



Vital support for third-party victims of crime



Police and Crime Commissioner Alison Hernandez, left, with Restitute CEO and founder Cath Pickles

Commissioned services provided by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly to address crime and provide better support for victims now includes a multi-award-winning service for family and friends who are supporting someone who has suffered sexual abuse, sexual violence or other serious violence.

The OPCC funds services aligned with the Police and Crime Plan to improve community safety and well-being, including a dedicated website for victims – Victim Care - and support through the Devon & Cornwall Police Victim Care Unit (VCU).

Referrals via the VCU can now be made to Restitute, a not-for-profit community interest

company that offers practical and personalised help across England and Wales to third-party victims of crime which includes parents, carers, partners, siblings and loved ones.

Support is given by a devoted team, many of who have lived experience either as a primary or third-party victim of crime, and some are former clients.

Among the many people who have supported by Restitute is a man whose wife was raped on a family holiday abroad while he stayed at home due to work commitments.

Afterwards he struggled with anger issues towards the abuser and frustration he had not been with his wife.

It impacted his work, relationship with his wife and other family members, and he became suicidal. A Restitute support worker provided weekly support meetings and helped him work through his anger, signposted him to additional therapy and advised him how to salvage his marriage.

He was also supported through the court case during which the perpetrator was found guilty of all charges in a foreign court. He and his wife are now expecting a baby girl and are said to now being enjoying an 'amazing' relationship.

In a thank you email to Restitute, he said: "After the incident, I was in a really tough place, and it was hard to see the light at the end of the tunnel. I feel incredibly fortunate to have been connected with my Restitute support worker during this time.

"He's been there for me through some of my worst moments, always ready to listen, offer advice, or just share a laugh to lighten the mood. His kindness, empathy, and humor have been invaluable, and I've truly built up a great relationship with him.

"It's rare to find someone so dedicated and genuinely caring and I can't thank him enough for everything he's done for me."

Another grateful service user is a woman in her early 20s who was struggling caring for her suicidal mother who was a survivor of childhood sexual abuse which she reported to police in 2023. The woman was also concerned about her father who was displaying signs of dementia.

After seeking help from Restitute, she was diagnosed with Autism, ADHD and PTSD, received support to process her emotional trauma, was assisted with financial support and is now in education to further her career within the workplace.

In an email to Restitute, she thanked the service for making her feel more emotionally stable and able to cope and admitted "I couldn't have done it without you."

Early intervention for third-party victim of crime is aimed at reducing the risk of harmful issues including substance misuse, homelessness, poor mental health, unemployment and early death for their loved ones.

Cath Pickles, founder and CEO of Restitute, was herself a third-party victim of crime and was inspired to launch the service due to the lack of support she received.

She said: "We are absolutely delighted to be supporting people in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. Our work ensures that the families caring for victims of serious sexual and violent crime get the support that they and their loved ones deserve to ensure they can rebuild their lives and look to the future with hope.

"We have received such a warm welcome from the OPCC and other providers who almost immediately started to make referrals to us. This means that there is a joined-up approach to victim care, allowing specialists to work in their area of expertise.

"Most importantly, we know that the families we are supporting are starting to feel hope and are rebuilding their confidence and self-belief. Their courage is extraordinary and the

work that they are doing now will support the survivors of these horrific crimes for decades to come.”

Restitute also offers training to organisations, businesses and - particularly agencies that count victims of crime and their families amongst their service users – and educates and raises awareness of the challenges and difficulties faced by indirect victims of crime.

Police and Crime Commissioner Alison Hernandez said: “Ensuring victims receive timely and free support is and has always been one of my top priorities, and that also extends to families, loved ones and communities because the impact of crime and violence is far reaching.

“I am delighted that my office is now able to offer third-party victims support through Restitute which is wonderful service created by those who know first-hand the devastating impact crime due to their own lived experiences. I would urge any direct or non-direct victim of crime to visit our Victim Care website to learn more about the wide range of free services available.”

To get in contact with Restitute please visit [We are Restitute - Restitute](#) or email ceo@restitute.org

Free support is also available from the Devon & Cornwall Police Victim Care Unit – regardless of whether a crime has been reported to the police or not. To make contact please [click here](#) or call 01392 475900.