

Cleveland Victims Needs Assessment – Evaluation of VCAS

The Centre for Public Innovation

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# Glossary

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| AFR | Action Fraud Referral |
| ASB | anti-social behaviour |
| CICS | Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme |
| CPS | Crown Prosecution Service |
| CSEW | Crime Survey of England and Wales |
| FLO | Family Liaison Officers |
| ICO | Information Commissioner’s Office |
| IDVA | Independent Sexual Violence Adviser |
| IICSA | Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse |
| IPSO | Independent Press Standards Organisation |
| ISVA | Independent Domestic Violence Adviser |
| MARAC | Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences |
| NPCC | National Police Chiefs’ Council |
| OPCC | Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner |
| PCC | Police and Crime Commissioner |
| PCR | Police Control Room |
| PCSO | Police Community Support Officer |
| SARC | Sexual Assault Referral Centre |
| VCAS | Victim Care and Advice Service |
| VCO | Victim Care Officer |
| VLO | Victim Liaison Officer |
| VPS | Victim Personal Statement |

# Executive summary

## 1.1 Context

Since 2016 the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland has commissioned the Victim and Care Service (hereafter VCAS) to provide support for victims of crime and anti-social behaviour. This report seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of VCAS in meeting the needs of victims of crime in the Cleveland area.

## 1.2 About VCAS

VCAS is operated by Safer Communities and is commissioned by the Cleveland Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to provide victim support services across the Cleveland Police Force area. VCAS support victims of all crimes, except the immediate family of homicide victims, domestic abuse or serious sexual violence. VCAS also provide support to witnesses to homicide, family members who have lost someone under suspicious circumstances as well as families following fatal road traffic collisions that involve a criminal offence. The current service model commenced on 1 April 2016.

Cases can be identified at any point of the criminal justice pathway and support provided may encompass the whole victim pathway or just one particular aspect. VCAS offers emotional and practical support services to victims. Support is provided regardless of whether the victim wishes to report the incident to the police and support is provided for however long as necessary to support the victim through their journey.

## 1.3 Key findings

This evaluation identifies a number of key findings which are set out thematically below.

### 1.3.1 High quality service

Satisfaction among clients with VCAS is extremely high – 93% of clients in a survey said that they were either ’completely satisfied’ or ’very satisfied’ with the service. The results of a CPI survey corroborate VCAS’s own data and indicates that over 90% of clients had their support satisfactorily completed. The quantitative data regarding client satisfaction is supported by interviews with clients in which they were very positive about VCAS and the support it provided. In particular clients welcomed the emotional support that was provided. The support received by clients evidently helps many to overcome the impact of being a victim of crime.

### 1.3.2 Areas of dissatisfaction

While recognising that dissatisfaction levels with the service are very low the data indicates that, where there is dissatisfaction with the service, this is correlated to referrals from the Police Control Room. This gives some cause for concern as the new control room initiative has demonstrably increased referrals from this source. Note also that dissatisfaction levels are higher among Asian clients which also gives some cause for concern.

### 1.3.3 Dependence on police referrals

Police referrals, via different mechanisms, make up two thirds of referrals to VCAS. This clearly demonstrates the critical pathway from police to VCAS. By aligning the two services so closely VCAS has, to some extent, become dependent on the public’s perceptions of Cleveland Police. If people are happy to report a crime to the police, they are highly likely to then be passed on to VCAS and supported accordingly. If however a person has reservations about reporting a crime to the police, then it would appear to be the case that their needs are likely not to be met. VCAS therefore has become dependent not only on its own reputation, but that of the police also.

### 1.3.4 Organisational capacity

The data would tend to suggest that the capacity of VCAS may be an issue: in 2020 1,177 clients were reported – a significant jump from the 828 in 2019 and 800 in 2018. We note that additional capacity has been added to VCAS over the period of its contract through PCC funding. It would appear that this additional capacity has been fully utilised and further tends to indicate significant levels of unmet demand. (Levels of demand are explored separately under the victim needs assessment report).

There appears to be have been no impact on quality from the growth in the service to date but this is unlikely to be the case should the growth in client numbers continue.

### 1.3.5 Contractual arrangements

The service has evolved over time meaning that it is delivering a much expanded service than was originally envisaged. It does not however appear to be the case that governance and structures have evolved in tandem with this development. Most particularly the service specification which VCAS is commissioned and contracted against bares limited resemblance to what the service now actually delivers.

### 1.3.6 Dependence on key staff

The effectiveness of VCAS appears to be linked to its small but dedicated team and their willingness to go over and above what is expected. While the efforts of the team are highly laudable, this seems to suggest that the service is dependent on key individuals meaning that the service may be significantly impacted by the departure of just a few key people

## 1.4 Recommendations

Following on from the key findings set out above a number of recommendations have been made which are set out below:

### 1.4.1 VCAS

1. VCAS should, on an ongoing basis from this point onwards, analyse satisfaction rates in relation to each referral pathway. Particular attention should be made to satisfaction rates for clients being referred on from the police control room.
2. Should satisfaction rates from control room referrals continue to differ or drop further from those of wider clients then VCAS should undertake an audit to understand reasons why satisfaction rates are lower. The results of this audit should be shared with the PCC.
3. VCAS should audit the support and work it carries out with Asian clients to understand reasons why this cohort reports higher dissatisfaction rates with the service. The results of the audit should be shared with the PCC and an agreed set of actions undertaken as required.
4. VCAS should continue to provide ongoing training to officers in Cleveland Police to raise awareness of the service. Emphasis should be placed on training experienced staff as well as new officers.
5. Recognising that some engagement work is already underway (for instance fraud awareness work), VCAS should proactively promote its services among a range of third sector organisations working with communities with protected characteristics including (but not limited to): ethnicity, faith, sexuality and disability status. This engagment should effectively communicate how to access the service with a clear message that referrals do not need to come via Cleveland Police.
6. VCAS should offer outreach sessions to meet community members from communities with protected characteristics to promote its service, understand whether they are affeceted by particular types of crime and to encourage self-referrals.
7. VCAS promotional materials should be prepared that are designed in relation to, and are targeted at, a range of communities with protected characteristics. This may include utilisation of community languages. Organisations representing these communities should be asked to support the development of promotional literature to ensure that such materials are culturally appropriate.
8. All promotional materials and outreach work undertaken by VCAS should emphasise the independence of this organisation, that it is not part of Cleveland Police and that it will support victims of crime including those who do not seek to engage with the criminal justice system.
9. Where clients are referred to VCAS via non-police third parties (such as local third sector organisations) VCAS should seek to provide feedback to these organisations on whether the client engaged and the outcome of the support provided.
10. VCAS should start a process of legacy planning in order that a range of strategies are in place should any key members of staff leave the organisation.

### 1.4.2 PCC

1. Recognising that a full commissioning exercise is required for service provision from April 2022, the PCC should put in place an interim agreement with VCAS that better reflects current service provision, with performance measures that reflect the totality of service provision.

# 2. Context

## 2.1 Evaluation

Since 2016 the PCC for Cleveland has commissioned VCASto provide support for victims of crime[[1]](#footnote-1) and anti-social behaviour.

## 2.2 Needs Assessment

Note that a companion Victim Needs Assessment report (also by CPI) has also been commisioned that sits alongside this evalation. The needs assessment seeks to address a number of separate research questions including:

* Level, type and profile of victims
* An understanding of who victims are
* An understanding of whether certain groups are not accessing support
* Gaps in current provision

For a full understanding of victim services both reports should be read in conjunction.

# 3. Methodology

A range of data collection methods were utilised in undertaking this evaluation. Details of these are set out below.

## 3.1 Qualitative data

### 3.1.2 Client consultation

The VCAS clients were selected via dip sampling method across all cases closed within the last year. Consent to participate in the research was obtained by VCAS and the contact details of clients who consented sent to the CPI researcher.

A member of the public requested to provide her feedback after seeing the Victim Needs Assessment press release by the OPCC.

In-depth telephone interviews were undertaken with fourteen victims of crime or anti-social behaviour. All interviews took place in May and June 2021.

Two respondents were interviewed on behalf of the VCAS client; one was the client’s carer, and one was the client’s parent. 14 clients were consulted. The profile of those consulted is set out below.

##### Gender identity

* Females - Ten victims
* Male - Four victims

##### Age

* Under 18 – One victim
* 18-25 – Two victims
* 35-44 - Two victims
* 45-54 – Five victims
* 55-64 – Two victims
* Over 65 – Two victims

##### Ethnic group

* White British – Thirteen victims
* Other ethnic group – One victim

##### Local authority area

* Hartlepool – Four victims
* Middlesbrough – Two victims
* Redcar and Cleveland – Four victims
* Stockton-On-Tees – Four victims

##### Crime category

* Anti-Social Behaviour – Two victims
* Burglary – Two victims
* Assault/threats of violence – One victim
* Assault/threats of violence/hate crime (disability) – Two victims
* Online grooming – One victim
* Domestic violence - One victim
* Fatal RTC – One victim
* Cuckooing – One victim
* Robbery/attempted robbery - Two victims
* Romance fraud – One victim

#### Professional stakeholder consultation

30 professional stakeholders representing a range of key agencies and organisations operating in part or across the Cleveland Police force area were interviewed. Stakeholders interviewed were:

* David Mead, VCAS Service Manager
* CI Christopher Barker, Cleveland Police
* Lottie Dixon, Victim Care Officer VCAS
* Karen Storey, Victim Care Officer VCAS
* Helen Oldroyd, Victim Care Victim Care Officer VCAS
* Joanne Hodgkinson, CEO Safer Communities
* Nicky Harkin, CEO Arch
* Becky Childs, Restorative Justice Cleveland
* Phil Greaves, Senior Youth Justice Officer Hartlepool BC
* DCI Jayne Downes, Cleveland Police
* Sue Mathews, Restorative Justice South Tees
* Sergeant Bryan Marsay, Cleveland Police
* Caren Barnfather, Business Manager Harbour
* Penny Edgar, Probation Victim Liaison Officer
* Kelly Close, Cleveland Police
* DC Rachael Graham, Cleveland Police
* Gerry McBride, Crime Prevention Officer Cleveland Police
* Richinda Taylor, CEO Eva
* DC Marie Appleby, Cleveland Police
* Andy Proudman 13 Housing Group
* Tanya Evans, YOT Team Manager Stockton on Tees
* Emma Geldhart, Business Manager Foundation
* PC Rachel Goodhall, Cleveland Police
* Lesley Storey, My Sisters Place
* Jamie Blythe, Brake
* Nicolas Stone, Neighbourhood Safety Team Leader Hartlepool BC
* Marc Stephenson Community Protection & Resilience Manager Stockton BC
* Marion Walker, Head of Strategic Commissioning Middlesbrough BC
* Jay Hosie, Service Lead Community Safety Redcar & Cleveland BC
* Inspector Fay Cole, Cleveland Police

#### Community consultation

Organisations and charities working with the underrepresented groups of interest were invited to provide their views on the victim support services in Cleveland, whether there are any gaps in the current service provision, and potential barriers to victim engagement. The aim was to give a better understanding of the support needs of victims and people affected by crime and to understand where efforts should be directed to better meet the needs of victims.

In-depth telephone or online interviews were undertaken with thirteen stakeholders from community organisations in May and June 2021. The organisations consulted include:

* A Way Out
* Age UK
* Barnardos
* Breckon Hill Community Centre
* Essential Learning Curve
* Halo
* Hart Gables
* Hartlepool Chinese Association
* Hartlepool Deaf Centre
* Methodist Asylum Project
* NUR Fitness
* Terrence Higgins Trust
* The Regional Refugee Forum

## 3.2 Quantitative data analysis

### 3.2.1 VCAS client data

A quantitative analysis was undertaken based on management information supplied by VCAS for 2016-2020 including the first quarter of 2021. The data was supplied on a quarterly basis and recoded into annual totals. Some recoding was necessary to ensure consistency across all the datasets supplied by VCAS. The VCAS dataset was analysed using univariate and bivariate analyses as necessary. Two multivariate models were developed using these data. The first was a Two-Step Cluster Analysis which is also known as a segmentation analysis or taxonomy analysis. This approach aims to identify homogenous groups or segments that describe the population known to VCAS. A Two-Step Cluster Analysis was undertaken to account for categorical and continuous variables. The approach uses a likelihood distance measure which assumes that variables in the cluster model are independent. The clustering criterion that determines the number of clusters was based on use of a Bayesian Information Criterion. It should be noted that the model was based on a relatively limited subset of the data as some information was excluded due to small numbers and missing data. There was also a large amount of free-text information and there were changes in variable coding structures over time periods which meant not all information could be used within the model. The findings should be considered exploratory at this stage only.

The second model was undertaken to explore prognostics associated when VCAS support was deemed unsatisfactory (e.g. the reverse of ‘Was VCAS support satisfactorily completed?’). A preliminary exercise dichotomised the variables into binary variables with the exception of age which was retained as a continuous numeric. The preliminary analysis including bivariate tests to determine which variables were significant (at p < 0.05). A logistic regression model was run to determine factors associated with the satisfactory completion of VCAS support. These findings are presented in chapter six. Analyses were undertaken in either Stata v16 or SPSS v25.

### 3.2.2 Client survey

In addition to an analysis of the VCAS client data, CPI prepared a short survey that was distributed to clients of VCAS. A copy of the survey is set out at Appendix A. The survey was accessible via hyperlink to SurveyMonkey and the link distributed by VCAS staff.

# 4. Standards for Victim Services

## 4.1 The Code of Practice for Victims

In 2006, the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales was established by the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act of 2004. This stated that for the first time by law, services had to be provided to victims of crime in England and Wales by criminal justice agencies. The Code stated what each criminal justice agency had to do for victims and the timeframe in which they must do it. The Victims’ Code of practice was revised in 2015 and also tells agencies and organisations that are ‘service providers’, what they must do to ensure victims receive that support and information. Examples of information and services that victims should receive are:

* A clear explanation of what to expect from the criminal justice system.
* Updates on the investigation such as whether someone has been arrested and is charged for the crime.
* A ‘needs assessment’ to find out what support the victim should get, followed by referral to relevant victim support services.
* The opportunity to make a victim personal statement to explain how a crime has affected them.

The Code also requires that all victims are treated in a respectful, sensitive and professional manner without discrimination of any kind.

The Code also sets out the ‘enhanced’ services that should be provided for the following victim categories:

* Victims of the most serious crime (bereaved family members and victims of domestic violence, hate crime, terrorism, sexual offences, human trafficking, attempted murder, kidnap, false imprisonment, arson with intent to endanger life and wounding or causing grievous bodily harm with intent).
* Persistently targeted victims (targeted repeatedly over time, particularly if deliberately, includes victims of sustained harassment and stalking).
* Vulnerable and intimated victims (including under 18s, adults with mental impairment or disorder, fear or distress about testifying in court will affect quality of evidence).

These services include shorter timescales, requiring service providers to seek consent before providing certain services, and Special Measures for eligible victims who are giving evidence as witnesses in court.

The police have a number of obligations to victims under the Victims’ Code:

* They are often the first point of contact for a victim after a crime has been committed, and must provide the victim with the information, help and services to which they are entitled.
* Under the Code, police must identify any vulnerability surrounding the victim and put in place appropriate safeguards, including enhanced entitlements.
* They must also consider what additional support a victim may need during the investigation, interview, and at court.
* Additionally under the Code, victims are entitled to receive information about restorative justice, a process that brings victims and offenders into communication and can provide a means of closure, enabling the victim to move on. It also allows victims to be heard and have a say in the resolution of offences, including agreeing rehabilitative or reparative activity for the offender.

## 4.2 The Victim Surcharge

In 2007 The Victim Surcharge was introduced. This was a surcharge levied on all individuals convicted of a crime. Revenue raised from the surcharge was ring-fenced to fund emotional and practical support for victims.

### 4.2.1 The Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme (CICS)

The Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme (CICS) is a government funded scheme which compensates victims of violent crime in Great Britain. The scheme makes awards to victims who suffer a serious physical or mental injury as the direct result of a violent crime.

At the time of the 2018 Strategy, injury payments ranged from £1,000 to £250,000 depending on the severity of the injury. Additional payments for loss of earnings or other expenses could also be made. In fatal cases, payments could be made to qualifying relatives of the deceased and to pay for funeral expenses.

The Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority, an Executive Agency of the Ministry of Justice, administered the scheme independently of government and decided all claims. In 2017/18, the Authority made decisions on over 40,000 applications for compensation and paid out £154 million to victims of violent crime.

## 4.3 The Victims’ Commissioner

In 2010, the first Victims’ Commissioner was appointed. This statutory position was set up to champion the interests of victims and witnesses and encourage good practice in their treatment. The role of the Victim’s Commissioner is to promote the interests of victims and witnesses, encourage good practice in their treatment, and regularly review the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime.

### 4.3.1 Local funding to commission emotional and practical support services for victims of crime

In 2012 Police and Crime Commissioners were introduced to replace the old system of police authorities. They were allocated local funding to commission emotional and practical support services for victims of crime in their area.

#### 4.3.1.1 ‘Getting it Right for Victims and Witnesses’ 2012

The Government’s consultation on ‘Getting it right for victims and witnesses’ was launched in 2012[[2]](#footnote-2). It set out the government’s proposed approach to ensuring that victims and witnesses would get the support they need. It stated that the role of Government in relation to victims and witnesses was three-fold:

* Firstly, the Government should make sure that victims get the support they need to deal with the immediate aftermath of a crime and, over time if need be, receive further help, which may include compensation, to put their lives back on track. In doing this, the Government should ensure that resources are focused on those in the greatest need.
* Secondly, in recognizing the critical role that victims and witnesses play in court, the Government must ensure that they get the support they need to deal with the stresses of going to court and giving evidence.
* Thirdly, the Government owes it to victims of crime to ensure as far as possible that offenders are caught, that they are punished, and that they are dealt with in a way that reduces the likelihood of their re-offending and creating more victims.

The principles underpinning proposed reforms:

* Practical and emotional support should be given to those who need it most. ‘We think that funding for support should be directed as a priority to victims of serious crime, those who are persistently targeted and the most vulnerable’.
* Victims should receive help as and when they need it. ‘Our approach to funding and commissioning victim services will recognize the importance of ensuring that practical and emotional support is on hand immediately after the crime has been committed, and that victims’ needs change over time’.
* Services should meet the different needs of communities across the country. ‘Different localities suffer from different levels and types of crime. While victims must have clear, national expectations about how they will be treated and the support on offer, local services must have the flexibility to meet the different and changing needs’.
* Offenders should make reparation for the impact of their crimes. ‘We want to see a shift away from compensation funded by the taxpayer to a situation in which more offenders take personal responsibility for the harm they have caused by offering an apology or by making the appropriate financial or practical reparation’.

The victims who Government believed should be prioritised for receiving support were identified as:

* **Victims of serious crime.** Murder and manslaughter, rape, sexual violence, terrorism, and violent crimes such as wounding or causing grievous bodily harm with intent, usually have the most serious impact on victims.
* **The most persistently targeted.** Crime can have a devastating impact on victims when committed repeatedly over a period of time, particularly where a person is deliberately targeted.
* **The most vulnerable.** Those people who are most likely to become victims, or who need particular assistance in coping with the consequences of crime or to engage with the criminal justice system. They could include people who are isolated, or lack social or family support, those who need assistance in managing their own affairs, those who are more likely to be a victim of crime than members of the community generally (for example, by reason of age or medical condition) or less able to cope with the consequences if they do, and those who are able to benefit from additional or special measures in relation to court proceedings

#### 4.3.1.2 Reforms to compensating victims – the CICS

The Government stated that a review of the CICS was long overdue and needed to take account of the difficult financial climate and that any compensation scheme must be sustainable. It stated that compensation payments should be a continuing part of how it supports and responds to victim’s needs, but that it was ‘more sensible and beneficial for victims with less serious injuries to ensure immediate practical and emotional support was available, rather than on compensation’. The proposed reforms were focused on protecting awards to those most seriously injured by violent and sexual crime and rebalancing the overall resources available to victims to best effect by increasing the financial reparation made by offenders in order to provide additional funding for victim’s services.

#### 4.3.1.3 Funding for support services

The Government noted that while successive governments had granted funding to a wide range of voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations to provide support services for victims and witnesses, there had been no consistent, strategic approach by central Government to the commissioning of victims’ services. In addition, these arrangements have failed to build capacity in the services which were most needed. (The bulk of central Government funding was provided by the Ministry of Justice to Victim Support, an independent charity and the largest provider of emotional and practical support to victims and witnesses of crime in England and Wales). The new approach to supporting victims was to be guided by the following principles:

* Victim services to be targeted at those who have suffered the greatest impact from crime, including victims of serious crimes, those who are persistently targeted, and the most vulnerable.
* Support services should aim to achieve two outcomes: helping victims first to cope with the immediate impact of crime, and subsequently to recover from the harm they have experienced.
* Services should receive funding depending on whether they are able to achieve these outcomes, based on evidence, and the outcomes should be reflected in a consistent commissioning framework.
* Such a framework would be best applied by local decision-makers based on a detailed assessment of demand against need. Exceptions might include services for relatively small groups of victims with complex needs (such as victims of trafficking, or those bereaved by homicide), case management functions which require a consistent approach and national reach, and services that can only be provided at a national level, such as national domestic violence and stalking helplines.
* Commissioners would have a wide margin of discretion about the way in which they make services available to meet local need with a small set of minimum entitlements for the most vulnerable victims, such as those suffering from domestic and sexual violence, which the Government would expect local commissioners to fund as a priority.
* Government would commit a proportion of the additional income raised from offenders through the Victim’s Surcharge and other financial impositions to services for victims of domestic or sexual violence.
* Commissioners, and those providing services, should be held accountable for the outcomes they achieved – the recovery of victims – rather than for transactional measures, such as the number of victims who had received a particular service.
* Commissioners should work closely with others who are commissioning services for victims locally, such as local authorities and Primary Care Trusts, in order to share knowledge, avoid duplication, and ensure a more strategic approach.
* Service providers should be funded through a single process in each area, reducing the need to apply many times for small sums of money.
* More funding should go directly to supporting victims rather than administration.
* Services should be provided to victims through an effective and efficient referral system, based on joint working with the police, which would ensure they received the support that is required.

#### 4.3.1.4 Providing and assessing services based on outcomes

A new commissioning framework for victim services should provide clarity about the outcomes for victims, and ensure that there is a practical and agreed mechanism for measuring performance so that commissioners and providers can be held accountable. Government will introduce a new commissioning model in 2014/15, building on the experience of other sectors and the expertise of those who already support victims and commission services.

An outcomes-based framework

Government stated that dialogue with practitioners and support providers suggested that the commissioning framework should cover eight categories of need:

* Mental and physical health
* Shelter and accommodation
* Family, friends and children
* Education, skills and employment
* Drugs and alcohol
* Finance and benefits
* Outlook and attitudes
* Social interaction.

The commissioning framework would be designed in a way that would enable commissioners to take full account of the benefits of interventions, including those which might not fall neatly under a single heading. For example, Victim Support volunteers might provide emotional support but also assist with practical considerations such as home security. To support the implementation of the new commissioning framework Government would:

* Strengthen the evidence available about the demand for services, against each category of need, particularly those who had been affected by the most serious crimes, were persistently targeted, or who were vulnerable.
* Establish which interventions had most impact in meeting these needs, taking into account the extent to which victims would otherwise require longer or more extensive support from other services funded by Government.
* Develop guidance and training for commissioners and providers in mapping the demand at local level against each type of need.

An effective framework would need to set clear expectations against which both commissioners and providers would be held accountable. Government would work with the voluntary sector in developing new methods for measuring service quality.

Who should commission services?

There would be a range of levels at which services could be commissioned:

* Local level: A local commissioning body would work with victims’ groups, criminal justice agencies, health services and other local partners to commission appropriate services for victims.
* Regional level: A commissioning body would be identified or appointed in each of the ten regions in England and Wales to commission support services across the region.
* Prime contractor: One or more contracts would be established across England and Wales with large providers or consortia. Each would then sub-contract to local providers but would remain accountable for the delivery of services.

It was proposed that the majority of services would be commissioned at the local level, with a single funder of victims’ services in each area. Police and Crime Commissioners should be responsible for these commissioning process at a local level and decisions should be taken by a commissioner with a good understanding of local victims’ needs. It was proposed that a range of other bodies could also take on the local commissioning of services, including local authorities, criminal justice agencies and voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations. However, PCCs would have links with these other bodies and would be able to work effectively with them.

However, it was also already noted that there were a small number of services that are better provided at a national level. ‘Relying on each individual local area to commission and sustain local specialist services when there are relatively few incidences of the crime is inefficient and may risk under-provision in some places. Some administrative functions, in particular case management of victims, where national infrastructure and a consistent approach have demonstrable benefits, might also be commissioned nationally’. Services commissioned nationally could be commissioned by the Ministry of Justice or alternatively, voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations could compete for a national commissioning contracts to deliver these services.

Reform of Entitlements for Victims and Witnesses

There should be greater room for professionals to determine how to deliver support, and to which victims and witnesses, based on need. The system of entitlements for victims and witnesses should reflect this more flexible and personalised approach. ‘We do not believe that limited resources should be expended on those who say they don’t want support. On the other hand, those who require support should have the confidence that it will be provided.’

## 4.4 The EU Directive for Victims of Crime

An EU Directive for Victims of Crime was passed in 2012. This required all EU countries to establish minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime. The UK government opted into the negotiation of the EU Directive on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime. The UK had fulfilled these obligations through the Victims’ Code.

The Government stated that when work began to incorporate the Directive into English law they would take the opportunity to consider options for a wider, comprehensive Victims’ Law. In 2012 they stated: ‘We believe that reform must begin immediately, however, and this should begin with a new, more effective, Victims’ Code’.

## 4.5 Reforming the Victims’ Code (2011-2012)

Government proposed that the Victims’ Code be reviewed and re-written so that it set out more clearly what victims could expect from criminal justice agencies, provided for a more personalised, individual level of service, and gave access to effective measures for redressing when things went wrong. They proposed that the new Code be structured around the following principles:

### 4.5.1 More support for those bereaved by homicide

The Government had already funded the National Homicide Service (established in April 2010) which provided specialist support for bereaved relatives. They had invested in the service and specialist support organisations to provide bereaved families with a dedicated caseworker who could give practical and emotional support as well as prompt referral to specialist counselling services. This included implementing a number of the recommendations that had been made in the Victims’ Commissioner’s report into the needs of families bereaved by homicide[[3]](#footnote-3) including:

* Increasing the number of professional caseworkers, ensuring that more families can access timely trauma and bereavement counselling, and providing greater resources to the many smaller organisations which provide longer term peer-support to the bereaved.
* Introducing legislation on Domestic Homicide Reviews so that lessons could be learned following a domestic homicide.

‘In reforming the Victims’ Code we will also consider the Commissioner’s remaining recommendations and propose to include a set of separate, additional entitlements which those bereaved by homicide can expect from criminal justice agencies’.

### 4.5.2 The approach of the police

The police had reviewed their approach to supporting victims, particularly their support for victims of serious crime, and Government suggested that there had been a cultural change which had seen the police prioritise victims as a core part of their job. However, it was stated that more work needed to be done with the police and support providers to improve the initial needs assessment, which should include the views of the victim and the nature of the crime. In particular, ‘Currently victims have access to emotional and practical support provided by Victim Support through the police automatically referring victims to their services, unless they expressly choose not to be referred. However, this means that Victim Support receive so many referrals that they cannot assess the needs of them all. We propose that support providers commissioned in the future will be expected to work with the police to improve needs assessment processes so that those most in need are identified and receive the support they require’.

### 4.5.3 Joint working arrangements and training

A number of voluntary sector organisations – including Victim Support – were already working with the police on training. For example, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors and Independent Sexual Violence Advisors, often employed through the voluntary sector, had responsibilities for assessing need, coordinating support and liaising with criminal justice agencies. Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) were bringing together key statutory and voluntary agencies in areas to agree safety planning for high-risk victims of domestic violence.

Government proposed greater use of these types of joint working arrangements so that support providers would have a greater role in assessing need at the earliest opportunity and supporting the police to refer the right victims to the right support services as soon as possible. It was stated that stronger joint-working should have the dual benefit of a clearer assessment of need by police early in their contact with victims, and prompt referrals enabling police to spend more time on investigations and protecting the public. ‘It will also support our objective of needs assessments which follow the victim, with support providers using their expertise to build on the initial assessment of need carried out by the police’.

The new framework for commissioning support services included effective collaboration with the police as a consideration in the bidding process for victim service providers.

### 4.5.4 Support in preparing for court

Government emphasised that victims and witnesses needed to be kept informed of progress in their case and be prepared to go to court to give evidence. The Victims’ Code already placed duties on criminal justice agencies to engage with victims, and services were provided to ensure that victims and witnesses were made as comfortable as possible in relation to the court process as a whole.

Some enhanced services were already available for bereaved relatives such as the police’s Family Liaison Officer scheme and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) for Bereaved Families (formerly the Victim Focus Scheme), in homicide cases.

However, Government stated that all victims of crime should have an opportunity to explain how a crime had affected them.

#### 4.5.4.1 The Victim Personal Statement (VPS)

While all victims of crime were entitled to make a personal statement, the Government reported that the proportion of victims who said they remembered being offered the opportunity to do so was low, at 43%, and for some groups such as disabled people (39%), and those of black (35%), Asian (37%) and mixed (38%) ethnicity, it was even lower.

Government stated that this low rate needed to be improved. Also there was a need to ensure that when a VPS was made, it was considered in the needs assessment process, and that criminal trials should always take the perspective of the victim into account.

#### 4.5.4.2 Protecting victims and witnesses at trial

Government emphasised that victims needed to feel able to give evidence and know that they would be supported and protected whilst doing so.

Special measures could be put in place for vulnerable and intimidated witnesses to help them give their best evidence, for example, pre-trial visits and other support from the Witness Service, which can help to minimise the stress and anxiety witnesses might experience on the day. However, even with this support, the impact of cross-examination – particularly on vulnerable and intimidated witnesses – had raised concerns. Recent experiences had also shown how witnesses could be distressed by press reporting of their testimony during the course of a trial. Government proposed a number of measures to help address this.

### 4.5.5 Restoration and reparation

In Breaking the Cycle[[4]](#footnote-4), the Government had set out its intention to make offenders take greater responsibility for their crimes and do more to repair the damage they had caused. There were three principles:

* Offenders should bear a greater proportion of the costs incurred by the state in supporting victims to cope and recover following crime.
* Offenders paying compensation direct to victims should be the norm, and any compensation awarded should be received by the victim in full.
* There should be greater opportunities for victims and offenders to participate in restorative justice.

However, government emphasised that it was essential that cases were appropriately assessed to provide sufficient safeguards for victims, prevent re-victimisation and also ensure that victims’ views regarding the application of restorative justice in their particular case were paramount. In particular, it was stressed that it was important that victims were able to make an informed decision about taking part in restorative justice. ‘We are already amending the standard victim of crime letter, sent by the police to all victims who report a crime, to provide more information on the criminal justice process. As we support the sector to build the register of practitioners and strengthen provision for restorative justice, we will ensure that each victim of crime letter explains the potential benefits of restorative justice and signposts to locally available services.’

#### 4.5.5.1 Non-financial reparation

Reparation could already be required of offenders both in and out of court, for example as part of an out-of-court disposal or a community order:

* Reparation to the victim could be informally agreed alongside out-of-court disposals such as simple cautions, reprimands and final warnings.
* Reparation could also be agreed formally as part of youth and adult conditional cautions, and as part of reparation orders for young offenders.
* Non-financial reparation could also be agreed more formally as part of Youth Referral Orders and Youth Rehabilitative Orders in the youth system. It could form part of a community sentence in the adult system.

Government suggested that there was greater scope for direct, non-financial reparation from offenders to victims, especially in cases of low-level crime where the victim has incurred an identifiable cost, e.g. minor criminal damage.

#### 4.5.5.2 Victim Surcharge

The Victim Surcharge had been implemented in 2007. Revenue raised through the Surcharge was used to fund non-financial support services for victims and witnesses of crime such as Independent Domestic Violence Advisers, Witness Care Units and various voluntary support groups through the Victims Fund.

However, Government stated that offenders as a whole were contributing too little towards the costs of providing support services for victims of crime and proposed that offenders should pay greater reparation to victims, both directly through court ordered compensation and by contributing to the cost of victim support services. ‘To ensure that the Surcharge is applied to the maximum number of offenders, we plan to increase the level of the Surcharge ordered with a fine and extend its application to a wider range of sentences’.

#### 4.5.5.3 Strengthening court-ordered compensation

Government stated that Compensation Orders could be an effective way of ensuring an offender provides reparation to their victim and they should be seen as an integral part of an overall sentence.

Through the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders[[5]](#footnote-5) Bill Government introduced a positive duty for courts to consider making a compensation order in all eligible cases. ‘We plan to seek views on reforms to compensation orders and other financial impositions as part of our forthcoming consultation on community sentences. This will include proposals to increase the average value of compensation orders, such as removing the current £5,000 limit on compensation orders in the magistrates' courts.’

## 4.6 Other developments in relation to victim services

A number of victim initiatives are worth highlighting which re explored below.

### 4.6.1 HM Victims Strategy 2018

The Victims Strategy was published in 2018. It provided a national, cross-government framework to make fundamental improvements for victims. The Victims Strategy included a foreword by the Prime Minister which stated that **‘**becoming a victim of crime is a deeply traumatic experience for anyone, often leaving scars – physical or mental – that linger for many years after the event.’

It was also emphasised that ‘such a trauma must never be compounded by an individual’s experience of the criminal justice system and all victims of crime have a right to know that the state is on their side… that their complaints will be taken seriously and that their views will not only be heard, but actively listened to and acted upon’.

#### 4.6.1.1 Vision and aim of the Victim Strategy

The vision of the Strategy was for a justice system that supports even more victims to speak up by giving them ‘the certainty that they will be understood, that they will be protected, and that they will be supported throughout their journey, regardless of their circumstances or background’.

The Strategy stated that in England and Wales, the adversarial system meant that a case is brought against someone by the State, rather than a victim. ‘But whilst a victim is not a legal party in the process, dealing with cases justly also means respecting their interests. A victim’s journey through the justice system – whatever the path and outcome – should not result in them becoming a victim of the process, as well as the crime’.

A key aim of the Strategy was therefore to make sure that all victims would receive the support they need throughout their experience of the criminal justice system.

#### 4.6.1.2 Guiding principles that have informed the development of the Strategy

* Empower victims and strengthen their entitlements
* Improve support for victims who interact with the criminal justice
* Provide consistent, joined up, needs led support for all victims of crime

#### 4.6.2.3 The needs of victims

The Victims Strategy identified the generic needs of victims as being:

* **Timely and accurate information and communication:** It was stated that this could help victims to cope with the impact of crime. If victims aren’t provided with appropriate information and updates, this can lead to dissatisfaction with the criminal justice system and in some cases victim disengagement.
* **Fair treatment during the justice process:** It was emphasized that ‘Quality of service contributes to victim satisfaction’. Victims want to feel that they have been treated fairly, and to be properly informed of the aid they may be entitled to.
* **Effective multi-agency working:** It was stated that partnership working, where several agencies work together from the same location, can be less confusing for victims and ensure that information is shared more efficiently, and that collaboration between the right agencies can also contribute to effective prevention strategies.
* **Professional, targeted victims’ services:** Quickly identifying victims’ needs means that services are targeted at those who most want and need them. Victims find it helpful if this primary point of contact is a trained professional with good knowledge of the criminal justice system, and the compassion and empathy to provide moral support.

#### 4.6.2.4 Key overarching challenges

The changing nature of crime

‘Over recent decades, we’ve seen a fall in overall levels of crime, a trend that now looks to be stabilising. However, the types of crime being committed are changing, which means our response in the way we tackle them and support victims must change too. Across government, we are responding to emerging pressures by focusing efforts on prevention and rehabilitation of offenders, addressing the underlying causes of crime and developing new ways to reduce the impact it has on wider society.’

The Strategy reported that despite crime having fallen since the mid-1990s, there had been a recent increase in some higher harm violent offences recorded by the police[[6]](#footnote-6). For example, in the year ending March 2018 there was a 16% increase in knife crime in England and Wales[[7]](#footnote-7) and the rate of violence against the person offences recorded by the police was similar in England and Wales at around 24 per 1,000 of the population[[8]](#footnote-8) Offences involving firearms had also increased by 31% between 2013/14 and 2016/17, although there had been a far smaller increase at 2% for the year ending March 2018.

The Strategy stated that these more violent crimes had often had a devastating impact on victims, their families and their communities and that spikes in certain types of crime could also introduce new pressures in the type of support required by victims. For example, an unprecedented rise in acid attacks and the use of other corrosives as weapons required specialist medical support.

More people were coming forward to report crimes that had traditionally been under-reported, creating more demand in the system.

There had been significant increases in sexual offences recorded by the police.

For example:

* In the year ending March 2018, there was a 23% increase in reported sexual offences in England compared to the previous year. Sexual offences against children contributed to more than a quarter (27%) of this increase[[9]](#footnote-9).
* In the year ending March 2017, the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimated a 27% increase in the reported rape of male victims over 16 compared to the previous year[[10]](#footnote-10). Specialist support services for male victims of sexual offending had reported demand rising 176% within the space of three years[[11]](#footnote-11). The Strategy states that while it was good that more victims had the confidence to come forward, it was also recognized that this increased demand put considerable pressure on the system.
* In line with the government’s efforts to tackle modern slavery and increase reporting, in 2017, there was a 159% increase in recorded modern slavery offences, and prosecutions of defendants as being involved in modern slavery also increased by 54% between 2015 and 2016[[12]](#footnote-12).
* It was reported that domestic abuse remained pervasive but under-reported. An estimated 1.9 million adults reported being subjected to domestic abuse in the Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW) in the year ending March 2017[[13]](#footnote-13). The rates of police recorded domestic abuse offences were similar in England and Wales at 8 and 9 per 1,000 of the population respectively and 82 women and 13 men were killed by a partner or former partner in 2016/17 in England and Wales[[14]](#footnote-14). While the reporting of these crimes to the police was increasing, the majority of domestic abuse victims still did not report anything to the police[[15]](#footnote-15).

No one department or service could meet the support challenges alone

* In 2017 a series of terrorist attacks in the UK and abroad had taken place - 36 people lost their lives in terrorist attacks in London and Manchester and hundreds more people had been affected by these incidents across the UK.
* 72 people died as a result of the Grenfell Tower fire with victims entitled to the same support in the Victims’ Code as other victims of crime.

These events demanded a cross-government response to support the victims and their families.

No one department or service could meet the support challenges alone, both because of the volume and the complexity. (A cross-government Victims of Terrorism Unit and a cross-government Grenfell Victims Unit was set up.) In both cases the role of the Unit was to coordinate the responses and support provided by a wide range of statutory and non-statutory agencies in the public and voluntary sector, at national and local level.

Technology’s role in crime is evolving.

The Strategy recognised that it was imperative to keep up to date with new technology utilised by criminals. For example:

* Technology has played an increasing role in stalking as well as other emerging crimes such as up-skirting and the taking of other illicit photos.
* Fraud and cyber-crime combined now account for just under half of all crime in England and Wales as estimated by the Crime Survey for England and Wales for the year ending March 2018, and findings from the survey suggest that less than one-fifth (13%) of incidents of fraud either come to the attention of the police or are reported by the victim to Action Fraud[[16]](#footnote-16). Research suggests that fraud can have a profound emotional and psychological impact on victims and that a sympathetic response to reporting as well as clear information on the support services available is important to victims[[17]](#footnote-17).

#### 4.6.2.5 Challenges in achieving improvements to victims’ experience.

Lack of consistency in how victims are supported after they report a crime

The VPS is one of the Code’s key entitlements, providing the opportunity for victims to express how a crime affected them.

However, the 2018 Strategy reported that the CSEW had found that for the past few years only around 15% of victims said they were given the opportunity by the police to make one[[18]](#footnote-18). There was evidence that only 4% of victims were aware that restorative justice had been offered (where an offender had been identified)[[19]](#footnote-19).

The CPS Victim and Witness Satisfaction Survey (2015) found that vulnerable victims and other victims entitled to enhanced services were more likely to report being treated disrespectfully[[20]](#footnote-20). Similarly, earlier research suggested that not all those entitled to enhanced services were identified early or even identified at all[[21]](#footnote-21).

The Strategy stated that the police must offer to refer victims to specialist support to help them engage fully with the criminal justice system, but referrals were not always offered and information about all relevant services was not always provided. A recent report by the Victims’ Commissioner indicated that not all those eligible were being offered Registered Intermediaries (communication experts who help vulnerable victims and witnesses such as children or people with mental health issues), and that waiting lists can be up to four weeks[[22]](#footnote-22).

The authors of the Strategy concluded that victims’ needs were not being assessed early enough or in the right way and that vulnerable victims who were entitled to enhanced services were not always getting the right support. They also noted that victims’ needs could change over time and the current system did not provide enough opportunity for professionals to reassess these needs so victims were prepared for court.

Awareness, understanding and delivery of the Victims’ Code.

‘Despite its importance, many people are not aware that the Victims’ Code exists and find it difficult to understand what it means for them’[[23]](#footnote-23). In the year ending March 2017, only 18% of victims were aware of the Code[[24]](#footnote-24).

The Strategy recognises that entitlements in the Victims’ Code are not always delivered, especially where a lack of data and reporting makes it difficult to identify where the key issues are, and also where the Code is not consistently monitored or enforced.

Ensuring that compensation keeps pace with our changing understanding of crime

The CICS is the Government funded scheme, administered by the CICA. It sets out the circumstances in which a victim of violent crime may be awarded government funded compensation.

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) has made a number of recommendations about changes to the CICS and to CICA’s operations for victims and survivors of sexual abuse.

The criminal justice system can be confusing for victims.

There can be many stages on a victim’s journey through the criminal justice process, which brings them into contact with different people at different times. ‘This can be difficult for victims to understand and navigate. It can be overwhelming and, at worst, traumatising if victims have to repeat their story multiple times’.

Information is not always clear and accessible.

Many victims will not have prior knowledge of how the criminal justice process works and the support that is available to them. We have heard from victims that they consider the provision of information on the key stages of the criminal justice system and information on the types of support services available to be one of the most important entitlements under the Code. A lack of accessible, timely and accurate information can lead to victim disengagement[[25]](#footnote-25). Given the multiple points of contact in a victim’s journey, it can be hard for them to find clear, consistent and accurate information that is relevant to them.

Media intrusion

The Strategy noted that while the importance of the freedom of the press is acknowledged, recent major incidents highlighted the negative impact that media intrusion could have on a victim’s ability to cope and recover from crime. For example, victims of the Manchester arena attack felt overwhelmingly negative about how the media behaved in the aftermath of the bombing. ‘People talked about feeling ‘hounded’; some victims were accosted at hospitals and several highlighted the distress caused by camera crews outside their homes’.

#### 4.6.2.6 Addressing these challenges

The Strategy states that to address these challenges government will:

Strengthen the Victims’ Code

The Victims’ Code was to be further amended to address the Code’s ‘complexity, accessibility and language’ and government would consult on a revised version. In particular:

* Entitlements in the Code would be updated so they better reflected victims’ needs.
* A short, user-friendly overview of the Code would be produced which summarized the key points that victims need to know. There would be an online and a hard copy summary and government would work with partners to ensure it is widely available.
* Agencies would be held to account for compliance with the Victims’ Code through improved reporting, monitoring and transparency on whether victims were receiving entitlements.
* Amending the Code would ensure that the entitlements victims receive are the right ones in the first place.
* At a local level Police and Crime Commissioners would be responsible for regularly monitoring and identifying issues through local criminal justice partnership arrangements so they could determine effective local intervention.
* The Criminal Justice Board and Ministers would receive reports to monitor delivery at a national level and address cross-cutting issues with national service providers.
* The government committed to bringing forward proposals for a consultation on the detail of the Victims’ Law. ‘The Victims’ Commissioner is a vital voice for victims, and the consultation will explore increasing their powers to better hold government to account’.

Improve access to compensation

The Strategy stated that the rule which denied compensation for some victims who lived with their attacker prior to 1979 would be abolished and government would consult on further changes to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme. This would include considering how the scheme could better serve victims of child sexual abuse, exploring the recommendations made by the IICSA and victims of terrorism.

Improve the handling of victim compensation claims

The CICA had already introduced new staff guidance for dealing with applications from child sexual abuse victims to ensure that grooming by offenders was dealt with

CICA’s customer service team offer dedicated caseworkers to applicants with particularly complex and difficult cases.

Speeding up the process of securing compensation

CICA’s new case management process aims to have a first decision ready in 80% of cases within 12 months, and new digital processes have already cut some applications by up to 30 days. ‘A new streamlined customer journey has also been introduced for victims of sexual assault or abuse that do not need a medical prognosis to resolve their applications swiftly, with clinical psychologists brought in to speed up applications for victims suffering from mental injury’.

Simplifying the criminal justice experience and streamlining victim support.

The government stated it would launch a consultation on an Independent Public Advocate (IPA) to help bereaved families following a major tragedy. ‘No family should have to struggle to navigate and participate in inquests, investigations and inquiries following major incidents, such as Hillsborough. Uncovering the truth matters acutely to those affected by major incidents, and it is vital that the voices of the bereaved are heard. We understand that families need dedicated support to make themselves heard following major incidents. Improve victims’ interactions with the criminal justice process by reducing the number of different people they have to engage with.’

There are a number of people that support victims during the criminal justice process and the Strategy states that these roles vary according to a victim’s needs, the stage of the process they are in or the type of crime they have experienced. They include Family Liaison Officers, Independent Sexual Violence Advisors, Witness Care Officers and Victim Liaison Officers.

The government reviewed the role of victim supporters and advocates as part of the review of the Victims’ Code, in particular, rolling out a new framework to improve criminal justice response and support for domestic abuse cases. This included:

* a multi-agency approach to risk management and safeguarding procedures
* best practice on the use of IDVAs throughout the process
* trained and consistently deployed staff across all agencies and
* proactive witness services with pre-trial familiarization visits and the use of special measures.

Improving the quality and accessibility of information

The government developed an online hub for victims so all the information they needed – such as how the justice system worked, where they could find support, and how to provide feedback – and was easy to access and understand. To this end:

* the government would refresh the information that was relevant to victims, such as the overview of the Victim Contact Scheme, ensuring that the information was up to date and easier to understand.
* improve the information sent to victims and how it was communicated.
* providing clearer and more sensitive explanations for decisions and actions, consistency of tone and language and offering the victim more choice in how they received information.

Strengthening the regulatory system for the press to tackle media intrusion

In 2018, the government had published guidance for victims of major incidents dealing with media interest and intrusion. The 2018 Strategy stated the government would expand this guidance to wider groups of victims recognising the media interest in many other cases such as sexual offences, so that these victims also know their rights and where to get support.

The government also stated that they would update data protection and strengthened the guidance the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) gave to journalists. This would direct people online to accessible and equitable redress without the costs and liabilities of going to court. The Strategy also stated that the ICO would conduct a statutory review of media compliance with the new law over the next four years, and every five years after that.

The press also strengthened and improved the funding of the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO), which regulates 95% of print media in the UK. IPSO would offer compulsory low-cost arbitration which would ensure that ordinary people could obtain redress against the media. IPSO also developed an organisational major incident plan that would be automatically triggered after any event leading to mass casualties, and guidelines for editors and the public covering reporting of major incidents. In addition, IPSO increased awareness of its Private Advisory Notices system under which IPSO could issue notices to make editors and journalists aware of people’s concerns and what the Editor’s Code says about how they should behave.

Support available whether or not victims report a crime

The Victims’ Code requires the police to refer victims to appropriate support services, but victims can also access these services directly. Victims are entitled to these services whether they have reported a crime or not, and at any time, including after the conclusion of the investigation and prosecution.

Offenders as victims

The Strategy drew attention to the fact that there were connections between offenders and victims in services. Many offenders have been victims of crime (at least 60% of women in prison report being a victim of domestic abuse) and have complex needs which have acted as barriers to getting the support they need[[26]](#footnote-26).

As part of the Female Offender Strategy, the government stated it would explore options to develop a victim pathway for female offenders using trauma-informed approaches to support female offenders who were also victims. They also committed to giving full consideration as to how earlier intervention for women who were victims of domestic abuse could take place at the first point of contact with the justice system.

Victim satisfaction with the police and CPS

Whether to investigate a crime is a matter for the police. The police must tell the victim if they decide not to investigate, or subsequently halt an investigation. If the police do investigate, they must tell victims when a suspect has been arrested, interviewed under caution, released without charge, or charged with an offence. If a suspect is released without charge, victims should be provided with an explanation as to why.

If a suspect is identified, it is usually the CPS (but sometimes the police) who decides whether the suspect should be charged. As part of the public interest test under the Code for Crown Prosecutors, the prosecutor will consider the impact the offence has had on the victim. If they are dissatisfied with a decision not to prosecute, victims may be entitled to seek a review of that decision.

Victim satisfaction with the police is variable. Some victims find the police to be the most positive aspect of their journey through the criminal justice system. For example, specially trained Family Liaison Officers (FLOs) that support bereaved families receive consistently good feedback. However, there is no consistent training across forces in dealing with victims, particularly where specialist skills are required, such as domestic and child sexual abuse.

Improving the quality of explanations around decisions not to prosecute.

The CPS was changing their process to ensure victims were provided with a clear explanation of why a decision was made, and so that victims understand their rights to challenge the decision.

‘We will improve how we communicate to victims, explaining how victims can access the right to review scheme in a much clearer and simpler way. We will also tighten compliance with timescales to ensure the process for vulnerable victims receiving information on their cases is more in line with that for other participants’.

PCCs would be required to make sure that restorative justice services were available in their areas, and that victims knew how they might access them and the services that they commissioned were safe. This would enable more victims to make an informed choice, at a time that is right for them and to be assured that the process will be led by skilled practitioners who could make the appropriate risk assessments to safeguard all participants in the process and so prevent re-victimisation.

## 4.7. Safe to share? Report on Liberty and Southall Black Sisters’ super-complaint on policing and immigration status

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, the College of Policing and the Independent Office for Police Conduct are responsible for assessing, investigating and reporting on police super-complaints through a Senior Panel. The Panel defines a super complaint as being one where: ‘a feature, or combination of features, of policing in England and Wales by one or more than one police force is, or appears to be, significantly harming the interests of the public (section 29A, Police Reform Act 2002).

This system is designed to examine problems of local, regional or national significance that may not be addressed by existing complaints systems. The process for making and considering super-complaints is set out in the Police Super-complaints (Designation and Procedure) Regulations 2018.

Super-complaints therefore provide a voice for designated bodies to raise concerns on behalf of the public about patterns or trends in policing that are, or appear to be, significantly harming the interests of the public.

### 4.7.1 Liberty and Southall Black Sisters’ super-complaint on policing and immigration status

In 2020 Liberty and Southall Black Sisters put forward a ‘super complaint’ about the treatment of victims of crime and witnesses with insecure immigration status. It focused on how information about them was passed to the Home Office for immigration enforcement. The super-complaint concerned two particular features of policing:

* The police passing victim and witness data to the Home Office for immigration enforcement purposes
* The operation of and/or perception of a culture of police prioritizing immigration enforcement over the investigation of crime and safeguarding.

Liberty and Southall Black Sisters stated that these features caused significant harm to the interests of the public because they deterred victims and witnesses with an unsettled immigration status from engaging with the police. Consequently, victims were being denied justice, while offenders often went unpunished and remained a threat to the public.

The evidence Liberty and Southall Black Sisters provided focused on the experiences of female victims of domestic abuse, sexual violence and modern slavery offences (the type of cases undertaken by Liberty and Southall Black Sisters, and their partner organisations), however, they argued that the same problems affected all victims and witnesses whose immigration status was not settled.

#### 4.7.1.1 Background to the super complaint

Policing and immigration status

The difficulties faced by people with uncertain immigration status in reporting crimes to the police had been the subject of increasing attention in recent years and had been evident through parliamentary reports[[27]](#footnote-27), media interest[[28]](#footnote-28), and a range of publications from academic sources and campaigning groups[[29]](#footnote-29), [[30]](#footnote-30).

Until 2018, there had been no specific guidance for police on the appropriate response to victims or witnesses of all crime types with uncertain immigration status. The NPCC had addressed this gap in October 2018 with a Guidance paper for the police service. However, while the NPCC is a co-ordinating body for the police service in England and Wales, it is not a legal entity and has no statutory powers). Liberty and Southall Black Sisters’ super complaint therefore stated that this Guidance had failed to stop or restrain the sharing of data of victims and witnesses of crime with the Home Office, and that it was unclear what status the Guidance had and whether it had been adopted by all forces.

This super-complaint was the first the Senior Panel had investigated. They acknowledged that it was important because it raised complex concerns that ‘may not otherwise have been a focus of our combined work’.

### 4.7.2 Key findings

Information sharing between the police and the Home Office

It was found that there were many reasons why the police service and the Home Office needed to share information when carrying out public functions, including when investigating and detecting crime, maintaining public order, and protecting life and safety. (Also, in certain instances, information sharing between the police and the Home Office was required by law, for example, under the National Referral Mechanism for victims of modern slavery and human trafficking). This super-complaint focused on one form of information sharing between the police and the Home Office.

Policy implications

The investigation findings upheld Liberty and Southall Black Sisters’ view that the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC) guidance had been inconsistently adopted by police forces in England and Wales. The report also offered some observations from the investigation that the police service and the Home Office should consider in any future policy development in this area.

Data limitations

The investigation found limitations in the available data on the outcomes of police responses to migrant victims of crime that were a concern for the police, the public and immigration enforcement services. For example, the available data on people referred to Immigration Enforcement by the police did not, at the time of the investigation, record a distinction between victims/witnesses and offenders.

Additionally, there was no data available, from either the Home Office or the police which linked the crime in which a person was victim or witness with individual referrals to the Home Office for immigration purposes. Therefore, it was not possible to use these sources to assess whether referrals by the police to Immigration Enforcement affected criminal justice outcomes. This meant that neither the police nor the Home Office were able to assure the communities they served that those with whom they had contact would be treated fairly and safely, and that allegations of discriminatory behaviour were unfounded.

Data from the victim case examples suggested that police referrals to the Home Office did affect criminal justice outcomes.

Features of policing

It was found that sharing information between the police and the Home Office on victims and witnesses of crime with insecure immigration status was a feature of policing and while it was not clear whether the purpose of this sharing was immigration enforcement, it did appear, in some cases, that this information might be used for this reason.

It was also found that the difficult judgment required of police officers in responding to migrant victims of crime was how to balance the interests of criminal justice and victims’ safety against the interests of the state in upholding immigration law, and how to understand the circumstances in which one should be prioritised over the other. ‘Existing guidance to the police service doesn’t adequately reflect the realities of some victims’ circumstances, particularly those arising from domestic abuse. These difficulties are made worse by the lack of shared knowledge between the police service and the Home Office on the outcomes for migrant victims when information has been shared’.

Overall, it was found that there was a lack of awareness in forces about the implications of sharing information with Immigration Enforcement and the potential enforcement activity that might be taken as a result. During the investigation, many interviewees started to recognise the problems raised by the super-complaint. For example, some officers thought that the lack of policy or protocols between the police and Immigration Enforcement was likely to make victims less willing to report crimes to them.

There was no evidence of an intention within the police service to operate a culture that prioritised immigration enforcement over the investigation of crime and safeguarding. However, there was a perception of such a culture by some victims and the specialist organisations that supported them.

There was also clear evidence in some of the victim case examples that the police did sometimes prioritise immigration enforcement and evidence that police officers were not always clear on their priorities in safeguarding victims and immigration enforcement. Consequently, and without any clear national policy guidance, the police’s approach to safeguarding migrant victims of crime was inconsistent.

It was found that the appropriate police response to migrant victims of crime was determined by the type of crime and the individual circumstances of each victim. These considerations were more clearly documented for victims of modern slavery and human trafficking than for migrant victims of domestic abuse. The investigation found no evidence that sharing of personal victim data between the police and the Home Office supported the safeguarding of victims of domestic abuse. There might be reasons to share intelligence in certain circumstances for the protection of people or the public interest. But the parameters and expectations in these circumstances were not clear.

Harm caused to the interests of the public.

The risks of harm to victims and witnesses arising from information sharing about people at high risk of domestic abuse who had an insecure immigration status, within formal and informal multi-agency discussions – for example, at MARACs.

The investigation found that immigration enforcement and data sharing with the Home Office could be indirectly influencing the operation and priorities of some MARACs. The absence of guidance for MARACs on information sharing on victims of domestic abuse with insecure immigration status could exacerbate victims’ concerns about this influence. It also raised the risk of inconsistent practice.

The investigation found that significant harm was being caused to the public interest. This was because victims of crime with insecure immigration status were fearful that, if they reported to the police, their information would be shared with the Home Office and/or the reported crimes would not be investigated. ‘The cause of this fear was difficult to establish definitively. However, there were clear contributing factors’. These included:

* the perception of a police culture that prioritised immigration enforcement over safeguarding and crime investigation.
* the experiences of victims that this sometimes happened in practice.
* demonstrable inconsistencies in policing practice.

Solutions

In the super-complaint, Liberty and Southall Black Sisters had proposed some solutions that the investigation considered:

**Consistent policy** - Clear policy and accompanying guidance are crucial. To achieve this objective, policy and protocols must be developed in consultation with the specialist agencies that understand the barriers to reporting faced by migrant victims of crime. The Investigation supported this solution.

**Identifying and sharing good practice** - Good criminal justice outcomes could be achieved when victims of crime were made safe and the crime is investigated in the full knowledge of the victim’s immigration status. Positive outcomes could be possible when police recognised immigration status as a risk factor for victims and work in partnership with specialist agencies, with a priority given to safeguarding.

**Developing robust advocacy and partnerships** - The super-complaint proposed the establishment of clear referral pathways to specialist agencies and immigration advisers so that victims would have access to sound legal advice and emotional support on their immigration matters. The investigation heard consistently that, when forces had access to such services, the partnership was highly valued by the police as a means of achieving positive outcomes.

**A firewall between police and immigration authorities?** The Investigation Team considered the feasibility of a firewall between police and immigration authorities.

They highlighted the fact that there was no widely agreed definition of ‘firewall’ in this context, in terms of what it meant in detail and in practice. ‘It is clear that firewalls can be and are being implemented in different ways around the world to create a separation between public services and immigration enforcement. Any policy decision to adopt a ‘firewall’ would have to be informed by evaluation to minimise the risk of unintended consequences.’ They suggested that a complete firewall preventing all communication between the police service and the Home Office on migrant victims of crime could undermine the public interest and the interests of bringing to justice individuals breaking the law. ‘Such a firewall might also have implications for other forms of information sharing between the service and the Home Office, which had not been considered as part of this investigation. Information sharing between designated organisations (including police forces) and the Home Office is required in law for victims of modern slavery through the National Referral Mechanism. However, there are no such legal requirements in relation to victims of domestic abuse’.

Nonetheless, the Investigation fully supported the idea of an immediate change in police practice to allow a separation between the response to a victim’s report of domestic abuse and the handling of their immigration status. The imperative is to establish safe reporting mechanisms for victims of domestic abuse in accessing the police service. Associated reporting pathways should include access to specialist support and legal advice to address a victim’s immigration status, as necessary.

### 4.7.3 Recommendations

Recommendation 1. To chief constables

As an interim measure, pending the outcome of recommendation 2, where officers only have concerns or doubts about a victim’s immigration status, it is recommended that they immediately stop sharing information on domestic abuse victims with Immigration Enforcement. Instead, police officers should link the victim to a third party that can provide advice and assistance, as set out in recommendation 4 (on the creation of safe reporting pathways). The College of Policing will immediately develop guidance for the police service to clarify this aspect of practice.

Recommendation 2. To the Home Office

Review the legal framework and policy underpinning the matters raised in the super-complaint with the aim of providing clarification to the police service, other public services and immigration authorities on priorities regarding all migrant victims and witnesses of crime with insecure immigration status.

The review should include consideration of an interim measure of a mechanism for establishing a firewall between police and immigration enforcement services for all migrant victims of crime with insecure immigration status. It should determine a working definition of a firewall in this context with reference to the conclusions of this report, international examples of such practice and any relevant academic research.

The effect of this review should be to establish safe reporting mechanisms for all migrant victims and witnesses, including those with insecure immigration status, in accessing the police service. The review should be conducted in consultation with victim and survivor representative groups, practitioners and other interested parties. The Home Office should publish a report that sets out its considerations and conclusions, and includes an equality impact assessment, within six months of the date of publication of this super-complaint report.

Recommendation 3. To the Home Office and the National Police Chiefs’ Council

Develop a safeguarding protocol between the Home Office and the police service to guide responses to all migrant victims and witnesses of crime by the police service, the Home Office and other law enforcement agencies as relevant. The protocol should reflect the realities of victims’ and witnesses’ experiences, drawing on the expertise of the relevant specialist organisations for supporting victims with insecure immigration status. The protocol would need to:

* address the respective roles and responsibilities of the police and the Home Office in safeguarding migrant victims of crime, with explicit attention to differences in approach that may arise for victims in different circumstances.
* for victims of domestic abuse or other gender-based violence, clarify that it is the responsibility of the police service, working with suitable specialist partner agencies, to provide safeguarding functions, and that sharing information on victims of domestic abuse with Immigration Enforcement does not constitute safeguarding.
* address the purposes of sharing information, as well as who does what with the information, how it will be acted on by the Home Office, and in what circumstances, with agreement about the terms of assurances that could be provided to victims and witnesses
* specify the circumstances in which information may be shared by police with the Home Office and ensure that victims and witnesses are told what information is to be shared and why, with reference to a clear basis in law
* be supported by appropriate governance processes to ensure that:
  + - personal data is processed in accordance with data protection law
    - due consideration is given to security in sharing, storage, retention and deletion of personal data
    - all organisations can demonstrate accountability.
* reflect consultation with data protection officers and reference Information Commissioner’s Office guidance to ensure that data sharing is compliant with data protection law.
* address the implications for data sharing within MARACs and other multi-agency safeguarding groups
* set out a nationally equitable position on access to specialist victim support services that could assist victims in resolving uncertainties associated with immigration status
* enable the victim or witness to contribute to any potential prosecution so that perpetrators are held to account and the victim or witness is supported to contribute to any potential prosecution
* be publicised through the appropriate channels to promote migrant victims’ and witnesses’ confidence in the existence of safe reporting pathways to receive support from the police and other statutory agencies without fear that their immigration status could be prioritised over their complaint to the police.

This protocol should be adopted by the police service across England and Wales. When the protocol has been agreed, the National Police Chiefs’ Council should consider how to operationalise it in consultation with the College of Policing so that the contents inform police responses.

Recommendation 4. To chief constables

In consultation/collaboration with local or national specialist organisations, chief constables should take steps to ensure that all migrant victims and witnesses of crime are effectively supported through safe reporting pathways to the police and other statutory agencies. They should:

* ensure there is a proper policy and practice framework in place for officers to work within.
* develop victim and witness support policies that reflect the characteristics of the safeguarding protocol set out in recommendation 3, and:
  + - draw on all relevant national guidance with particular reference to the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime and data protection legislation.
    - are developed in partnership with and include pathways to the relevant specialist organisations for supporting victims and witnesses with insecure immigration status.
    - are clear about the circumstances in which information will be shared by police with immigration enforcement.
    - provide clarity about the purpose of sharing information at different points of the pathway.
    - explicitly recognize the importance of telling victims, witnesses and supporting agencies whether information will be shared with Immigration Enforcement, and if so, when and in what circumstances.
    - promote understanding among police officers and staff to differentiate between responses to victims of modern slavery/human trafficking and victims of domestic abuse.
    - promote awareness within their forces of any existing pathways to specialist organisations for supporting victims with insecure immigration status.
    - ensure the policy and practice framework is adopted by all officers and staff who come into contact with victims of crime who have insecure immigration status.
    - promote police engagement in regular outreach community work, as highlighted as good practice in this report.

Recommendation 5. To chief constables and police and crime commissioners (or equivalents)

In consultation/collaboration with local or national specialist organisations, chief constables and police and crime commissioners should take steps, through the appropriate channels, to promote migrant victims’ and witnesses’ confidence in reporting crimes to the police without fear of prioritised immigration control.

Recommendation 6. To police and crime commissioners (or equivalents)

Conduct an assessment of local access to specialist victim support organisations or networks and take steps to build up such networks.

Recommendation 7. To the Home Office

Improve the recording and assurance processes related to sharing information with the police. In particular, record the status, ethnicity and nationality of people referred, or enquired about, to the National Command and Control Unit within Immigration Enforcement in order to understand and record whether the caller believes the individual to be a victim, offender or both.

Collect and monitor data on the use of the Police National Computer for immigration purposes, including the number of live markers in operation. The investigation considers it is essential to understanding and differentiating the appropriate range of actions in individual cases, including compliance with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime.

Recommendation 8. To all recipients of recommendations from this investigation

Provide an update to Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Constabulary on progress in implementing these recommendations within six months of the date of publication of this report.

## 4.8 Updated Victims’ Code

In April 2021, the Ministry of Justice published a further Updated Victim’s Code, which gave victims of crime better support from the police, courts and other criminal justice agencies. The Ministry state that the updated Code would pave the way for a new Victims’ Law, on which Ministers would consult this summer. The aim was to inspire more victim confidence in the system from the moment they reported a crime to the end of the trial.

The updated Code brought together 12 overarching rights that were ‘straightforward, concise and easy to understand’ – outlining the minimum level of information and service victims could expect at every stage of the justice process. The new Code was structured so that it focuses on the following 12 overarching rights:

* To be able to understand and to be understood.
* To have the details of the crime recorded without unjustified delay.
* To be provided with information when reporting the crime.
* To be referred to victim support services 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 your role as a witness.
* To be given information about the outcome of the 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 rights not being met.

These rights were to be addressed through:

* Providing victims with a simplified and stronger set of rights – making clear their entitlements at every step of the way as they recover from crime.
* Victims will be told what to expect at every stage of the justice system including, for the first time, their automatic right to be told when a perpetrator is due to leave prison.
* Victims of sexual violence will be able to choose the gender of their police interviewer and there will be clearer advice on when they can have their evidence pre-recorded ahead of a trial – rather than face the stress of cross-examination in front of a packed courtroom.
* Victims of sexual violence or domestic abuse will be directed towards the support of independent advisors who provide emotional and practical help, regardless of whether the crime is reported to the police.
* Where an offender is a foreign national offender, victims will for the first time have the right to know when they are deported.
* For the first time, eligible victims will be automatically referred to the VCS and offered a Victim Liaison Officer (VLO), who provides vital updates on offenders as they serve their sentence, including their potential release from prison. A VLO can also help victims apply for licence conditions to reduce the chance of them encountering an offender in the community and assist with requesting reviews of Parole Board decisions.
* The ability for vulnerable victims to have their cross-examination pre-recorded away from the courtroom - reducing the stress of giving evidence in court, which many find intimidating.
* Greater flexibility over when and how a VPS, which tells the court how the crime has affected the victim, can be made – recognizing that for many the impact of the crime may not be immediately apparent. Victims will also be able to request a copy of their VPS for them to refer to in future.
* Victims to have the right to be informed of the reasons why a suspect will not be prosecuted. If unhappy, victims will also be able to ask the police CPS to review this decision.

Victims or bereaved family relatives where the offender was convicted of a violent of sexual offence and sentenced to 12 months or more in prison would be automatically referred to the VCS and be assigned a VLO (if they chose to enter the VCS).

### 4.8.1 Victim Liaison Officers

The VLO will tell the victim:

* what the sentence of the court means in terms of their detention in prison or hospital, if there are any changes to their sentence, and when they’ll be transferred to open conditions or considered for release or conditional discharge.
* how to make a VPS if an offender’s case is due a Parole Board review.
* how to apply to read the VPS to the Parole Board, in cases where the Parole Board holds an oral hearing.
* how to apply for licence/discharge conditions to reduce the chances of encountering the offender in the community, or from them making contact.
* about any licence/discharge conditions that relate to them and the date they will end.
* how to ask for a summary of the Parole Board’s decision and how to challenge the decision if the Parole Board decides an offender is safe to release.

Depending on a victim’s needs and the nature of their case, they will be offered specialist support, for example from an Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA) or Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA). The advisor will normally act as your single point of contact throughout the case and communicate with the police, Witness Care Unit and the CPS on the victim’s behalf.

Pre-recording of cross-examination will exist for all victims and witnesses deemed to be vulnerable due to age, mental disorders or a physical impairment across all Crown Court in England and Wales. (A similar process is being piloted for victims of sexual and modern slavery offences at Crown Courts in Liverpool, Leeds, and Kingston-Upon-Thames).

# 5. Current provision

This section sets out the operation of VCAS in order to contextualise the data as subsequently set out.

## 5.1 Overview of service provision

VCAS is operated by Safer Communities and the charity also provides other supportive community services in the same geographical area. The VCAS service is commissioned by the Cleveland & Durham PCC to provide victim support services across both Cleveland and Durham Police Force areas (note this evaluation solely relates to Cleveland). VCAS support victims of all crimes, except the immediate family of homicide victims, domestic abuse or serious sexual violence. However, VCAS will provide support to witnesses to homicide, family members who have lost someone under suspicious circumstances as well as families following fatal road traffic collisions that involve a criminal offence. The current service model commenced on 1 April 2016.

Cases can be identified at any point of the criminal justice pathway and support provided may encompass the whole victim pathway or just one particular aspect (for instance attendance at court).

## 5.2 Operational elements of VCAS

### 5.2.1 Staffing

VCAS have six full time Victim Care Officers (VCO) who work closely with the police alongside specialist teams (for instance Neighbourhood Teams). The VCOs work Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm and each are allocated to individual boroughs on a 4 + 2 basis, with greater cover being made available to Stockton and Middlesbrough which are considered to be the busiest areas. Two staff are additional and not from existing VCAS resources.

Three volunteer members of staff also support the call blocking aspects of the VCAS service (see later for details of this service).

One of the VCOs also acts a Team Leader for the other VCOs. They manage their own caseload and have supervision meetings quarterly with the Team Leader. There is a full time manager for the service who is responsible for the overall service, but does not carry an individual caseload. The office is also supported by a full time administrative support.

### 5.2.2. Operation of the service

The core hours of the service are 9am – 5pm, but the service is at times flexible dependent on need and has operated between 8am – 8pm and on occasions over the weekend. Flexible working is normally agreed at the discretion of the service manager.

The VCOs are community based, rather than office based, and have access to hot desks in local police stations and have an average caseload of 30 victims relating to crime and victim support at any one time. Caseloads have increased recently with an average of 40 per VCO. In Hartlepool all community partnership services are based in the main police station under managerial control of a Chief Inspector. This works well in terms of effective operational management, responsiveness and joint working.

A recently introduced pilot has resulted in two members of VCAS staff being located within the control room. Cover is provided over the seven day period 9am – 5pm. This development speeds up the identification of victims by the Police and onward referral to VCAS.

VCAS is not contracted to provide an out-of-hours service, but during those times voicemail messages can be left and email contact is still possible. Clients will also be able to leave voice messages on the individual VCO’s mobiles if they are known clients. The VCAS control room staff also work at weekends. Review of Niche can also happen at the start of the next working day which will also pick up out of hours cases.

VCAS offers emotional and practical support services to victims, their family members, witnesses to the offence or anyone who feels vulnerable as a result of crime or fear of crime. Support is provided regardless of whether the victim wishes to report the incident to the police and support is provided for however long as necessary to support the victim through their journey. This may include all parts of the victim’s journey or one or several parts of that process and could include liaison with the Victim Care Unit, Witness Services, the courts, the police and Restorative Justice.

Each package of support is bespoke for the individual victim’s needs and could include emotional and practical support at the point of reporting and subsequent court hearings, through to the release of the perpetrator from prison. There is no time limit on the length of support although the ending of the package of support is discussed and mutually agreed between the victim and VCAS. Victims are able to contact VCAS after the completion of their package of support if they have further concerns or feel vulnerable again. There are a large number of repeat victims and these are seen as high risk by the police and VCAS.

### 5.2.3 Working with Cleveland Police

Since 2020 awareness of and access to VCAS has been spread out to all police teams through a range of awareness and training sessions. Previously this knowledge was seen as a gap and was lacking. Within the Police this specifically includes Neighbourhood Teams, Response Teams & CID Teams. Where strong links have been developed with Victim Support Officers. Awareness has been improved further with the commencement of the control room pilot.

An intensive programme of increasing awareness of VCAS within the police has also been undertaken and this has predominantly focused on all new police recruits, Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and new control room staff. In interview with multiple stakeholders within the police it was clear that overall awareness of VCAS has improved. Police stakeholders reported that awareness was most pronounced among new recruits and some specialist areas (notably the control room staff and specialist crime teams). Additional feedback however indicated that there is still an issue of awareness amongst some more experienced personnel.

Each VCO is partnered with a Response Sergeant with whom they hold regular meetings to share information and raise awareness of each agencies work, together with sharing VCAS’ access to other partner agencies. VCAS can pick up referrals this way and the number of referrals from this source has increased.

### 5.2.4 Referral processes

#### 5.2.4.1 Key referral pathways

All police staff within the control room have been made aware of the services provided by VCAS and flag those victims classed as having vulnerabilities. They work on the basis that the victim will be referred to VCAS unless they opt out.

The VCOs have been trained to use the police IT systems and are peripatetic and attend a police station on a daily basis where they review crimes reported on the police IT system (NICHE) and to identify if a victim of that crime has requested support or contact. The VCOs will take into account the Ministry of Justice categories of need and crime type, and will then make contact with all victims identified whether they have requested VCAS support or not. VCAS staff suggested that approximately 30% of the VCAS caseload are victims who did not initially request their support.

There may be occasions when VCAS come into contact with a victim of excluded types of victims (specifically victims of domestic abuse and sexual assault) where VCAS may operate some degree of “hand holding”, but these cases are swiftly referred on to other appropriate and specialist services through the police and established pathways. There does not appear to be any duplication of services in these areas. VCAS may be requested to contact a victim for another reason and may find, for example, that a domestic abuse issue comes to light and they would then advise and support referral to a domestic abuse charity provider, but will continue to check that contact has been made. They may well also continue to support the victim for any non- domestic violence issues.

VCAS aims to contact all victims of crime, even those who have initially indicated that they do not want support. Those who confirm that they still do not want to access support are retained on a VCAS spreadsheet separate to their normal case management system. It is also recognised that some victims may initially indicate they do not require support, but may change their minds following further reflection.

There is no formal referral form to access VCAS services which can be accessed in a number of ways (flags on Niche, emails, telephone calls).

#### 5.2.4.2 Direct referrals from police officers

Police officers can make direct referrals to VCAS. This includes referrals made by VCAS staff through review of Niche, from the control room (see below) as well as direct referrals from individual officers. Types of crimes include witnesses to homicide, bereaved relatives following suspicious deaths or fatal road traffic accidents, where family liaison officers are deployed, fraud, anti-social behaviour, and neighbourhood incidents. Referrals can come from various parts of the police force and VCAS have been working closely with the police to raise awareness of their services. These areas include neighbourhood teams, victim liaison officers, specialist units specialising in fraud and cyber-crime,

VCAS also receive victim details direct from Action Fraud and in partnership with the Cyber Crime Unit who contact all victims and refer onto VCAS. VCAS will email victims of fraud a fraud prevention toolkit and will call those assessed as more vulnerable. The police send a letter to all victims of fraud inviting them to attend a bi-monthly fraud awareness event delivered by VCAS.

#### 5.2.4.3 Third party referrals

VCAS staff indicated that they have received referrals directly from third party and community organisations such as local authorities, housing providers, social services, GPs, the military, and local charities and Registered Social Landlords.

#### 5.2.4.4 Self referrals

Victims can self-refer into VCAS and the service has attempted to raise awareness of services in a wide range of agencies such as hospitals, GP practices and social care agencies in an effort to increase referral rates.

#### 5.2.4.5 Control room pilot

As part of a pilot initiative a member of VCAS staff is based in the police control room giving the police immediate access to a VCAS member of staff as incidents are recorded. This allows for even more rapid access to support for victims, allowing swifter action and referral onto other support agencies and services if needed and has already resulted in a large increase in VCAS referrals. This now the source of the largest number of police referrals. Cases can be identified and transferred to VCAS immediately. Note that it is not possible to tell, at the current time, whether the right referrals are being made via the police control room (albeit that VCAS have not noted any issues with inappropriate or poor referrals from this source).

### 5.2.5 Client assessment

Following identification an initial call is made to the victim to make contact and ascertain if support is to be requested. Calls are also made to victims who have already indicated that they do not wish to take up the offer of support. VCAS staff noted that this has been adopted as they have found that, on occasion victims may on reflection may change their mind and take up the offer of support. Details of those that do not request support are retained on a separate VCAS spreadsheet. In effect the service has become an opt out rather than an opt in service.

The initial VCAS call will be undertaken within 24 – 48 hours of the referral and this will be followed with the production of the Risk Assessment and Recovery Plan.

On receipt of the referral VCAS assess the vulnerability of those referred. VCAS using a system in which they allocate a score that gives an indication of an individual’s level of vulnerability. The scoring is based on the assessment of the individual across a number of discrete domains including: physical need, mental health need, accommodation, drugs and alcohol, finance and benefits, outlook and attitude. A score is awarded in each area and the overall total (i.e. the total of each domain added up) indicates the level of vulnerability. Note that the domains used for the scoring are based on Ministry of Justice criteria and so align with national standards and expectations.

This assessment and discussion with the victim will be used to develop an individual recovery plan which is monitored on a RAG rated system and may also include referral onto other support services as well as direct support from the VCO. For instance, referral onto Brake (road safety charity) for seriously injured or bereaved relatives following a road traffic accident. (Note that numbers of referrals to Brake however seem to be very low and it appears that VCAS tend to “hold on” to these clients rather than refer on; this is explored further in section 8.1.3).

Details of the referral are also entered onto the VCAS case management system detailing the call including the individual’s details, the case details, who referred and crime types. This information is available to the VCOs who are operating remotely.

Cases are followed through the system as required on an individual basis from the actual incident, court attendance and following release of perpetrators from prison. During this time there is regular contact with relevant criminal justice agencies, such as the Victim Liaison Unit in Probation, and the National Compensation Scheme.

### 5.2.6 Client criteria

Exclusions to the VCAS service include serious sexual assault (which are dealt with by the police and the Teesside Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)) and domestic abuse (which are dealt with by local domestic abuse support charities). VCAS will work alongside the National Homicide service for cases of homicide.

There is no set time limit for a case being active. Judgements are made mutually with the victim and in some cases, for instance with a lengthy criminal justice system case, support can last a number of years. VCAS staff however indicated that the average length of active cases is four to six weeks.

There is no defined age limitations for accessing the service and VCAS will work with children’s service agencies and parents or Appropriate Adults where children and young people are involved. For ages 16 – 18 years a competency check would be undertaken, and below 16 years would be worked in conjunction with the parents. These cases will include youth offending teams and CAMHS. Service provision and processes can differ between local authorities which the VCOs need to be aware of and manage appropriately. To assist with this process the VCOs have access to a list of community and statutory services.

### 5.2.7 Covid

Covid has significantly affected the operation of the service resulting in more complex cases as well as different levels of cases (for instance more anti-social behaviour, neighbourhood disputes, car theft and car damage). More telephone and email contact work has had to be undertaken remotely rather than face-to-face, which has been made undertaking risk assessments more difficult. Being able to visit victims home addresses helped in undertaking assessments. Some face to face visits have occurred, but these tend to be walking or park visits rather than at the victim’s home.

## 5.3 Additional services

VCAS also offer a number bespoke/additional services that have been developed in response to the needs of victims.

### 5.3.1 Crime prevention

Crime prevention surveys are undertaken with clients as well as the provision of crime prevention equipment such as door and window alarms, dummy CCTV camera and dusk to dawn security lighting. These initiatives can be in order to prevent further crime, but also to help manage the fear of crime.

### 5.3.2 Fraud awareness

VCAS work with Action Fraud and VCAS staff members have been trained by the National Trading Standards Team to deliver Friends Against Scams sessions providing fraud awareness and prevention advice. The sessions are provided to groups of victims, faith groups, disability groups and elderly victims groups. Fraud Awareness sessions are also delivered during student police officer and PCO initial training course and VCAS runs drop in sessions with Barclays Bank on fraud prevention.

### 5.3.3 Telephone Call Blocker

Telephone Call Blocker services where VCAS can provide call blockers to vulnerable victims of fraud for an initial three month period and the blocked calls are monitored by VCAS volunteers. On average 2,800 calls a month are stopped or blocked.

### 5.3.4 Anti-social behaviour

A number of antisocial behaviour drop in sessions have been held in areas of high anti-social behaviour. These often run in conjunction with Cleveland police, local authorities and youth outreach services. Over the contract various drop in sessions have been run in such settings as libraries and community facilities often run with partner agencies.

VCAS runs a number of sessions to partner agencies, particularly for older people, where these can include Dementia Friends sessions.

# 6. Service outcomes

The following section provides a quantitative overview of the operation of VCAS based on secondary analysis of management information provided by VCAS.

## 6.1 Profile of VCAS clients

### 6.1.1. Referral source

Table 1 (below) sets out the source of referrals for VCAS clients presented by year to give a view of how this has changed over time.

Table 1 Referral Source of Cleveland Victims reported to VCAS, 2016-2020

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2016** | | **2017** | | **2018** | | **2019** | | **2020** | |
| Referrals | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Action Fraud Referrals | 26 | 9.9% | 61 | 8.9% | 60 | 7.5% | 57 | 6.9% | 21 | 1.8% |
| Electronic daily transfer | 62 | 23.7% | 1 | 0.1% | 1 | 0.1% | 1 | 0.1% | 75 | 6.4% |
| Point of Detection | 0 | 0.0% | 1 | 0.1% | 0 | 0.0% | 1 | 0.1% | 0 | 0.0% |
| Police Control Room\* | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 238 | 20.2% |
| Referrals direct from a Police Officer | 46 | 17.6% | 163 | 23.9% | 216 | 27.0% | 260 | 31.4% | 332 | 28.2% |
| Review of Police Crime Recording System | 73 | 27.9% | 320 | 46.9% | 329 | 41.1% | 312 | 37.7% | 208 | 17.7% |
| Self-referrals | 24 | 9.2% | 50 | 7.3% | 77 | 9.6% | 87 | 10.5% | 129 | 11.0% |
| Third Party referrals (i.e. BTP, RJ Service, Witness Care Unit or Witness Service) | 31 | 11.8% | 86 | 12.6% | 117 | 14.6% | 110 | 13.3% | 174 | 14.8% |
| VALID TOTAL | 262 | 100.0% | 682 | 100.0% | 800 | 100.0% | 828 | 100.0% | 1177 | 100.0% |
| Missing/Not Stated | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% |
| TOTAL | 262 |  | 682 |  | 800 |  | 828 |  | 1177 |  |

\*Includes 4 other cases that have been included in this category

There has been some variability in how referrals have been recorded over the five-year period.

There has been an increase in the number of referrals direct from a police officer (n=46) in 2016 to 332 in 2020. Proportionally, self-referrals have remained relatively stable at around 9-11% (apart from a low of 7.3% reported in 2017). This increase is to be expected given training provided to police and the shift to the control room pilot (described in Section 5).

Third-party referrals have also been stable as a proportion of the total at around 12-15%.

‘Action Fraud Referrals’ have reduced from 61 (8.9%) in 2017 to 21 (1.8%) in 2020.

### 6.1.2 Crime type

The crimes which VCAS clients were victim of are set out below at Table 2. As per referral data, the information is set out by year to highlight any changing patterns.

Some variability in recording has been noted over the five-year period (e.g. the introduction of anti-social behaviour as a category from 2017) which will affect the interpretation of the trends presented.

Table 2 Crime type associated with Cleveland victim reports to VCAS 2016-2020

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2016** | | **2017** | | **2018** | | **2019** | | **2020** | |
| Crime Type | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Anti-Social Behaviour | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 43 | 5.4% | 110 | 13.3% | 136 | 11.6% |
| Arson | 2 | 0.8% | 3 | 0.4% | 1 | 0.1% | 3 | 0.4% | 10 | 0.8% |
| Assault or Attempt to cause physical harm | 47 | 17.9% | 116 | 17.0% | 86 | 10.8% | 87 | 10.5% | 134 | 11.4% |
| Breaching restraining order or Harassment | 10 | 3.8% | 34 | 5.0% | 48 | 6.0% | 27 | 3.3% | 124 | 10.5% |
| Burglary | 41 | 15.6% | 130 | 19.1% | 131 | 16.4% | 130 | 15.7% | 124 | 10.5% |
| Criminal damage | 41 | 15.6% | 123 | 18.0% | 130 | 16.3% | 96 | 11.6% | 167 | 14.2% |
| Fatal/Serious RTC | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% |  | 0.0% | 1 | 0.1% |
| Fraud | 33 | 12.6% | 75 | 11.0% | 113 | 14.1% | 126 | 15.2% | 135 | 11.5% |
| Homicide/Suspicious death | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% |  | 0.0% | 8 | 0.7% |
| Miscellaneous | 18 | 6.9% | 75 | 11.0% | 64 | 8.0% | 27 | 3.3% | 29 | 2.5% |
| Not applicable | 4 | 1.5% | 11 | 1.6% | 3 | 0.4% | 1 | 0.1% | 5 | 0.4% |
| Other | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 48 | 6.0% | 75 | 9.1% | 109 | 9.3% |
| Racial or Religious crime | 14 | 5.3% | 17 | 2.5% | 25 | 3.1% | 19 | 2.3% | 15 | 1.3% |
| Robbery | 4 | 1.5% | 21 | 3.1% | 14 | 1.8% | 24 | 2.9% | 37 | 3.1% |
| Stalking | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% |  | 0.0% | 15 | 1.3% |
| Theft (Vehicle/Shops/Person/Pedal cycles) | 37 | 14.1% | 57 | 8.4% | 50 | 6.3% | 55 | 6.6% | 50 | 4.2% |
| Threatening violence | 7 | 2.7% | 17 | 2.5% | 33 | 4.1% | 42 | 5.1% | 69 | 5.9% |
| Threats to Kill | 3 | 1.1% | 3 | 0.4% | 6 | 0.8% | 3 | 0.4% | 3 | 0.3% |
| Vehicle related crime | 1 | 0.4% | 0 | 0.0% | 5 | 0.6% | 3 | 0.4% | 6 | 0.5% |
| VALID TOTAL | 262 | 100.0% | 682 | 100.0% | 800 | 100.0% | 828 | 100.0% | 1177 | 100.0% |
| Missing/Not Stated | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| TOTAL | 262 | 100.0% | 682 | 100.0% | 800 | 100.0% | 828 | 100.0% | 1177 | 100.0% |

The main crimes reported by victims over the five-year period were:

* assault, burglary and criminal damage (from 2016-2018),
* in 2019 the top three crimes reported were burglary, fraud and anti-social behaviour and
* in 2020 the main crimes reported were criminal damage, fraud/assault/antisocial behaviour.

Although fraud increased from 75 (11.0%) in 2017 to 113 (14.1%) in 2018, this difference was not statistically significant[[31]](#footnote-31).

There has been a statistically significant[[32]](#footnote-32) jump in the number and proportion of victims reporting ‘breaching restraining order or harassment’ from 27 (3.3%) in 2019 to 124 (10.5%) in 2020.

### 6.1.3 Hate crime

The majority (between 91.2% in 2016 to 95.4% in 2020) of crime reported to VCAS were non-hate crimes. The number of hate-crimes reported are relatively low at around 33-39 (between 2017 and 2020). Further data is set out at Table 3.

Table 3 Hate crime reported by Cleveland victims reported to VCAS 2016-2020

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2016** | | **2017** | | **2018** | | **2019** | | **2020** | |
| Type of Hate Crime | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Disability | 7 | 2.7% | 13 | 1.9% | 11 | 1.4% | 8 | 1.0% | 6 | 0.5% |
| LGBT | 3 | 1.1% | 5 | 0.7% | 8 | 1.0% | 10 | 1.2% | 9 | 0.8% |
| Not a hate crime | 239 | 91.2% | 629 | 92.2% | 747 | 93.4% | 779 | 94.1% | 1123 | 95.4% |
| Race | 13 | 5.0% | 33 | 4.8% | 34 | 4.3% | 30 | 3.6% | 39 | 3.3% |
| Religion | 0 | 0.0% | 2 | 0.3% | 0 | 0.0% | 1 | 0.1% | 0 | 0.0% |
| VALID TOTAL | 262 | 100.0% | 682 | 100.0% | 800 | 100.0% | 828 | 100.0% | 1177 | 100.0% |
| Missing/Not Stated | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% |
| TOTAL | 262 | 100.0% | 682 | 100.0% | 800 | 100.0% | 828 | 100.0% | 1177 | 100.0% |

## 6.2 Client satisfaction

This section explores the satisfaction of VCAS as measured by a range of means.

### 6.2.1 Overall satisfaction

Data at Table 4 sets out client satisfaction as reported by clients to VCAS and which is therefore held on VCAS management systems.

Table 4 Operational factors as reported by Cleveland victims reported to VCAS 2016-2020

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2016** | | **2017** | | **2018** | | **2019** | | **2020** | |
| Operational Factors | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Was VCAS support satisfactorily completed - YES | 249 | 95.0% | 634 | 93.0% | 759 | 94.9% | 790 | 95.4% | 1103 | 93.7% |
| TOTAL | 262 |  | 682 |  | 800 |  | 828 |  | 1177 |  |

As shown at Table 4, the vast majority of victims reported that the support had been satisfactorily completed (between 93.0% - 95.4%).

### 6.2.2. Satisfaction in relation to key needs

VCAS case workers also provide an assessment of the extent to which clients are satisfied with the service provided. The data is set out at Table 5.

Table 5 Client Satisfaction, January 2018- end March 2021 combined

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Strongly Agree** | | **Agree** | | **Neither Agree or Disagree** | | **Disagree** | | **Strongly Disagree** | | **Valid Total** | |
|  | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Overall, I am satisfied with the service I received from VCAS | 679 | 82.7 | 131 | 16.0 | 5 | 0.6 | 4 | 0.5 | 2 | 0.2 | 821 | 100.0 |
| I was listened to and treated with respect/dignity/Sensitivity | 706 | 85.9 | 108 | 13.1 | 1 | 0.1 | 0 | 0.0 | 7 | 0.9 | 822 | 100.0 |
| The Victim Care Officer understood my needs | 682 | 83.0 | 131 | 15.9 | 2 | 0.2 | 4 | 0.5 | 3 | 0.4 | 822 | 100.0 |
| Once identified my needs were addressed | 652 | 79.5 | 147 | 17.9 | 10 | 1.2 | 5 | 0.6 | 6 | 0.7 | 820 | 100.0 |
| I feel more positive as a result of VCAS support | 672 | 82.2 | 133 | 16.3 | 9 | 1.1 | 4 | 0.5 | 0 | 0.0 | 818 | 100.0 |

98-99% of clients who responded to these questions indicated that they ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ that VCAS has a positive effect resulting from their intervention. (It should be noted that responses were received from around one-fifth (21%) of those seen by VCAS and should be noted with caution.)

### 6.2.3 Unsatisfactory support

Analysis was undertaken examining the factors associated when VCAS support was deemed unsatisfactory (e.g. the reverse of ‘Was VCAS support satisfactorily completed?’). As shown, the numbers were small overall: including the first quarter of 2021, the total number in this category was 252 (including where ‘no’ or data are not stated).

A preliminary exercise dichotomised the variables into binary variables with the exception of age which was retained as a continuous numeric. The preliminary analysis including bivariate tests to determine which variables were significant (at p <0.05). Gender and age were included as it was hypothesized that there may be interactions with these key variables. A logistic regression model was run to determine factors associated with a non-satisfactory VCAS Support episode (Table 6).

Three factors were shown to be statistically significant and therefore related to dissatisfaction:

* referrals from Action Fraud Referrals (AFR) were 3.4 times more likely to result in a non-satisfactory VASC episode (95% CI 1.7 – 6.8)
* referrals from Police Control Room (PCR) which were 1.7 times more likely to result in a non-satisfactory VASC episode (95% CI 1.04 – 2.6)
* Asian people were two times (2.2, 95% CI 1.1 – 4.3) more likely to be reported as not satisfied with the support episode than clients from other ethnic backgrounds.

Note that the analysis indicates that crime type, age and gender were not significant factors in determining satisfaction. The analysis is set out at Table 6.

Table 6 Logistic regression model examining (highlighted in yellow statistical significance at p <0.05).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | **B** | **SD** | **Sig.** | **Exp(B)** | **95% C.I.** | |
|  | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Fraud | -.124 | | .322 | .699 | .883 | .470 | 1.659 |
| Age | -.003 | | .004 | .362 | .997 | .989 | 1.004 |
| Action Fraud Referrals (AFR) | 1.211 | | .363 | .001 | 3.358 | 1.648 | 6.844 |
| EDT | -1.411 | | .721 | .050 | .244 | .059 | 1.002 |
| Police Control Room (PCR) | .504 | | .237 | .033 | 1.655 | 1.040 | 2.633 |
| Review PCRS | -.016 | | .164 | .924 | .984 | .713 | 1.359 |
| Female | -.144 | | .145 | .323 | .866 | .652 | 1.152 |
| White British | -.185 | | .146 | .205 | .831 | .624 | 1.106 |
| Asian | .776 | | .348 | .026 | 2.174 | 1.098 | 4.302 |
| Constant | -2.496 | | .236 | .000 | .082 |  |  |

## 6.3 Client outcomes

From VCAS management information it is possible to determine the change in victims’ perception of their need following an intervention from the VCAS case officer. Specifically, an initial Victim Needs Assessment is completed on the victim’s needs until the support is considered to be completed. A ‘score’ is given across seven domains as defined by the Ministry of Justice including:

* mental and physical health
* shelter and accommodation
* family, friends and children/social isolation
* education, skills and employment
* drugs and alcohol
* finance and benefits
* outlook and attitude.

The higher the score, the greater the need for an intervention.

Analysis of data across these domains is set out at Table 7.

Table 7 Changes in Victims Score, January 2018- end March 2021 combined

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **MOJ Category of Need** | **Combined opening score** | **Combined closing score** | **% Reduction in victim needs** |
| Mental and physical health | 47973 | 13024 | -73% |
| Shelter and accommodation | 17070 | 3209 | -81% |
| Family, Friends and Children/Social Isolation | 3570 | 1700 | -52% |
| Education, Skills and Employment | 2635 | 1191 | -55% |
| Drugs and Alcohol | 583 | 348 | -40% |
| Finance and Benefits | 1958 | 641 | -67% |
| Outlook and Attitude | 27503 | 11707 | -57% |
| **Total** | 101292 | 31820 | -69% |

(Source: VCAS Management Information. Note that some information had been assumed to incorrectly entered in tables received e.g. where closing scores were notably greater than the opening scores)

Large percentage reductions were noted across all domains, resulting in a 69% overall reduction in the level of need from an initial starting score to the final, closed score. The results would therefore indicate that the response provided by VCAS is helping clients across all the reported domains and that improvements (reduction in need) can be seen in all areas.

The domain with the greatest client improvement was ‘Shelter and accommodation’ where 81% of clients experienced an improvement (i.e. a reduction in need). ‘Mental and physical health’ was the next domain that showed the greatest improvement. ‘Drug and alcohol’ need showed the lowest change.

## 6.4 Client satisfaction survey

A client satisfaction survey (Appendix A) was circulated to service users by staff at VCAS. Note that this was a new research tool developed by CPI and is not the satisfaction tool as used by VCAS.

People who had used the service since March 2020 were asked to take part, with the deadline for responses being 14 June 2021 when there had been 29 responses.

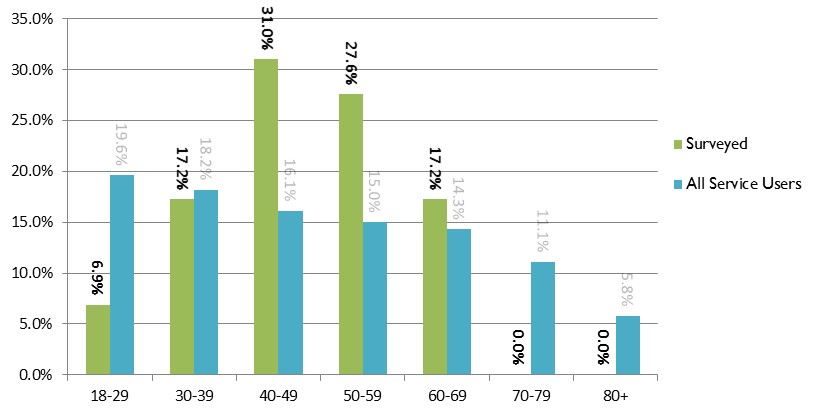
### 6.4.1 Respondent profile

When asked ‘what gender do you identify as?’ just over a third of respondents identified as male (37.9%), three fifths female (58.6%), and one non-binary. Note that these proportions are broadly in line with service user statistics with most victims reporting in to VCAS being female (68.8%), compared to under a third (31.2%) being male.

Apart from one respondent, all those surveyed classed themselves as ‘White British’ (96.6%). This again is broadly consistent with overall service user data: the vast majority of all service users (92%) reporting to VCAS in 2020 identify as White British.

58% of those surveyed were aged between 40 and 59 years old, compared to less than a third of all VCAS service users in this same age bracket (31%). See Figure 2.

Figure 2 Age of respondents



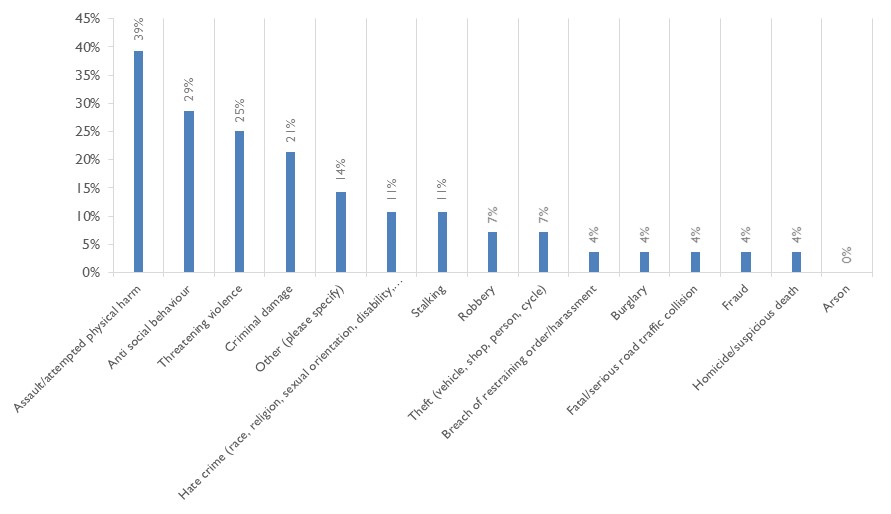
The higher than expected number of ‘middle-age’ respondents is reversed in the youngest and oldest age brackets: no-one aged 70 years of age or older completed a survey (though 16.9% of all service users are 70 years old or over); and only 7% of respondents are under 30 years old, compared to almost one in five service users.

Breaking down the results by local authority of residence, the highest number of respondents live in Middlesbrough (41.4%), followed by Stockton on Tees (34.5%) and Redcar and Cleveland (24.1%). No survey respondents live in Hartlepool.

### 6.4.2 Victimisation and reporting

93% of those completing the survey (n = 27) were a victim of crime or an incident, whilst two respondents were witnesses to a crime or anti-social behaviour.

Figure 3 Crime recorded by respondents



51 crimes/incidents were recorded on the survey by respondents therefore meaning that some respondents had been the victim of multiple crimes, with the most being five for one individual.

Of the 51 crimes/incidents logged, ‘assault/ attempted physical harm’ was experienced by 39% (n=11) of respondents and was therefore the most predominant of the crime types listed. See Figure 3.

Three of the crime categories (‘assault/attempted physical harm’, ‘anti-social behaviour’ and ‘threatening violence’) account for over half of all the crimes/incidents logged – 32 of the 51 recorded. Note that the first two categories are also two of the most common categories of crime reported by VCAS service users in 2020. However in contrast ‘threatening violence’ accounted for only 6% of all the crimes service users reported to the VCAS service in 2020, yet one in four survey respondents specified threats of violence in the survey (25%).

All but one of the survey respondents reported the incident or crime to the police (n=28).

### 6.4.3 Contacting VCAS, support needs and satisfaction

#### 6.4.3.1 Contact

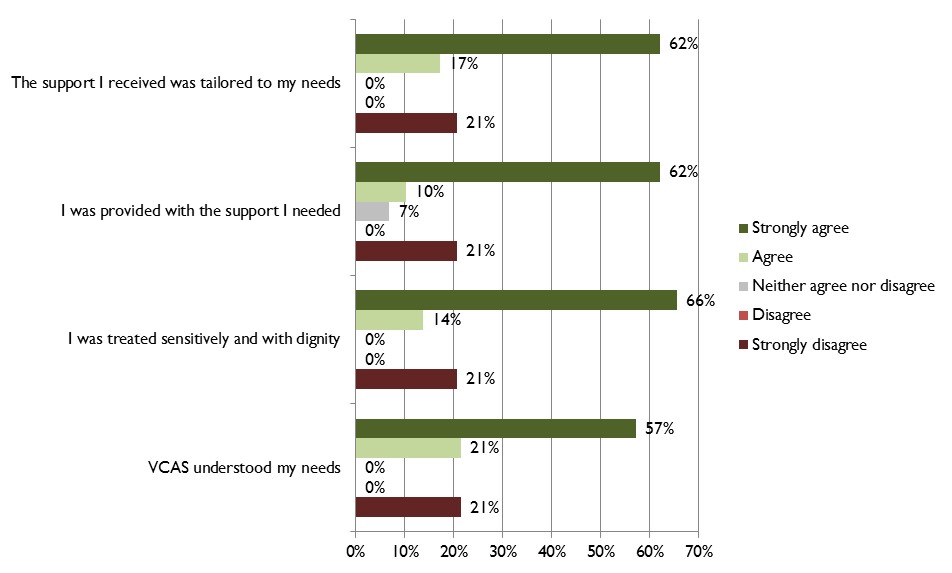
Over 80% of those completing the survey had found the VCAS service by either being contacted directly by service staff or else being put in touch with VCAS via police staff. This accords with the service data that highlights the role of the police in engaging clients.

#### 6.4.3.2 Satisfaction

Overall, levels of satisfaction with the support provided by VCAS was very high with 93% of respondents either ‘completely satisfied’ (83%) or ‘very satisfied’ (10%) with the VCAS support they received, whilst the other two respondents were ‘fairly satisfied’ overall. This is consistent with the results from the end of support questions asked of VCAS clients, with 93.7% of the 1103 service users who fed back their views in 2020 stating that VCAS support was satisfactorily completed.

When asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about the VCAS support they received, a large majority agreed or strongly agreed with each of the statements (See Figure 4). However a notable minority, a fifth of respondents for each statement, strongly disagreed (n=6 for each, or 21%).

Figure 4 the support received from VCAS



A caveat needs to be raised in relation to the six clients who strongly disagreed with each of the statements. Specifically the same group of people strongly disagreed with each statement but in relation to the question ‘Overall, how satisfied were you with the support provided by VCAS?’ all six answered ‘Completely satisfied’. This may suggest that they incorrectly selected their response (choosing a negative rather than positive result). As such the negative feedback may not accurately capture the views of this group.

#### 6.4.3.3 Unmet needs

When asked about any unmet needs - and whilst 24 of the 29 respondents indicated their needs were met - five respondents had issues with ‘touch points’ within the criminal justice system (namely the police and the courts), the outcome (“My neighbour was not prosecuted”) and the unmet need for counselling. Note therefore that the results would tend to indicate that their unmet needs were not necessarily those that could have been met by VCAS but were rather issues with the wider criminal justice system and the outcomes that the criminal justice had (or had not) provided.

Over a third of survey respondents (38%) had been put in touch with another organisation by VCAS, to help with specific needs. The most common sign-posting was to counselling and therapy (n=4) followed by the fire service (n=2), with the latter for security checks on property.

### 6.4.4 Coping and recovery support needs

When asked whether, following on from the incident, the victim or witness had recovered, only one of the 28 who answered that question stated they had ‘fully recovered’ – almost two thirds (61%) had partially recovered, whilst almost a third (29%) had not recovered at all, highlighting the enduring impact of criminality on people’s lives.

Exploring what else would have helped recovery, a range of answers were recorded: several acknowledging that more time was needed to recover and this was an ongoing situation, whilst four identified the actions of the police and probation service as being inadequate in their cases. One example is quoted below:

* “I'm not sure what else could have been done apart from a stronger response to the stalking from the police. Police officers stated they believed it was stalking but she was only charged with harassment and malicious communications…my stalker still continues her online behaviour and it looks like I am back to square one with building up a portfolio of incidents in order for anything further to be done. I feel the intervention wasn't strong enough to deal with her behaviour and that at any point she can, and does, decide to continue. Victim support has been amazing in supporting me as and when these incidents occur. I can't fault the service. My recovery, though, will only be complete when the stalking stops”.

### 6.4.5 Other

Finally, when asked for further comments, the 11 who completed the final question all fed back praise for the service and in particular caseworkers and/or other staff who had helped on their journeys. A selection of plaudits for staff are listed below:

* “X was fantastic and very understanding.”
* “Y was very supportive and I am forever grateful for her help. She was there for me through it all, she made it better for me to try to recover.”
* “Z my caseworker has gone above and beyond anything I ever expected. A wonderful lady whose compassion and care shines!”
* “X has been fantastic support and done whatever she could for me”
* “X is a star!! I have been so lucky having her as my support! Xxx”
* “The support I received from Karen was outstanding. She was caring, she listened to me and I didn’t feel uncomfortable when I cried or when I called her when I needed to talk. She was so lovely and calming and she really helped me at probably the worst point in my whole life. I so appreciated the support I got and I can't thank her enough”

# 7. Client perspective

## 7.1 Methodology

The VCAS clients were selected via dip sampling method across all cases closed within the last year. Consent to participate in the research was obtained by VCAS and the contact details of clients who consented sent to the CPI researcher.

A member of the public requested to provide her feedback after seeing the Victim Needs Assessment press release by the OPCC.

In-depth telephone interviews were undertaken with fourteen victims of crime or anti-social behaviour. All interviews took place in May and June 2021.

## 7.2 Victim profile

Two respondents were interviewed on behalf of the VCAS client; one was the client’s carer, and one was the client’s parent. The details below are for the fourteen victims of crime.

#### Gender identity

* Females - Ten victims
* Male - Four victims

#### Age

* Under 18 – One victim
* 18-25 – Two victims
* 35-44 - Two victims
* 45-54 – Five victims
* 55-64 – Two victims
* Over 65 – Two victims

#### Ethnic group

* White British – Thirteen victims
* Other ethnic group – One victim

#### Local authority area

* Hartlepool – Four victims
* Middlesbrough – Two victims
* Redcar and Cleveland – Four victims
* Stockton-On-Tees – Four victims

#### Crime category

* Anti-Social Behaviour – Two victims
* Burglary – Two victims
* Assault/threats of violence – One victim
* Assault/threats of violence/hate crime (disability) – Two victims
* Online grooming – One victim
* Domestic abuse - One victim
* Fatal RTC – One victim
* Cuckooing – One victim
* Robbery/attempted robbery - Two victims
* Romance fraud – One victim

## 7.3 Victim feedback

### 7.3.1 Reporting crime to the police

All crimes or anti-social behaviour (ASB) incidents experienced by the victims we consulted were reported to the police. Crimes were usually reported by the victims themselves, although the carer/parent reported crimes on behalf of the victim.

For on-going repeated incidences of ASB, the victim regularly reports incidents to the police, sometimes as frequently as five times in one night.

Two victims cited some dissatisfaction with the way their call/s to the police were handled. One said that her calls were not logged by the call handler which resulted in repeated calls to the police as no action appeared to be taken.

Another described how the interaction with the police during the initial call had a huge impact on her. She felt berated by the call handler, that she was not listened to, and dismayed at the lack of communication as to whether the police were on their way.

### 7.3.2 Victim’s experience and associated impact

The majority of victims experienced a single criminal episode. These single experiences included ASB, burglary, road traffic accidents, robbery and attempted robbery. For others, the victim’s experience comprised repeated, on-going episodes, and interactions with the perpetrator.

Despite the differences in the number of victim episodes and types of crimes experienced, nearly all victims felt negatively impacted by their experiences. A plethora of immediate, and more longer-lasting effects of the crimes were described by victims, but there did not appear to be any correlation between the number of victim episodes and extent of the impact; both one-off, and repeated victim episodes, had devastating and irreversible outcomes for some.

Many victims described being shocked at the impact the crime had on them. They used words such as traumatic, intimidated, anxious, scared, paranoid, and intimidated and ‘floored’ by the experience when recalling the various incidents. The experience became all-encompassing for many victims.

The impact that the crimes had on victims have been categorised and outlined in more detail below:

#### 7.3.2.1 Feeling unsafe and scared

Feeling unsafe in the immediate aftermath, and for many in the longer-term, was the most commonly mentioned impact cited by victims. Victims of ASB, robbery, cuckooing, hate crime, domestic abuse and online grooming said they felt unsafe. Some victims reported feeling unsafe in their own homes, and for those living with families, they worried about the safety, and impact of the criminal activity on those they live with. For one client, the safety and welfare of her family was her primary concern, and far outweighed any concerns for her own safety or wellbeing. A deep rooted protective instinct encased her during the criminal experience.

Some victims said they were anxious, scared, crying and did not want to be alone. Some were fearful that the perpetrator would return. One described walking with her head cowered and constantly looking over her shoulder in case of repeated attacks or reprisals.

Some victims fell into what they described as “a very dark place” with the crimes having devastating effects on future plans and ambitions – all which are thwarted by the fear of meeting the perpetrator and constantly living in fear.

#### 7.3.2.2 Deliberately changing everyday behaviours

Clients described how their victim experience impacted on their everyday behaviour, with some deliberately avoiding doing normal, everyday things.

The behaviours that were affected included leaving the house, walking on their own, and behaviours that one victim felt may have been an indication that her house was unoccupied.

These behavioural changes tended to be more short term, with victims feeling able to revert to normal behaviour after a period of time, following support, and once their confidence had returned.

#### 7.3.2.3 Health and sleep deprivation

The impact on mental health was devastating for one victim who now had to take regular medication as a result of the long lasting impact and damage of the ASB.

Two victims said that they experienced sleep deprivation as a result of the impact the crime had on them, caused by worry that the perpetrators would return and continue the on-going verbal abuse and threats. The noise from late night parties was partly responsible for sleep deprivation for one client.

One victim aligned her experience with the process of grieving.

#### 7.3.2.4 Financial impact

Many of the accumulated affects outlined above resulted in one client being unable to work, which impacted her earning potential, and one victim lost money as a direct result of fraud.

#### 7.3.2.5 House move

Following a burglary within the victim’s home, one client was re-housed, and another said he would have moved house if other circumstances had not prevented this being a viable option.

### 7.3.3 Referral routes into VCAS

The police referred twelve of the fourteen victims to VCAS. Some mentioned referrals through specific police departments such as the police ASB team or the FLO. One victim was referred to VCAS through Action Fraud, and another could not remember.

A VCAS representative then promptly made contact with victims by phone, followed up by a face-to face visit where necessary or where covid regulations allowed.

No one reported any difficulties with the initial contact with VCAS – case workers contacted clients within reasonable timescales and one client described how she was shocked at the speed with which VCAS contacted her following the referral.

### 7.3.4 Defining recovery

A few victims could not define, or explain, what recovery meant for them. Some were still living with the effects of the criminal episode/s or were still part-way through their recovery journey.

One victim believed she would never recover from what had happened to her, “Nothing will make it completely go away.” The worry for the safety of her family was fundamental to this, and the all-consuming thoughts around protecting others will, she believes, be with her forever.

Others were confident in explaining what recovery meant to them and how they wanted to live their life again. They explained that they wanted to feel safe again, for improvements to their mental health, and in the case of ongoing ASB incidents, for the perpetrators to be moved.

Others described wanting to regain their confidence, to have the confidence to leave the house and to not constantly look over their shoulder in fear.

For most, recovery means making life how it used to be, to get their old lives back, and to stop feeling responsible, or to blame for what happened to them.

### 7.3.5 Expectations of VCAS service provision

#### *7.3.5.1 Expectations at point of referral*

The majority of victims were unaware of VCAS prior to their referral and thus did not have any expectations about how VCAS could help them or the type of support VCAS would provide.

This absence of service expectation was due to a combination of not knowing the VCAS service existed, as well as the fact that victims were first time users of VCAS.

Furthermore, victims explained that at the point of referral they were in shock, anxious, and were experiencing heightened emotions. This left very little room to think about what the referral to VCAS would entail. “I was in a lot of shock - don't know what I was looking for. It was just nice.”

Following a household burglary, the client explained how there were so many professionals in her house (such as forensics, police and others) that it felt frantic and she was grateful for the offer of support as she, “thought I would have to get through it by myself.” Her expectations were clouded by what she had heard in the media about the police – she aligned VCAS with the police given this was the route of referral.

A few victims anticipated that VCAS would provide someone to listen and talk to, but many were unaware of the practical advice that VCAS subsequently provided.

#### *7.3.5.2 Expectation of VCAS’ role in full recovery*

The majority of victims adopted a pragmatic approach to their recovery journey, expecting to manage part of their recovery themselves. These victims acknowledged that there is only so much VCAS could do and that it is up to the individual manage part of their recovery - VCAS can offer advice and guidance but the individual is in control of whether they take up/use the support and guidance offered.

One victim said she knew the support had to “end at some point.”

Just one client expected VCAS to help her fully recover but said she has had to help herself by referring herself to further support.

### 7.3.6 Initial assessment

Many victims could not remember whether they had an initial assessment from VCAS but said that they received a telephone call or/and a visit from a VCAS representative shortly after the referral. Thus, clients do not recognise/label it as an assessment as such but mentioned that VCAS case workers explained the range of support that was available, explained the next steps in the criminal justice process and provided details of other support organisations to some. All but one felt that VCAS understood their situation.

### 7.3.7 Onward referrals and additional sources of support

Approximately half of the victims consulted said that case workers provided details of other support organisations or referred them on their behalf. Referrals were made to MIND and other support organisations but the clients could not remember which ones.

Often these were not contacted by the victims as they felt it was not necessary as they had sufficient support or did not want to involve anyone else. Two clients were already accessing professional support prior to their referral to VCAS, so did not feel that they needed any additional support other than that they already accessed and that offered by VCAS.

VCAS were unable to provide the necessary support to one victim, but she did feel that VCAS understood her and her situation. Describing the VCAS personnel as ‘lovely’ and ‘apologetic’ that they could not offer support, the victim had to self-refer to various support services, none of which ever fully met her needs.

Friends and family were a source of support for a few victims, although not all had any family that they could reach out to. Other sources of external support were offered by employers.

### 7.3.8 Support

#### 7.3.8.1 Type of support offered by VCAS

Practical Support

About three-quarters of the clients consulted said VCAS gave them practical advice, advising them on ways to improve home security and sent alarms, cameras (false), window and door locks.

Clients who experienced ASB, burglary, cuckooing and hate crimes all said security advice was given as well as advice on ways they could protect themselves. Practical security and safety advice to help clients feel safer is a key support need given feeling unsafe is frequently cited impact of many types of crime.

Practical advice was always given in conjunction with additional emotional support.

Emotional

All but one client said that VCAS provided them with emotional support comprising telephone calls to ensure they were ok, listening to them, offering reassurance and being a voice on the phone. For the client who did not receive emotional support, the client’s carer was able to provide this support and it was therefore not necessary for VCAS to provide this for one victim.

Liaison

For some clients, VCAS liaised between the victim and other organisations, speaking to other organisations on their behalf. Clients described how VCAS wrote letters to the ASB team, assisted with Social Services, and acted as the liaison between clients and the Police.

Legal/Criminal Justice Process

The support VCAS provided in terms of the legal and justice process can be divided into two types of support:

VCAS explained the legal/criminal justice process to victims, explaining the steps involved, how the legal system works and offering advice on what clients can do to legally protect themselves.

VCAS also kept clients informed of their case and any developments. Clients said they were informed of things such as when the perpetrator had been caught, trial dates and outcome of the trial, as well as any updates as necessary. VCAS contacted clients on key dates such as the day of court cases and provided timely information on any updates within the legal process.

Mediation service

One client said that VCAS offered to mediation to help resolve in ongoing neighbour dispute.

#### *7.3.8.2 Delivery of support*

Most of the support that VCAS provided to clients was delivered over the telephone. In interview, clients reported limited face-to-face appointments. (Note that most of those interviewed had received support during the Covid pandemic and so this limit on face-to-face work is likely to be a result of VCAS applying appropriate social distancing measures in the delivery of their service).

#### 7.3.8.3 Effectiveness of the support

The immense appreciation and gratitude that most clients have for VCAS and the support they provided cannot be underestimated. The life-line VCAS offered victims at a time when many felt vulnerable, were confused, shocked, and scared, was truly welcomed.

Even though clients did not take up all the support VCAS offered, or went through with all referrals to other support organisation, the fact that they were informed or offered these by VCAS was considered valuable to their recovery.

The appreciation client’s had for the VCAS service is illustrated in a few comments below:

* “The support was brilliant. 100% it met my needs.”
* “Highly delighted. They are very kind people. They really looked after me. I can't fault them.”
* “Their service was spot on. I couldn't have asked for anything else. Amazing someone would support me. It is an excellent service.”
* "I didn't think they would go above and beyond."
* “I can’t fault the service.”
* “There is nothing more they could have done for me.”

The consensus was that the case workers were nice people, kind and sensitive to their needs, with a genuine interest in clients as individuals and that they would not stop until they had provided the full level of support that clients needed. Respondents said it felt like nothing was too much trouble and that VCAS ensured they had the best possible experience.

In the majority of cases the referral was made by the police and VCAS case workers then called the client – there was no onus or responsibility on behalf of the victim which victims welcomed.

The practical support helped victims to feel safe and helped some to regain their confidence so that they could reinstate their normal everyday behaviours such as leaving the house and walking alone.

Whilst the practical support was highly effective, it was the emotional support that clients repeatedly referred to in terms of being instrumental in their recovery.

The frequency of telephone calls by case workers to ‘check-in’ on clients was targeted appropriately and to the level victims needed at that point in time. The telephone calls underpinning the emotional support were more frequent during the initial weeks following the crime, reducing in frequency in line with respondents support needs; the call frequency was never out of line with what clients needed.

For many clients it was valuable to talk to someone and to know that someone was listening to them where they felt they were not a burden. They found strength in talking things through which was a vital part in the recovery process. One victim described how the case worker made her feel important, and another said “it is about knowing someone is there when you need them.” This was particularly welcomed during periods of isolation felt during lockdown.

The majority of victims said that they knew how to contact their caseworkers and felt that they could call them at any time which offered them comfort. Others shared similar sentiments saying that they knew they could contact the case worker at any time knowing they weren’t annoying them which is testament to the case workers and the ease at which they made clients feel.

The liaison role that VCAS undertook was considered effective by clients. Many described how this was the first time they had found themselves a victim of crime and they found the process confusing. VCAS’s timely passing on of information regarding the legal/criminal process meant that victims were not left in limbo which they felt they may have been if VCAS had not relayed this information to them.

One client cited some dissatisfaction with the lack of detail/information from the Police (partly thought to be due to the impact of Covid) or that the police were not helping them effectively. Thus this go-between service provided by VCAS was hugely helpful. Describing VCAS case workers as a “reference point you can contact at any time,” one victim said how she felt very comfortable asking the case worker questions about the criminal process that she felt she would have been wasting police time.

The support from VCAS appeared to sit comfortably alongside additional support victims were accessing at the same time. It does not appear to be the case that the ‘listening ear’ that VCAS provides duplicated support clients received from other support services; VCAS emotional support enhances the professional support received elsewhere. “If I didn't have VCAS alongside counselling I would have struggled. Counselling was ok for a period - can't praise VCAS enough. Didn't realise how much I needed them – it was a valuable service.” The client said that VCAS had an invaluable level of knowledge and signposted her effectively for further support.

Many victims felt that the service they received from VCAS helped them to cope with the impact of the crime. Clients described regaining their confidence, being able to take a walk on their own again, feeling safe and helped one to understand that they were a victim and were not to blame for what happened.

One did not take up all the support offered by VCAS and so the impact is still being felt, and for another the ASB is on-going and thus the impacts still emerging.

Just one client said that the support she received did not meet her needs. Whilst acknowledging that it was nice to have someone to talk to, VCAS were ‘just an ear’ and she felt she could have received similar level of support from family.

It is worth noting however, that not all respondents had family to speak to and so this was vital to their recovery journey.

### 7.3.9 Gaps in the referral process

Just two victims felt there were gaps in the referral process.

One described being “passed from pillar to post,” and said that no one fully understood her needs and she was referred on to numerous services, none of which could fully help her.

The services did not appear to communicate with each other when referrals were made – this left the victim having to tell her story again and again.

(Note that this individual was the victim of domestic abuse so would appear to have been incorrectly signposted to VCAS who subsequently referred her on to a local domestic abuse organisation).

The victim said that the referral process should be explained to victims and services should be committed to the victim. A service should continue supporting the victim until they are ready to move on to other services, or have got the support they need.

One client noted that there is a need for victims to be seen by more than their victim ‘label’. Whilst predominantly seeking support for domestic abuse, one victim said how victims should not be defined by such labels. Labelling her needs as domestic abuse, resulted in her missing out on opportunities for referrals to services which could support her for all her other victim experiences which were entwined in the domestic abuse; crimes such as knife crime, fraud and stalking. Referrals to deal with these issues were missed given the domestic abuse label that was imposed on the victim early on.

Another was referred onto a different organisation by VCAS for additional support but due to the waiting time, had to refer herself to the same organisation again.

One client felt that VCAS should have more connection with mental health services and better links with local services. One client said that VCAS should know how the local services work, what is available and what you can do in the area. Explaining periods of isolation, the client said she would not have felt so isolated if VCAS had recommended local social groups for example. The client explained it is about helping individuals feel more connected and if VCAS do not know what local groups are available, they should research the local services and get back to clients with what would work best for them and their individual needs.

### 7.3.10 Gaps in the support provision

One client felt that the correlation between the police case being closed and the end of support provision should be addressed. One client explained that support services should not stop once the case is closed – the victim’s support needs have not disappeared once the case is closed.

The client felt that the decision to stop the support should lie with the individual case worker. The victim should be consulted to check if they are ok with the support being removed so that there remains a continuity of case worker support all the way through. She described the end of the support from VCAS as, "feels halfway through the chapter."

Another said that VCAS service should not be limited to particular crime types. The client felt that VCAS is not usually recommended for her situation but that the support from VCAS was invaluable and she would have struggled without it.

VCAS were not able to support one victim of domestic abuse. One interviewee considered this to be a gap in the VCAS service provision.

Despite praising VCAS and the support provided, one client felt that the support VCAS provided could have been better. However, the respondent explained that she was unable to explain what more support she needed VCAS to provide as a result of this being the first time she was ‘in this situation’.

One victim said that VCAS offers great support for listening to problems but they should take that support further. She would recommend that VCAS improve the practical side of their support – in terms of offering an advocacy service and liaising with the Police more on the victims behalf and providing the victim with information they need.

For this client, this improvement is ingrained in providing more effective communication to the client – informing the client if they cannot help with particular issues. She was looking for VCAS to assist her with a particular issue and was told that they would phone her back if they could do something. The victim felt that she should have been contacted regardless of whether they could help with that issue or not to let her know the outcome

The telephone delivery of support was considered a gap by one victim who would have preferred the case worker to have made a site visit so that VCAS understood the intensity of the situation. This would have prevented the victim having to explain the situation over the phone.

# 8. Stakeholder perspective

## 8.1 Professional stakeholders

A range of professional stakeholders across the Cleveland Police Force area were interviewed to understand their perceptions of VCAS. In total 30 stakeholders were interviewed. Their views are set out below in relation to the key themes that were raised.

### 8.1.1 Comparison with previous victim provision

All stakeholders felt that VCAS provided an excellent and high quality service. In particular a number marked differences between the current service as provided by VCAS and what was previously in place before VCAS were awarded the victim support contract. Stakeholders noted that the previous victim support service was predominantly office-based operating a telephone and was largely a signposting service. It was felt that this had been insufficient to meet the needs of local victims of crime and the current offer was far better as responding to the needs of victims.

Specifically, VCAS was seen as being much more responsive, working directly in the community with service providers and victims in a hands-on fashion. Stakeholders felt that VCAS were really victim needs driven and took great strides to work in partnership with other agencies. They were seen to have a “can do” approach and were prepared to follow through to provide support for victims.

### 8.1.2 VCAS and the police

#### 8.1.2.1 Overall police view of VCAS

Given the critical relationship between the police and VCAS it is worth exploring this issue in detail.

The police were very supportive of the role played by VCAS and a number of officers described how they had seen the service develop year-on-year. Police stakeholders noted that there are good relationships both at managerial and operational levels and that there are mechanisms for any issues to be resolved by managers within each organisations where any issues arise.

Police stakeholders described effective integrated working which was evidenced by such things as the joint identification of victim cases, shared IT systems, VCAS presence in control room, joint working with specialist police teams, training and awareness sessions, managing the fear of crime and community awareness sessions.

It was felt that VCAS had a high profile within the police and had a reputation for being proactive with a “can do” attitude, with an organisational ethos of looking for continual development. Attitudes to VCAS in the police were captured in the following quotes:

* “Worth their weight in gold and have never been let down by them.”
* “VCAS tailor service for what’s needed”.
* “VCAS are fantastic – take over wrap around care. Can continue the victims support once the police have done their bit and have to withdraw.”
* “VCAS bend over backwards and will look at victims’ individual needs. Will top and tail services to that individual victim’s needs.”

Looking at specific areas within the police, one stakeholder stated that their specialist fraud unit “couldn’t do it without VCAS – their support has been phenomenal in major cases”. VCAS supporting victims allows specialist police units to concentrate on their investigation aspects. As another stated,

#### 8.1.2.2 VCAS’ capacity

Whilst the overall thrust of police responses were positive, police stakeholders had some suggestions made with regard to the VCAS service.

They noted that there is evidence that having VCAS staff located in the control room was increasing the number of identified victims and that there was increased scope for even more referrals from the police. Despite this, stakeholders from the police felt that there was still a level of unmet need. It was also felt that there was scope for both parties to work together to enhance prevention work. The use of social media should be investigated and it is likely that this will also give rise to more referrals.

Acknowledging the unmet need some police stakeholders raised concerns with regard to the capacity within VCAS to cope if it were to see any further large increase in workload. While welcoming the fact that VCAS were continually looking at ways of enhancing their offer to victims as well as addressing fear of crime and prevention work there were some concerns whether this was practical and sustainable within current resources and whether capacity within VCAS would allow for constant growth.

One police officer noted that there has been a large increase in fraud and cyber-crime and that the specialist police unit leading this area works closely with VCAS who have also been proactive in raising public awareness using monthly webinars and drop in sessions. Whilst welcoming the promotion of this issue, the officer raised concerns about VCAS to cope with the (hoped for) rise in numbers of victims of cyber-crime coming forward.

#### 8.1.2.3 Other areas of consideration

Some within the police recognised that a lot of training of police officers had been undertaken which had predominantly concentrated on new recruits and key staff such as control room staff. Although there was clearly an increased awareness of VCAS within the police force it was felt that there was still scope to expand training and awareness amongst more experienced officers.

### 8.1.3 Potential duplication

Some stakeholders raised the issue of potential for duplication of support services where it might be more beneficial for VCAS to signpost cases to specialist providers rather than undertaking the victim support themselves. There was some sense that VCAS are ‘holding’ clients who could legitimately be passed on to specialist services. It was felt that this was largely because VCAS were focussed on providing a high quality service and were most confident that they would be able to meet client’s needs ‘in-house’ without reference to other providers. It was felt that this could also free up additional capacity within VCAS.

An example is Brake, a national charity supporting people who have been seriously injured in a road traffic accident or bereaved relatives and who are listed as one of the services that VCAS refer onto. Brake reported that while they have a national contract (and therefore cover the Cleveland area) they have noted lower levels of referrals for residents of Cleveland compared with other areas. They encouraged VCAS to make more use of this national resource, directly referring victims onto Brake, which could release capacity in VCAS.

### 8.1.4 Capacity

Other stakeholders other than the police (see above) commented that VCAS is probably at or near full capacity. While this is an issue in itself it was further noted that VCAS is likely to have additional demands placed on it as access capacity increases (such as increased numbers of victims of cyber-crime being referred in). Furthermore it was noted that there appears to be demand from other agencies such as the police for them to take on more referrals. As such a range of interviewees expressed some concerns about the ability of VCAS to absorb this additional demand while retaining the quality of its provision.

There also needs to be a greater focus on victims of lower level crimes, which are often not picked up and supported.

### 8.1.5 Key staff

There was a general view that VCAS relies on practitioners’ experience and the skills and knowledge of a small number of staff. There was a consensus that the service has a group of highly committed staff, but this might not always be the case. Moreover it was felt that the success of the service depends in particular on the relationship with and the efforts of a couple of key managers. Concerns were raised about whether the quality of the service could be maintained should one or two key individuals move on.

### 8.1.6 Communication

Some stakeholders stated that it is important for the future that there is continued effective feedback on the work and support undertaken by VCAS. A past criticism was that, in general, feedback on victim support services were poor. It was agreed that levels of communication between victim services and the wider service landscape have improved since VCAS has been in post, but there are still pockets of areas where this could be improved on. For example there was feedback from an RSL that although they were happy with the service provided by VCAS they would welcome more feedback on the services provide to and the outcomes for their residents.

### 8.1.7 Prevention

Although VCAS has made great efforts to support the prevention agenda it was felt that this is a key area for development in raising public awareness and having structures and frameworks to pick potential cases up before they could become acute. Access to schools and education was suggested as a key area to explore further.

VCAS had worked closely with Action Fraud to undertake awareness sessions and had undertaken similar sessions with other agencies. *Ad hoc* drop in sessions had also been undertaken. However, prevention was seen as vital and would need a cross agency co-ordinated framework and it is doubtful if VCAS currently had enough capacity at the required levels to deliver effectively at the required levels.

### 8.1.8 Domestic abuse

VCAS had little contact with domestic abuse charities as it was recognised that this was outside their current contract. The domestic abuse charities also considered that it would be difficult for VCAS to undertake their role due to the specialist knowledge and skills that are necessary.

## 8.2 Community organisations perceptions

Organisations and charities working with the under-represented groups of interest and/or people with protected characteristics were invited to provide their views on the victim support services in Cleveland and by VCAS, whether there are any gaps in the current service provision, and potential barriers to victim engagement. The aim was to give a better understanding of the support needs of victims and people affected by crime and to understand where efforts should be directed to better meet the needs of victims.

In-depth telephone or online interviews were undertaken with thirteen stakeholders from community organisations in May and June 2021. The organisations consulted include:

* A Way Out
* Age UK
* Barnardos
* Breckon Hill Community Centre
* Essential Learning Curve
* Halo
* Hart Gables
* Hartlepool Chinese Association
* Hartlepool Deaf Centre
* Methodist Asylum Project
* NUR Fitness
* Terrence Higgins Trust
* The Regional Refugee Forum

The organisations work with a diverse range of vulnerable groups and groups with protected characteristics.

* Three organisations work with the LGBTQ+ community
* Six organisations work with people from BAME communities
  + Two of these work predominantly, but not exclusively, with women
  + Four work with refugees and asylum seekers
* Two work with children and adults who are at risk from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse
* One works with the Deaf community
* Age UK

An online focus group was undertaken in May 2021 with representatives supporting the refugee and asylum seeker community:

* Diversity Inside Us
* Creative Minds
* British Sri Lankan Community
* Individual activist in Hartlepool

### 8.2.1 VCAS service provision

Some stakeholders could not comment on the quality of the service provided by VCAS. They were either unaware of VCAS or received very little feedback from clients and service users following the referral to VCAS.

However, a few stakeholders spoke highly of the general support that VCAS provides. It was considered to be a good general service enabling victims to unwrap their problems, providing someone to listen to them and someone to focus on their needs, all of which enable many victims to move forward and get closure.

VCAS were considered to be good at engaging the refugee and asylum seeker community once victims were “on their radar,” noting that this can be a difficult group to engage.

VCAS were considered to provide a good service for those experiencing LGBTQ+ hate crime once victims are engaged with VCAS.

### 8.2.2 Perceptions of VCAS and support services

Stakeholders were asked to describe how their clients and service users perceive the victim support services.

The consensus was that people are pleased that there are referral agencies they can access for support. However it was noted that the clients that they work with can be unsure about the support services, what they can provide, why they would therefore access that service and what the benefits are to them.

Specific issues were raised with regard to some communities.

One stakeholder said that services are isolating to those over 50 who often do not go back to the service.

For those working with the LGBTQ+ community it was stated that there is a perception that services ask inappropriate questions around LGBTQ+ issues and that there is a lack of understanding of LGBTQ+ issues which leaves the marginalised being 'othered'.

Hart Gables additionally cited a visible improvement in the perceptions of, and confidence in, the police amongst its service users. This has led to an increase in the number of hate crimes reported. As a result of the close links and recent work with the police engagement team, service users feel more comfortable reporting crimes directly to the police.

### 8.2.3 Gaps in the referral process

Many victims are referred into VCAS by the police once they have reported a crime and this pathway appears to work well for those reporting crimes. One stakeholder however highlighted the difficulty with this referral pathway claiming that, as a result, the VCAS service can only be useful to, or accessed by victims once a crime is reported: “What happens to those that do not report crimes?”

The referral process is hindered by the lack of knowledge about what services are available and who provides them. With no central database of the services available, and what appears to be no recent mapping exercise of the support, stakeholders felt that the referral process is hindered as they can be stuck wondering where to refer victims to. This can lead to incorrect signposting.

The inconsistency in the referral process, all seemingly appearing to operate in a different way, means that many victims are missing out on the best and quickest support available.

## 8.3 Gaps in service provision

Both professional stakeholders and representatives of community organisations were asked to explore any perceived gaps in the provision as provided by VCAS. Their responses are set out below thematically.

### 8.3.1 Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse

There is a limit to the support VCAS can provide for victims of sexual exploitation or abuse and one stakeholder felt that the service needs expertise to work with women. If people have complex, multiple disadvantages, they need a more specialist approach than that VCAS currently provides.

### 8.3.2 Provision of safe spaces for women

There is currently sometimes a gap in the provision of safe spaces for women which should be gender and trauma informed. Offering mixed supported housing is not appropriate for some women.

### 8.3.3 Capacity

Stakeholders described how services cannot always pick up the referral once it has been made. Capacity to deal with referrals in a timely manner is considered a gap in the current provision.

### 8.3.4 Recognising the indicators

Victims of exploitation do not always recognise that they are a victim – it can sometimes take people years to recognise the control they are under. Two stakeholders said that there is a gap in the awareness of the indicators of such crimes amongst professionals and some victims are therefore not picked up quickly enough.

### 8.3.5 Local service provision

Stakeholders felt that provision at a local, community level is currently missing. A locally based service within a community setting would enable a greater understanding of the problems and issues faced in that area.

### 8.3.6 Method of contacting victims

One stakeholder said how referral agencies often phone victims from an unknown telephone number. For victims who are scared, anxious and worried about reprisal from perpetrators, phoning from an unknown telephone number is unhelpful.

# 9. Conclusions and recommendations

## 9.1 Conclusions

A number of conclusions have been drawn from the data set out in this report.

### 9.1.1 High quality service

Satisfaction among clients with VCAS is extremely high – 93% of clients in a survey said that they were either ’completely satisfied’ or ’very satisfied’ with the service. The results of the CPI survey corroborate VCAS’s own data that indicates that over 90% of clients had their support satisfactorily completed.

The quantitative data regarding client satisfaction is supported by the interviews in which clients were very positive about VCAS and the support it provided. There was a clear consensus that case workers were sensitive and supportive and were committed to helping victims of crime. In particular clients welcomed the emotional support that was provided. The support received by clients evidently helps many to overcome the impact of being a victim of crime. This is reflected in the fact that, when offered onward referrals to other services by VCAS, a number of clients appear to be satisfied with receiving support solely from VCAS.

Professional stakeholders also praised the quality of the VCAS service. Stakeholders compared the service positively to the service that had been in place prior to VCAS and the police emphasised how the service better enabled them to deliver their work.

A very slight caveat can be offered in relation to the satisfaction data. In interviews with clients it was clear that they had not expected to receive any support as a victim of crime. Many were therefore glad to have been offered any sort of support. Possibly, high levels of satisfaction are partly a function of clients having no expectations about what they should be offered. However, on the whole it would appear that the service is providing a genuinely high quality service regardless of expectations.

It can therefore be concluded with a high degree of confidence that VCAS offers a high quality service that meets the needs of most clients.

### 9.1.2 Areas of dissatisfaction

While recognising that dissatisfaction levels with the service are very low, it is important to identify patterns and indicators where performance is not so strong.

The data indicates that dissatisfaction with the service is correlated to referrals from the Police Control Room. This gives some cause for concern as the new control room initiative has demonstrably increased referrals from this source. The data does not indicate *why* people referred from the control room are more likely to be dissatisifed but, if this mechanism continues to be a primary conduit to accessing services then it does give some cause for concern about further emphasis on a channel that produces a higher level of dissatisfaction.

Note also that dissatisfaction levels are higher among Asian clients which also gives some cause for concern as it tends to indicate that the service is not necessarily meeting the needs of minority communities in the area.

### 9.1.3 Dependence on police referrals

Drawing together a number of strands of data, and whilst again emphasising that the clear majority of clients are satisfied with VCAS (according to both internal VCAS data as well as data obtained through consultation work carried out for the purpose of this evaluation), some reservations exist with regard to the heavy emphasis of VCAS on police referrals.

Police referrals, via different mechanisms, make up two thirds of referrals to VCAS (see Table 1). The dip sample of clients who were interviewed ended up with a group whereby 12 out of the 14 having been referred by the police. This clearly then demonstrates the critical pathway from police to VCAS.

By aligning the two services so closely VCAS has, to some extent, become dependent on the public’s perceptions of Cleveland Police. If people are happy to report a crime to the police, they are highly likely to then be passed on to VCAS and supported accordingly. If however a person has reservations about reporting a crime to the police, then it would appear to be the case that their needs are likely not to be met. VCAS therefore becomes dependent not only on its own reputation, but that of the police also.

This appears to be corroborated by reference to data regarding hate crime. VCAS data indicates very low levels of victims of hate crime being supported by the service – the numbers range from 33 to 39 between 2017 and 2020. This is a very significant under-representation of this client group and would tend to indicate that groups who are not approaching the police to report crime are also not accessing VCAS.

Given the reliance on Cleveland Police, as the representative from one community organisation noted- ”What happens to those that do not report crimes?” Only around one in ten victims self-refer into the service, while around 15% (in 2020) were reported by a third party – but note that such third parties include other police forces such as British Transport Police.

It would therefore appear to be the case that, while VCAS has built a robust pathway for referrals via the police, it does not serve as well those who do not wish to engage with the police. Given that those who do not report to the police may well be more vulnerable, then it may be the case that the most vulnerable victims of crime are not accessing VCAS.

As such, a key conclusion of this report is that VCAS is a high functioning service for people who are prepared to come forward and contact Cleveland Police but that it needs to improve pathways into communities and individuals who do not approach crime to the police.

### 9.1.4 Organisational capacity

While the enthusiasm and hard work of the VCAS team is obviously to be applauded, a number of stakeholders raised concerns about the capacity of the service. The data would tend to suggest that capacity may well be an issue as it indicates that, in 2020 1,177 clients were reported – a significant jump from the 828 in 2019 and 800 in 2018. We note that additional capacity has been added to VCAS over the period of its contract through PCC funding. It would appear that this additional capacity has been fully utilised and further tends to indicate significant levels of unmet demand.

There appears to be have been no impact on quality from the growth in the service to date but this is unlikely to be the case should the growth in client numbers continue.

### 9.1.5 Contractual arrangements

The service has evolved over time meaning that it is delivering a much expanded service than was originally envisaged. It does not however appear to be the case that governance and structures have evolved in sync with this development. Most particularly the service specification which VCAS is commissioned and contracted against bares limited resemblance to what the service now actually delivers. This raises cause for concern as commissioners are in effect dependent on VCAS being willing to continue to deliver all the additional elements, and furthermore, cannot performance manage against these additional elements (as they do not appear in the current contract). In essence, large parts of the work of VCAS are delivered on good faith with no contractual under-pinning.

### 9.1.6 Dependence on key staff

Related to the points above, the effectiveness of VCAS appears to be linked to its small but dedicated team and their willingness to go over and above what is expected. Again, while the efforts of the team are highly laudable, this seems to suggest that the service is dependent on key individuals meaning that the service may be significantly impacted by the departure of just a few key people.

## 9.2 Recommendations

Following on from the conclusions set out above a number of recommendations have been made which are set out below:

### 9.2.1 VCAS

1. VCAS should, on an ongoing basis from this point onwards, analyse satisfaction rates in relation to each referral pathway. Particular attention should be made to satisfaction rates for clients being referred on from the police control room.
2. Should satisfaction rates from control room referrals continue to differ or drop further from those of wider clients then VCAS should undertake an audit to understand reasons why satisfaction rates are lower. The results of this audit should be shared with the PCC.
3. VCAS should audit the support and work it carries out with Asian clients to understand reasons why this cohort reports higher dissatisfaction rates with the service. The results of the audit should be shared with the PCC and an agreed set of actions undertaken as required.
4. VCAS should continue to provide ongoing training to officers in Cleveland Police to raise awareness of the service. Emphasis should be placed on training experienced staff as well as new officers.
5. Recognising that some engagement work is already underway (for instance fraud awareness work), VCAS should proactively promote its services among a range of third sector organisations working with communities with protected characteristics including (but not limited to): ethnicity, faith, sexuality and disability status. This engagment should effectively communicate how to access the service with a clear message that referrals do not need to come via Cleveland Police.
6. VCAS should offer outreach sessions to meet community members from communities with protected characteristics to promote its service, understand whether they are affeceted by particular types of crime and to encourage self-referrals.
7. VCAS promotional materials should be prepared that are designed in relation to, and are targeted at, a range of communities with protected characteristics. This may include utilisation of community languages. Organisations representing these communities should be asked to support the development of promotional literature to ensure that such materials are culturally appropriate.
8. All promotional materials and outreach work undertaken by VCAS should emphasise the independence of this organisation, that it is not part of Cleveland Police and that it will support victims of crime including those who do not seek to engage with the criminal justice system.
9. Where clients are referred to VCAS via non-police third parties (such as local third sector organisations) VCAS should seek to provide feedback to these organisations on whether the client engaged and the outcome of the support provided.
10. VCAS should start a process of legacy planning in order that a range of strategies are in place should any key members of staff leave the organisation.

### 9.2.2 PCC

1. Recognising that a full commissioning exercise is required for service provision from April 2022, the PCC should put in place an interim agreement with VCAS that better reflects current service provision, with performance measures that reflect the totality of service provision.

# Appendix A: Client Satisfaction Survey

**About the satisfaction survey**

The Centre for Public Innovation have been commissioned to carry out an evaluation of the Victim Care and Advice Service (VCAS). As a client of the service we are interested to hear your opinion of the service and how effective it was. As such we would appreciate it if you could take a few minutes to complete this short survey.

The survey should take no more than five minutes to complete. Your response will be completely anonymous and there is no way we can use your response to identify who you are.

Many thanks for your help.

**About you:**

1. What gender do you identify as:
   * Male
   * Female
   * Non-binary
2. How would you describe your ethnicity?
   * White British
   * White Irish
   * White Gypsy or Traveller
   * Other White background
   * White and Black Caribbean
   * White and Black African
   * White and Asian
   * Other Mixed background
   * Asian or Asian British Indian
   * Asian or Asian British Pakistani
   * Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi
   * Chinese
   * Other Asian background
   * Black African
   * Black Caribbean
   * Any other Black background
   * Arab
   * Any other ethnic group
3. What age are you?
   * Under 18
   * 18 – 29
   * 30 – 39
   * 40 – 49
   * 50 – 59
   * 60 – 69
   * 70 – 79
   * 80+
4. What local authority area do you live in?
   * Hartlepool
   * Middlesbrough
   * Redcar and Cleveland
   * Stockton-On-Tees

**About what happened to you**

**Thinking about the incident that led you to being supported by VCAS:**

1. Were you a victim or witness to the crime/incident?

* Victim
* Witness

1. Could you indicate what type of crime/incident you were the victim of/witness to? (Tick all that apply).
   * Assault/Attempted physical harm
   * Anti-social behaviour
   * Arson
   * Breach of Restraining Order/Harassment
   * Burglary
   * Criminal Damage
   * Fatal/ Serious Road Traffic Collision
   * Fraud
   * Homicide/Suspicious Death
   * Hate Crime (race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, gender identity)
   * Robbery
   * Stalking
   * Theft (Vehicle/Shop/Person/Cycle)
   * Threatening Violence
   * Other (if Other please state below)
     1. Text box
2. Did you report the incident to the police?
   * Yes
   * No
   * Don’t know
   * Not applicable

**About VCAS**

1. How did you contact VCAS?
   * I contacted them myself
   * They contacted me
   * I was put in touch with them via the police
   * Another organisation put me in touch with them
   * A family member or friends put me in touch with them
   * Other

If you said Other, could you say how you contacted VCAS below.

1. If another organisation put you in touch with VCAS can you provide the name of the organisation?
2. Thinking about the support you received from VCAS, how far would you agree or disagree with the following statement? (Tick one option per statement).

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor disagree Agree Strongly Agree

* VCAS understood my needs.
* I was treated sensitively and with dignity.
* I was provided with the support that I needed.
* The support I received was tailored to my needs.

1. Did you have any needs as a victim or witness that were not met?

* Yes
* No
* Don’t know

1. If you had any needs that were not met could you please describe what these were below.
2. Did VCAS put you in touch with any other organisations to help you out with any specific needs that you had?
   * Yes
   * No
   * Don’t know
3. If VCAS put you in touch with another organisation, could you give the name of the organisation?
4. Overall, how satisfied were you with the support provided by VCAS?
   * Completely satisfied
   * Very satisfied
   * Fairly satisfied
   * Neither satisfied not dissatisfied
   * Fairly dissatisfied
   * Very dissatisfied
   * Completely dissatisfied
5. If you could make any changes to improve the service provided by VCAS, what change would you make?
6. Following on from the incident you experienced would you say that you have?
   * Fully recovered
   * Partially recovered
   * Not recovered at all
   * Don’t know/Not sure
   * Not applicable
7. Was there anything that would have helped your recovery that you would have liked to have received?
8. If you have any final comments please put these in the box below.

Many thanks for taking the time to complete this survey. Your results will be used to understand how to better deliver services to victims of crime in Cleveland.

1. VCAS is not commissioned to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ministry of Justice (2012) Getting it right for victims and witnesses’ Her Majesty’s Stationery Office [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Case L (2011) Review into the Needs of Families Bereaved by Homicide [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. # Ministry of Justice (2010) Breaking the cycle: effective punishment, rehabilitation and sentencing of offenders

   [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. ONS (2018) Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. ONS (2018) Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. ONS (2018) Crime in England and Wales: Police Force Area Tables. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. ONS (2018) Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Sexual Offence Appendix Tables, Analyses from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) of sexual assaults experienced by adults aged 16 to 59, including by type, sex and personal characteristics, and police recorded sexual offences. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Female Rape Support Fund 2015/16 – MoJ End of Year Review summary. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. 2017 UK Annual Report on Modern Slavery, HM Government, October 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Crime Survey for England and Wales. Office for National Statistics (2017). Domestic abuse in England and Wales: year ending March 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Office for National Statistics (2018) Appendix tables: homicide in England and Wales [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Office for National Statistics (2017). Domestic abuse in England and Wales: year ending March 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Button M, Lewis C & Tapley J (2009a). A better deal for fraud victims. London: Centre for Counter Fraud Studies [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Button M, Lewis C & Tapley J (2009a). A better deal for fraud victims. London: Centre for Counter Fraud Studies [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Victim personal statements, by demographics and offence type, year ending March 2014 to year ending March 2017, Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. ONS 2018 Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), data table 6b, victims’ services and restorative justice, year ending March 2013 to year ending March 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Wood, M. Lepanjuuri, K. Paskell, C. Thompson, J. Adams, L. and Coburn, S. (2015), Victim and Witness Satisfaction Survey, CPS [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Hamlyn, B., Phelps, A., Turtle, J. and Satter, G. (2004) Are Special Measures Working? Evidence from Surveys of Vulnerable and Intimidated Witnesses. London: Home Office Research Study 283. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. ‘A voice for the voiceless’ The Victims’ Commissioner’s Review into the Provision of Registered Intermediaries for Children and Vulnerable Victims and Witnesses. Office of the Victims’ Commissioner. January 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Tapley. J., Stark. A., Watkins, M. and Peneva, B. (2014) A Strategic Assessment of Support Services for Victims of Crime in the South East. Portsmouth: University of Portsmouth. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. ONS 2018 Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), data table 4b, victims’ services and restorative justice, year ending March 2013 to year ending March 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Wedlock, E. and Tapley, J (2016) What works in supporting victims of crime: A rapid evidence assessment’, University of Portsmouth, Victims Commissioner [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. MOJ (2018). Supporting data tables: Female offender strategy. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. For example, Human Trafficking: Twenty-sixth Report of Session 2005–06, Vol 1, House of Lords and House of Commons Joint Committee on Human Rights, 9 October 2006, para 140; Domestic Abuse: Ninth Report of Session 2017–19, House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 17 October 2018, para 102; The Windrush generation: Sixth Report of Session 2017–19, House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 27 June 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. For example, ‘Government must protect domestic abuse victims “trapped” due to hostile environment, Sadiq Khan says’, The Independent, 15 August 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. For example, ‘Policy Evidence Summary 1: Migrant Women’, Bates, L., Gangoli, G., Hester, M. and Justice Project Team, University of Bristol, 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. The Right to be Believed: Migrant women facing Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in the ‘hostile immigration environment’ in London, McIIwaine, C., Granada, L., Valenzuela-Oblitas, I., King’s College London and The Latin American Women’s Rights Service, May 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. α²= 3.3; p-value=0.07 [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. α²=36.9; p-value < 0.00001 [↑](#footnote-ref-32)