



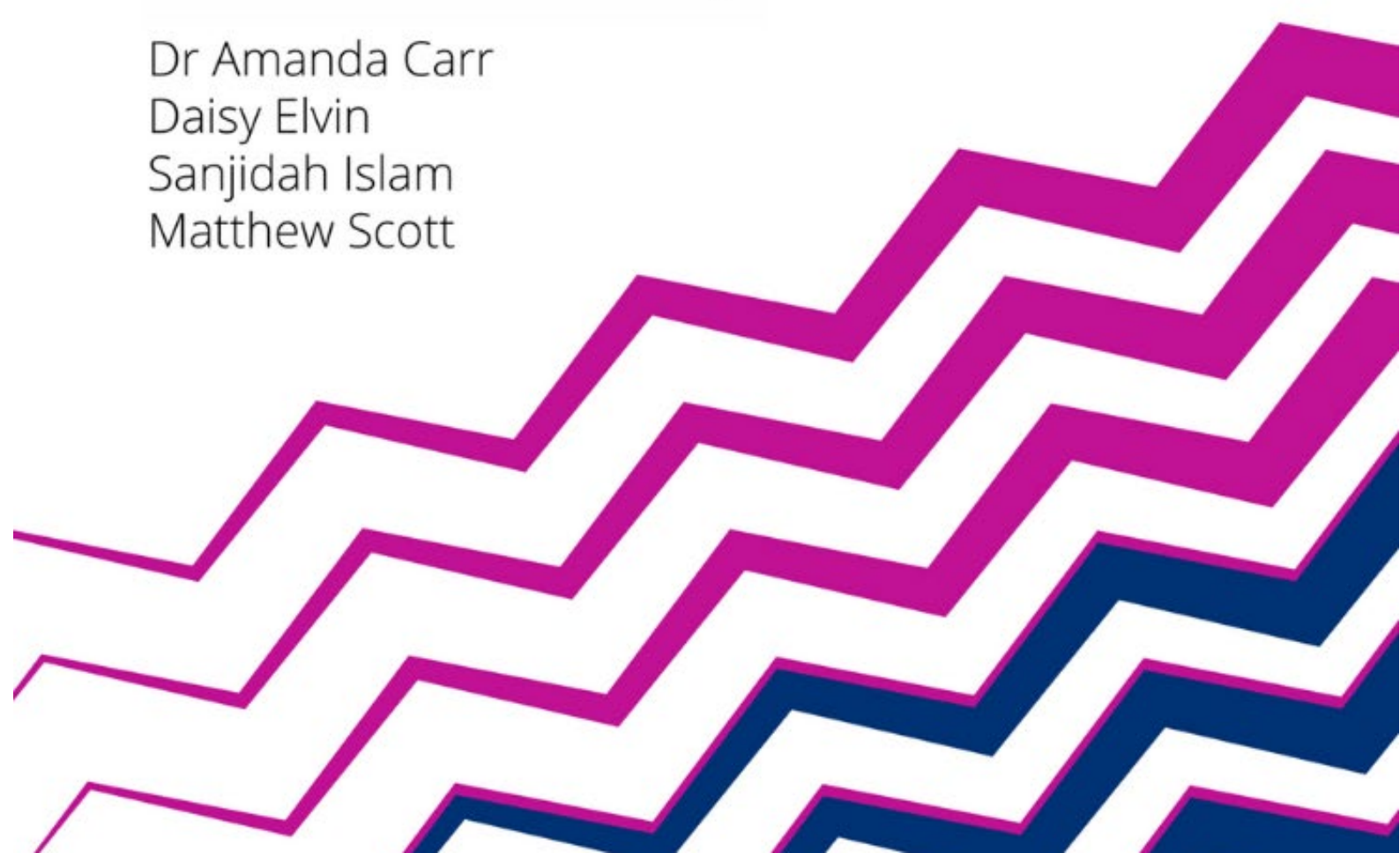
**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE  
POLICE & CRIME  
COMMISSIONER**

# ***Victim Needs Assessment***

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## **Executive Summary**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background and Context

Across England and Wales, there was a 14% increase in total crime between 2019 and 2021, driven by a 47% increase in fraud and computer misuse. Latest estimates reveal that around 2 in 10 adults were a victim of crime in the year ending September 2021, with this most commonly being fraud (8.9%), computer misuse (3.6%), criminal damage (2.9%), and vehicle-related theft (2.9%). However, a smaller but significant percentage experience more interpersonal crimes such as violence (2.0%), burglary (1.7%), and theft or robbery from the person (0.6%). Specifically in Nottinghamshire, for the year ending September 2021, police recorded 89,873 crimes, with a further 7,908 fraud offences.

It is well documented that the impact of crime on victims can be far reaching, including physical and emotional injury, long-term psychological and mental health effects, negatively influencing future trust, sense of fear, and feelings of safety, all of which can impact on various aspects of a victim's life, consequently meaning crime is extremely costly to society. Accordingly, there has been a shift in the culture of the Criminal Justice System (CJS) to recognise the importance of better engaging with, and supporting the needs of, victims.

The Office of the Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) is responsible for commissioning the Nottinghamshire Victim CARE (Cope and Recovery Empowerment) service. The service, currently delivered by Catch22, provides victim-centred and outcomes-focused support to empower victims and survivors to cope and recover from crime, anti-social behaviour, hate incidents, and identity theft, whether the crime has been reported to the police or not. The service is for all victims of crime and anti-social behaviour, with the exception of domestic abuse and sexual violence for which specialist services are separately co-commissioned. In addition, Nottinghamshire Victim CARE also provides a Restorative Justice (RJ) service.

In order to shape the commissioning of future victim support services in Nottinghamshire, social research organisation TONIC were commissioned to conduct an independent Victim Needs Assessment (VNA) and review the current model.

### Design, Methodology and Sample Overview

To undertake this VNA, TONIC conducted the following work, which engaged over 450 local victims and professionals:

- **Literature review** of existing research, surveying, and synthesising both national and international literature, to provide insight into the current understanding and knowledge.
- **Quantitative data analysis** covering national trends in crime, local police recorded crimes, and referral and intervention information alongside demographic data of those accessing Nottinghamshire Victim CARE.
- **Surveys** reaching 401 people, including 355 victims and service users and 46 key stakeholders.
- **In-depth interviews** with 50 people, including 22 victims and service users and, 28 key stakeholders.

## The landscape of support

Nottinghamshire Victim CARE is a free, independent, and confidential service that aims to provide a wide range of victim-centred and outcomes focused support services to empower victims and survivors to cope and recover from crime<sup>1</sup> and anti-social behaviour, regardless of when the crime occurred and whether the incident has been reported to the police or not. Support from Nottinghamshire Victim CARE is available to those of all ages and referrals can be made by the police, professional agencies, or individuals can self-refer into the service.

The model operates through a Victim CARE hub which delivers expert, tailored, one-to-one victim support as well as offering a Restorative Justice service. Additionally, the model manages a Community Points Programme, which enables individuals to access a diverse range of victim friendly services via community groups and organisations within their communities.

## The level of need for victims in Nottinghamshire

Latest estimates from the Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Survey suggest that as much as 52% of crime in the year to March 2022 may have gone unreported. Although the Nottinghamshire Victim CARE service offers support to all victims, even those who have not reported a crime to the police, the data shows that self-referrals and those from community points are very low, and that the majority of referrals (over three quarters) are made through the police when a crime is reported. This means that there is a significant level of unmet need in relation to victims of unrecorded crime in the community. One of the challenges for future services is to increase the reach of support to these 'hidden' victims.

Of those who do report a crime to the police, only 14% receive a referral to Victim CARE. This means that the majority of victims who report a crime are not being referred for support. Victims and stakeholders feel that the offer of support is often not made at the right time or in a manner they fully understand. In addition, opt-in consent procedures act as a further barrier relying on victims giving their consent at a time many are experiencing high levels of stress and anxiety due to the crime they have experienced.

This is a crucial touchpoint in the system where victims can slip through the net, and it poses a real challenge for Nottinghamshire Police and future support services to ensure more victims are aware of and understand the support offer, receive it at the right time and continue to have access to the offer beyond the initial point of reporting.

Once referred into the service, over a third of victims are not successfully contacted due to incorrect contact details or not answering the phone. This becomes another point at which victims slip through the net unnecessarily, and fall away from services and support.

In the end, only around 10% of victims who report a crime to the police receive support through Victim CARE; 8% receive standard support and 2% receive enhanced support. When estimated crime prevalence is taken into account, including unrecorded crime, this reduces to only 5% of all victims who receive support through Victim CARE.

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<sup>1</sup> Nottinghamshire Victim CARE does not support those who have experienced domestic or sexual abuse, as these services are delivered by other specialist providers

A priority moving forward must be to ensure that more victims are aware of and are able to access support after becoming the victim of a crime, and that access points into support are embedded throughout the victim journey.

Once receiving support, the Victim CARE service meets the needs of victims very well and provides a tailored and individual approach to care. In particular, victims and stakeholders value the caseworker approach which provides service-users with a single point of contact and a trusted professional who understands their circumstances and is aware of their individual needs at each point in the journey.

Despite these high levels of satisfaction among service-users, there are always areas for improvement. The views and experiences of victims provide a clear set of priorities for the areas in which service development is needed. These include: greater awareness, understanding and visibility of the service within communities, police stations and online; better mental health advice, guidance and support within the service; more specialised support in relation to being the victim of fraud; a more trauma-informed approach from partner agencies such as the police; and greater cultural awareness within the service of the diverse needs and experiences of minoritized ethnic communities across Nottinghamshire.

Although many victims are still being missed, the demand for the Victim CARE service has been increasing year-on-year and referrals are at their highest ever level, up 26% in the last year. As current capacity is stretched, there is a risk of losing the one-to-one individualised approach that is so valued by victims and proven to meet support needs to high levels of satisfaction. Moving forward, it is important to ensure resourcing meets the increasing demand for the service in a manner that can retain the offer of tailored intervention.

## Recommendations

A number of recommendations are set out below which address the levels of need for victims in Nottinghamshire that have been identified in this assessment. They are intended to guide the commissioning of future victim support services.

### Ensure sufficient resources are provided to meet the needs of service users and to accommodate fluctuations in demand and crime trends

A future Victim CARE service should provide a flexible model for commissioners such that resources can be scaled up or down depending on changing need and demand. The current picture suggests a high level of unmet need as only a small proportion of victims are referred to, and then take up, support. The ambition for future services should be to engage with victims who are either not known or not being referred at the point of reporting, and to increase levels of victim engagement, particularly from minoritized ethnic communities.

To achieve this, alongside a baseline of increasing demand, additional resource should be allocated to:

- Broadening the reach of the service and engaging a larger proportion of victims (e.g. through embedding additional caseworkers in the community)

- Addressing current gaps in provision (e.g. mental health specialist support; dedicated outreach caseworkers to engage particular communities)
- Ensuring caseloads continue to enable tailored intervention by identifying appropriate practitioner/caseload ratios to ensure sufficient capacity is maintained.

Consider a hybrid approach to opt-in/opt-out consent where identified crime types and/or victim profiles are automatically referred for support (opt-out) while others identified continue on an 'opt-in' basis

There are opportunities to improve and increase access to support for victims through a revised approach to referral and consent procedures. While opt-out procedures would ensure reaching a greater number of victims, this will also require increased resource within the service in relation to a) an estimated fourfold increase in referrals for follow-up contact and b) an increase in caseloads as more victims are contacted and take up the offer of support.

Develop clearer, robust referral pathways, and disseminate these to all potential referrers

Victims and stakeholders highlighted a need to improve referral pathways into Victim CARE. Clarifying the message for victims, potential service users, and all relevant professionals of what support is available and who the service has been designed for is essential in order to support stronger referral pathways. For example, some agencies were not aware that support through Victim CARE is available even if the crime has not been reported to the police.

Improve website functionality and ensure all information provided is up-to-date and accurate

Information on the website is relatively static and needs to be updated more regularly with accurate information, changes and updates. We recommend developing the website to be more victim-focused speaking directly to individuals seeking support and providing comprehensive information and resources. In order to ensure people are directed to the right information for them, we suggest demarcating sections of the website 'for professionals' and 'for victims'. We also advocate developing a self-service web mechanism by providing an online portal for users. A portal can include mechanisms for accessing further information, providing case details, providing automated updates and a messaging service.

Improve data recording and information sharing agreements between Victim CARE and key partners

Data and information sharing was frequently raised by stakeholders as a key barrier to providing a seamless and robust service, with significant delays in access to information. This was the case in particular for the restorative justice service, where clear information pathways between key partners (e.g., Probation and Victim CARE) were not readily available. However, Victim CARE staff also reported difficulty in accessing data from the police where this was needed to follow up for particular support cases. In addition, without full data on who is not taking up the service, which is held only by the police, it is difficult for the service to monitor and analyse demand, need and gaps. We would advocate reconsideration of previous data sharing agreements with Nottinghamshire Police to support better information, sharing and monitoring.

### Notts Victim CARE should proactively seek to engage with individuals who have protected characteristics using a range of approaches

Victims from minoritised ethnic backgrounds are less likely to access support. Whilst the reasons for this are not fully understood and require further research, it is vital that this is not overlooked and that Nottinghamshire Victim CARE attempts to overcome such barriers as effectively as possible. There is a particular need for awareness raising initiatives within these communities. There should be availability of appropriate interpreters/translators as needed for anybody whose first language is not English, and consideration should be given to translating the website to include versions in multiple languages.

Consideration should also be given to provision of support for individuals with specific protected characteristics facilitated by someone of their background, accepting that there may also be preference for help from outside of the community, and this should be guided by the individual and their circumstances. As such, we recommend Victim CARE consider recruiting outreach caseworkers from particular communities of interest. This would require a dedicated and skilled individual who could take on an assertive outreach role, to ensure communities feel represented in the service offer.

### Reconsider the function and purpose of community points in the wider victim CARE model and consider moving to a 'narrow and deep' versus 'wide and shallow' approach

Currently, there are a high number of community point organisations which are inactive or engage very little with the Victim CARE hub, despite resource being dedicated to outreach and development work. In addition, referrals into the service through community points are very low. We would advocate reconsidering the referral and support function of the community point model and refocusing resource on a narrower but deeper engagement with identified organisations. A more targeted approach could yield better results more efficiently. Resource could be redirected from the community point programme to employing the dedicated outreach caseworkers identified above and embedding them in a number of local community organisations on a walk-in/surgery basis.

### Engage the victim voice in the future design and implementation of Notts Victim CARE

Wherever possible, Victim CARE should consult with victims on what support is needed and how victims want support to be delivered. This activity should be over and above service evaluation and feedback surveys, which should also be regularly collected, it should be responsive to victims' needs and be used pro-actively to drive improvements. We would advocate a wide programme of victim voice engagement activity, including providing opportunities for consultation and co-design of any future service. In particular, it is vital in recommissioning to engage potential service users who have protected characteristics in facilitated co-design and co-production activity in order to ensure the service is meeting the needs of those individuals and communities.

### Broaden the Restorative Justice offer through co-missioning and improved partnership working and education

It is currently not possible to truly estimate the need and demand for a restorative justice service in Nottinghamshire, as there are systemic barriers that have resulted in a very low take up and a lack of awareness of the current restorative justice offer. The need, therefore, is to promote a system change in partnership working and collaboration across the spectrum of victim and offender services



in order to lead the restorative justice agenda across Nottinghamshire and promote buy-in from key stakeholders. Initial investment should be on addressing these system barriers and improving education and understanding among key stakeholders.

**Incorporate the need to raise awareness of the service into the future contract**

A future service must take a pro-active approach to service promotion and awareness of the support offer. Although there is currently outreach and promotion work being undertaken, for many key stakeholders, partner agencies and victim themselves, these messages have not been landing sufficiently and general awareness of the service was poor. Clear visibility of the service, including information and contact details, must be in place at all police stations, on social media platforms and in community settings with active and dynamic engagement with the public.



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