

Victim and Offender Needs Assessment

Executive Summary

July 2012

Assessment project led by the Research and Performance Team, Cambridgeshire County Council on behalf of Cambridgeshire Police Authority

This is the first time that a joint needs assessment for victims and offenders has been carried out for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It was commissioned by Cambridgeshire Police Authority and overseen by a steering group of representatives from a range of local agencies.

The approach was chosen to reflect the way people think about crime, which is based on who they are, where they live and their own or their family's experiences, rather than being primarily statistically-led.

The assessment uses qualitative opinions from a series of bespoke consultation workshops with people who work with victims and offenders, as well as numerical data collected locally. It paints a picture of the numbers of victims and offenders in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and provides a broad overview of the needs of sub-groups within the population.

Key Findings - Victims

- Since 1995 the level of crime in England and Wales has fallen¹. An individual's likelihood of being a victim has fallen with the fall in crime, however being a victim is still a reality for many people.
- Cambridgeshire Constabulary recorded 32,260 victims of crime (excluding businesses) during the calendar year 2011.
- Of these victims 85 per cent were aged between 16 and 65. A total of 80 per cent were white British, or from other white backgrounds e.g. European. A third of victims came from the 20 per cent most deprived areas of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- The British Crime Survey suggests that many people do not report crimes and that at least one in five people in the country are actually victims of crime each year. Applied to the population of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough this infers more than 100,000 people (aged 10-65) could have been a victim of some sort of crime in the last 12 months.

¹ British Crime Survey (BCS) 2010/11: This is a systematic study of victimisation in England and Wales carried out through interviewing a large sample of the population. The BCS provides a different reflection of crime compared to police crime statistics since it includes unreported offences and those considered too trivial to be worth reporting by the victims.

- The likelihood of someone reporting a crime can depend on the nature of the crime they have experienced. For example the British Crime Survey suggests almost 100 per cent of people who have had their car stolen will contact the police, while only 11 per cent of victims report serious sexual assaults.
- There is also variation in repeat victimisation. Those experiencing domestic abuse are more likely to suffer from repeat victimisation than any other type of victim. Cambridgeshire Constabulary records nearly 13,000 domestic abuse incidents each year; while the actual number of incidents experienced could be significantly higher.
- The impact of becoming a victim of crime varies from person to person. A relatively minor offence can have a serious outcome for a vulnerable victim. All agencies need to appreciate this and take a victim-centred approach; responding to the needs of the individual, rather than the crime type suffered. The demand for victim support services outweighs the resources available which means the highest risk victims are prioritised.
- The Victim Services' Advocacy Project recommended a common assessment tool should be introduced for victims across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It also raised a need for a seamless service for victims.
- The consultation workshops identified that the following victim groups needed to be featured within the needs assessment:
 - Victims of anti-social behaviour
 - Victims of domestic abuse
 - Victims of sexual violence
 - Victims of hate crime
 - People bereaved by murder, manslaughter or as a result of road traffic incidents
 - Young victims of crime
 - Victims of honour-based violence
 - Vulnerable, elderly victims of crime
 - Victims with mental health problems
 - Victims living in deprived / vulnerable localities.

A brief overview of why each of these groups has been included is within the main body of the needs assessment.

- The impact of crime on each of the key victim groups is potentially more significant. Some of these groups have high volumes of victims and place a great demand on services; for example, it is estimated there are more than 40,000 reported incidents of anti-social behaviour each year. Other victim groups are relatively small in number; with Cambridgeshire Constabulary recording 155 cases of honour-based violence between August 2008 and May 2012.
- The likelihood of becoming a victim varies depending on personal circumstances and lifestyle. For example the risk of being a victim of crime is highest amongst single, 16–24 year old males who live in relatively deprived areas. The lowest risk lies with someone in an older age range living in an affluent rural area.

Key Findings - Witnesses

- Witnesses play a crucial role in supporting victims and ensuring offenders are brought to justice. If they are witness to a traumatic event then they could be considered a secondary victim group.
- There is only a limited amount of local information available about witnesses and their experiences. Research with a small sample of witnesses as part of the joint inspection of Witness Care Units (WCU) in 2009 found that 14.3 per cent would not be prepared to give evidence should they witness a crime again. This point was also raised by those people who attended the stakeholder workshops in Cambridge and Peterborough. In particular those working within the third sector reported that many witnesses they had come across had expressed the view that “if they had know what it was going to be like, and entail, they would not have come forward as a witness”. More research is needed to identify if this is a common experience in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough or not.
- It has been recognised that a more detailed look needs to be taken at witnesses so all agencies can better understand and support their collective needs. This work has now been commissioned by Cambridgeshire Police Authority and will be added to the Joint Victim and Offender Needs Assessment in October.

Key Findings - Offenders

- Cambridgeshire Constabulary identified at least 11,300 individual offenders during 2011 – this includes those linked to a crime as the offender and those who have been convicted, cautioned or recently arrested.
- The total extent of offending is difficult to gauge. Estimates of offending based on the national 2003 Crime & Justice Survey applied locally suggest that more than 50,000 people living in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough aged between 10 and 65 years could have committed some sort of offence in the last 12 months. However many offences, as suggested in the British Crime Survey, go unreported, indeed many would have been considered too trivial to have been reported.
- More than 80 per cent of the offenders identified by Cambridgeshire Constabulary are male. Nearly one third are aged between 18 and 24, and 17 per cent are under the age of 17. Over a third reside in the 20 per cent most deprived areas in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- Many local agencies are involved in managing offenders. Within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough there are three prisons with a total of 2,727 prisoners. Each year more than 2,000 offenders are supervised for periods by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Probation Trust – with approximately 10 per cent re-offending each quarter.
- The re-offending rate amongst short-sentence prisoners (those serving less than 12 months, who are not subject to probation supervision) has been highlighted as being the highest of all offender groups² even higher with 57 per cent reoffending within a 12 month period.
- More than 950 young offenders (those aged under 18) are managed by youth offending services in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough each year.

² 2011 Compendium of Reoffending Statistics and Analysis, Ministry of Justice

- The risk factors in childhood which lead to offending can be the same as those which accompany substance misuse, other risk taking behaviours, and mental ill-health. Early interventions with young people can be the most effective, but need to address a broad range of behaviours, not just offending.
- Analysis into the current most prolific adult offenders in the area has revealed most started out as young offenders in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. In fact it revealed 85 per cent of them started their offending in the county at an average age of 13.
- The Integrated Offender Management Scheme currently manages 169 prolific offenders, many of whom also have drug and/or alcohol dependency problems. This represents less than two per cent of offenders identified in Cambridgeshire Constabulary's nominal database.
- The MAPPA (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements) scheme has identified 726 offenders (512 sex offenders and 154 violent offenders) who are specifically assessed to manage the risk they pose within the community in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- No single issue causes someone to re-offend rather it is an interaction between many different factors e.g. drug misuse, homelessness, lack of social skills or lack of employment opportunities. Therefore offenders need to be managed holistically with co-ordinated inputs from a number of relevant agencies.
- The consultation workshops highlighted that many offenders can also become victims of crime. In particular sex workers, substance misusers and chronically excluded adults were identified as being at risk.