

Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee

20 February 2025

Sexual Violence Support Services

Report of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To scrutinise how partnership work is being carried out through the Joint Sexual Violence Commissioning Group to recommission the sexual violence support hub and therapy service for survivors of sexual violence in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.

2 Action required

- 2.1 The Committee is asked:

- 1) to make any comments or recommendations in response to the Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC's) report on the co-commissioning of the sexual violence support hub and therapy service; and
- 2) to consider whether any further scrutiny of the issue is required (and, if so, to identify the focus and timescales).

3 Background information

- 3.1 As a result of the Independent Inquiry into Childhood Sexual Abuse in 2018, survivors identified a need for significant improvement in sexual violence support services, particularly specialist therapy. At that time, these services were fragmented, quality was variable and mainstream NHS services were not provided in a way that met survivors' needs. Various new support offers were tested, including a specialist pathway through NHS-commissioned 'Talking Therapies', accessed via General Practice to secure individual funding requests and personal health budgets. Whilst some personal health budgets were successful, there was a need for greater support to be introduced. An independent needs assessment was commissioned, which recommended that specialist therapy be put in place together with a single point of contact for survivors, who were often struggling with fragmented provision. Following discussion of the needs assessment, it was decided to co-commission and co-fund a new hub and therapy service.
- 3.2 The new model for sexual violence services for all survivors was designed to provide three specialist types of support: a single point of contact to signpost, take and make referrals, and conduct assessments (including mental health triage); practical help, including sexual assault referral centres, independent sexual violence advisers and lived experience support; and a range of tailored specialist therapy. The development of this model was shaped by survivors,

who wanted access to a broad range of support through a hub but did not want a medicalised approach to be taken, whilst recognising that clinical therapy was also needed.

- 3.3 In 2020, the new sexual violence support hub and therapy service was co-commissioned by the PCC, Nottingham City Council, Nottinghamshire County Council and the then Clinical Commissioning Groups for the area – now the NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board (ICB). The PCC was the lead commissioner and worked with both providers and survivors of sexual violence on an open tender process, with the final contract being awarded to the Nottinghamshire Sexual Violence Support Services (NSVSS). The commissioned 'ASA Hub' has been in operation since 1 January 2021 to provide a single point of contact for sexual violence survivors, as well as specialist therapy.
- 3.4 The core elements of the ASA Hub are funded by a three-way split between the PCC, the City/County Councils and the ICB, with the City/County proportion divided on a population basis. A partnership agreement is in place to govern the funding but, as both the funding and the contract with NSVSS are due to expire in December 2025, the PCC, the City, the County and the ICB have begun working together as part of a Joint Sexual Violence Commissioning Group to recommission the service and identify its future funding – with final procurement and funding decisions required by the summer of 2025.
- 3.5 The PCC's Insight Team conducted a full needs assessment for sexual violence and service provision in Nottinghamshire in June 2024. Extrapolated statistics from the Crime Survey for England and Wales for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire indicate that 22,740 people (0.45% of the population) aged between 16 and 59 had experienced sexual violence in the year ending March 2023. There is a large gap between estimated prevalence and reported crime, with 150 adults reporting non-recent sexual violence to Nottinghamshire Police in 2023 (a 25% increase on the previous year) and 1,704 adults reporting recent sexual violence in the same year. Over half (51%) of sexual violence reports were linked to domestic abuse and 8% of survivors were linked to 20% of the volume of offences.
- 3.6 Academic research sets out the significant long-term negative impacts on survivors of sexual violence and abuse (including the most vulnerable adults) who have unmet need, which then has an effect on the wider local statutory services and communities. The ASA Hub has had a long waiting list from its inception, however, which has grown over the life of the contract from around eight months for the longest wait to over two years. This has largely stabilised in recent years, with the needs assessment finding that, during 2023, there were an average of 665 survivors on the waiting list, similar to the previous year. On 30 September 2024, 656 survivors were on the waiting list, with the estimated longest time period to starting therapy being two years. There are a number of factors contributing to the increased waiting list, such as the Coronavirus pandemic plus the subsequent increased focus on improving mental health services leading to recruitment difficulties for counsellors nationally, with

specialist sexual violence support therapists facing additional retention challenges in relation to managing vicarious trauma.

- 3.7 NSVSS has reported that survivors are also presenting with increased complexity and that the delays in the Courts system are having a negative impact. During 2024, NSVSS, with the commissioners' agreement, established clearer and shorter time limits on therapy based on clinical need. Commissioners worked with NSVSS to increasingly structure their stabilisation and emotional support to survivors on the waiting list for therapy. Monitoring of the service during this time has indicated that positive outcomes have been maintained. However, whilst the waiting list has largely stabilised, waiting list times have not reduced as hoped, so it is clear that further action needs to be taken as part of the re-commissioning process.

4 List of attached information

- 4.1 Report: Adult Sexual Violence Hub and Therapy Service

5 Background papers, other than published works or those disclosing exempt or confidential information

- 5.1 None

6 Published documents referred to in compiling this report

- 6.1 [Nottinghamshire Sexual Violence Support Services – ASA Hub](#)

7 Wards affected

- 7.1 All

8 Contact information

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