



HM Government

Victims Funding Strategy

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Victims Funding Strategy

Presented to Parliament
by the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice
by Command of Her Majesty

May 2022

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Ministerial Foreword



Crime devastates lives, its impact on victims often far-reaching and long lasting.

Many victims need help and support – not only to recover from their ordeal,

but to give them the confidence to come forward and pursue their case in the criminal justice system. In turn, that helps us to bring more criminals to justice, keeping our streets and communities safer.

Yet, as it stands, victim support is often piecemeal and uncoordinated, and the help a victim so desperately needs may simply not be available locally.

As Victims' Minister, I am determined to put this right. But that can only happen if we fund the victim support sector more effectively, sustainably and in a co-ordinated way.

This Victims Funding Strategy sets out our vision for how victim support services can be better funded and commissioned, securing high quality support for victims now and in the future.

We will fund the support sector more strategically, so the right services are available for victims. At the same time, we will remove barriers to accessing support services – such as encouraging remote services to be offered alongside face-to-face services -, so victims can always access support, regardless of where they live or the level of support they may need. We will ensure funding

streams are as accessible as possible to all services, so that smaller services are not unintentionally excluded.

This includes a commitment to multi-year funding for core victim support services – a minimum of £440 million over the next three years, so that organisations can plan for the future and build capacity to support even more victims.

And, crucially, we will introduce new national commissioning standards, establishing a minimum level of service quality, so that victims consistently receive the high-quality support they deserve.

This will be underpinned by an expectation that all providers achieve core outcomes for victims: making sure they have built resilience to move forward; feel more informed; and receive support when they need it.

Furthermore, the Victims Funding Strategy will be overseen by a new cross-government board, to ensure we deliver on our aims.

At the last election, the government pledged to do much better by victims, and we remain steadfastly committed to that pledge.

Victims deserve to be supported in the right way, and at the right time, so they can move forward with their lives.

Our Victims Funding Strategy represents a vital and practical step towards making that a reality for all victims.

Tom Pursglove MP

**Parliamentary Under Secretary
of State for Justice**

Executive Summary

Under the Victims' Code,¹ victims are entitled to access support services which are tailored to their needs. We know that the right support encourages victims to continue to pursue their case through the criminal justice system – research shows that victims who received support like an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) service were 49% less likely to withdraw from criminal investigation.² Access to appropriate support on their terms is also vital for victims to begin the process of recovery.

Victim support services are funded and commissioned by a variety of agencies, including government departments nationally, and commissioners such as Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) locally. Each agency is responsible for deciding how to use the resources available to them in order to improve victim outcomes in the most efficient and effective way. This patchwork arrangement can be confusing, and victims may not always know where to go or how to access the right support for them.

It is important that national and local provision complement each other to ensure as seamless a service as possible for victims. This can only begin to be achieved by government departments and commissioners adopting more aligned, and sustainable, funding and commissioning processes.

The Victims Funding Strategy will provide a framework for how agencies should work together to best resource the victim support sector. It will address alignment of funding across departments, tackle the barriers to sustainable funding and drive consistency in commissioning.

This Strategy will additionally and importantly ensure that government can better measure and assess the impact of the funding it commissions nationally, regionally and locally for victims and survivors.

This Strategy builds on the 2018 Victims Strategy and the progress made since then in funding and commissioning services to ensure victims are properly supported. This Strategy will be delivered through the implementation of three strategic aims:

Aim 1 – Fund the victim support sector more strategically

We will simplify funding processes, where appropriate, to reduce the complexity of the landscape for those providing critical services for victims of crime. We will adopt a strategic approach across government departments who have responsibilities for victim funding and commissioning of support services. In particular, government will commit to the principle of **multi-year funding for core victim support services**, ensuring that we are putting the proper emphasis on the importance of sustainable services.

1 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974376/victims-code-2020.pdf

2 Walker et al. "Rape, Inequality and the Criminal Justice Response in England: The Importance of Age and Gender."

Aim 2 – Remove barriers to access

We will introduce **national commissioning standards**, across all victim support services, to ensure a baseline quality of support for all victims. We will ensure we are **reviewing and refreshing existing commissioning guidance across government**, so that it reflects updated priorities and funding. These new standards will complement the joint statutory duty on relevant agencies in the draft Victims Bill, which will require them to work together when commissioning support services to ensure victims of sexual and domestic violence and serious violence get the joined-up support needed.

Aim 3 – Implement clear and consistent outcomes

We will **introduce a set of core metrics** for all departments, commissioners and services to collect, and **a set of core outcomes** for commissioners and services to deliver against. This will ensure that across government, we can build a strong baseline for measuring impact, and ensure that funding is being used effectively to support victims. These core metrics and outcomes will form the basis for how we want to move forward, and are aligned with wider data projects across government to improve how we collect and use data.

Finally, we will set out how we will monitor delivery of these aims through a new victims funding governance structure.

Introduction

The right support for a victim can transform their lives after the worst has happened. We need to ensure that we fund the victim support sector effectively and efficiently in order to give all victims of crime the confidence that they will be able to access the right support, whenever they need it.

This is why we have developed the Victims Funding Strategy, because now more than ever, we need to focus on what we are funding and how we are commissioning victim support services.

In May 2020, the Prime Minister convened a Hidden Harms Summit, where it was agreed that funding for victim support services needs to be better aligned across

government and made more sustainable for the support sector. There are significant costs of not adequately supporting victims - in 2017, domestic abuse was estimated to cost society **£66 billion**³ and sexual violence estimated to cost **£12.2 billion**⁴.

To address the challenges of alignment and sustainability, it was agreed that a cross-government Victims Funding Strategy would be developed, building on the previous Victims Strategy which was published in 2018, with subsequent commitments made in the Rape Review (published June 2021), the Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (published July 2021) and the Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan (published March 2022).

The Ministry of Justice allocated

£150.5m

to fund victim and witness support services, including £50.5 million ringfenced for domestic abuse and sexual violence.

The Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities allocated

£125m

to local authorities across England to deliver the statutory duty to provide support within safe accommodation for victims of domestic abuse and their children.

3 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/918897/horr107.pdf

4 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/732110/the-economic-and-social-costs-of-crime-horr99.pdf

This commitment was made against the backdrop of the pandemic, which had led to growth in demand for support services, particularly for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence. Given this, the government took swift action to ensure victims received the required support. The government provided over **£76 million** of emergency funding, and this increased funding continued into 2021/22, with the government allocating over **£300 million** to continue the recovery of these services and meet the growing demand. This included **£150.5 million** allocated by the Ministry of Justice for victim and witness support services, and **£125 million** allocated by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to local authorities across England, to deliver the statutory duty to provide support within safe accommodation for victims of domestic abuse and their children (which commenced in October 2021).

The continued increase in demand for support services as we move out of the pandemic has meant that more funding than ever before has been committed for victims. The Ministry of Justice is significantly strengthening support for victims and witnesses by increasing funding to **£185 million** by 2024/25, which represents an uplift of 85% on core budgets from 2020/21. Whilst increased funding has been welcomed, for those commissioning and delivering services, the pandemic also highlighted many challenges with the way government currently funds the victim

support sector, and different ways in which processes could be improved to achieve better outcomes for victims.

Scope

This Strategy is primarily focused on funding and commissioning that supports victims of crime, whether or not they report the offence. This does not mean that the principles proposed would not be applicable in other similar or overlapping areas such as services for witnesses, and victims of civil offences. We acknowledge that there is further consideration needed across government on how these areas intersect to ensure there is consistency across what is offered to support all victims and witnesses, but for the purposes of this Strategy, when we refer to a victim or survivor, this means a victim of a criminal offence.⁵

This Strategy is applicable to all commissioners of victim support services, including but not limited to, government departments in England, PCCs in England and Wales, local authorities, and Clinical Commissioning Groups or Integrated Care systems. This Strategy will apply to all victim support services and commissioners in England, and to agencies discharging reserved functions relating to crime, policing and justice in Wales, such as Welsh PCCs. Services for Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) are devolved in Wales under the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales)

5 As defined in the MoJ Victims Code 2020, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974376/victims-code-2020.pdf

Act 2015.⁶ The Welsh Ministers have powers to provide funding and further, to exercise executive ministerial functions in relation to matters within devolved competence under the Government of Wales Act 2006.⁷ This Strategy does not directly cover services for VAWDASV victims and survivors that are funded and commissioned by the Welsh Government. We will continue to work closely with the Welsh Government on any areas of crossover as we implement this Strategy. Devolved bodies and local organisations in Wales should refer to Statutory Guidance associated with the 2015 Act, as well as the toolkit for the commissioning of such services in Wales.⁸

Any elements within this Strategy that refer to health, social care and education are applicable to England only. Funding for victim support services is completely devolved in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

6 Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2015/3/contents/enacted>

7 Government of Wales Act 2006, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/32/contents>

8 Statutory Guidance for the Commissioning of VAWDASV Services in Wales, <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-05/statutory-guidance-for-the-commissioning-of-vawdasv-services-in-wales.pdf>

Vision and Strategic Aims

What is the vision for victims funding?

The right support should be available to all victims of crime, when they need it. This requires government, commissioners and service providers to work together to set clear funding processes, commission effectively and provide quality support services.

To achieve this vision, this Strategy will aim to:

1. Fund the support sector more strategically

This will require departments to work together better to respond to demand and ensure services are available where and when they are needed. The Ministry of Justice, as the lead department with responsibility for victims, will take an oversight role to ensure that victims funding across government is aligned and coordinated. This, and the other aims laid out in this Strategy, will be implemented and monitored through a cross-government oversight board with relevant departments.

Feedback from stakeholders has highlighted that the need for multi-year funding is particularly important to the victim support sector. Multi-year funding will drive consistency and sustainability of services, which can be crucial for victims receiving support.

Key considerations for government and commissioners when developing or allocating funding streams should include:

- ▶ What funding streams are created and for what purpose?
- ▶ How do funding allocations work together and what organisations are in scope?
- ▶ How to build capacity and resilience within the support sector and, if short-term funding is necessary, what is the exit strategy to prevent loss of staff or expertise?

2. Remove barriers to access

Victims should be able to access support whenever they need to. The pandemic highlighted the importance of having the capacity and capability to offer remote or digital services to victims. Many service providers adapted and expanded their support offers to ensure this provision was available. This does not detract from the importance of face-to-face provision, and where a victim lives should not stop them from accessing a service.

The people who face the greatest barriers to justice are often those who are most vulnerable. A key issue is how to support victims who require more tailored support. These victims, such as those who develop post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of the crime or those with protected characteristics, may need support beyond what is available in their local area. Funding and commissioning practices need to take account of how best to meet these needs.

It is also important to consider how organisations or support services are able to access funding; we know that smaller, and by and for organisations may not have the resources or capacity to compete for funding, which means they find it difficult to secure central government and local funding.

Key considerations for government and commissioners when developing or allocating funding streams should include:

- ▶ How are different needs accounted for in the commissioning processes including those of victims with complex needs as a result of the crime?
- ▶ What data is collected to identify areas of need and demand?
- ▶ What data is collected on how different victim groups access services?
- ▶ How have victim groups or sector experts been engaged in deciding what services should be commissioned?
- ▶ Are funding streams accessible to all service providers, particularly smaller services who may face additional barriers in applying for funding?

3. Implement clear and consistent outcomes

All funding and commissioning should be provided with clearly set out outcomes, so that its impact can be measured – have we achieved what we set out to do? Whilst this Strategy provides a set of overarching outcomes for funding, departments should consider how they can work with commissioners and providers to determine what specific outcomes should be achieved to ensure that victims

are receiving the support that they need. Consideration needs to be given to how any outcomes will be measured, how they fit within existing processes, and how this information will inform future funding decisions. This information should be shared with stakeholders to help best practice emerge and to drive better understanding of impact between agencies.

Key considerations for government and commissioners when developing or allocating funding streams should include:

- ▶ Has the funder engaged with relevant commissioners and the support sector to develop the outcomes and objectives of the funding?
- ▶ What outcomes are to be achieved with the funding?
- ▶ How activity is being monitored and how outcomes are being reported.
- ▶ Are the outcomes achievable and proportionate to the amount of funding and the funding period?

Aim 1 – Fund the support sector more strategically

We want to ensure there are aligned and sustainable funding streams and processes.

What are the challenges?

Funding for victim support services is provided by a number of different government departments and agencies. Some funding will be provided directly to frontline providers and services by government, whilst the rest is directed through local commissioners, in particular PCCs, local authorities and health commissioners. Services for violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence in Wales are funded by the Welsh government. Given this mixed landscape and differing oversight arrangements, agencies are very likely to commission in different ways, in different places, which can result in an inconsistency in which victim support services are funded, and how they are funded.

“Having shorter term funding and new contracts means that the information sharing agreement process needs to be repeated with new providers. This consumes valuable service delivery time which could be better spent supporting victims without barriers.”

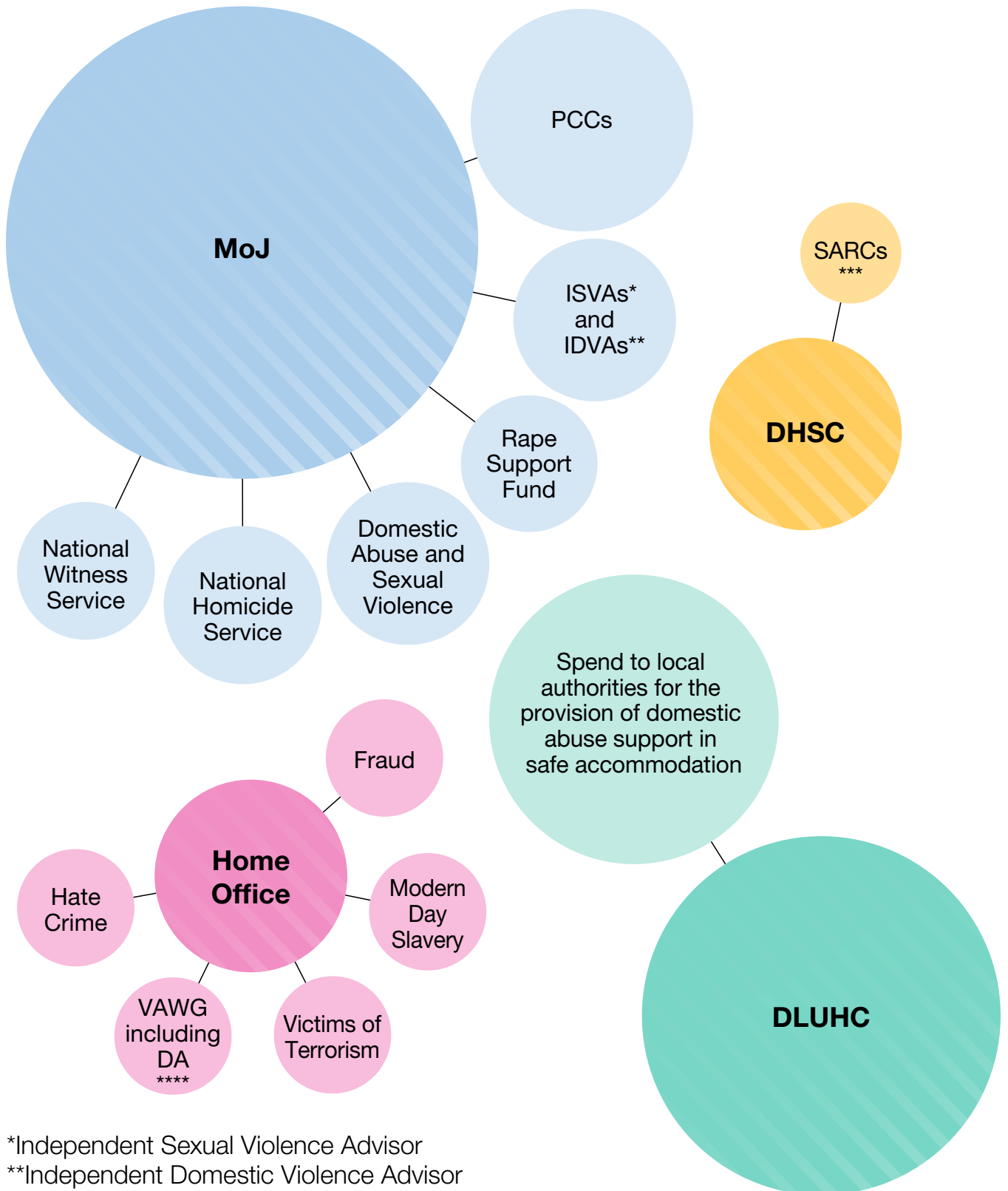
Service provider

Aim 1 – Fund the support sector more strategically

Victims funding landscape

The circles below illustrate the key government departments and their responsible pots of funding in this space.

The proportion of the circles indicates the relative amounts of funding for victims.



*Independent Sexual Violence Advisor
 **Independent Domestic Violence Advisor
 ***Sexual Assault Referral Centres
 ****Violence Against Women and Girls, and Domestic Abuse

The 3 key challenges are:

- ▶ **Single year funding:** The biggest challenge highlighted by providers and commissioners is single-year funding. In the joint inspectorate report from Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and Her Majesty’s Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSI) on the investigation and prosecution of rape cases (published on 24 February 2022)⁹, it was suggested that the lack of multi-year funding resulted in PCCs and providers being unable to properly invest in victim support services for sexual violence survivors. Short-term funding can also inhibit the ability to explore new innovative, long-term support interventions or service expansion.
- ▶ **Disparate and complex funding landscape:** Lots of different agencies are involved in the funding landscape for victim support services across England and Wales. This includes national commissioners, such as government departments, and local commissioners, such as PCCs, local authorities, and health and clinical commissioners. This can be confusing for providers when looking for available funding, particularly for smaller, by and for services.
- ▶ **Ineffective and burdensome funding processes:** Engagement with providers and local commissioners has shown that the current processes for applying for, and receiving funding, can be confusing and burdensome. This can lead to providers being unintentionally excluded from funding opportunities, or choosing not to apply for funding as they do not have the staff resource to apply, or they may consider that the time spent on the process is not proportionate to the amount of funding on offer.

9 Criminal justice system continues to fail rape victims, <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/news/news-feed/criminal-justice-system-continues-to-fail-rape-victims/>

What we will do

Key to addressing these challenges is recognising the importance of multi-year funding. The availability and confirmation of longer-term funding will lead to sustainability of the victim support sector, and allow commissioners to commit to funding services for longer.

The government is committed to the principle of multi-year funding for core victim support services. All departments

in England with responsibility for victims funding will commit to multi-year funding where possible and appropriate.

On 25 March 2022, the Ministry of Justice committed to **£147 million per annum** until 2024/25 for core services. PCCs are required to pass the multi-year funding commitment on to the local services they commission as appropriate, to ensure frontline providers see the full benefits. This will mean a multi-year investment of at least **£440 million** over this three-year period.

MULTI-YEAR ISVA AND IDVA FUNDING

In 2021, the Ministry of Justice committed to a multi-year ISVA and IDVA fund (which has now been extended until 2024/25) despite being in a single year SR period. We knew that organisations struggled to retain staff due to the uncertainty around funding, and we wanted to ensure that victims could continue to receive the support they needed with a person familiar to them.

The ability to commit to this funding beyond a single financial year has helped to ensure over 700 ISVAs and IDVAs are, and continue to be, available to those who need them. In the 2021 budget, this funding has been extended for a further three years with additional recruitment to increase provision to over 1,000 posts by 2024/25.

“Having the security of a multi-year contract allows us to focus on quality service delivery, continuous improvement and innovation rather than continually being in a competitive bidding cycle.”

Service provider

In the recent Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan (published 30 March 2022), the Home Office committed to the same multi-year principle for organisations supporting victims and survivors of domestic abuse in England. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities will continue to fund local authorities in England in future years to deliver their duties in line with Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act (2021).

A cross-government ministerial board will be established to strengthen oversight of victim funding and commissioning. This enhanced scrutiny will help to ensure that funding is not duplicated, and that we can identify and address any gaps in services. It will also mean that government departments work together better, coordinate funding streams and collect and share information to show the impact of funding.

Across government, we will ensure that funding streams are accessible to relevant services who want to access them. We recognise that sometimes smaller, tailored services may struggle to apply for national funding streams where the process is complex or time-consuming. Government departments will tailor applications to reflect the funding that is available, and ensure that where possible there is enough time for providers to apply to the best of their ability, whilst ensuring that public money is spent effectively.

Aim 2 – Remove barriers to access

We want to ensure that victims are able to access the support they need in a way that works for them.

It is crucial that victims receive the right support to enable them to cope, build resilience, and move forward in their lives, when they are ready to do so. To achieve this there needs to be effective and consistent commissioning of services.

What are the challenges?

The 3 key challenges are:

- ▶ **Insufficient scrutiny of commissioning:** Local commissioners are required to report back to government on the impact and benefit of the services they commission; however, this reporting varies depending on departmental requirements and funding amounts. This results in an incomplete or inaccurate picture of the impact of funding. It may also suggest that commissioners are not all being held to the same standard for the funding they are responsible for.
- ▶ **Availability of services:** Feedback from the victim support sector highlighted a particular issue in the inconsistent availability, and quality, of support across England and Wales, with waiting lists for many services at capacity. This can be a particular concern for tailored services. Where populations of victims with tailored need – for example, disabled victims – are low, it may be that there are no tailored services for them in an area. It is right that services are commissioned based on the needs of the local area population, but this can sometimes mean that specific, tailored services are not available.
- ▶ **Accessibility of services:** Accessibility can either mean the ability to access an individual support service (for example, availability of remote or digital provision) or it can mean the ability for different victim groups to access the **same** level of service. Lack of access can be particularly severe for a number of victim groups, including those with protected characteristics, those in prison settings, and those who are more likely to access ‘by and for’ services.¹⁰

10 Specialist services that are led, designed and delivered by and for the users and communities they aim to service (for example, victims and survivors from ethnic minority backgrounds, deaf and disabled victims and LGBT victims).

What we will do

We are introducing five national commissioning standards that all national and local commissioners of victim support services will be expected to meet.

1. Victims at the centre of commissioning

Victims should be at the heart of every decision a commissioner or service provider makes. Services which focus on the needs of victims, that can flexibly and sensitively respond to unique victim needs, are instrumental in supporting victims most effectively.

To meet this standard, commissioners will:

- ▶ Encourage victim involvement at every stage of the commissioning process, including shaping objectives or performance indicators for services. The greater the victim engagement, the better suited services will be to meet their needs.
- ▶ Commission the appropriate services in response to victim needs, which can be identified using needs assessments and other local tools. Commissioners will be expected to provide a justification of their commissioning decisions.
- ▶ Ensure that needs assessments include all the data required to commission appropriate services, including for victims with tailored need. Local needs assessments should happen regularly to ensure that victim needs are continually being met.

- ▶ Build an understanding of their local area through available data and evidence, using this to identify which groups or communities are harder to reach – including those who are currently not engaged with services, or have less access to existing support.
- ▶ Ensure that safeguarding for service users is given due consideration in all services.
- ▶ Reflect best practices adopted during the pandemic, particularly around how commissioning processes can be adapted or flexible to emergency need.

2. A whole-system approach to commissioning

The victim journey is not straightforward and there is no one way for someone to engage with support services. As far as possible, agencies should be working together to reduce the need for victims to share their experience multiple times. They should also consider the entirety of the victim journey, from reporting (if they choose to do so) through to post-sentencing (if applicable). This journey should be streamlined, as far as possible, in local areas through building complete victim pathways and promoting data sharing.

To meet this standard, commissioners will:

- ▶ Work with other commissioners and agencies in their area to agree what is needed locally, and to ensure different agencies who may be supporting victims do so in a sensitive and joined-up way-taking account of necessary requirements as part of any relevant statutory duties. Partnerships should include PCCs, local authorities, Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) or Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) and other local commissioners, agencies and providers.
- ▶ Involve organisations who are not already funded by the commissioner – such as charities, trusts, voluntary organisations and otherwise. These organisations will hold expertise and understanding of

the support sector, which can be used to help inform the service development process, even if they are not bidding for funding.

- ▶ Communicate and work together with partners to prevent duplication of service activity, recognising that both national and local commissioners will set a strategic direction for the services that they commission, and that these should complement each other.
- ▶ Engage in data and information sharing between themselves and services in a local area, with the expectation that agencies in England will sit on at least one local partnership board with a standing agenda item on victim support services.¹¹
- ▶ Engage in collaboration across local service boundaries, to reflect the knowledge that victims move between areas but do not always get the same level of support.

Building on these standards, as part of the upcoming Victims Bill, the government will introduce a duty for PCCs, local authorities and Integrated Care Boards in England to collaborate locally when commissioning support services for victims of domestic abuse, sexual violence and other serious violence. This will facilitate more effective, co-ordinated support and commissioning at a local level.

11 This does not include Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Boards, which is a statutory requirement for agencies involved in the provision of domestic abuse support for victims and their children in safe accommodation.

3. Victims receive equitable access to services

All victims should be able to access appropriate support based on their needs arising from being a victim of crime. The right support can help victims to stay engaged with the criminal justice system.¹² We also know that some victims may require, or prefer, tailored services that will better understand the cultural and societal context surrounding their abuse.¹³

This standard will encourage commissioners to ensure that services are responsive to the people they are supporting, identifying and addressing barriers to support, and promoting service offers across their local area – particularly to victims with specialised need who may not be aware that tailored services are available in their area.

To meet this standard, commissioners will:

- ▶ Ensure that needs assessments capture the diverse range of support that is required in any local area – including victims with specialised need, victims who have accessibility requirements (such as language differences or disability), and offenders who are also victims who may require support in prison or otherwise.

- ▶ As much as possible, identify and address barriers which prevent victims from using services they are entitled to, with consideration for victims with a disability or victims for whom English is not their first language.
- ▶ As much as possible, identify and address problems with referral routes, particularly for services supporting children and young people following sexual violence or domestic abuse.
- ▶ Encourage services to promote themselves to the communities they are supporting.
- ▶ Ensure funding stream applications are accessible, particularly to smaller or ‘by and for’ organisations.
- ▶ Ensure services do not discriminate against service users and staff, and have well promoted processes in place to deal with any potential incidents.

4. Clear and consistent mechanisms for reporting and evaluation

This standard focuses on the importance of collecting the right data and holding services accountable. The right data will enable us to see the impact of our funding, and help to ensure we can target funding where it is most needed. Consistent evaluation allows us to identify any problems with services, as well as recognise gaps in service provision.

12 Victims who received specialist support were 49% less likely to withdraw from criminal investigation. Walker et al. “Rape, Inequality and the Criminal Justice Response in England: The Importance of Age and Gender.”

13 GALOP. “Commissioning for Inclusion: Delivering services for LGBT+ survivors of domestic abuse.”

This standard will support clearer requirements for reporting including clarifying what data is being collected for. It will encourage routine use of the core metrics and outcomes provided as part of this Strategy, and look at how reporting mechanisms can be better aligned across government to reduce the burden on providers.

To meet this standard, commissioners will:

- ▶ Be compliant with the proposed level of reporting and metrics. Where new requirements are identified, we will consult with local commissioners and the victim support sector on any changes in advance of implementation.
- ▶ As far as possible, ensure and encourage collection of demographic and equalities data of the victims being supported.
- ▶ Ensure that escalation routes in the event of unacceptable performance are clearly communicated to providers, including reporting back to central government.
- ▶ Mandate clear timelines on reporting and escalation should services be at risk of failure, to avoid any breakdowns in service provision.
- ▶ Ensure there is a clear and collective understanding of what success looks like at the start of a service. This will be in the form of clear outcomes and performance indicators.
- ▶ Ensure evaluation plans are included in any contracts or grants and made clear to providers. Services will be assessed on their impact and benefit to victims.

5. Promote sustainable funding

This standard recognises the value of multi-year funding commitments and establishes these as best practice to improve support for victims. It also looks at other ways to strengthen sustainability in the sector, such as ensuring that application processes for funding are proportionate, and that multiple funding sources, such as foundations and trusts, are considered alongside central government funding.

To meet this standard, commissioners will:

- ▶ Pass multi-year funding commitments on to their providers where possible, to encourage stability in the sector.
- ▶ Ensure where transformational or innovation funds¹⁴ are offered, a clear and sensitive exit strategy is in place.
- ▶ Encourage the retention of staff with experience to prevent loss of knowledge and information.
- ▶ Encourage and promote seeking multiple funding sources for services, including the availability of funding from foundations and trusts.
- ▶ Ensure that the application processes for funding streams are proportionate to the amount of funding on offer, and that the process for applying for funding is consistent across comparable funding amounts.

These standards align with principles set out in the Home Office's Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and the Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan, as well as other existing standards.

14 A transformational or innovation fund is any funding stream where the purpose is to create or test new support interventions, with only short-term funding committed.

They also work together with statutory guidance for relevant local authorities in England accompanying the Domestic Abuse Act (2021) safe accommodation duty – particularly in highlighting the importance of multi-agency working.

Adherence to these standards will be incorporated into existing funding arrangements with commissioners and providers, with work ongoing to consider how best to monitor implementation and compliance. The standards are designed to ensure that everyone should expect to receive an agreed standard of support, regardless of where they live. We encourage all commissioners to adopt these standards and use them in conjunction and in accordance with any legal requirements and other existing standards and guidance for the victim support sector, such as the:

- ▶ Ministry of Justice Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic Commissioning Guidance;
- ▶ Home Office Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls National Statement of Expectations and accompanying Commissioning Toolkit;
- ▶ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities statutory guidance for domestic abuse support in safe accommodation; and
- ▶ The Statutory Guidance for the Commissioning of VAWDASV Services in Wales.

The standards will support commissioners in ensuring that services are effective and reaching as many victims as possible. Following publication, we expect any new standards for specific crime types to take these into account when being developed.

Existing guidance will be reviewed, and this Strategy will be refreshed where needed.

Aim 3 – Implement clear and consistent outcomes

We want to ensure there are clear and consistent ways to monitor and evaluate what is funded and its impact.

One of the most important elements of ensuring government is providing the right services is being able to monitor the impact of them. The right oversight will allow us to know how many victims we are supporting, how we are supporting them and importantly, where we can do better. Effective monitoring will provide evidence on if, and how, outcomes are being achieved, and provide reassurance that funding is having the impact it was designed to.

What are the challenges?

The 3 key challenges are:

- ▶ **Inconsistency and transparency of reporting and data:** Engagement with the victim support sector and local commissioners has highlighted differences between how departments and commissioners collect data and measure the outcomes of services. Reporting requirements may not always be proportionate to the amount of money provided, or the timeframes for reporting may be short and intensive. The lack of a standardised data set makes it harder to compare and contrast services and determine if support interventions are working.
- ▶ **Minimal understanding of the impact of funding:** The differences in data collected leads to a poor understanding of the impact of the funding being provided. The inconsistency of collection and the lack of data-sharing at both a national and local level make it hard to identify trends in required support, making government more likely to miss vital areas where funding is particularly needed. It is also difficult to identify and address any gaps in provision, or to see where there might be room for improvement in particular areas or in response to certain crime types.
- ▶ **Minimal use of qualitative data:** Whilst there is a need to improve data collection across the board, the current data collected is mostly numerical. Whilst this data is useful for understanding who is accessing services, it does not properly reflect the value of this support for victims. Though qualitative data is harder to collect, as it will differ from victim to victim, it is invaluable information that will allow us to see what is working so we can fund and commission accordingly. Qualitative data is useful to show where a provider is meeting victim need, and that the victim's journey is front and centre.

What we will do

We will implement a set of core outcomes on all victims funding provided by government. Establishing outcomes are an important part of the commissioning process – being clear about what is being provided and why. They also allow commissioners to monitor the impact of funding that is being provided, to see the benefits of it, and address problems or gaps where they become evident.

There are already guidance documents which set out what outcomes we all want to achieve for victims. We do not propose that the new core outcomes will replace or supersede anything that is currently used, or that they are the only outcomes that services should work towards. However, these core outcomes should be a **baseline of expected outcomes** that all services should be reporting to and aligning against. They can be tailored to co-exist with frameworks already in place, and we encourage commissioners to work with services as part of the commissioning process to do so.

This Strategy proposes **three core outcomes and one additional discretionary outcome**. The fourth outcome is optional in recognition that not every victim will choose to engage with the criminal justice system. These core outcomes are outlined below, with further detail in Annex A on examples of how to measure the outcome:

1. Coped and built resilience to move forward with daily life
2. Feeling more informed
3. Received all the support they needed, when they wanted it
4. Increased engagement with the criminal justice system (additional)

We will implement a set of core quantitative metrics (set out in Annex B) that all commissioners and services will be expected to collect.

Aim 3 – Implement clear and consistent outcomes

The proposed metrics are split into two broad categories: information on the characteristics of the victim being supported, including age, gender identity and ethnicity; and information on the demand for a support service, including waiting lists and how many victims have been supported in the reporting period. Some of the definitions may not be consistent across all services; however it is important that we can collect the data across government in the same way, to enable us to establish an evidence base of need and demand for victim support services¹⁵. These core quantitative metrics are a starting point, and government will continue to develop them as we build a picture of the impact of government funding. We will work closely with other government departments, agencies and commissioners to ensure these metrics can be collected, especially where different data collection systems are being used.

Whilst we have only proposed core quantitative metrics, qualitative metrics should also be collected by commissioners and services, as these provide great value in measuring a victim's journey. We expect that commissioners and services will use qualitative data to complement how they measure or demonstrate delivery of the proposed core outcomes.

We do not consider it appropriate to prescribe what qualitative data should be collected, as this will depend on the service and should be developed alongside service users, considering how a victim would want to share their feedback. We have however set out some examples of how commissioners or service providers could collect this type of information in Annex B.

Additionally, as referenced within the Victims Bill consultation and response, **we are considering other ways for government and organisations to collect victim views and feedback more widely.**

15 In implementing these, we acknowledge that victims are not obligated to provide services with personal or sensitive data, particularly if they feel they are still in danger.

Implementation and Oversight

The publication of this Strategy represents the first practical step towards ensuring government is supporting victims effectively by funding the support sector more strategically. This will lead to more sustainable services, and ensure that victims can continue to access the services that they need, when they want to. Also, it will mean that government can show how funding is being used successfully to achieve better outcomes for victims.

It is important that the way that victims are supported changes and evolves as we learn more about the most effective ways to provide what is needed. Therefore, we want this Strategy to be flexible and responsive **and will commit to reviewing it at appropriate intervals**, ensuring it remains live and relevant.

Governance

The success of this Strategy relies on its effective implementation. Scrutiny will be provided through the establishment of a cross-government oversight board, chaired by the Victims' Minister. This will bring together key departments and stakeholders, including commissioners and support sector representatives where appropriate, to ensure adherence with this Strategy.

Annex A – Core Outcomes

Data and feedback should be gathered from victims throughout their engagement with the support service, and not just at the start or end of their support. This will ensure that we are continually receiving the highest quality data on the impact of support services, and ensure that feedback is still gathered from victims who may withdraw from services earlier than expected.

1. Coped and built resilience to move forward with daily life

This outcome relates to ensuring that victims have received the support they need to ultimately move forward with their daily lives. This may include indicators related to both physical – such as improved access to healthcare services, reduced substance misuse – and mental – such as reduced stress, anxiety and depression – health. This outcome would also look at reducing the risk of re-victimisation, such as for domestic abuse victims or victims of modern slavery. This is the primary outcome for victim support services and one all commissioners should be looking for services to report against.

An example of questions that can be asked to measure this outcome are:

- ▶ Has your experience with SERVICE NAME allowed you to move forward?
- ▶ Remembering the changes you wanted to make in your life before accessing this service, has your experience with SERVICE NAME helped you to make these changes?

- ▶ Could you share what these or other changes are? For example, something specific that your experience with SERVICE NAME enabled you to do or to stop doing which could be a way of thinking, feeling or behaving?

2. Feeling more informed

This outcome is focused on ensuring victims know what is afforded to them under the Victims' Code, and that they feel informed about the breadth and range of services that are available to support them. Feedback suggests that victims are not always given the correct or full information on what services they can access, and often learn upon engagement with support services. This outcome can also track increased awareness and understanding of the criminal justice system, whether a victim reports to the police or not.

An example of questions that can be asked to measure this outcome are:

- ▶ Were you made aware of the support you are entitled to as a victim of crime?
- ▶ Has your interaction with SERVICE NAME increased your awareness or understanding of the support that is available to you as a victim of crime?
- ▶ Has your interaction with SERVICE NAME increased your awareness or understanding of the criminal justice system and its processes?

3. Received all the support they needed when they wanted it

This outcome relates to ensuring that all the support needed was received when the victim wanted to access it. We know that

the complexity of support that is required can differ from victim to victim, and every journey will be different. This outcome will ensure that regardless of the type of support, the length of support or when the support was sought, it was received by the victim on their terms. This can be on one or multiple entries into the support structure.

An example of questions that can be asked to measure this outcome are:

- ▶ Did you receive all of the support you required during your time with SERVICE NAME?
- ▶ Were you able to access the support you wanted during your time with SERVICE NAME?
- ▶ If you were not able to access the support you wanted, were you referred to another service that could or offered an alternative intervention?

We know that not every victim will choose to engage with the CJS, therefore we consider the below outcome additional and applicable to those who do. However, we believe this outcome should still be considered by all support services as it allows government to build a picture of the victim experience with the CJS, as we know there is a link between the level of support a victim receives and their engagement with the court process.

4. Increased engagement with the criminal justice system (additional)

This outcome relates to victims who reported their crime to the police or other statutory services, and will track their experience of the criminal justice process

through the lifetime of their support. The outcome will ensure that victims who are part of the CJS are receiving the right kind of support they need to help them through it and ultimately move on with their lives. This outcome should also, where possible, encompass collecting data from victims who report and then decide to drop out of or withdraw from the case and accompanying support, and their reasons for doing so.

An example of questions that can be asked to measure this outcome are:

- ▶ Did the support you received from SERVICE NAME help you through your engagement with the criminal justice system?
- ▶ Without your support from SERVICE NAME, do you think you would have dropped out of the criminal justice process?
- ▶ What has SERVICE NAME done particularly well to support you through your engagement in the criminal justice process?

We also encourage the use of free text or open questions to measure victim satisfaction with the support they have received. These can include questions that ask victims to feedback on what they liked or did not like about the service, if they believe any improvements could be made, and whether they would recommend the service to other victims seeking support.

Annex B – Core Metrics

Table 1: Demographic Metrics

TYPE OF METRIC	METRIC	DEFINITION
Demographic	Age	17 and under 18-34 35-54 55-74 75 and over Not stated
	Gender identity	Woman Man Non-binary Not stated None
	Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual/straight Gay Bisexual Lesbian Other Not stated
	Ethnicity	White Asian / Asian British Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups Black/African/Caribbean/ Black British Other Ethnic Group Not stated
	Disability	Has a disability Does not have a disability Not stated

Annex B – Core Metrics

Table 2: Referrals Metrics

	METRIC	DETAIL
Referrals	Number of victims on service waiting list Length of time on waiting list	We would define waiting list as 'waiting to access their preferred service'. We recognise that not all services use waiting lists. so we encourage this metric to measure how long a victim is waiting to access their preferred service (for example, if a victim is receiving phone support but would like face-to-face counselling).
	Number of new victim referrals to support services	To capture the number of victims who are being referred to a support service in a single reporting period. This allows us to see how many are seeking support and for what kinds of services. This metric could also encompass the length of time it took for a victim to receive their preferred support once referred.
	Total number of victims who engaged with the support service in the reporting period (new and existing)	To capture all victims who received support during a reporting period, and to be broken down into new (victims who started receiving support during that period) and existing (victims who were already receiving support and continued to do so). This metric could also measure any victims who re-entered the service, if this information is captured.
	Total number of victims referred on to other services	We would define 'other services' as: other victim support services, financial support services, housing support, healthcare services or additional/complex needs services. The number of victims who were referred onwards during this reporting period.
	Total number of victims engaged in support who reported to police (active and non-active)	To capture how many victims are engaged with the criminal justice system. This metric should be broken down into 'active' (cases currently undergoing process) and 'non-active' (cases that have been concluded, or where the victim has dropped out of the process).
	Total number of victims who departed the service in the reporting period	To capture how many victims have finished receiving support. This metric could further be broken down by those who concluded their support or those who dropped out.

Examples of qualitative metrics or feedback can include:

- ▶ Surveys which can be completed either on departure from the service or if appropriate, during the support period. These surveys can be collected using tools that allow victims to complete them online, or via a posted copy. It is important to note that every survey should have an opt-in question to gain consent for use of feedback in service design, funding, or for research purposes.
- ▶ Offering an invitation to victims to be involved in service development or future projects. This ensures a survivor-led service and enables the victim to use their voice to shape the future of the support offer.
- ▶ Holding regular forums or open-door sessions where victims can discuss or offer feedback on the service more widely. This may not have to be related to an individual victim experience but could be used as an opportunity to engage with broader victim groups or advocates that can contribute to the development of the service.
- ▶ Developing an independent panel or group that has membership built from victims and survivors or experts that can be used to test or advise on the quality of the service, and provides regular recommendations or feedback.

Annex C – Our approach

Following the commitment made at the Hidden Harms Summit, the Ministry of Justice began to develop what a Victims Funding Strategy could look like. As part of this development, we engaged with a number of interested stakeholders.

Thanks go to the service providers, local commissioners, government departments and agencies, and community sector organisations who all fed into the development of this Strategy, and who we will continue to engage with on its implementation.

With particular thanks to:

- ▶ The Victims' Commissioner and Domestic Abuse Commissioner, who supported the engagement and provided their feedback on this Strategy.
- ▶ The Association of Police and Crime Commissioners who provided us with a space to engage with offices of Police and Crime Commissioners early on in the development process, and continued communication throughout.
- ▶ All the organisations who are a part of Silver Command (the Ministry of Justice's sector forum) who contributed and provided examples of where improvements could be achieved.

Annex D – Equalities statement

We have considered our equality obligations in accordance with s149 of the Equality Act 2010. We believe that the commitments in this Strategy are not directly discriminatory as they would not result in victims being treated less favourably because of their protected characteristic. We believe our proposed changes will be positive for victims generally, including those with protected characteristics.

Equalities Statements will be produced for specific strands of work that are undertaken by the MoJ and other government departments that are referenced in the Victims Funding Strategy.

Annex E – Glossary

‘By and for’ services – Specialist services that are led, designed and delivered by and for the users and communities they aim to serve (for example, victims and survivors from ethnic minority backgrounds, deaf and disabled victims and LGBT victims)

CJS – Criminal Justice System

CCG – Clinical Commissioning Group

DAC – Domestic Abuse Commissioner

DLUHC – Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

GEO – Government Equalities Office

HO – Home Office

ICBs – Integrated Care Boards

ICSSs – Integrated Care System

ISVA – Independent Sexual Violence Advisor

IDVA – Independent Domestic Violence Advisor

LCJB – Local Criminal Justice Board

LGBT – Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other minority sexual orientations and gender identities

MoJ – Ministry of Justice

NSE – National Statement of Expectations

PCC – Police and Crime Commissioner

SARC – Sexual Assault Referral Centre

VAWDASV – Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence. Funding for these services is devolved in Wales.

VAWG – violence against women and girls. The term ‘violence against women and girls’ refers to acts of violence or abuse that disproportionately affect women and girls. Crimes and behaviours covered by this term include rape and other sexual offences, domestic abuse, stalking, ‘honour’-based abuse (including female genital mutilation forced marriage, and ‘honour’ killings), as well as many others, including offences committed online. While we use the term ‘violence against women and girls’, this refers to all victims of any of these offences, including men and boys.

Victims’ Code – The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (Victims’ Code) sets out the services and a minimum standard for these services that must be provided to victims of crime by organisations (referred to as service providers) in England and Wales.

VC – Victims’ Commissioner

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