



Scrutiny Review of Asylum Seeker Services

2.00pm – 4.00pm Monday 12th June 2017

Victim Care and Advice Service - Cleveland, County Durham and Darlington

VCAS have been invited to answer the following questions in preparation for the above meeting: -

1. An overview of your organisation's role in providing support to asylum seekers
 - The Victim Care and Advice Service (VCAS) provide a free, independent and confidential service to help victims cope with the immediate impact of crime and subsequently make a full recovery.
 - The service can be accessed at any point in the journey to recovery. For many this will be in the immediate aftermath of the crime being committed but for some the full impact may not be evident until later.
 - Victims are entitled to support through VCAS regardless of whether they have reported the incident to the Police or not. VCAS will always encourage victims to report their crime to the Police and would offer support to the victim during the reporting process if that was needed. However if the victim did not want to report to the Police then their wish would be respected unless there was a safeguarding issue that would need to be addressed.
 - If the victim did not want to report the crime to the Police the victim would be asked if they would like the information to be shared with the Police anonymously for intelligence purposes only.

2. A brief description of any local projects that your organisation has recently done/is doing in relation to asylum seekers
 - Community Champions - VCAS have been directly involved in developing a briefing session for Community Champions. This has been delivered in collaboration with the Regional Refugee Forum North East and Cleveland Police. Community activists were identified through the Regional Refugee Forum and the briefing was delivered jointly by VCAS and Cleveland Police. The aim is to increase the knowledge of asylum seekers and refugees so that they are more confident in the process to report crime and so they know where to go if they would like support to cope and recover after being a victim of crime.
 - Friends Against Scams - Following liaison with the Regional Refugee Forum some members of the Refugee and Asylum Seeker community attended Friends Against Scams Champion training delivered by the National Trading Standards Team. This equipped them to deliver important crime prevention advice to their communities in relation to frauds and scams.



3. Which other groups/agencies you regularly co-ordinate/link in with

The below table shows some of the agencies that VCAS regularly engage with. Please note that this list is not exhaustive.

<u>Cleveland</u>	
Age UK	ARCH Northeast
Regional Refugee Forum	Citizens Advice Bureau
Cleveland Fire Brigade	Cleveland Fire Support Network
Cleveland Police	Coast and Country Housing
Hart Gables	Hartlepool Council
Housing Hartlepool	Middlesbrough & Stockton Mind
Middlesbrough Council	Middlesbrough Safeguarding Children Board
MVDA	My Sister's Place
Redcar & Cleveland council	Safe in Tees Valley
South Tees Youth Offending Service	Stockton Community Safety Team
Thirteen Care and Support	Thirteen Group
Unite	Endeavour
Harbour	RCVDA
Talking Therapies	Witness Care Unit
Eva	Ageing Better
Volunteer Police Cadets	National Citizen Service
Teesside IAPT Services	Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority

4. Any involvement your organisation has with the North East Migration Partnership (NEMP) and/or the Local Authority

- When necessary VCAS have consulted with Janine Hartley from the North East Migration Partnership.
- Consultation has taken place with Claire Sills and Satnam Singh from Stockton Council and they know how to refer victims to VCAS for support when they need to.



5. Key asylum seeker issues/concerns/gaps in provision from your perspective, and those of asylum seekers using your service (capturing the voice of asylum seekers)

- Housing - Compass / Jomast - People from different countries, continents and cultures are being placed together in shared accommodation when they have nothing in common. Their only connection is that they are seeking asylum. More thought needs to go into the housing arrangements for asylum seekers.
- There has been an occasion when an asylum seeker was assaulted by a person who was also residing in the shared accommodation. Following the arrest of the offender they were released on bail back to the same address where the victim lived. This was insensitive and not in the best interests of the victim.
- There is a need to spend time with asylum seekers to explain British cultures. Some things that may appear quite basic for British people may initially appear unusual when asylum seekers first arrive in the UK. For example, dogs are kept as pets and not only as guard dogs, an explanation of Halloween and bonfire night etc.

6. Future challenges for your organisation around providing support to asylum seekers

- We would like to have volunteers from an Asylum Seeker background volunteering for VCAS. We are working through this and expect that progress will be made shortly.

*Graham Strange
Manager*

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30th May 2017