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LaToya Ridge  
Victim Support  
Safer Communities Partnership Board  
Barnet 2023 Report

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## Who We Are

Victim Support (VS) is an independent charity that provides free, independent and confidential support to anyone affected by crime and traumatic events in England and Wales.

We provide personalised support to help people manage after crime and feel safer. We also inform victims of their rights and the services that they may be entitled to and ensure their voices are heard throughout their support and beyond.

Victims, those close to them, and witnesses to the crime are our focus and over the years we have developed unrivalled expertise when it comes to their needs and their journey through the criminal justice system.

VS makes a profound impact on victims' throughout 2023, we directly contacted hundreds of thousands of victims, helping them to access their rights and recover after experiencing crime. By working with victims, often at crisis point, we have gained unique insight into their needs - and how these are being shaped by what is unfolding in wider society.

The cost of living crisis has made life harder for all of us. However, for victims, already facing enormous challenges, it has compounded impacts on their wellbeing, physical and emotional health, and their ability to move on after crime. Throughout the year, we heard how the cost of living crisis becoming a national emergency for domestic abuse victims who couldn't afford to leave perpetrators. The current state of our courts mean that victims also face appallingly long waits for justice. The true cost of crime has never been more apparent. This report outlines how we are striving to innovate within our support services and align with Barnet's Community Safety Strategy of '*working to make Barnet a place where everyone feels safer*'.

## Our Work

Our core funding provides a multi-crime services and a range of crime-specific projects via local funding. Our services work closely with partner organisations to reach all communities and ensure those affected get the most appropriate support.

## Awards and accreditations

Although awards and accreditations are not the reason we do our work, we are proud of these achievements as they demonstrate our commitment and determination to achieve the highest standards, both for our colleagues, and for victims and witnesses of crime.



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Our core services are national and provide support to victims and witnesses in multi-crime, Domestic Abuse, Terrorism, and Homicide.

We are locally funded in Merton, Ealing, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Haringey, Camden, Islington, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest to provide specialist projects in Hate Crime, Sexual Violence, Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), and support to Children and young people (known as CYP projects)

We design our services with academics, government, local authorities, other specialist organisations to provide support and enable victims and witnesses to cope and recover. Being able to adapt our services to people's changing needs is an area where VS can add real value has never been more vital.



## London Victim & Witness Service

In London Victim Support delivers the London Victim and Witness Service (LVWS) which has been funded by MOPAC since 2019, delivering core services to London residents. The scale of our reach is vast, with multi-channel information and support provided to victims and witnesses. This includes in-person and virtual support from local staff, community events and partnership work, responding to live chats and calls to our national Supportline, visitors to the VS website and access to our online platform, [My Support Space](#).

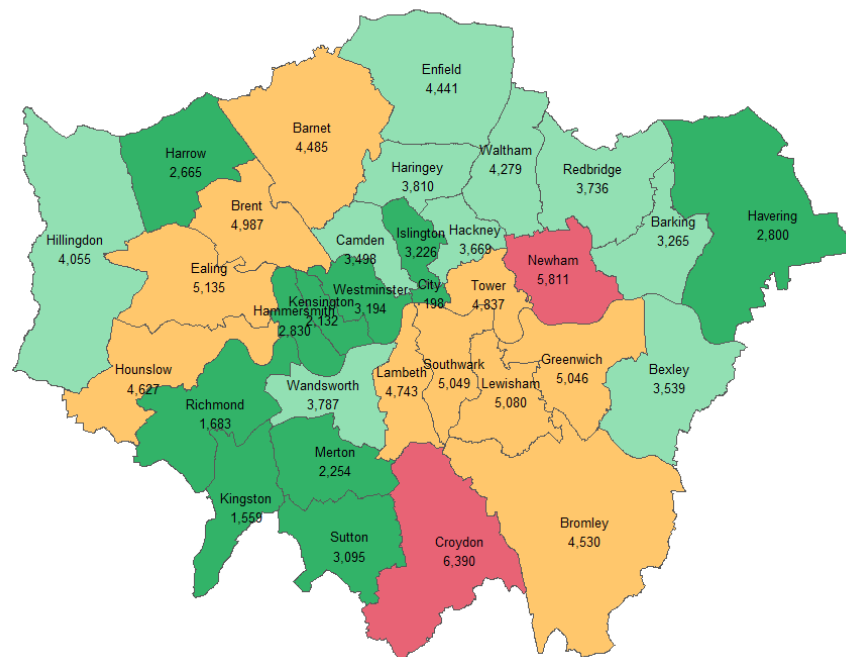
We firmly believe that all victims should be able to access support and safety advice in a way that is convenient for them, which is why we have continued to provide 24/7 access to our services through our Supportline and online live chat. Often, especially for victims who do not want to approach the police, these frontline services are a lifeline. They can be the first step in their journey to accessing more long term support, or to recognising what they're experiencing as abuse. We have seen demand for these crucial services

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increase by 12% (Supportline) and 54% (live chat) since 2020 and we remain committed to providing 24/7 access.

The LVWS is broken down to reflect the Metropolitan Police Service BCU areas. Within the LVWS, Barnet is considered as the North West BCU area. This financial year (April-December 2023) so far we've received almost 125,000 referrals from across London, of these 12,137 referrals are from the North West BCU, which is made up of Barnet, Brent, and Harrow.



Referrals Group: Highest (>= 5473) High (>= 4485) Low (>= 3245.5) Lowest (< 3245.5)  
Numbers represent number of Referrals YTD Financial Year 23/24  
Groups based on quantiles for period

As the cost of living crisis hit victims we increased the practical and financial support we offer - this rose by 20% compared to the year before. This included for example, providing food vouchers, as well as supporting victims to apply for funds to buy necessary items such as school uniforms for children.

VS has seen a 38% increase in the number of romance fraud victims we have supported. This particular crime can tear lives apart, with the grooming and abuse inflicted by perpetrators being akin to domestic abuse. Similarly ever growing demand in areas such as sexual violence where rising referral numbers, alongside cases that are taking years to reach Crown Court, are creating rising and unsustainable caseloads for support services. While VS prides itself on developing innovative solutions, such as our online platform, My Support Space, these cannot meet all needs and the sheer scale of referrals we are receiving. We are pleased that innovative new services, such as WeMatter - a digital service for 8-17-year-olds who have been affected by domestic abuse, and IMatter for women aged 16+ who have been, or are currently, victims of domestic abuse (not high risk), have extended the ways in which victims can access our support. These online group



support programmes provide support to some of the most vulnerable victims. In addition we continue to support victims directly in person, and we have continued to campaign tirelessly for systemic change throughout the criminal justice system. We have given evidence at three different Select Committees on fraud, police transparency and accountability and the once-in-a-generation Victims Bill.

### Barnet Referrals April-December 2023

Here’s a breakdown of the 4,483 referrals the LVWS received for Barnet residents specifically.

Crime Category Group	Referrals
Acquisitive	1,284
Fraud & Forgery	968
DV	913
Violent Crime	666
Other Crime	224
Hate Crime	208
Arson/Criminal Damage	162
Sexual Offences	55
Non-Crime	3

We believe that every person affected by crime should have access to independent victim services. To prevent a postcode lottery for victims, all our core services delivered by the LVWS are available to anyone in need throughout London.

### Barnet’s Community Safety Strategy and The LVWS

#### Priority 1: Tackling and reducing anti-social behaviour

Although we are not commissioned within Barnet to deliver an anti-social behaviour project, residents are able to access our [SilverCloud](#) online self-help app, with modules for victims experiencing Stress, Depression and Anxiety, issues with Sleep, and Resilience.

#### Priority 2: Early intervention and prevention of domestic abuse and violence against women and girls



The LVWS delivers specialist IDVA support co-located in Barnet Hospital and Northwick Park Hospital for victims and survivors of domestic abuse (16+), which includes the delivery of Pre-trial, Outreach support, and support at court. The IMatter programme delivers support sessions focusing on healthy relationships, coercive control and abuse, communication styles, and more.

### **Priority 3: Reducing offending including violence, vulnerability and exploitation, with a focus on acquisitive crime**

The LVWS continue to support victims of violent crimes, exploitation, and acquisitive crimes. In addition VS introduced a new fraud awareness training course, established a monthly fraud supporter's forum (for complex cases), ran VS' first national virtual fraud conference, developed expert resources on money mules and cryptocurrency, ran a series of webinars with organisations such as Which? Money Advice Helpline, the Financial Ombudsman Service and the City of London Police. We developed specialist fraud materials for victims, and we have given evidence at three different Select Committees on fraud, police transparency and accountability and the once-in-a-generation Victims Bill.

### **Priority 4: Safeguard and support those vulnerable to radicalisation**

In November 2023, a series of activities took place across VS during National Adult Safeguarding Week, including a forum to share good practice, webinars, blogs, and open question sessions to support staff feel confident in recognising signs of abuse and neglect and the procedures to follow. All staff undertook PREVENT training, and we have also delivered safeguarding webinars focusing on subjects such as Modern Slavery and Exploitation.

### **Priority 5: Access to justice for those affected by hate crime**

We have supported research by academics at Royal Holloway, University of London exploring the relationship between hate crime and domestic abuse, and have undertaken research about service needs of victims. As well as undertaking new research, we have published "[It's who I am](#)" - a report looking at the impact of hate crime and hate incidents, barriers to reporting, engagement with the support service and improving understanding of support needs.

## The Support Barnet Victims Can Expect

### Support Framework



We will always aim to make contact with a victim-survivor or witness within 48hrs of referral, in a way that works for them and is safe. Barnet victims and witnesses have free and confidential access to our 24/7 Support Line 0808 16 89 111, our 24/7 Live Chat [victimsupport.org.uk](http://victimsupport.org.uk) and other agency referrals to dovetail support. When receiving support from our trauma informed caseworkers, clients can expect, a needs and risk assessment, safety planning, bolstering security provisions, and participate in a co-produced support plans which is measured and reviewed, to appropriately support them in coping with the effects of crime and trauma.

### Contacts

The general number for victims is 0808 1689 111 or live chat via [www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)

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