject to an initial assessment in accordance with the National crime recording standards to establish if an offence has been committed. The victim is at the centre of this assessment and FRC staff will:

- Ensure compliance with Victims Code of Practice (VCOP) - to include completing the victim contact management section on any crimes they add to NICHE and ensuring the completion of this section on any other crimes.
- Conduct an assessment for the tasking of enhanced victim support, and provide assistance and guidance to victims and witnesses of crime where enhanced victim support is not required.
- Provide assistance and guidance to victims and witnesses of crime through referral to Victim Support or the Vulnerable Victim Advocate where required.

32. The principals of the victim code are applied to all assessments and at this point a determination is made as to whether a victim is vulnerable or repeated. If yes, enhanced support will be provided.

- A person is considered vulnerable if as a result of their situation or circumstances, they are unable to take care of or protect themselves, or others, from harm or exploitation
- A victim is to be treated as a repeat victim if they have been subjected to the same or similar offence in the past 12 months. Whilst this should necessitate action in respect of safeguarding/reassurance/support it does not automatically mean the crime should be allocated for further investigation if it fails to meet the allocation threshold (whether mandatory or assessed).

33. When considering the status of a victim and whether there are any additional factors that will indicate that the crime should be allocated for investigation, special consideration should be given to the following:

- Where the victim has suffered substantial loss – this could include an elderly victim who has had something of low monetary value (e.g. pension) stolen where this is their sole source of income or where the loss is significant for another reason (e.g. sentimental rather than monetary)
- Where the victim is a public servant and the offence was committed whilst they were acting in the course of their duty

Response, including investigation, victim management and judicial process

34. **Victim management by investigators;** When a case is assigned to an officer the officer makes contact with the victim and discusses their needs for example how often the victim requires an update and specific support or signposting as required. It is the responsibility of the officer to continue that service covering areas as follows:

- Would they like to engage with our service and if so establish the areas in which support is needed.
- If possible give support advice for relevant agencies such as Victim Support, City Advice or Toynbee Hall over the phone.
- If they would like us to contact these services on their behalf then we would collate all the information needed and make the referral by contacting the agency requested directly.
- We would end the call by explaining what we will now do going forward and ensure they have our contact details for any future support or advice.

All victim contacts must be recorded on Niche.

35. **Victim Contact Unit (VCU)**; part of the National Lead Force response to Fraud. It is structured with three Victim Care Reviewers and managed by one Victim Care Manager. The VCU support Victims emotionally and practically whether they are located within the City of London or elsewhere in the Country or World as part of the National Lead Force Investigations. The VCU are an important team who ensure all rights under the Victims Code of Practice are being achieved to a high standard throughout City of London Police Fraud Investigations.

Currently the VCU manage 4325 Victims across 30 Operations (internal and external), broken down as follows:

- 593 Victims for Victim care only from external Organisations and Police Forces with no Investigation by CoLP.
- 3732 Victims which are Victims of National Lead Force (NLF) Investigations conducted by CoLP.

In addition the VCU receive weekly lists from the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB). These are lists of City Victims who have reported to Action Fraud which can include both individuals residing in the City of London and Organisations which are based here. In the 2020 calendar year they received 39 spreadsheets with 1216 victims reports on and so far in the 2021 year this has been 45 spreadsheets received and 26,023 reports made. This is not representative of separate victim reports as some Organisations include bulk uploads on these reports. The support in which we offer these Victims has been detailed below.

36. **Victim Support**; The London victim and witness service provides victim support. The volume crime service receives a daily automatic transfer of victims that have requested to be referred to victim support. This service provides support and sign posting to all victims throughout the duration of their case.

37. **Economic Crime Victim Care Unit (ECVCU)**; As a direct result of the success of the pan-London Action Fraud Economic Crime Victim Care Unit (ECVCU), the Home Office provided funding to roll-out the Action Fraud National Fraud Economic Crime Victim Care (NECVCU) in areas outside London with potential to extend the service across England and Wales.

The original aim was to roll out NECVCU to all 43 forces in the England and Wales for Level 1 (non-vulnerable victims) with a further aim to roll-out to all forces at Level 2 (vulnerable victims) once further funding is approved. Six forces receive Level 1 and Level 2 service, these are the initial pilot forces. Fourteen forces, in addition to the pilot forces, now receive the Level 1 service, which is an overall total of twenty. Six forces have intimated they do not want the NECVCU service, so currently we are now seeking to bring a total of 37 forces into the Level 1 service.

38. **Domestic Abuse (DA)**; Domestic abuse processes are well established within the CoL. These include the recent introduction by the CoLP of a '20 Point Plan' and

mandatory supervisor attendance at all DA incidents to improve the frontline response to victims and enhance opportunities for evidence gathering and prosecutions. This has been shared nationally as best practice.

All domestic abuse investigations and non-crime matters are allocated to the Public Protection Unit (PPU) for investigation and safeguarding. The PPU work closely with the CoLC to safeguard victims and in all cases consider evidence led prosecutions.

Throughout 2020 and 2021 to date, the CoLP have worked closely with partners to deliver several initiatives around domestic abuse. These have included:

- Spotting the Signs Toolkit – shared with Business throughout the COL providing information to managers and staff on responding to DA. This has been updated to include a section on working from home. This toolkit has been recognised as national best practice through operation Talla and adopted within other forces.
- Hidden Harms Campaign – Developed with Crimestoppers to raise awareness of DA and HBA amongst harder to reach communities, specifically the Bangladeshi community in the city. Utilised targeted social media and traditional media translated into Bengali.
- Hotel Engagement Newsletter – circulated on a quarterly basis and focussed on vulnerability issues.

39. Sexual Violence; There has been an increased focus on sexual offences in response to the Sarah Everard murder and other high-profile cases. Serious 'Stranger' sexual offences within the City of London remain low. Of the rape cases reported, the majority centre on the issue of 'consent' making investigation and prosecution challenging.

The number of sexual offences also decreased during the pandemic due to the decreased footfall and closure of licensed premises. Whilst figures are once again increasing and the rolling 12-month comparison shows an increase of 144% (13 offences), the total figure remains on a par with 19/20 levels.

The VVA plays a key role in supporting victims of sexual violence, ensuring they are supported from 'report to court'. This is alongside the team of SOITs (Sexual Offence Investigation Trained officers) whose provide the single point of contact for victims throughout the investigation.

CoLP have continued a programme of engagement activity alongside partners in Victim Support and the COL to raise awareness on issues such as consent, and sexual violence linked to the night-time economy. This has included several initiatives:

- Social media video series during lockdown highlighting how victims can report sexual abuse, dispelling myths and outlining support available

- Training for licensed premises in relation to vulnerability and specifically VAWG and sexual violence
- Supporting the 'Good Night Out' and 'Reframe the Night' campaigns to raise awareness on sexual violence in licensed premises
- Input the Corporation Women's Network on night safety and VAWG

40. **Mental Health;** Mental Health and Suicide is a strand under the vulnerability priority. Whilst this report does not focus on these areas, it should be noted that this is a cross cutting issue across many of the other vulnerability areas. For example, many domestic abuse victims and perpetrators present with mental health issues and this is an underlying issue in many of the high-risk MARAC cases discussed.

The force lead for Mental Health and Suicide is placed within Sector Policing and there is a large amount of work ongoing with CoL partners to provide MH support to those in the CoL and reduce suicide.

The CoLP/CoLC/NHS fund the Mental Health Triage nurses who proactively support frontline staff by providing on the street assessment of individuals presenting with mental health issues and ensure appropriate signposting and use of MH detention powers, freeing up valuable police time and providing improved outcomes for individuals. Additionally, there is effective partnership working through the Community MARAC, chaired jointly by CoLP and the CST where complex cases of antisocial behaviour or those with repeat mental health issues can be discussed.

Future investment in mental health initiatives and support across the partnership is imperative in reducing the burden that mental health places on the police service.

41. **Cyber support to victims;** Cyber Griffin leads the CoLP Police's victim care in the area of cyber criminality. The programme offers four primary services designed to support individuals and organisations who have been a victim of cyber criminality:

- **Baseline Briefings** – Non-technical intelligence led presentations designed equip attendees with key advice and guidance they need to protect themselves from the most prolific cyber offences today.
- **Table Top Exercise** – A scenario based exercise designed to take teams through a series of increasingly complex cyber-attacks with the aim teaching them the value and key principles of effective cyber strategy.
- **Incident Response Training** – A seminar for all staff involved in cyber incident response which teaches the police major incident response methodology in the context of cyber events.
- **Cyber Capability Assessment** – A police led assessment of an organisations information security management (ISM) resulting in an advisory report detailing the organisations maturity broken down into a list of controls.

This catalogue of NCSC certified services can be applied flexibly depending on the victim's needs. Using these, Cyber Griffin aims to provide long-term support to victims of cyber-crime and to instil sustainable resilience to any future cyber criminality. Cyber Griffin engages with 100% of victims of cyber dependent criminality within the City of London.

42. Victims right to review a police decision; If the police or Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) decide not to prosecute the suspect the Victim has a right to be told within five working days. They should be informed of the following:

- Reasons for the decision
- How they can get further information
- How to seek a review and make representation under the National Police Chief's Council or the CPS Victims right to review scheme
- How to be referred to support services

43. Call Blocker Project; The Fraud Operations VCU successfully bid and received funding for one-hundred Call Blocker Units from the supplier TrueCall. These Units are highly effective at blocking scam and nuisance calls which come through to individuals/victims phone lines and have been proven to increase the wellbeing of individuals when installed. These Units are recognised and used by Trading Standards Teams across the Country and the National Scams Prevention Team. The City of London Police Force now have this capability for residents within the square mile.

The VCU have worked alongside the Corporation of London, Corporate Communications, City of London Trading Standards and the Dedicated Force Ward Officers to ensure this new capability within the Force and City is becoming well known and available to those residents in need.