



John Campion
Police and Crime Commissioner
West Mercia



Victim and Witness Strategy

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Foreword



When I first entered the world of politics I had a vision of working on behalf of my local community to help make things better. That drive to deliver better outcomes for the local communities of West Mercia has only strengthened in my role as the Police and Crime Commissioner. Over the past four years I've worked tirelessly to make West Mercia a Safer Place, working in partnership with a myriad of different agencies and stakeholders. While we have made great progress in reducing crime, delivering early intervention programmes and supporting vulnerable people, there is still so much to do.

I have worked continuously with partners to put the victim and survivors first. While we've made strides in improving support for victims of crime, the Criminal Justice System (CJS) often fails to put the victim at the heart of everything it does. Too often I have heard from victims of crime about how the process seems to be prioritised over their needs, which undermines trust and confidence in the CJS.

After meeting with and listening to victims, I am determined to do everything I can to help support victims to cope and recover. I will use my office and influence to champion improvements across the CJS on behalf of victims. I will challenge and when appropriate hold the CJS to account for improving outcomes for victims and witnesses. I will use my powers ensure all relevant agencies comply with the Victims' Code of Practice. And I will continue to work with partners to improve access to services to support each victims' journey.

Set out in my Safer West Mercia Plan 2016-2021, is my commitment to put victims and survivors first, whilst tackling those crimes which cause the most harm to our communities. By preventing crime we reduce the rate of victimisation in our communities. As such, it is vital that any approach to improving services for victims also addresses the root causes of crime through prevention and early intervention. Where prevention is not possible, and someone becomes a victim, I want to ensure they receive the best possible treatment.

In order to ensure we capture and understand the experience of victims, I will set up a Victims' Collaboration Board, which will bring together victims and staff from the CJS in order to capture the experiences of victims so we can work together to address any systemic issues, or concerns that need to be dealt with.

I will work with the partners to ensure offenders are brought to justice and that appropriate intervention programmes are in place to reduce the likelihood of reoffending, thereby protecting the public from future harm.

As your Police and Crime Commissioner I will continue to hold the CJS to account for complying with the Victims' Code of Practice and challenging the system when I don't think it is putting the victim at the heart of the system.

John Champion

West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner

Summary of PCC commitments

Good governance

- The PCC will establish effective governance frameworks, such as the PCC's Victims' Board to ensure victims and witnesses receive a timely and responsive service designed to meet the needs of individuals, especially those with complex needs.
- The PCC will ensure local delivery adapts to take account of new requirements and emerging best practice
- The PCC will work with and hold partners to account for delivering the priorities set out in this strategy
- The PCC will work with local Community Safety Partnerships and Safeguarding Boards to ensure there is alignment between local plans and this strategy.

Commissioned services

- The PCC will ensure services commissioned by their office are evidence-based and take into account the experiences of victims.
- The PCC will work with partners to ensure the provision of support services are, whenever possible; seamless, integrated and responsible to victims' needs throughout their journey.
- The PCC will continuously monitor victim information, crime patterns, need assessments and service provision to ensure potential gaps in service, or areas of improvement are identified and addressed
- The PCC will work with partners to ensure that resources are managed efficiently and effectively, ensuring that anyone who has been a victim of crime has access to the support they need.
- The PCC will work with local commissioners to ensure victims of crime who have more complex needs are provided with access to support in order to help them cope and recover.
- The PCC will work with partners to tackle the harm of criminal exploitation.
- The PCC will develop outcome focused plans to improve outcomes for victims domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Partnership working

- The PCC will work with partners to ensure victims of crime have access to the help they need, whether they choose to report the crime to the police or not.
- The PCC will work in cooperation with local, regional and national partners to ensure victims in West Mercia receive the help and support they need to cope and recover.
- The PCC will support the continued development of the Victim Advice Line, including access to and delivery of Restorative Justice Interventions.
- The PCC will raise awareness of stalking and harassment, to include signposting to support services.
- The PCC will work with partners to tackle violence against women and girls.

Voice of the victim

- The PCC will establish a service user group to capture the feedback and experience of victims of crime.
- The PCC will ensure feedback and lessons learned from complaints, feedback and Victim Right of Review processes are captured, understood and when applicable used to improve policy and practice.



Introduction

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) is committed to ensuring that anyone who is affected by crime in West Mercia receives the support when they need, regardless of whether they choose to report the crime to the police or not.

As set out the PCC's Safer West Mercia Plan, the PCC has made a clear commitment to ensure that victims have access to the support they need, helping them to cope and recover from the harm suffered, improve their feelings of safety while building confidence in the CJS as offenders are brought to justice. This drive has helped improve outcomes Victims and Witnesses. Also included in the PCC's plan was an ambition to develop new Victims' and Witness Strategy, which will be supported by a comprehensive delivery plan designed to deliver improved outcome for victims and witnesses.

This new Victim and Witness Strategy will build on and enhance existing services provided to the public, while setting out how the PCC will work in partnership with other relevant organisations to improve access to services victims and witnesses. It is the ambition of the PCC for victims to have access to seamless services which recognise their needs and provides the right support in order to help victims cope and recover, while ensuring partners are complying with the rights and entitlements set out in The Victims' Code of Practice.

The PCC will challenge partners in the criminal justice system to ensure that victims are at the heart of the process and not pulled along a process which fails to recognise their needs. By providing strategic leadership, it is the aim of the PCC to put the victim at the heart of the criminal justice system, transforming services to focus on the experience of victims and witnesses and make changes when those services are failing to meet those needs.

In making arrangements to support victims, the PCC will aim to make the best possible use of available resources, take an evidence-based approach to commissioning services, and seek continuous improvement by putting the voice of victims at the very heart of processes to plan, deliver and review services.

This strategy provides the following:

- the context within which the PCC is supporting victims and witnesses;
- a set of strategic objectives;
- a programme of the key activities that will be delivered;
- a framework for performance and governance;
- the principles for use of resources and commissioning.

Aims and objectives

The Police and Crime Commissioner will work with partners to ensure that victims of crime have access to seamless services which are designed to meet their needs, even if they did not report that crime to the police. Commissioned services will be designed to provide accessible and responsive services, tailored to ensure that anyone who suffers as a result of a crime in West Mercia is offered the support they need to cope and recover. The PCC will work with partners to ensure that victims are placed at the heart of the criminal justice system, ensuring compliance with the Victims' Code of Practice.

Objectives

- A. To ensure systems and processes are designed to support and identify the needs of victims and that victims have access to the help they need, whether they choose to report the crime to the police or not.
- B. To ensure the provision of support services are seamless, integrated, and responsive to victims' needs throughout their journey through the criminal justice system
- C. To ensure victim services are timely and responsive and able to meet the needs of individuals, especially those with complex needs, thereby offering a quality experience designed to help victims cope and recover.
- D. To ensure that future commissioned services are evidence based, that feedback from victims is used to drive continuous improvement.
- E. To provide good governance, ensuring resources are managed efficiently and effectively, ensuring anyone who has been a victim has access to the support they need, whilst providing targeted and specialist services for victims of serious crimes, the most the most persistently targeted & the most vulnerable and intimidated, using a partnership approach to look at wider needs of victims.

Principles

The PCC, police and their partners will work together to help and support victims of crime in West Mercia, regardless of whether they choose to report the crime or not.

The views, needs and expectations of victims will be central to determining the services that are made available to provide support.

Victims will be able to report a crime in a way that is convenient to them, be clear about the service they can expect to receive from the police, the support services available to them, and what to do if they have questions about what is happening, how to access support or raise issues with relevant authorities if they are unhappy with the service provided.

Whether victims want information, advice, emotional or practical support, they will have access to independent services that have victims' safety and wellbeing as their priority.

Victims' needs may change over time, so they will be able to access services whenever they need them, not just immediately following the incident.

The PCC is committed to continuously improving the services offered to victims of crime, and will regularly assess needs and feedback to ensure services can be tailored accordingly.



Strategic context

National legislation and policy

Provisions were made in the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 (PRSR Act)¹ for Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to be elected by the public. PCCs are accountable for securing an efficient and effective police service in their force area. In carrying out their responsibilities, they are required to work in cooperation with other local partners with a responsibility for crime and disorder, and work together with other criminal justice bodies in order to secure an efficient and effective criminal justice system.

Responsibility for commissioning the majority of emotional and practical support services for victims' services was passed to PCCs in England and Wales in 2014. A Commissioning Framework published by the Ministry of Justice in 2013² provides advice and information to those involved with victims' services.

The Framework defines a victim as 'a person who has suffered harm which was directly caused by a criminal offence, or in relation to a person whose death was directly caused by a criminal offence, a family member who has suffered harm as a result of the person's death, or a family member who has been affected and suffered harm as a result of a criminal offence against the victim'.

In addition to the National Framework, PCCs are empowered to create local police and crime plans, which provide localised context to delivering strategic outcomes. The PCC for West Mercia has set out several clear objectives for victims and witness in the Safer

West Mercia Plan. Aligned to the Safer West Mercia Plan is the PCC's Commissioning and Grants Strategy, both of which are published on the PCC's website: <https://www.westmercia-pcc.gov.uk/>

To enable PCCs to commission appropriate services at a local level, the MoJ provides a grant on an annual basis. The PCC for West Mercia provides additional funds on top of the MoJ grant in order to provide improved services for victims and witnesses.

In addition to the services commissioned by PCCs, some specialist services are commissioned at a national level, including:

- Rape support centres;
- Services for victims of trafficking;
- A homicide service; and
- A court based witness service
- Some national telephone helplines; and
- Some domestic violence and sexual violence specialist services.

The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (the Victims' Code)³ is the statutory code that sets out the minimum level of service that victims should receive from the criminal justice system. PCCs and police forces are amongst the organisations required to deliver services set out in the Victims' Code. PCCs should ensure that the Victims' Code of Practice is taken into consideration when carrying out their responsibilities, such as commissioning support services, include:

- All victims should be referred to support services within 2 working days
- An enhanced service should be provided for victims of serious crimes, a persistently targeted victim or a vulnerable or intimidated victim, as defined by the Victims' Code
- Access to the following information must be offered from first contact with the police: where and how to get advice or support, including access to medical support, any specialist support (such as psychological support) and alternative accommodation
- PCCs must consult victims of crime when setting policing priorities
- Service providers must include information about the Code on their websites
- PCCs have a reciprocal duty with other criminal justice agencies to work in a way which delivers an efficient and effective local criminal justice system

- Respond to complaints about the service provided through the organisations own complaints processes. If complaints are sent to the wrong organisation, the service provider will pass the complaint onto the relevant organisation. An acknowledgement or full response is required within 10 working days.

The PCC in West Mercia will ensure, through the Victims' Board that local delivery adapts to take account of new requirements and emerging best practice. This will include the publication of any new strategies, white papers, best practice, or the development of service quality standards, and the changing roles and responsibilities for partners.

In addition to the broad requirements to provide services to help victims cope and recover when they have suffered harm as a result of a criminal offence, government policy has provided a framework to ensure victims of some of the most serious crimes have access to specialist support tailored to their needs.

Further details about national policy and strategies are referred to within relevant sections of this strategy.

Changing nature of crime and community safety

The Police and Crime Plan published by the PCC recognises that the face of crime is changing, and the police and partners must react accordingly and manage those changes to ensure that resource and service provision is targeted effectively.

Growing threats like child sexual abuse, modern day trafficking, organised crime and online fraud and other computer enabled crimes have a significant impact on those affected, and appropriate support must be in place for victims. Equally, it is important to have a strong focus on preventing crime in the first place.

The PCC will work with the force and community safety partners to review local Crime Prevention Strategies, which define priorities and measures that will be taken to prevent people who live, work or travel in West Mercia suffering as a result of crime. It is important that local Crime Prevention Strategies and the Victims' Strategy are closely aligned, as the prevention of crime results in fewer victims of crime. In particular, the PCC will ensure that services commissioned by the PCC link back to the Safer West Mercia plan and include objectives linked to crime prevention and reducing repeat victimisation when relevant.

The PCC will establish a monitoring framework designed to ensure that victim services commissioned by the PCC meet the needs of victims. If certain outcomes aren't being met, the PCC, through contract management meetings will work with providers to get things back on track.

In addition, the PCC will continuously monitor victim information, crime patterns, need assessments and service provision to ensure that any potential gaps in service, or areas of improvement are identified and addressed.

In order to ensure service user feedback is captured, the PCC will work with the Force and relevant stakeholders to establish a lived experience service user group which will provide feedback to the PCC and partners on their experiences.



Stakeholders

The PCC will work in cooperation with local, regional and national partners to ensure victims in West Mercia receive the help and support they need to cope and recover. This is because the needs of victims will be varied and often complex, and it is essential that partners work together to ensure the holistic needs of victims are met.

West Mercia Police, Victim Advice Line and Witness Care

The PCC will hold the Chief Constable to account for delivering the priorities set out in its own Victims' Strategy. The stated ambition of the Force's strategy is to create a victim focused service model which will safeguard and protect the welfare of victims and witnesses by reducing the risk of harm and further victimisation, improving their safety, health and wellbeing and enhancing their trust, confidence and satisfaction in the police, from the victim's first point of contact through to crime resolution.

In addition, the PCC will support the continued development of the Victim Advice Line, seeking to improve access and support to victims of crime, whether they report the crime officially to the police or not. The PCC will also work with the Police to improve the use of Restorative Justice as an option to help victims cope and recover.

County council, local authority and other Community Safety Partners (CSPs)

Worcestershire County Council (WCC), Herefordshire, Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin and the district councils of Worcestershire work in partnership with the police to keep communities safe, reduce crime, and protect and support vulnerable people.

CSP partners and the police work together through a range of multi-agency Boards to tackle a range of public protection issues including the dynamics, impact and effects from, amongst other things, physical, sexual and financial abuse. These include the various Safeguarding Adults Boards and Safeguarding Children Boards, and Community Safety Partnerships. These are supported by Strategic Management Boards for Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.

As well as specific activity in response to the shared priorities of sexual violence and domestic abuse, the PCC, police, council and other local partners work together to prevent and respond to community safety issues, such as anti-social behaviour.

Health services

The PCC works together with NHS England and local clinical commissioning groups to put in place Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs), which assess and support victims of sexual assault. In addition, the PCC will work with local commissioners and health professionals to improve access to mental health provision for victims who need specialist support. The PCC will also work with local health leaders to raise awareness of the role GPs play in identifying harm caused by crime and how to refer victims to relevant support services.

Criminal Justice partners

Successfully prosecuting offenders and bringing them to justice is essential if the public are to have confidence in the criminal justice system. The PRSR Act 2011 and Victims' Code require the PCC, police and other criminal justice partners to work together to ensure an efficient and effective criminal justice system, and to ensure victims of crime are supported. Criminal justice agencies include the police, Crown Prosecution Service, probation, prisons and court service. Due to their geographical boundaries, these organisations come together at a regional level to review performance and consider how they can work together to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system.

Regional and national policing

The PCC collaborates closely with PCCs from across country. Currently the PCC sits on both the National PCC steering group for victims and witnesses, as well as the PCC steering group for the Criminal Justice System. The national steering groups work closely with ministers and government departments with a view of improving services for victims, while driving improved outcomes across the CJS.

Regionally, the PCC sits on the West Midlands Criminal Justice Collaboration Forum, which brings together the 4 PCCs from the West Midlands Region with Chief Officers from the Criminal Justice System, Senior leaders from Public Health and Local Authority leads. The Forum is focused on improving partnership working across the region, regional commissioning, sharing best practice and driving system wide improvements.

Locally, the PCC sits on the Local Criminal Justice Board, the Victims' Board and the Crime Reduction Board, as well as sitting on various local partnership boards, such as Community Safety Partnerships.

Service providers

There are many organisations providing services to victims of crime across West Mercia, such as Victim Support, Women's Aid, Refuge, West Mercia Rape and Sexual and Assault service, AXIS and Brake to name but a few. The PCC believes it is important that victims have a choice of the support services they access, which may include organisations that are not directly commissioned by the PCC or other public bodies. The PCC strives to achieve a balance between directly commissioning services to meet the needs of victims, and signposting so that victims are aware of the wide range of other organisations available to provide support.

Organisations providing support services to victims will have significant expertise and knowledge about the experience victims have of the criminal justice system and the help, support and information they need. Therefore, the PCC is committed to regularly engaging with service providers to ensure support services can be continuously improved to meet commissioning needs.



Strategic objectives

The strategic objectives which are set out below have been taken from the PCC's Safer West Mercia Plan, the PCC's Victims' Charter, The National Victims Strategy, the Victims' Code of Practice, the EU Directive for Victims, the National Witness Charter and other relevant national strategies. The following objectives will be adopted across West Mercia, which will ensure victims and witnesses are receiving the best possible service.

Objective A

The PCC will ensure victims have access to the help they need whether they choose to report the crime to the police or not.

Anyone who suffers harm or loss as a result of crime in West Mercia should have access to support services that can help them, regardless of whether they choose to report the crime to the police or not. It is equally important to give victims the freedom to access support services that are relevant to their individual needs. This can be achieved by providing an easily accessible directory of organisations that are available to provide support, information and advice, in addition to the organisations directly commissioned by the PCC and partners.

Victims of certain crime types might require specialist support, and that it is important to monitor changes in crime trends to ensure services remain relevant. Objective C sets out specific areas where support services to victims will be increased based on specialist needs.

In addition, the PCC intends to improve access to support for the following groups:

Victims of road traffic incidents, or those bereaved as a result of a road traffic collision

As made clear in the PCC's Road Strategy, many road traffic incidents may not have been the result of a criminal offence, the people affected may need access to support to cope and recover, including those bereaved as a result of the incident. Those who are seriously injured or bereaved as a result of a road traffic collision will be signposted to appropriate support services where they can receive support to help them cope and recover.

Rural crime

West Mercia is predominately rural force, and as such rural crime has a significant impact on our rural communities. Rural crime can be defined as crime that is enabled by, or dependent on the rurality or remoteness of a locality. This might include incidents such as theft of farm equipment and hare coursing. The police work closely with the rural and farming communities in West Mercia to tackle crime and have developed a Rural Crime Strategy to provide a framework for responding effectively.

The PCC will engage regularly with rural and farming communities to discuss issues affecting them.

Objective B

The PCC will ensure the provision of support services will be seamless, accessible, integrated and responsive to victims' needs throughout their journey through the Criminal Justice System.

Although multiple organisations are involved in the process of preventing crime, responding to incidents, supporting victims, and delivering criminal justice outcomes, the PCC recognises that everything possible should be done to put victims' needs at the heart of process, and make sure victims receive a service that is as responsive and integrated as possible, and where possible, victims should have a single point of contact.

In many cases, the public expects to be able to communicate through digital technology and it is important that public services respond by making it easier for the public to interact online. However, enabling the public to interact online is not a replacement for other forms of communication, the public will still be able to call the police, and officers will still attend when it is appropriate to do so.

The needs of victims change over time, particularly as cases progress through the criminal justice system. It is not sufficient simply to offer support immediately following an incident, instead victims should be made aware, and reminded of the services available to them throughout their journey as a result of a regular assessment of their needs.

To complement the Witness Service (currently commissioned nationally by the Ministry of Justice), which offers witnesses emotional and practical help before, during and after the trial, West Mercia Police also have a Witness Care Unit, which guides victims through the court process, keeping them updated on the case as well as providing support and guidance.

One of the key services available to victims in certain circumstances is Restorative Justice, which can be an important part of the victims' journey to recovery. This process can involve the victim:

- explaining to an offender the impact of the crime in them;
- seeking an explanation and apology from the offender; and
- playing a part in agreeing reparative or rehabilitative activity for the offender e.g. working for free for a charity, paying to repair any material damage, or keeping the victim informed of their progress in getting off drugs or finding a job.

The PCC will put in place process to continuously monitor the experience of victims, and their journey through the criminal justice system to ensure support services are as coordinated and seamless as possible.

Objective C

The PCC will establish effective governance frameworks, such as the PCC's Victims' Board to ensure victims and witnesses receive a timely and responsive service designed to meet the needs of individuals, especially those with complex needs, or those who experienced the highest harm.

Victims of serious crimes, those who are vulnerable, and those who are repeat victims will be entitled to receive enhanced services as established in the Victims' Code of Practice. Such services may include; access to dedicated and specialist support services, such as an Independent Sexual Advice Advocate.

In addition to the specific groups set out below, it is important that any assessment of needs take account of a full range of factors that might result in a crime having a disproportionate effect on a victim, such as repeat victims, vulnerable and intimidated victims and witnesses and those who are disabled or who may have learning difficulties. As a principle, it is important that victims have access to services that can respond to their individual needs, especially those who are vulnerable or have complex needs. To help achieve this, an Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken on the delivery of victims' services in West Mercia and refreshed annually.

Cyber-crime

Cyber-crime can be defined as crime that is enabled by or dependent on a computer or the internet. Specifically, this can include:

- fraud that can result in financial loss for individuals and businesses;
- bullying, harassment and stalking;
- sexual abuse or exploitation.

The nature of this activity is complex as it is not contained within police force boundaries, and requires response and intervention at local, regional, national and international levels.

National organisations such as the National Crime Agency and Action Fraud have important operational roles to play in relation to identifying, analysing and disrupting criminal activity. However, PCCs have a responsibility to support victims at a local level, and the PCC in West Mercia is committed to making sure that individuals and businesses have access to the information and support they need to reduce the chance of suffering harm or loss as a result of cyber-crime, and to cope and recover if they are a victim.

Domestic abuse and sexual violence

To support the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, the Government has published a National Statement of Expectations, which sets out what local areas need to put in place to ensure their response to VAWG issues is as collaborative, robust and effective as it can be so that all victims can get the help they need. The Statement sets out expectations that local multiagency strategies should be put in place to:

- Put the victim at the centre of service delivery;
- Have a clear focus on perpetrators in order to keep victims safe;
- Take a strategic, system-wide approach to commissioning which takes into account the victim and need profile associated with VAWG.
- Are locally-led and safeguard individuals at every point;
- Raise local awareness of the issues and involve, engage and empower communities to seek, design and deliver solutions to prevent VAWG

Although these crimes are disproportionately gendered, which is why the Government's approach is framed within a VAWG strategy, it is recognised that men and boys can also be victims of violence and abuse and the approaches set out in the National Statement will benefit all victims of these crimes. In addition, it is the stated aim of the PCC that

services commissioned by the PCC will adhere to the above expectations.

Protecting and supporting victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence requires an integrated, multi-agency response.

[The PCC will continue working with local partners to prevent people from suffering as a result of these crimes and to support those who are victims.](#)

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse has a significant impact on individuals, families and communities, which is why the PCC has developed a Domestic Abuse Strategy which was published in 2020 and can be found on the PCC's website. As outlined in the PCC's strategy, Domestic Abuse has major implications for service providers and agencies across West Mercia and increases the demand on services and organisations.

There are various Domestic Abuse Partnerships across West Mercia. The West Mercia PCC will develop a strategic approach to Domestic Abuse across all areas to support the delivery of his Domestic Abuse Strategy which reflects the objectives set out in the VAWG Strategy. It is the aim and ambition of the PCC in West Mercia to make West Mercia an area where domestic abuse will not be tolerated and people will enjoy healthy and respectful relationships. By working together we will ensure that individuals, families and communities are able to recognise domestic abuse in all its forms. We will empower everyone to have the knowledge and confidence to know how to respond.

To complement services commissioned nationally, the PCC supports local authorities to ensure the services are available to victims of domestic abuse include:

- Helplines
- Outreach services
- Accommodation based services, such as refuges
- Drop-in centres
- One to one support
- Advocacy services
- Services to prevent re-offending
- Children and Young People

Sexual violence

In West Mercia, The Serious Sexual Offences Coordinating Group (SSOCG) is a partnership board that has responsibility for delivering strategic outcomes aligned to the PCC's Safer West Mercia Plan and the NHS's Sexual Assault and Services Strategy (SASS). The SSOCG aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To decrease the occurrences of Sexual Violence and Abuse across West Mercia
- Create a West Mercia wide shift in culture to promote positive relationships where sexual violence & abuse is not acceptable.
- To identify potential victims and offenders and

implement effective interventions to prevent violence and abuse from escalating.

- To assist in the development of local strategies to support the needs of victims; ensuring they have access to services appropriate to their needs and this access is timely. This includes better access to integrated pathways.
 - To enhance data collection and analysis across all agencies to better inform the understanding of the nature and scope of the issue across West Mercia
 - To develop and implement a true multi-agency profile to better enable commissioning of services and early problem solving to prevent offending.
 - To transform multi-agency partnerships to deliver needs led intervention for victims, including the possibility of pooled or devolved budgets in this area.
 - To support the framework set out with the National Statement of Expectations.
 - To improve access to services for new and emerging communities and minorities within the county.
 - To increased confidence in, and access to, the criminal justice system for victims.
 - To develop a robust approach to preventing and managing perpetrators.
 - Reduce re-offending through effective service provision for perpetrators.
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The PCC will work partners on the SSOCG to develop outcome focused plans to deliver the above objectives. When objectives aren't being met the PCC will bring partners together to agree and implement solutions. In addition, the PCC will work with partners to commission appropriate services for victims of sexual assault and abuse. These services include Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) and Independent Sexual Violence Advisers for adults and children. These services are all available to support those who are victims of historic sexual violence. These services provide vital support and have been proven to help victims cope and recover.

Stalking and harassment

Stalking is a pattern of repeat and persistent unwanted behaviour that is intrusive and engenders fear. It is when one person becomes fixated or obsessed with another and the attention is unwanted. Threats may not be made but victims may feel scared. Even if there is no threat this is still stalking and it is a crime.

- 1 in 5 women and 1 in 10 men will experience stalking in their adult life
- Victims do not tend to report to the police until the 100th Incident
- 1 in 2 domestic stalkers, if they make a threat, will act on it
- 1 in 10 stalkers, who had no prior relationship, if they make a threat will act on it

Stalking and harassment is an identified priority area within the government's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. In response to the HMICRFS Inspection into Stalking and Harassment, the government introduced a new civil Stalking Protection Order designed tackle perpetrators of this frightening and distressing crime at an early stage to help prevent victims becoming targets of a prolonged campaign of abuse, sometimes lasting for many years.

The PCC will work with partners to raise awareness of stalking and harassment, to include signposting to support services. By raising awareness, it is the PCC's hope that the CJS sees an increase in reporting, along with an improvement in positive action taken against perpetrators.

The HMICFRS and HMCPSI completed their report, Living in Fear, setting out several recommendations. The PCC will work with the police and local partners to ensure that the agreed recommendations are delivered locally. This will include how to tackle online offending, where the internet has also facilitated the obsessive behaviour of stalkers. Stalking must be identified at the earliest opportunity so that appropriate interventions can be put in place to disrupt the underlying delusion of power and control which is prevalent in this type of offending.

Improving the police and criminal justice response to stalking and harassment is central. The court process can be length and challenging – it is imperative that the first response by police but also by any other agency, is right first time, every time

Children and young people

The Victims' Code defines a vulnerable victim as anyone who is under the age of 18 at the time of an offence. In addition to the special measures set out in the Code, it is important that the support available to children and young people who are victims of crime is appropriate and relevant. For example, the provision of Children and Young People's Independent Sexual Violence Advisers, access to advice, information and support about online bullying and harassment, and support for those affected by domestic abuse.

In addition, partners will work together to ensure a coordinated approach to preventing child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation, and provide the services necessary to support victims to cope.

Elderly people

Certain crime types may have a more significant impact on elderly people and their quality of life. It is important to have an ongoing awareness of these issues and work closely with partners to prevent these crimes taking place, and protect and support victims. In order to reduce the harm associated with elder abuse and crime.

The PCC will work with partners to reduce the instances where elderly people are victimised.

Modern slavery and human trafficking

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 recognises that servitude, forced or compulsory labour and human trafficking are all forms of modern slavery. Victims of modern slavery may be vulnerable and their needs may be complex. The Home Office currently commissioned support services for victims of modern slavery. Details of the services available will be included in a regional strategy that sets out how police forces and other agencies within the West Midlands region will act to prevent and respond to modern slavery. In order to reduce the harm associated with modern slavery and human trafficking (MSHT),.

The PCC will work with partners to raise awareness of the issues and support the development and delivery of services designed to support victims of MSHT.

Mental health

A Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat was published by Government in 2014¹¹ makes a commitment that includes the following statement:

“We commit to work together to improve the system of care and support so people in crisis because of a mental health condition are kept safe and helped to find the support they need – whatever the circumstances in which they first need help – and from whichever service they turn to first.”

The Association of Police and Crime Commissioners has signed the statement on behalf of PCCs in recognition of the importance that PCCs place on the need to ensure people with mental health conditions receive the support they need.

The PCC in West Mercia recognises that victims may have a mental health condition, or may have their mental health affected as a result of the harm or loss they suffer because they were a victim of crime.

Services to support people with mental health conditions are already provided by local health services but it is important to coordinate and build on these to ensure that appropriate services are made available to help victims with mental health conditions to receive the support they need.

The PCC will continue to work with local commissioners to ensure victims of crime who have mental health needs have access to support in order to help them cope and recover.

Criminal exploitation

Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults is a geographically widespread form of harm that is a typical feature of county lines activity. It is a harm which is relatively little known about or recognised by those best placed to spot its potential victims.

The PCC will commission work designed to improve our understanding of criminal exploitation across West Mercia.

In addition, the PCC will work with partners on Serious Organised Crime Joint Action Groups (SOCJAGs) to identify and tackle criminal exploitation linked to County Lines, bringing the offenders to justice while ensuring victims of exploitation receive the help and support necessary.



Child sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation involves situations, contexts or relationships in which a person under 18 is given something, such as food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts or money in return for performing sexual activities or having sexual activities performed on them. It can also involve violence, coercion and intimidation, with threats of physical harm or humiliation.

The PCC will work with partners to ensure the threat, risk and harm posed by child sexual exploitation is fully understood across West Mercia and that when identified offenders are brought to justice and victims are offered support to help them cope and recover.

Objective D

The PCC will ensure commissioned services are evidence-based and feedback from victims about their experience is used to enable continuous improvement.

Under section 143 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, PCCs were given wide ranging powers to commission or provide victims' services and are able to use a Ministry of Justice (MoJ) annual grant funding to do this. At a national level, the MoJ commissions a witness service, a homicide service, support for victims of human trafficking, support for victims of rape through rape support centres, some victims' national telephone helplines and some

other support for victims of domestic and sexual violence. In West Mercia, a large proportion of the victim service provision is centred around the Victim Advice Line (VAL), which was launched in April 2019.

This is the process for deciding how to use the resources available to secure outcomes in the most efficient, effective, and sustainable way, responding to local need, delivering best value and ensuring a continuous review process is implemented. Commissioned services can be funded either through a contract or a grant.

A clear evidence base (through needs assessments, engagement with the public, potential service users and partners) must be established to introduce a new or continue an existing service. This must include a clear understanding of the outcomes to be achieved and the existing service provision, ensuring a new service does not duplicate effort. Sometimes re-commissioning or bolstering an existing service can deliver the intended outcomes.

The strategic direction of key partners is taken into account both in drafting the Police and Crime Plan and in our approach to commissioning.

Few services can operate in isolation so it is important to map out any co-dependencies. This could include referring agencies or other specialist support provision to provide seamless pathways.

Consideration is given to pooled budget arrangements to ensure a more joined up service provision and deliver economies of scale.

Services will be accessible across West Mercia unless the service being funded is developing a proof of concept (pilot) or is responding to nuanced need through the local Community Safety Partnership.

Co-commissioning is desirable because the use of pooled budgets can enable more comprehensive service provision and reduce the burden on providers of multiple outcome reporting arrangements. This will be done within the region or across boundaries where it will benefit service users.

Co-design and engagement with service users, providers and partners will be key to the process. The publication of the commissioning intentions (in the form of a Provider Information Notice on the Blue light E-Tendering site or on the Commissioner's website) will promote this dialogue.

Outcome measures must be set to enable the Commissioner to be satisfied that the service provider is demonstrating they are meeting the identified need.

Proportionate methodology will be used within the confines of the Financial Regulations including competitive tendering.

The Safer West Mercia Plan (2016-2022) sets out the overall performance framework.

Contract management ensures performance reporting obligations are proportionate to the

size of the contract. However, reassurance has to be sought that all funding is delivering the agreed outcomes.

Outcome reporting forms will be required to be completed by all service providers on a quarterly basis (unless otherwise stated in the grant agreement/contract). These should demonstrate the activity undertaken (service provision), the outputs generated (quantitative data such as referral numbers) and the impact they have had on the service user (outcomes). Providers must be able to evidence the impact through for example the use of outcome stars or other proportionate qualitative evaluation methodology.

Grant visits (to include service user feedback) will be conducted during the life of the contract.

De-commissioning - where services are shown not to be meeting their outcomes support will be offered. However, in some cases, such as pilots, where the PCC decides it is not viable to continue, a service will be de-commissioned. This will be carried out in partnership with the provider.

Objective E

The PCC will ensure resources are managed efficiently and effectively, ensuring anyone who has been a victim has access to the support they need, whilst providing targeted and specialist services to those with more complex needs.

The ambition of the PCC is to ensure that anyone who has been a victim of crime in West Mercia has access to the help, support and advice they need. In summary, the following types of services will be made available:

- Services will meet the needs of the majority of victims by providing information, offering advice, emotional support, and practice help.
- Specialist support services for people with complex needs.
- A directory of services providing the details of a wide range of organisations available to offer advice, information and support.

To enable the delivery of these services, the PCC has the following financial means available

- An annual grant provided by the Ministry of Justice specifically for the provision of services to support victims of crime, including the provision of Restorative Justice Services.
- The ability to issue grants.
- The ability to bid for national funding, such as the Violence Against Women Transformation Fund and the Police Transformation Fund.

The PCC is also enabled through legislation to work with other community safety and criminal justice partners to reduce crime and provide efficient and effective services, which provides the opportunity to work together to commission services. This is important to ensure that services are integrated and coherent, and can be meet the holistic needs of a community or individual.



Governance and performance

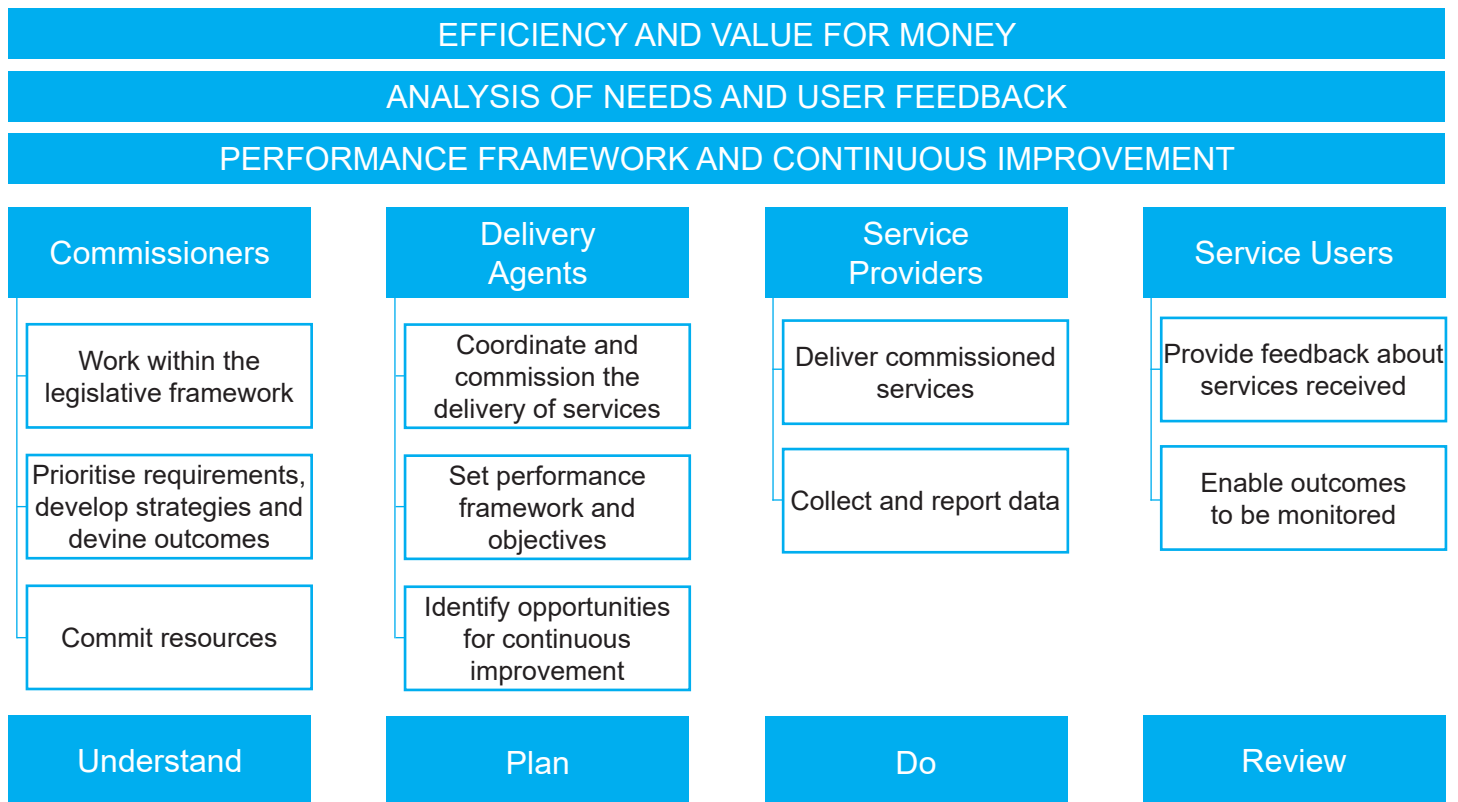
The PCC must hold the Chief Constable to account for the provision of an efficient and effective police force. In addition, the PCC must work with other community safety and criminal justice partners to reduce crime and provide an efficient, effective criminal justice system. Governance and performance processes enable the PCC to ensure he is fulfilling his responsibilities.

The PCC's Victims' Board will provide strategic governance and assurance for the delivery of the stated aims and objectives set out within this strategy.

The Deputy PCC will chair the Victims' Board and staff within the Office of the PCC will provide relevant support to enable the Victims' Board to function effectively. This support will include the development of a comprehensive delivery plan, the production of highlight reports linked to this strategy, a risk and issue log (if appropriate) and secretariat support to minute the meeting and capture actions. Papers for the Victims' Board will be published on the PCC's website.

Diagram 1 shows a model for commissioning relevant to the provision of victims' support services in West Mercia.

Diagram 1 : The role of the commissioners, delivery agents, service providers and service users as part of the commissioning cycle



It sets out the role of commissioners, delivery agents, service providers and service users, underpinned by providing services that are efficient and value for money, based on an analysis of need, and with a performance framework enabling continuous improvement.

The table on page 26 shows how the governance arrangements for the PCC and police force, services that are commissioned collaboratively with local partners, and criminal justice agencies could be delivered in the context of the 'understand, plan, do and review' commissioning model. This, and Diagram 1, provide the basis for the governance and performance framework for overseeing the delivery of victims' services across West Mercia.

The performance framework for the provision of victims' services will need to take account of changes requested, or required by the Ministry of Justice.

Table 1: Activity and tools required throughout the commissioning cycle

| | PCC/Force | Co-commissioning | CJS (Regional) |
|------------|--|---|---|
| Understand | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmark against code and other requirements • Understand crime and anti-social behaviour rates (force and CSEW) • Carry out victims' needs assessment • Map available services and gaps | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify shared priorities • Analysis of need • Identify available funding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmark against code and other requirements • Map/review victims' journey • Understand victims' perspective (feedback and complaints) |
| Plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Police and Crime Plan • Develop relevant strategies • Agree operational delivery plan against strategy and Code • Agree commissioning plan for delivery of services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop shared strategy and plan for priority services • Develop commissioning plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree CJS improvement plan (supporting national Criminal Justice Board plans) • Plan for compliance with the Code |
| Do | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy implementation • Commission support services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission support services in context of wider strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan/monitor Implementation |
| Review | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Code compliance checklist and dashboard • Single performance framework for commissioned services • Victim perception data (including USS, complaints, public engagement feedback) • MoJ outcomes framework • Service providers' engagement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance framework to support strategy and commissioned services • Service user perspective | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CJS performance framework, including compliance checklist • Victim and witness perspective |



To contact your Police and Crime Commissioner:

John Champion

Police and Crime Commissioner
OPCC, West Mercia Police
Hindlip Hall, Worcester
WR3 8SP

Tel: **01905 331656**

Email: **opcc@westmercia.pnn.police.uk**

Twitter: **[@WestMerciaPCC](https://twitter.com/WestMerciaPCC)**

Facebook: **West Mercia PCC**

Instagram: **WestMerciaPCC**