



20 November 2012

Agenda Item: 8

**REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR,
POLICY, PLANNING AND CORPORATE SERVICES**

VICTIM SUPPORT IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide information on "Victim Support", an independent charity for victims and witnesses of crime, as an introduction to the presentation to the Community Safety Committee by Olwen Edwards, Divisional Manager for Victim Support, Nottinghamshire.

Information and Advice

2. Victim Support is the independent charity for victims and witnesses of crime which operates across England and Wales. Victim Support was established 35 years ago and has grown to become the oldest and largest victims' organisation in the world. Every year, nationally, they contact over 1.5 million people after a crime to offer help and support. Locally, the Nottinghamshire Division of Victim Support receives referrals of approximately 24,000 victims each year and contact 18,000 of these in a variety of ways. Those that require emotional support are offered a community volunteer. Victim Support in Nottinghamshire also supports 5,000 witnesses going through our local courts through specially trained Witness Support volunteers.
3. The vision of Victim Support is to become the world's best charity for victims and witnesses of crime. Their purpose is to help people find the strength to move forward after a crime. Victim Support has 6 objectives:
 - Victims and witnesses will know they can always turn to Victim Support for help
 - Victim Support will work with others to help victims and witnesses
 - Victims and witnesses will value the excellence of the staff and volunteers
 - Victim Support will make every penny count as we strengthen our funding base
 - Victim Support services will meet local need, drawing on national strength
 - Victim Support will speak up strongly for victims and witnesses
4. Victim Support offer support to victims of crimes ranging from burglary, criminal damage, and anti-social behaviour to crimes of domestic violence, sexual violence and murder. They also support victims who have not reported their experiences to the Police (approx 8% of all referrals). Although Victim Support works closely with the Police, courts and other parts of the Criminal Justice System, they are completely independent. The help

they give is confidential and free. If a victim asks for their help, Victim Support will not tell anyone without their permission (unless it's an emergency and they think someone's safety is at risk). In Nottinghamshire Victim Support have a number of additional projects additional to the core work of the organisation, primarily anti-social behaviour work and the Young Witness Service. They also provide outreach support in Gedling, Newark & Sherwood, Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Ashfield and Nottingham City. This work reaches over 250 victims of anti-social behaviour per year. The Young Witness Service remains a countywide service and continues to serve approximately 400 young witnesses per year.

5. Victim Support is a "volunteer led" organisation. Nationally, they depend on approximately 5000 specially-trained volunteers to deliver services to victims and witnesses. Locally, Victim Support has 180 community volunteers. Whether they support a witness at court or give emotional support to a victim, volunteers are vital to the work of Victim Support. Full training is given to each volunteer. Victim Support provide extensive specialist training for experienced volunteers to work with victims of domestic violence, sexual assault or murder. Volunteers state that helping the Victim Support charity is very rewarding.
6. Comments from service users regarding the work of Victim Support include:-
 - "I would like to take this opportunity to say that a volunteer called Sandra from Victim Support has made a positive impact on the recovery of my son from the attack. I am without doubt that without her good work, he would have a lot further to go on the road to recovery from this incident"
 - "a treasure and stated that VS had saved her life"
 - "thanks for all support – you are fantastic, an absolute diamond"
 - " wouldn't have got this far without xxxx"
7. In 2012/2013 Nottinghamshire County Council provided £15,000 towards the general costs of training and developing the volunteer workforce and £15,000 towards the Young Witness Service, which helps young witnesses through the difficulties in attending court. Whilst a small part of the total funding of Victim Support in Nottinghamshire, this contribution of £30,000 from Nottinghamshire County Council is acknowledged as an essential part of their operating budget. The total annual funding for Victim Support in 2012/2013 is approximately £750,000, funded mostly from the Ministry of Justice, but with an expectation that funding will also be raised locally. Victim Support state that they "do try to make every penny count, spending wisely and providing a high quality service". They provide Nottinghamshire County Council with regular updates on the impact of the funding awarded.
8. Over the last few years Nottinghamshire County Council has been pleased to host the Victim Support Annual Review. Most recently, this was held on 10 October 2012, where the Chairman of the County Council gave the welcoming speech. This year the review focused on a celebration of the contributions made by the staff and volunteers of Victim Support who primarily provide the services to victims and witnesses of crime. The range and diversity of partners attending the Annual Review, (which included Nottinghamshire Police, District and County Councils, the Voluntary and Private Sectors, and the City Council), was a positive indication of the willingness to come and celebrate the work of Victim Support, the value partners place on the service provided, and the worth they place on the commitment of victims and witnesses. At the Annual Review, The Chairman

of the County Council assisted with the presentation of long service awards to volunteers, with awards to individuals for up to 30 years service.

Statutory and Policy Implications

9. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- i) Members note the content of the report and receive the presentation from Olwen Edwards, Divisional Manager for Victim Support Nottinghamshire.

Martin Done, Service Director, Communications and Marketing

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:
Tony Shardlow, Community Safety Officer x73846**

Background Papers

None.

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All