



VICTIM SUPPORT

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

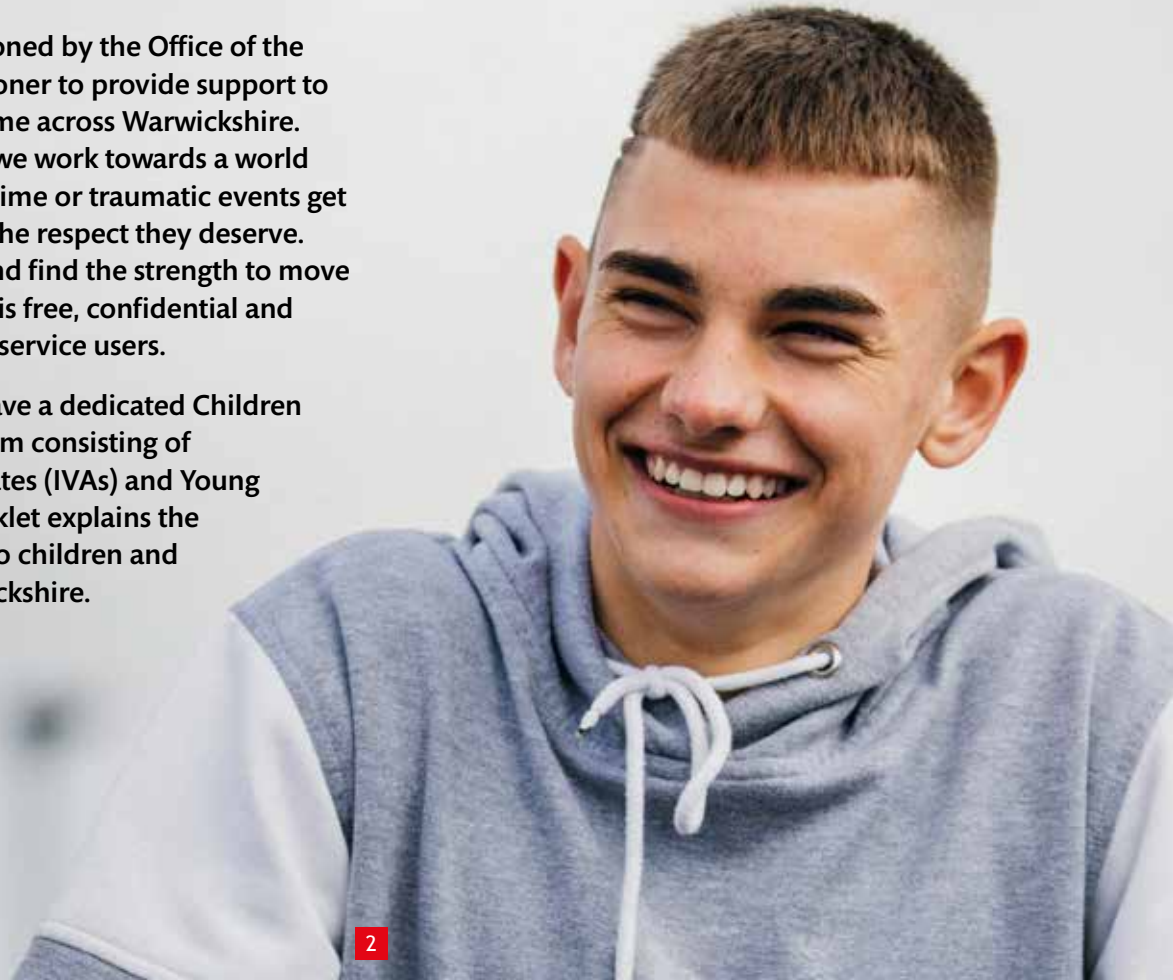


**Warwickshire Children
and Young People service**

Children and Young People service

Victim Support is commissioned by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to provide support to victims and witnesses of crime across Warwickshire. As an independent charity, we work towards a world where people affected by crime or traumatic events get the support they need and the respect they deserve. We help people feel safer and find the strength to move beyond crime. Our support is free, confidential and tailored to the needs of our service users.

As part of this service, we have a dedicated Children and Young People (CYP) Team consisting of Independent Victim Advocates (IVAs) and Young Victim Volunteers. This booklet explains the specialist support we offer to children and young people across Warwickshire.



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We also have a brilliant team of specialist Young Victim Volunteers who can be contacted through our CYP team.

Who do we support?

Our team works with children and young people, aged between five and 17, who have experienced or witnessed crime and traumatic incidents, regardless of whether the crime has been reported to the police or when the incident occurred.

Our support focuses on reducing risks, increasing protective factors and improving levels of resilience, therefore supporting children and young people to be:

- safer and less fearful
- less likely to be re-victimised
- less likely to engage in risky behaviours
- more likely to move on from their victim experiences and effect positive change.

We deliver a 'multi-crime' service, meaning we help children and young people who experience or witness different types of crime, including assault, cybercrime, bullying, theft, hate crime, antisocial behaviour. The easiest way to understand our service is that we provide support to children and young people affected by all crimes except sexual abuse (specialist services are available within Warwickshire that we can refer to for support). We have a

referral pathway with Refuge, Warwickshire's commissioned domestic abuse service, for children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse. Alongside this we are also able to deliver a group work recovery programme if schools have a group of young people who have previously experienced domestic abuse and are able to engage in group work. Please refer to the group work section of this document for further information.

There are lots of ways children and young people can get support to cope and recover from the effects of crime. Our CYP Independent Victim Advocates will talk with them and agree an individual support plan.



Support



Immediate emotional and practical support

For some young people, they may not want ongoing support from our service and may require some immediate emotional support or practical interventions. When we receive a referral we will make contact either direct with the young person, or with their safe parent/carer (depending on their age) and complete an initial need and risk assessment. This helps our team to identify what support the young person may benefit from.

During this conversation we will be offering some initial support and reassurance around what has happened and how it has impacted them; for some young people this will be all the support they need. Some may benefit from various practical interventions in addition to this such as safety advice, or information about their rights as a victim of crime.

We are able to offer security items such as personal, window and door alarms to young people who have been affected by crime, and those who have a smartphone are made aware of personal safety apps they may benefit from, such as Hollie Guard®.

We also inform all young people referred to our service about other services available to them and their rights within the Victims' Code of Practice. The Victims' Code of Practice is a Government document that details the support and information victims of crime should receive from criminal justice agencies in England and Wales. The Victims' Code of Practice has a special section for people who are under 18 because they are entitled to extra support. Our CYP Team are able to send out more information around this and discuss the Victims' Code of Practice appropriately with children and young people.

See Jonny's Story on page 15 for an example of a young person we supported who received immediate emotional and practical support.

Support



Ongoing emotional support

For other children and young people affected by crime and traumatic incidents, ongoing emotional support is often needed to help them cope and recover from the harm caused. They will be assigned their own CYP Independent Victim Advocate who will support them throughout this cope and recovery process. Support typically takes place on a weekly basis with sessions lasting up to one hour, depending on age. These can take place at home, in school, at local community venues, at a Victim Support office or over the phone; this will be determined by the age of the young person and any risks there may be around their current situation.

Each young person will create an individual support plan with their CYP Independent Victim Advocate which will contain a number of activities and interventions designed to help them cope and recover from the harm caused. While this is not an exhaustive list, support plans could include safety planning, confidence and self-esteem building, exploring and understanding emotions, and developing coping strategies. Quite often this will be arts and crafts based to make it more enjoyable for the young people we support, but we will always be led by them as to what they want to do and how they want to do it.

Part of our ongoing emotional support may involve advocacy work. With their explicit consent, we can assist young people with speaking to school about the impact the crime has had on them, speaking with the police about the progress of an investigation and help them access updates, or support them with accessing their GP.

The needs assessments our CYP Independent Victim Advocates complete with children and young people explores all areas of their life, so we can often identify support needs that are outside of the support we are able to provide. When this happens our role is to find a service best suited to support them with these needs and either signpost them to the agency or make a referral on their behalf.

See Sarah and Mohammed's stories on pages 17 and 20 for examples of young people we have supported who received ongoing emotional support.

Support



Group work and prevention

We also provide a variety of group work programmes for children and young people who have been affected by crime and traumatic incidents. Group work may be offered to a young person because this suits their needs better than one-to-one support. While there is the possibility that the programmes we deliver may change to meet the needs of the children and young people we support, there are currently two that we deliver:

CYP Recovery Toolkit

At present we currently only provide one-to-one support young people who have experienced domestic abuse through our referral pathway with Refuge. Alongside this we are also able to deliver a group work recovery programme if schools have a number of young people who have previously experienced domestic abuse and are able to engage in group work. The CYP Domestic Abuse Recovery Toolkit is an eight-week programme for children and young people who have witnessed or experienced domestic abuse and are able to engage with a group programme. This programme has been written for children and young people who are no longer living with the abuse and aims to help them understand their experiences.

Boomerang

Boomerang is a five-week resilience building programme created by Primary Mental Health Services. Boomerang has been designed to help children and young people learn ways to cope with difficult feelings and feel confident to manage hard situations. We typically offer this to young people who have been affected by bullying and have delivered Boomerang to groups of six to 12 children and young people but also to whole class groups within schools.

School assemblies

Victim Support is also committed to raising awareness and sharing preventative messages within schools. We are able to provide bespoke school workshops and interventions around a wide range of topics, including: bullying, cybercrime, and hate crime. Following some of our sessions we ask the children to sign a pledge by putting their thumb prints onto a canvas which is displayed at school as a visual reminder of the work they have undertaken.

Support

A young boy with short brown hair and black-rimmed glasses is smiling warmly at the camera. He is wearing a blue zip-up jacket. His right hand is extended towards the camera, with fingers slightly spread, as if reaching out. The background is dark and out of focus, showing some indistinct shapes that could be other people or objects in a room.

Awareness raising

As a local team it is very important to be as visible as we can in the local community. We are able to do this in a number of ways:

Local community events

We attend as many local events as we can and meet community members to talk about the support we provide and how they or someone they know can access our service. Our staff and volunteer team support all local events and are able to provide some immediate support or safety advice where appropriate. Some of the events we attend include Warwickshire Pride, Pawprints Fun Dog Show, local village fairs, and school summer fairs.

Parents' evenings

We often attend a number of Warwickshire schools parents' evenings, letting parents, carers and young people know who we are and the support we are able to provide. This allows us to accept referrals for children and young people direct from their parent and carers, enabling support to start as soon as possible.

School drop-ins

Some Warwickshire schools also host a Victim Support drop-in for parents and carers. Parents and carers are able to drop into school and meet with some of our CYP Independent Victim Advocates and discuss any support they or their children may need.



Providing the right support

"I really liked making the stress balls and having someone to talk to."

"The support has been invaluable to children who have experienced trauma."

"It really helped having someone who would listen to me and let me talk about everything."

"Your service is fantastic. It is effective emotional support for [school name] students which we continue to be thankful for. Children and Families have been supported emotionally and nurtured by VS through extremely difficult circumstances where they have been able to work through many complex thoughts, feelings and emotions, one-to-one with an Independent Victim Advocate."

"The service is invaluable for young people and their families to access the support they need. Increasingly, the onus is placed upon schools to support and manage the emotional impact of children and families' lived experiences, which often has significant impact on their behaviour and access to learning."

"Thank you for being someone I can talk to."

"My sessions were really fun, thank you."

"You have helped me feel much more confident."

"It is really easy to refer into your service and we always get a quick response, thank you!"

Meet Jonny

Jonny was referred to Victim Support by Warwickshire Police after being assaulted when out with his friends. He had been at the local skate park when a group of older teenagers attacked him and stole his wallet and phone.

One of our CYP Independent Victim Advocates called Jonny's parents to see how he was after the assault and discussed the support he might need. Jonny's mum said she felt he had been a bit withdrawn since the incident and hadn't been out with his friends as much as he usually would. Our CYP Independent Victim Advocate explained the support we were able to offer, and Jonny's mum wasn't sure whether he needed this support. We agreed that it was best to speak to Jonny himself, which we did.

Jonny told us that he felt worried about going back to the skate park meaning he had not been leaving his house after getting home from school. We provided some initial support and reassurance, discussing how it is natural to have these worries and explored some strategies he may be able to use to help with how he is feeling. We also discussed a personal safety alarm, which Jonny felt would help, so we posted this out to him.

Jonny also told us that he hadn't heard anything from the police since it was reported which was also worrying him a lot. We informed Jonny of the Victims' Code of Practice and discussed his rights within this. We offered to try and find out what was happening with the police investigation. Whilst Victim support are totally independent from the police, we do have access to their systems within the Warwickshire Integrated Victim Management Unit; with Jonny's explicit consent, we found out the latest update for him and also made contact with the Police Officer in charge of the investigation asking him to contact Jonny.

Jonny said he didn't feel he needed any further support from our team, so we provided him with our contact information and he agreed to call us if he needed anything.

Meet Sarah

Sarah was referred to Victim Support by her parents after an incident where she was a victim of hate crime. Sarah had been assaulted by her peers in school who has also threatened to kill her. She was told to “go back to where you’re from” and that she “doesn’t belong here”.

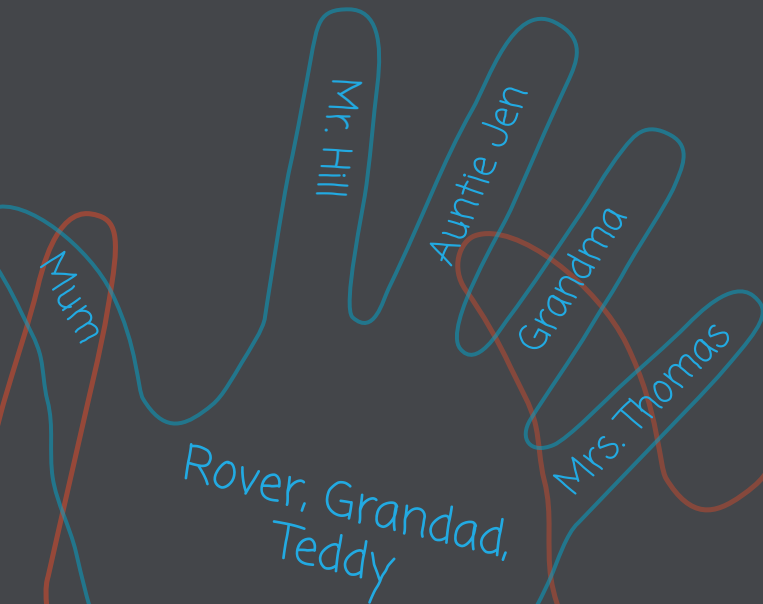
When Sarah's mum made the referral to our service she wasn't sure whether we would be able to provide support as Sarah has been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Our CYP Independent Victim Advocate reassured mum that this would definitely not prevent us from offering support and we would work with Sarah and her mum to adapt our approach in any way needed to ensure she got the most out of support.

On initial contact with Sarah, it was clear she was struggling with anxiety after what had been happening; she didn't leave her house, didn't want to socialise with her friends, struggled eating and sleeping, and was also missing a lot of school. Sarah told her CYP Independent Victim Advocate that she didn't feel safe and felt she didn't have anyone to talk to. When support started, mum was concerned about it taking place in school as this was where the ongoing hate crime was taking place and she felt as though the school were not helping, leaving Sarah at risk of further harm. Our CYP Independent Victim Advocate reassured mum that we would speak with the school about her concerns and the ongoing hate crime and we felt school needed to be part of the solution;

we did offer to meet at an alternative venue, however, mum decided school would be a good place to meet.

Support was provided to Sarah on a weekly basis at school. Working with Sarah we completed a needs assessment helping both Sarah and her CYP Independent Victim Advocate create a tailored support plan. Safety planning was the main priority, which was initially the focus of her sessions. Sarah's CYP Independent Victim Advocate helped her to create a personalised safety plan, identifying her safe people and safe places; Sarah was also shown the Hollie Guard® smartphone application which works as both a safety plan and a personal safety alarm combined.

As they worked through her support plan, Sarah's CYP Independent Victim Advocate helped her to develop her confidence and self-esteem. Sarah completed a wellbeing diary, each week filling it with something positive, something active and something sociable she had done each day. Sarah created a 'helping hand' poster to remind her of all the people she has in her life who love and support her; this was a really good way of reminding Sarah that she had people to support her.



Our CYP Independent Victim Advocate was able to advocate on Sarah's behalf and speak with the school about the concerns that she and her mum had about their perceived lack of action and support. We were able to not only reassure Mum that the school were very understanding of their concerns, but also let her know the different things school had put in place to try and protect Sarah from any further harm. Both Sarah and her mum were not aware of the support school had put in place; the advocacy we provided improved the relationship between this family and the school significantly.

Sarah told her CYP Independent Victim Advocate that she felt she had really benefitted from having someone to offload to about her worries and said she always felt much better after seeing them each week. Once we had completed Sarah's support plan, we confirmed that all of her needs has been met; Sarah had a new circle of friends she felt were supporting her. She told us she was feeling really happy and had begun to plan for her future. The family had a much better relationship with Sarah's school and the pastoral team after learning what had been put in place to help her. Ongoing conversations also took place with the school around Victim Support delivering some hate crime workshops to their other students.

Case study



Meet Mohammed

Mohammed was referred to Victim Support by his school who had noticed a significant change in his emotional wellbeing over the previous few months. The school had spoken to his father who informed them that there was ongoing antisocial behaviour happening in the block of flats where they lived which was having a big impact on the whole family, especially Mohammed.

When our CYP Independent Victim Advocate made contact with the family, dad told them about what had been happening. The resident of the flat above theirs had been playing very loud music until the early hours which had been keeping Mohammed awake at night. The family could hear fighting and shouting from the flat on a daily basis and they would often have people banging on their door looking for their neighbour who owed them money.

On first contact dad informed us that the night before their door had been kicked open by three men in masks demanding money from the neighbour upstairs. Once dad had told them they had the wrong flat they left, leaving Mohammed and his dad extremely scared. Mohammed was refusing to sleep in his own room and would want to be with dad at all times. When they had to leave for school in the mornings, he could see Mohammed physically shaking as he was worried about the neighbour seeing them or someone else coming to their door.

When our CYP Independent Victim Advocate spoke with dad, they arranged for support to take place with Mohammed on a weekly basis in school and also spoke about some support for himself. Dad was also struggling with what was happening, he felt guilty that he wasn't able to protect his family and how they were not able to move house to get away from what they were being subjected to. Dad received support from his own Victim Support Independent Victim Advocate.

Mohammed spoke to his CYP Independent Victim Advocate about what was worrying him and what scared him most about his neighbour. After creating a tailored support plan with Mohammed, his CYP Independent Victim Advocate focused initially on safety. They worked together to create a plan of what Mohammed can do when bad things were happening at home with the neighbour; they explored the safe people he could talk to and the safe places he could go both inside and outside the flat.



Our CYP Independent Victim Advocate also helped him develop his own set of coping strategies, such as a stress ball, a worry monster and relaxation techniques designed especially for children and young people. Both CYP and adult Independent Victim Advocates worked together to support father and son with having their property secured after the door had been broken, alongside exploring their options around moving properties. They attended the local Antisocial Behaviour Forum where their situation

was discussed. This enabled us to link in with other agencies such as the local Safer Neighbourhood Team from Warwickshire Police who agreed to visit the family on a regular basis to not only reassure them, but to also increase police presence in the area.

Mohammed was also given a personal safety alarm by his CYP Independent Victim Advocate. This was not only to help him feel safe when leaving the house, but also to help him sleep in his own room again. Mohammed felt he was able to start sleeping in his own bed again because he knew that he could set off the alarm and his dad would hear check on him. This reassurance meant that both Mohammed and his dad were able to have a better night's sleep.

Mohammed and his dad told our CYP Independent Victim Advocate they felt the support they received had made a big difference. Mohammed was now sleeping in his own room, their front door had been replaced, and they were in the process of moving away from the area. Mohammed also had learnt a range of different coping strategies he could use when something was happening in the flat above that made him feel scared.

About our support

Do the police need to be involved for someone to access support?

No, our support is available regardless of whether the incident has been reported.

How do we refer a child or young person for support?

There are a number of ways this can be done. We have a referral form for schools and other services to complete; please contact us at: warwickshire.vs@victimsupport.org.uk for the latest version that can be emailed to you. We accept referrals over the phone from other agencies, parents/ carers and age-appropriate self-referrals. Our local office (02476 351 003) is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, and we also have a free 24 hour Supportline (08 08 16 89 111) that can be contacted outside of these hours.

Is there a cost to this service?

No, our support is totally free and also confidential. This means we only share information about a child or young person without their permission if we are worried about their safety, someone else's safety, or have a safeguarding concern. If information is shared, we will always try and discuss with them why we are passing this on and what happens next.

Do you offer support to children and young people around the impact of having a parent in prison?

We get asked this question quite a lot and unfortunately we do not.





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