



Virtual Home

Requirements Description

Client: Digital Birmingham

Following the success of the Virtual Ruksak project by St Basils, Penval Ltd was asked to investigate further potential development of the Virtual Home concept amongst organisations working with vulnerable groups and to produce a requirements specification.

Penval Ltd
1/6/2009

Document Control

Title

Virtual Home

Intended Audience

CIRCUIT

Document Owner

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Version Control

#	Version	Date	Initials	Description
1	1 Draft	8 th January 2009	PEN	Initial report based on interviews conducted during December 2008 by Val Lewis
2	Final	19 th January 2009	PEN	Version distributed at request of KS-J

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Introduction

In December 2008 Val Lewis, Independent Consultant was commissioned by Penval Ltd to conduct a series of interviews with organisations who worked closely with vulnerable groups. From an initial contact list of some 19 organisations it was possible to organise meetings with 7 of them. The interview with the Shropshire Gypsy Liaison Officer was by telephone. One organisation, The Anawim DV Project, had to cancel the interview at the last minute due to an accident involving a key member of staff but have expressed a desire to be involved in any future project. Birmingham & Solihull Womens Aid contacted Penval in January to express interest – they would like a copy of the report and agreed generally with overall verbal feedback provided by Penval. The interviews are detailed in Annex 1.

The interviews used screen shots from the existing Virtual Ruksak project as a stimulus for discussion and then explored how such a facility might be relevant to the client group and what specific features would be needed to meet the needs of that specific group. The client groups represented by the interviewees were:

- Gypsy Travellers
- Families of offenders
- Vulnerable, homeless, drug/alcohol abuse sufferers, mental health sufferers, ex-offenders, migrant workers.
- Teenage Pregnancy / Sexual health
- Victims of domestic violence

Organisations Interviewed

SHARP – Support Help & Advice for Relatives and Friends of Prisoners	Fletcher House, College Hill, Shrewsbury SY1 1LY
Shrewsbury ARK	10 Castle Foregate, Shrewsbury SY1 2DJ
Health Development Team (Sexual Health, Teenage Pregnancy)	Shirehall, Shrewsbury, Shropshire. SY6 2ND
Victim Support Shropshire	Suite 2, Cannon Court East, Abbey Lawn, Shrewsbury, Shrops SY2 5DE
West Mercia Womens' Aid (Shropshire, Hereford * Worcestershire)	Berrows Business Centre, Bath St, Hereford.
Allens Croft Project (Family Support & Domestic Violence)	44 Allenscroft Rd. Kings Heath, Birmingham B14 6RQ
Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer, Shropshire	Shirehall, Shrewsbury, Shropshire. SY6 2ND

Summary of Findings.

Initial Views

With the exception of Gypsy and Traveller support there was general enthusiasm for the concept of a Virtual Home. In the case of Gypsy and Traveller communities it was felt that whilst there might be some enthusiasm amongst younger, more IT literate members of the community, there did exist an established communication network based on family matriarchs who maintained a legitimate address for all family members and acted as a clearing house for documents and letters.

The ability to store important numbers was important though there was a divergent view about documents which had been scanned based on the potential for identity theft. One possible option was for the ability to apply for replacement documents via a trusted third party. Victims of domestic violence are in a “flight” situation and rarely have the time to seek out and carry off important documents.

Without exception the security of such a facility was paramount. Every organisation emphasised that this should not be viewed as an alternative, or in any way similar to Facebook. Folders and documents should not be sharable. Passwords and identifiers should not have friendly alternatives and in some circumstances the initial registration and, potentially, future access should be mentored. It should be completely impossible to save a password.

The ability to “Ask an Expert” was seen as a useful idea with the proviso that an expected response time should be given. The clients cannot afford to spend time surfing or randomly accessing e-mails. Whilst the possibility of a text notification to alert to email messages was expressed it was emphasised that this needed the capability to be disguised (for some client groups) so as not to reveal the true nature of the message to a potential abuser.

With much of the stored information a history was seen as very important. Dates of claims for benefits, dates of residence and dates of important events were often missing or forgotten which led to delays in accessing housing or benefits in the future and problems with making criminal injury compensation claims. The names and addresses of previous landlords were also useful in completing references for accommodation. Maps and locations, on the other hand, were seen as an irrelevance by some groups but of real value for DV clients to pinpoint exclusion order breaches and to help them when applying for housing to show “safe” and “unsafe” locations.

It was pointed out that access and basic skills were a real issue particularly for BME women yet potentially this group could benefit greatly because of the exposure to honour crimes and child theft. This particular group highlighted the importance of having access to mentors and the development of capacity amongst existing volunteers where clients IT capacity is low.

Potential for Client Group

Organisations working with the families of prisoners see this as a as a mentor led tool to enable clients to understand the potential, to be confident about using it and to enable personalisation and help to be part of the whole user experience. The key benefit was as an Evidence Store with a personal touch.

Those working with ex offenders, drug abuse client and the homeless saw Ask an Expert as a key feature and would like links to organisations like Job Centre Plus, CAB, housing advice, anyone willing to engage who could help target group. The diary feature was also seen as useful to help disorganised and chaotic people to begin to organise themselves and thought that linking the diary to a texting service if interviews or meetings were inserted into diary as a reminder was an excellent idea. Alerts were also seen as a useful feature for example an alert to notify drug users when bad heroin around. Email with text to mobile would give this alert and may encourage use of tools on the website when accessed for the email (pushing info) but providing additional opportunities for a client to access resources, services, support.

Ask the Expert was also seen as a really good idea by the Sexual Health /Teenage Pregnancy Support Team who identified a need for it to be made “local” by providing local contacts, e.g. links to children’s information services. However, the option to collaborate and share with anyone should not be available at all. There are other places where this can happen. Any possibility of accidentally making information about an individual widely available should not exist.

Victim Support pointed out that Domestic Violence victims need to be able to control when information is received. A real safe place for storing actual documents would be even better – perhaps agencies signing up to support clients in accessing the virtual home could provide registered storage facilities for passports, driving licences, NI numbers etc?

Womens’ Aid noted that a Virtual Home in a mentored environment could be very instrumental in helping women plan leaving, taking responsibility, developing life skills, managing their own affairs because it’s often first time they have had to do any of this.

Additional Ideas, Features and Opportunities

Offender Support saw real potential in the Virtual Home for young offenders but they would need it before release and they don’t have internet access in prison. Their suggestion would be the possibility of an offline template for them to input info whilst preparing for release, with it going live on release. Process for this to happen would be very helpful via CD or Memory Stick given to client on release with clear instructions.

Once again the importance of links with a mentoring service was raised. Approved Mentors in supporting organisations have:

- PC,

- Internet Access,
- Showing How Skills,
- Signposting skills,
- and hand holding and mentoring skills

This makes the software more than just a tool, but a way of engaging with the individual.

Supporting the homeless, ex offenders and victims of drug abuse highlighted the need for a Job Log. This is more than just a history and would need to be updated, preferably automatically updated, if the client had done a search, and give a search history in the job log. This is always useful to have the evidence; those leading chaotic lives often forget to record automatically.

The Health Development Team saw a real potential for private residential care homes for children. They move around every 6 – 12 months and Virtual Home could provide a permanent “home” for their important documents to move with them, for photographs, special pieces of work, certificates, awards even RoA’s. Also lists of previous homes, and special contacts would be good as children build relationships which are lost because they don’t have a place to store contact information for themselves.

Mentoring support was, again, highlighted as a key issue. Homes and staff in them might be interested because of the potential this has to enhance the life skills package they have to deliver to prepare children for when they leave the home at 16 years of age:

- Safekeeping of important records
- Organisation skills
- Data that might be important to them.
- Next of kin information

Victim Support pointed out that chaotic lifestyles prevent people from thinking about updating information and proposed flashing reminders on various parts of the site to encourage people to put up to date contact details in the hands of trusted agents – mobile phone number (these can be changed every 2 – 3 weeks by victims fleeing abuse). Victim support sometimes lose track of clients who go underground and then become safe so don’t stay in touch with agencies. Victim Support may have Criminal Injuries Compensation claims of up to £10K for them, but can’t find them to hand it over!

Women’s Aid West Mercia said that one of the commonest reasons for returning to a violent household is women missing treasured photographs or mementos (they often have to leave children behind) – if these could be uploaded to keep it would be really valuable.

An organisation such as Womens’ Aid West Mercia suggested that they could explore using their 24 hour helpline to provide IT support to women needing support in accessing or updating their Virtual Home details.

Womens' Aid West Mercia also suggested separate area for all the children's details e.g. medical data, doctor's names, hospital numbers, medical conditions, medication taken (children in these situations often have multiple medical needs and it's very difficult in crisis to keep this information together – it is often lost and time is wasted or info not passed to medical staff quickly).

Women's Aid West Mercia also highlighted the importance of a housing history – absolutely vital that this includes a facility to put address, date of arrival and departure and Landlords name. Very important for housing benefit and for reference tracking – often the thing that prevents client getting new safe accommodation is she has had to flee, is lack of record for landlord to seek references. Need to be able to see 5 years back.

Unlike other groups the Womens' Aid group saw the map with the housing information as really useful to enable marking of exclusion area for preventing molestation by perpetrator. Often the biggest problem is showing evidence to police of where client lives and where molestation occurred in relation to this. A map which might easily draw a circle around the address and show where breach occurred would enable police to act much more quickly. This is easy if a client stays in one place, but much more difficult to prove if client has to keep moving for safety and this map would help enormously with this. This would also be useful to both police and housing officers to inform them of "safe" areas for client.

Once again the importance of accurate housing address details and the need for a reminder each time a person logs on asking if this is still the most recent address and most recent phone number and reminding client to inform any agencies of changes if they wish to be contacted. Examples include contact when client reaches top of housing list, and to contact client if Criminal Injuries Claim is successful and an award needs paying to them.

The Womens' Aid group also emphasised the need to **REMOVE "SAVE PASSWORD" OPTION**. In their view it was crazy to even offer this on a web-based programme for something which would contain so much information about a client especially where there is a high risk of ID theft through accidental or criminal access. "Anyone on Internet" option should be removed from the Internet Options too for the same reason.

Barriers.

Cost is always going to be an issue. Many of the organisations dealing with this client group have low client numbers and this would be a barrier for small organisations if there was a cost. If this was a grant funded project and the facility became embedded in the organisation what happens when the grant runs out? Is the organisation denied access? These services are often "non-statutory" but they are vital in delivering outcomes such as reduction in re-offending and prevention of domestic violence. As such they are services for the public as opposed to public services. This means that they are often grant funded rather than contracted and where they are contracted they are often not contracted at full cost recovery. This would suggest that such an IT based offering would need to be "built in" to a

wider strategy which dealt with issues such as homelessness, domestic violence, re-offending, drug abuse, and teenage pregnancy. Having such development funded by delivery groups is not an option.

The most hard to reach are the most difficult to make contact with. This might be very useful as a tool for families to be in touch without actually meeting an ex-offender if they could receive reassurance of the safety of family member without having to meet. There is often conflict on either side but that doesn't mean they don't want to know that each other is OK.

Concerns about security remain paramount. This is ? the Facebook generation and there are real concerns about the enthusiasm for a software tool that has been designed for sharing. These are some of society's most deprived, disengaged and at risk individuals. Even the use of SSL protocols has raised some concern because many in this client group are driven by obsessive determination. Abusers are often clever at eking information from trusted agents and friends who break a trust inadvertently. Unique identifiers and an inability to share any data or save any form of identification cannot be emphasised enough. There can be no cross agency use, confidentiality is absolutely vital. Collaboration areas need to be very specific. Password management will always be an issue.

The inability for offenders to have access to the internet whilst in prison is a major barrier. Therefore, a secured offline template activated on release is vital.

There are significant skills issues both in terms of the client group and many of the support organisations. Mentoring has been highlighted by all groups as a key component of any package. Mentors will have to be involved at the enrolment stage and understand the security issues so that the client can be advised, trained, and the messages re-inforced and documents scanned and uploaded quickly and professionally.

Multi lingual capability is important. Suggestions are for Punjabi, Urdu, Bangladeshi. Where this is not possible, universally agreed, clear icons to indicate the different tools would be vital in addition to the written word.

Requirements Description

Number	Item	Comment
1.	Important Numbers	Must be able to handle Driving Licence, Passport, National Insurance Number, Possibly a freeform table with prompts for key documents.
2.	Key Documents	<p>This is <u>NOT</u> Facebook! No suggestion of any similarity to friendship sites should be made. These are life documents and <u>CANNOT BE SHARED</u> in any way.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option 1. - Copies of the above key documents in PDF format. – Potential for a trusted third party to sign as proof of authenticity. • Option 2. – On line application with potential for delivery to agreed address via trusted agent.
3.	Secure Identifier	<p>The emphasis on security is paramount:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must not be able to change to something friendly or memorable. • Potential for key worker to countersign at point of initial registration and optional future access. • Save Password <u>MUST NOT</u> be available as an option. • Available to anyone in Internet should be removed too • Trusted agent possibly holding copy of password as back up?
4.	Ask the Expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to post questions – must be able to indicate likely 12/24 hr response time so that urgent queries are made via another medium. • Link to txt to say that a response has been received. • Facility for some text messages which <u>MUST BE</u> disguised as something innocuous and not make direct reference to content or context. • Links direct to relevant key advice organisations: CAB, Job Centre Plus, Housing Associations. • Links to local organisations such as children’s information services.
5.	Previous Address	<p>Essential for claiming benefits.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must force inclusion of relevant dates of residence. • Also include name of Landlord. • Must hold at least 5 years worth of records. • Previous children’s homes
6.	History	Important for remembering key dates, useful in making criminal injuries compensation claims.
7.	Mentor Support	An option for a dual sign in. The client and the mentor. Initially this ensures supported use. Subsequently this can be disabled by the mentor OR in the case of vulnerable young people or adults, retained to ensure authorised use

Number	Item	Comment
		only and to prevent accidental sharing of information.
8.	Personalisation	Ability to change colour/introductory message/Title page to allow element of ownership if required.
9.	Diary	Ability to record key dates and appointments.
10.	Alerts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reminders for appointments, • Notification of messages received, • Warning messages such as known availability of poor quality drugs. • Reminder to update current contact information – people on the run will change a mobile phone number every 2 to 3 weeks.
11.	Texting service	Alerts linked to texting service. This facility must be OFF by default and then when turned on texts must be configurable by the mentor so that they appear as innocent messages. This is important when protecting victims from abusers.
12.	Offline template	Offenders do not have access to the internet in prison. An offline template could be used to populate the information fields before release then be used to bring the on line version up to date upon release.
13.	Job Log	Job searches need to be recorded as evidence that they are looking for work. Preferable if this could be an automated process.
14.	Special Contacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important for children who move about a great deal, records people who have formed a specific relationship • Very important for all client groups to be able to keep trusted friends and agents details • Trusted agents who will keep up to date contact details for individuals in hiding or on the run.
15.	Special Photographs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option to upload pictures of children, relatives or important contacts. • Perfect for storing copies of photographic evidence of abuse (many support organisations now trained to take these pictures for clients as legally acceptable evidence)) to store and retrieve fi needed in prosecution in future.
16.	Children's Details	Must be capable of holding individual children's details of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • medical conditions, • national health numbers, • key dates, • inoculations, • doctors' names, • hospital admission dates, • Hospital contact numbers.

Number	Item	Comment
17.	Interactive mapping	Ability to identify exclusion zones and to highlight locations of offences against victims.
18.	E-mail	This should be available BUT NOT visible on log in – there must be one or more secret areas of a web page known only to the user and mentor accessed by a pre-determined key combination which will provide access to e-mail or certain pages of information.
19.	Re-skinning	The web pages must be capable of being re-skinned easily to represent something of interest only to the client. A beauty products advice page or a page of recipes. It must be possible to change the “skin” frequently. A number of requests made for skin to “hide” obvious log in behind a picture or icon known only to client groups.
20.	Multi-lingual capability	Punjabi, Urdu, Bangladeshi and Polish. Where this is not possible agreed, clear symbology and icon design is essential
21.	Cookie management	All cookies and history specific to this site and its use must be automatically deleted on log out.

Annex 1 Interview Notes

Virtual Home **Date:** 9/12/08
Name of Interviewee: David Doonan
Organisation: SHARP – Support Help & Advice for Relatives and Friends of Prisoners
Address: Fletcher House, College Hill, Shrewsbury SY1 1LY
Contact: Tel: 01743 245365
Email: sharphilary@yahoo.com.
Client Group: Relatives and Friends of Prisoners

Interview notes: **Interviewer – Val Lewis**

Initial views and comments on being shown features:

Likes the idea of numbers such as Driving License, ID, Passport, NI No, being recorded. All the sort of info that is needed for application forms and is often missing or difficult to trace.

Like the idea of all info in one place – bringing together various services such as email, info store, job log into one safe environment – there are lots of things out there that offer parts of this but nothing that brings it all together

Not certain that website producer really totally understands the concept and the need of the end user – perceives that there may be a need for more clarification. (David has done a lot of web-based tools (Tracefast.co.uk, Carmail.co.uk) both of which require secure ID. David would be interested in talking to producer.

Potential for client group

SHARP only has small number of clients who may see need/benefit per year, but would be interested in being involved in any pilot.

Thinks they would only use it as a mentor led tool to enable client to understand potential, be confident about using and to enable personalisation and help to be part of package too. He suggests use of it as an Evidence Store with a personal touch.

Any additional ideas, features, opportunities?

Thinks potential significant for young offenders but they would need it before release and they don't have internet access in prison. Suggests possibility of an offline template for them to input info whilst preparing for release, with it going live on release.

Mentoring service – Approved Mentors in supporting organisations have:
PC, Internet Access, Showing How Skills, Signposting skills, and hand holding and mentoring

skills – make this more than just a tool.

Any barriers limiting or excluding your clients? Include Legislative

Low client numbers would be a barrier for small organisations if there was a cost.

Best suited to most hard to reach, but they are most difficult to make contact with, might be very useful as a tool for families to be in touch without meeting ex-offender if they could receive reassurance of safety of family member without having to meet (often there is conflict on either side but it doesn't mean they don't want to know each other is OK)

Unit price would be unacceptable because of low numbers of potential users – SHARP has no income, grant reliant, could not support annual cost unless grant provided – what would be consequence to client if organisation could no longer afford to participate – would client lose access? MS should sponsor this type of thing as a social service

Perception of acceptable costs for organisations associated with this?

£ 0 - £500	£500 -£1000	£1000 -£2000	£3000 - £4000
£4000 - £5000	£6000-£7000	£7000 - £8000	£8000 - £9000

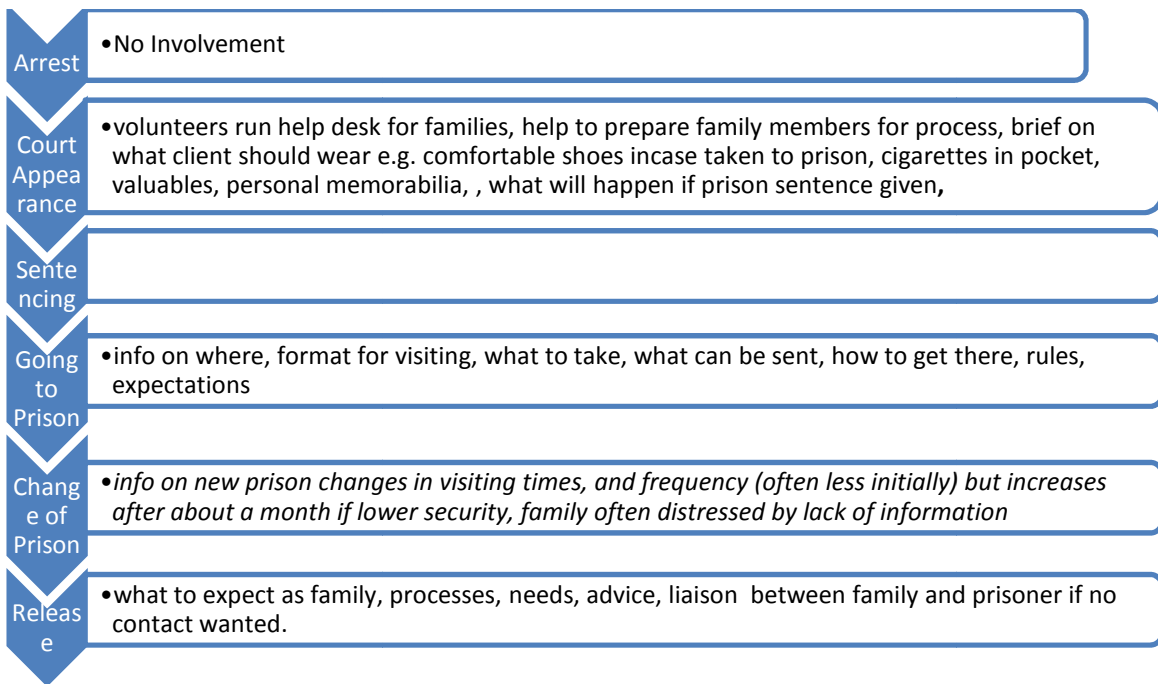
Would you consider an annual running cost for access to the service for your client group - No

Would you expect an upfront/license cost? – Would hope statutory partners might cover this

Have you any questions/concerns around cost that you would like to pose?

This should only go ahead if you can tick all the boxes around Secure Internet Access, Data Protection, File/Document protection.

Typical Client Pathway



Virtual Home
Name of Interviewee: Phil Griffiths
Organisation: Shrewsbury ARK
Address: 10 Castle Foregate, Shrewsbury SY1 2DJ
Contact: Tel: 01743 363305
Email: shrewsburyark@yahoo.co.uk
Client Group: vulnerable, homeless, drug/alcohol abuse sufferers, mental health sufferers, ex-offenders, migrant workers

Interview notes: **Interviewer – Val Lewis**

Initial views and comments on being shown features:

Initial info on the useful numbers – very useful idea
Ask Expert – likes this good idea

Previous addresses very important but must have dates of residence with them – this is necessary for transient lifestylers to submit on Housing Benefit Claims etc. – clients can never remember further than the last one! Would be useful to have landlord names too. Map of addresses is irrelevant and waste of space

Scanning and storing key documents to view on line (as evidence) is fine but retrieval of scanned copies would be a worrying resource – could be abused as part of an ID theft. Would prefer to see system whereby clients applied on line for certified copies of birth certs/passports through trusted agent and then had them delivered to agreed address

Potential for client group

Ask Expert, good idea, should be linked to people like Job Centre, CAB, housing advice, anyone willing to engage who could help target group

Likes diary to help them organise self – could it be linked to texting service if interviews or meetings were inserted into diary as a reminder?

Likes idea of putting info in front of people eg Alert to notify drug users when bad heroin around. Email with text to mob would give this alert and may encourage use of tools on the website when accessed for the email (pushing info) but providing additional opps for client to access resources, services, support.

Any additional ideas, features, opportunities?

Job Log, could this be automatically updated if the client had done a search, and give a search history in the job log – always useful to have the evidence, those leading chaotic lives often forget to record automatically.

Likes diary to help them organise self – could it be linked to texting service if interviews or meetings were inserted into diary as a reminder?

Any barriers limiting or excluding your clients? Include Legislative

Limit amount can do online particularly limit data accessibility in case of fraud, ID theft etc. Ideally need a unique ID and rest of info only available by formal request to Administrator. SSL OK but people can break through this if determined and the mindset of many in this client group increases the potential for this to happen.

Would be good to have this available to input data whilst still in prison, but can't happen with limited/no internet access in most prisons. However, would help as a virtual resource. Likes idea of offline template made live on release.

Perception of acceptable costs for organisations associated with this?

£ 0 - £500	£500 -£1000	£1000 -£2000	£3000 - £4000
£4000 - £5000	£6000-£7000	£7000 - £8000	£8000 - £9000

Would you consider an annual running cost for access to the service for your client group -

£2.5K for 10 clients as a pilot (but would seek match funding to cover the cost of this from statutory partner. Would need assurance of "life" membership for client even if sponsoring organisation had to discontinue subscription for any reason

Would you expect an upfront/license cost? –

Have you any questions/concerns around cost that you would like to pose?

Worth investing –but would need funding source to cover cost???? As a charity not viable to buy in more likely to develop own cut down version unless there was funding to pay for project would consider buying in
Pump priming first 10 clients would be a good tester for it to build momentum

Typical Client Pathway

Virtual Home
Name of Interviewee: Health Development Team (Sexual Health, Teenage Pregnancy)
Organisation: Shropshire County Council
Address: Shirehall, Shrewsbury, Shropshire. SY6 2ND
Contact: Kay Smallbone, Team Leader Tel:...01743 25
Email: kay.smallbone@shropshire.gov.uk
Client Group: Teenagers, vulnerable young people

Date: 10/12/08

Interview notes:
Initial views and comments on being shown features:

Interviewer – Val Lewis

Security Permissions, ensure that there is NO possibility of giving anyone unauthorised access.

Set it up so that clients can only register with a keyworker in attendance who can stress the importance of security, and not sharing information, and pointing out the weak spots and the risks.

Save Password option should simply NOT BE ABAILABLE on the login screen if this is intended to be a web-based service!!!

Emphasise the importance of “life important” ID documents and the need to keep these secure, don’t make this look like Facebook – it could give the impression of a friendly free and easy area and the clients must be clear how precious this info is to them and how dangerous if it was accessed by an ID thief.

Potential for client group

Ask the Expert is a really good idea. Could it be made “local” by providing local contacts, e.g links to childrens info services.

Skydrive – Document Collaboration - the option to share “with anyone on interent” should not be available at all!!! CVS can be lodged in shared places on other sites if necessary, not via this site.

Any additional ideas, features, opportunities?

Potential for private residential care homes for children – they move around every 6 – 12 months, this could provide a permanent “home” for their important documents to move with them. Also lists of previous homes, and special contacts would be good. Homes and staff in them might be interested because of the potential this has to enhance the lifeskills package they have to deliver to prepare children for when they leave the home – safekeeping of important records etc. – organisation skills of data that might be important to them. Next of kin info

Any barriers limiting or excluding your clients? Include Legislative

Concern about IT literacy of clients, risk of their low levels of understanding about internet protocols and access leading to a breach of security of some aspects of their information.

No public folders – this would minimise the risk of data loss.

If email sits in the Virtual Home, how do people access it if they forget their password, and as passwords are sent to email address how do they re-enter!?

Perception of acceptable costs for organisations associated with this?

£ 0 - £500	£500 -£1000	£1000 -£2000	£3000 - £4000
£4000 - £5000	£6000-£7000	£7000 - £8000	£8000 - £9000

Would you consider an annual running cost for access to the service for your client group -

yes to statutory partners but no to individual vulnerable person.

Would you expect an upfront/license cost? –

NO – multi-agency buy in to use for all target groups would be better.

Have you any questions/concerns around cost that you would like to pose?

No cost to vulnerable young person should be expected, but why not make this available to general public too, and charge them but promote fact that in paying the charge they are supporting vulnerable youngsters in having the same facility? Sell it??

Typical Client Pathway

Virtual Home
Name of Interviewee: Pamela Paradise CEO + Trainee Police Officer
Organisation: Victim Support Shropshire
Address: Suite 2, Cannon Court East, Abbey Lawn, Shrewsbury, Shrops SY2 5DE
Contact: 01743 362812
Email: Pamela.paradise@victimsupport.org.uk
Client Group: Victims of Domestic Violence

Interview notes: **Interviewer – Val Lewis**

Initial views and comments on being shown features:

Scanned copies of documents a brilliant idea! – clients could take actual documents have them scanned and return them without raising the suspicion of abuser. It would mean they could have everything off site for the emergency escape but accessible at all times.

Previous address history details and dates (must include dates) would be very useful for Criminal Injuries Compensation Claims – very important for violent crime victims who may have a claim.

Text message notification of email arrival good idea but for this client group the text would need to be disguised as a banal message to prevent arousing suspicion of abuser.

Ask Expert – need to make clear on the page, the likely response times

Potential for client group

Virtual home to deliver messages is such a good idea, as DV victims need to be able to control when info is received.

A virtual safe place for storing actual documents would be even better – perhaps agencies signing up to support clients in accessing the virtual home could provide registered storage facilities for passports, driving licences, NI numbers etc?

Any additional ideas, features, opportunities?

Chaotic lifestyles prevent people from thinking about updating info – could there be flashing reminders on various parts of the site to encourage people to put up to date contact details in the hands of trusted agents – mobile phone number etc (these can be changed every 2 – 3 weeks by victims on the run)

Victim support sometimes lose track of clients who go underground and then become safe, but Victim Support may have Compensation claims of up to £10K for them, but can't find them to hand it over!

Any barriers limiting or excluding your clients? Include Legislative

Real Concern about shared doc areas for DV cases – abusers often clever at eking info from trusted agents and friends inadvertently – perhaps eliminate choice of shared folders for DV victims??

Collaboration area needs to be very specific, no access to cross agency use – confidentiality absolutely vital.

Diary/calendar – not sure about this but could be used to confirm by email time and place for a meeting

Email showing on login – no good, too high risk for DV, must be invisible

Perception of acceptable costs for organisations associated with this?

Should be no cost to the client

£ 0 - £500	£500 -£1000	£1000 -£2000	£3000 - £4000
£4000 - £5000	£6000-£7000	£7000 - £8000	£8000 - £9000

Would you consider an annual running cost for access to the service for your client group -

No – could statutory partners buy it in and give VCS organisations access?

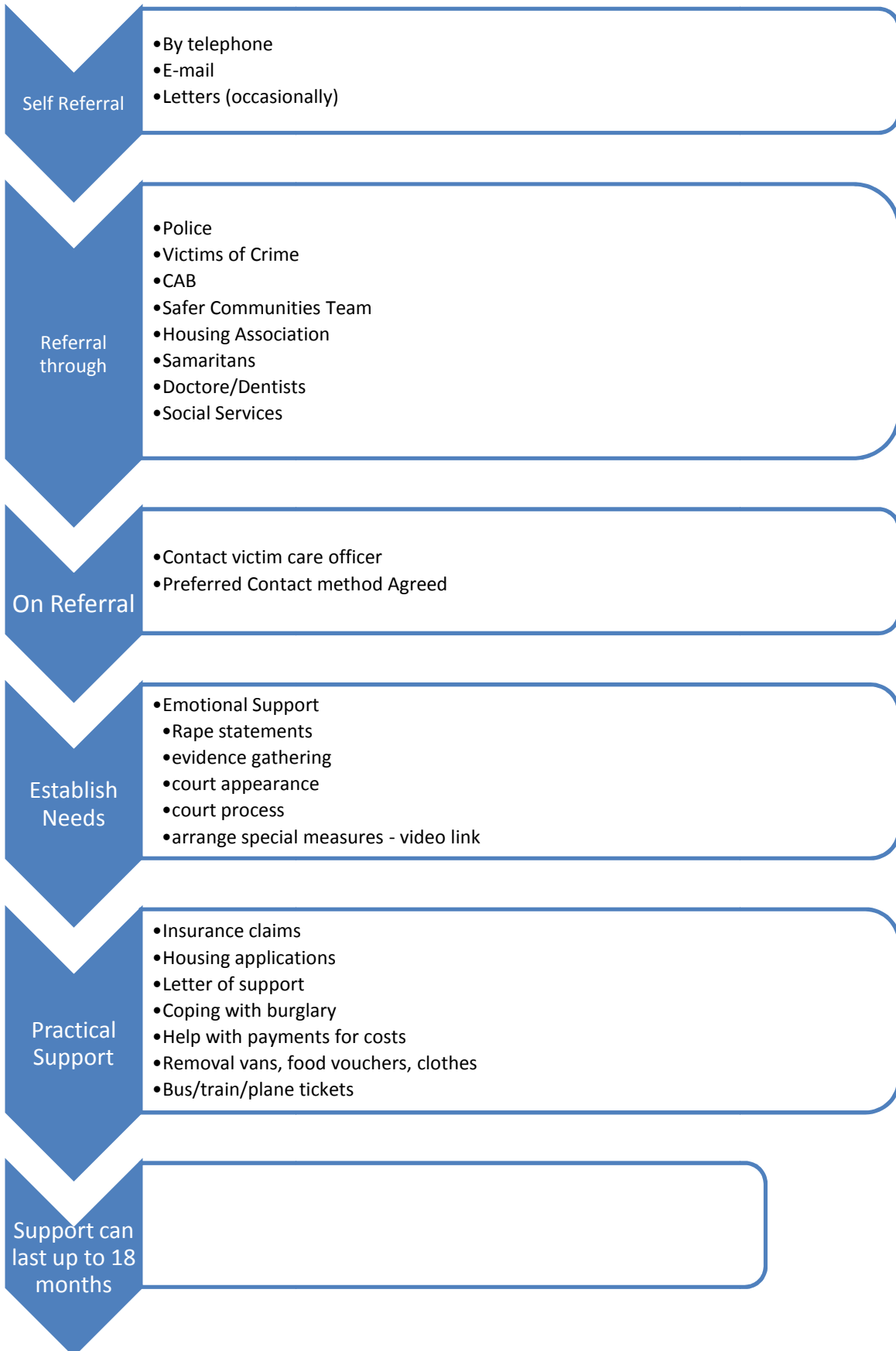
Would you expect an upfront/license cost? – No

Have you any questions/concerns around cost that you would like to pose?

Document share – should not be option “anyone on internet” should be removed

Most of these services are available elsewhere already but like idea of package with all in one place, but a physical place would be good also for storage of important docs.

Typical Client Pathway



Virtual Home
Name of Interviewee: Charlotte Woodward
Organisation: West Mercia Womens' Aid (Shropshire, Hereford * Worcestershire)
Address: Berrows Business Centre, Bath St, Hereford.
Contact: 01903 616411
Email: charlotte@westmerciawomensaid.org
Client Group: Women and Men experiencing domestic violence

Interview notes: **Interviewer – Val Lewis**

Initial views and comments on being shown features:

In principle a good idea.

Barriers – access and ability to use particularly BME women struggling with basic English, but they are the group who would benefit most because honour crimes, child theft etc. is a big problem and the ability to be able to scan documents and keep in a safe virtual place in readiness for when they are able to flee would be fantastic.

Would need mentor support to enable the IT to be used and this could be a problem with the Women's Aid Vols not always being IT literate to support them.

Potential for client group

Very instrumental in helping a woman plan leaving, taking responsibility, life skills, managing own affairs – often first time they have had to do any of this

Any additional ideas, features, opportunities?

One of the commonest reasons for returning to a violent household is women missing treasured photographs/momentos (they often have to leave children behind) – if these could be uploaded to keep it would be really valuable.

Speculated that Womens Aid could explore using their 24 hour helpline to provide IT support to women needing support in accessing or updating their Virtual Home details.

Suggested separate area for all the childrens details e.g. medical data, doctor's names, hospital numbers, medical conditions, medication taken (children in these situations often have multiple medical needs and its very difficult in crisis to keep this information together – it is often lost and time is wasted or info not passed to medical staff quickly)

Housing history – absolutely vital that this includes a facility to put address, date of arrival and departure and Landlords name. Very important for housing benefit and for reference tracking – often the thing that prevents client getting new safe accommodation is she has had to flee, is lack of record for landlord to seek references. Need to be able to see 5 years back!!!!

The map with the housing info would be really useful to enable marking of exclusion area for molestation by perpetrator – often biggest problem is showing evidence to police of where client lives and where molestation occurred in relation to this. A map which might easily draw a circle around the address and show where breach occurred would enable police to act much more quickly. Easy if client stays in one place, but much more difficult to prove if client has to keep moving for safety and this map would help enormously with this. Useful to both police and housing officers to inform them of “safe” areas for client.

Housing address details – should be a reminder each time log on asking if this is still the most recent address and most recent phone number and reminding client to inform any agencies of changes if they wish to be contacted. Two good e.g.s given 1. to contact when client reaches top of housing list, and 2, to contact client if Criminal Injuries Claim is successful and an award needs paying to them.

REMOVE “SAVE PASSWORD” OPTION – crazy to even offer this on a web-based programme for something which would contain so much info about client – risk of ID theft through accidental or criminal access should be minimised.

“Anyone on Internet” option should be removed from the Internet Options too for same reason

Any barriers limiting or excluding your clients? Include Legislative

Language – Punjabi, Urdu (though this is not written down much) and Polish would be necessary, Bangladeshi would be in great demand in Birmingham = could it be multi-lingual? If not clear Icon use to denote different tools would be vital.

Real barrier to engagement if staff at women’s aid not confident in IT to be able to assist client and support it.

Biggest fear will be that this could be accessed by “wrong person” All steps need to be taken to reduce this risk – e.g. software needs to eliminate as many risks as possible such as save password, but also clients need to be mentored through enrolment and have impressed on them the importance of the safety of this info and need to be 100% discreet – remove cookies, history, tell no-one about site, liaise only with trusted agent in agency supporting access.

Ask the Expert – good idea in principle but it implies a level of guarantee of info provision – suggest all agencies becoming experts are required to sign up to a sort of SLA to ensure minimum response time is adhered to. Also need to make it very clear that response will not be instantaneous and how long it will take. People in crisis wanting answers need to understand that this is a longer term response and if an urgent one is needed that they need to use another route such as phone or visit to agency.

Perception of acceptable costs for organisations associated with this?

No to cost to client, and difficult for VCS to find funds for this type of thing.

£ 0 - £500	£500 -£1000	£1000 -£2000	£3000 - £4000
£4000 - £5000	£6000-£7000	£7000 - £8000	£8000 - £9000

Would you consider an annual running cost for access to the service for your client group -

Not Really

Would you expect an upfront/license cost? – Not to VCS or Client

Have you any questions/concerns around cost that you would like to pose?

There might be a cost to VCS organisations supporting access to this package for their clients in terms of staff training – budgets are always tight, this needs to be borne in mind.

Probably need to allocate some with responsibility in each organisation. Access to the IT in venues where clients are seen is not always easy or even possible – needs to be considered – a cost?

Typical Client Pathway

Virtual Home **Date:** 08/12/08
Name of Interviewee: Roy Jones
Organisation: Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer, Shropshire
Address: SCC
Contact: 01743 252364
Email:
Client Group: Travellers/gypsy communities in Shropshire

Interview notes: **Interviewer – Val Lewis**

Initial views and comments on being shown features:

Not able to meet with interviewee, but spent half an hour on the phone talking through the concept and possible application

Initial view was that it had some potential for younger traveller family members who were now, on the whole more IT literate, with adequate literacy and numeracy skills to cope.

However, ALL travellers already offer a permanent address even if they are on the road all the time as they use their family network to provide holding addresses for benefits, correspondence etc. This holding address often also holds important documents for them

Potential for client group

Possibility that younger more mobile travellers might find it useful although still a tendency not to use technology widely.

Can see potential for this younger group, but it depends utterly on the family matriarch who is usually the dominant decision maker on behalf of the extended family and will decide for them what they can and can't use.

Tendency in Shropshire travelling communities, and particularly the Irish travellers who regularly come through the county is to consult with the matriarch and do what is suggested. Likely that take-up of this would be small

Any additional ideas, features, opportunities?

Believe there has been some work with the Powys/Hereford team that has done some needs analysis with this group.

Interviewer tried to make contact but has had no response

Interviewer also tracked down a document relating to this the Gypsy Needs Assessment Ref CURS0628, on the web, 0121 4145028 but no contact response to enquiry so far

Any barriers limiting or excluding your clients? Include Legislative

Would require significant support from a mentor to make this feasible, and access to the IT to enable this and most encounters with the Liaison team are on site which is not usually IT connected.

Perception of acceptable costs for organisations associated with this?

£ 0 - £500	£500 -£1000	£1000 -£2000	£3000 - £4000
£4000 - £5000	£6000-£7000	£7000 - £8000	£8000 - £9000

Would you consider an annual running cost for access to the service for your client group -

Would you expect an upfront/license cost? – Not to VCS or Client

Have you any questions/concerns around cost that you would like to pose?

Typical Client Pathway

Virtual Home
Name of Interviewee: Jacky Mulveen (co-ordinator) plus 4 service users and a mentor

Organisation: Allens Croft Project (Family Support & Domestic Violence)

Address: 44 Allenscroft Rd. Kings Heath, Birmingham B14 6RQ

Contact: 0121 624 5775
Email: jmulveen@yahoo.co.uk

Client Group: DV victims, family support

Interview notes: **Interviewer – Val Lewis**

Initial views and comments on being shown features:

Very good idea

Must not show on the web as the URL name – needs disguising as abusers search web to see what their victims have looked at- ?shopping website dummy

Would work really well as part of the development of a Safety Plan for women wishing to escape – could get copies of stuff in here without removing originals permanently

Copies of Risk Assessments could go in here from Allenscroft too, that would be extra evidence for women to keep later if prosecuting but moved away.

Refuges would need to be made aware of this software to help them to support victims – needs to be nationally used so victims who have fled can use it with any new support they require

Potential for client group

Has potential for CAF (Common Assessment Framework) – include names of previous social workers, dates cases opened and closed – really useful for victims who lose this sort of stuff all the time but may need it.

Safety is always the big issue – must be as secure as possible – would be really good if this could be incorporated into an holistic support package for victims

Any additional ideas, features, opportunities?

Might be better to disguise website as something to do with school or education, as abusers aren't interested in anything like that but know that mums need to be in touch with school?

Really good place to store details of accounts like water, electricity, gas because when they flee they need to notify utilities so that they don't build up debt in their name but get it transferred to abuser straight away. NB Mentor commented that gathering info to notify utilities when victim flees can take a lot of time – often days.

Good place to store info like Medical Card, Child Benefit details, Bank, even a Will, Baptism Certificates for Catholic School access (really important in some communities)

Don't like idea of link to text message when email has been sent – this can cause real panic as abuser always wants to know who its from, and even if messages are encoded to appear bland, the fear in the face of the victim often tells the abuser that all is not as it seems. (nb all abused women in this group agreed that their abuser would guess that there was more to it than it seemed) However, all agreed it would be useful for those who had moved out of the relationship to remind them of appts and get info to them (suggested that should be an option to receive or not receive text reminders which could be changed when status changed)

Definitely need a really bland mask on website to camouflage it – must not indicate in any way its real purpose – danger if all info is in one place that abuser has additional weapons and will beat victim to get password. Suggest, shopping, makeup, school or educational site with a very Unobtrusive link to the log in screen

Like idea of being able to store references – could there be a phone numbers list too?

Previous addresses – need dates and landlord details

Like the map – could be used to show police that abuser has violated exclusion order by showing police the streets that sit around home of victim – police often can't identify easily whether exclusion zone has been breached – this would really help!

Ask the Expert – needs to be really clear how long this would take to get a response – links to websites like Rights of Women and Womens Aid would be good to have on here

Any barriers limiting or excluding your clients? Include Legislative

GET RID OF THE OPTION TO SAVE PASSWORD – ITS CraZY TO EVEN HAVE THIS OPTION ON HERE!

Literacy issues – should have icons as well as written word to help less literate use the site

The charity staff and mentors commented that this sort of site would be great for them to help women organise their life prior to fleeing, but that the charity staff and volunteer mentors would need training (cost here could be a barrier) and there would need to be a clear induction programme to impress on users the value of this, the danger if accessed by anyone who was a danger to them, the need for care and secrecy in deciding who knows about it .

Perception of acceptable costs for organisations associated with this?

Should be no cost to the client

£ 0 - £500
£4000 - £5000

£500 -£1000
£6000-£7000

£1000 -£2000
£7000 - £8000

£3000 - £4000
£8000 - £9000

Would you consider an annual running cost for access to the service for your client group -

no charitable organisation no chance of funding this

Would you expect an upfront/license cost? – No

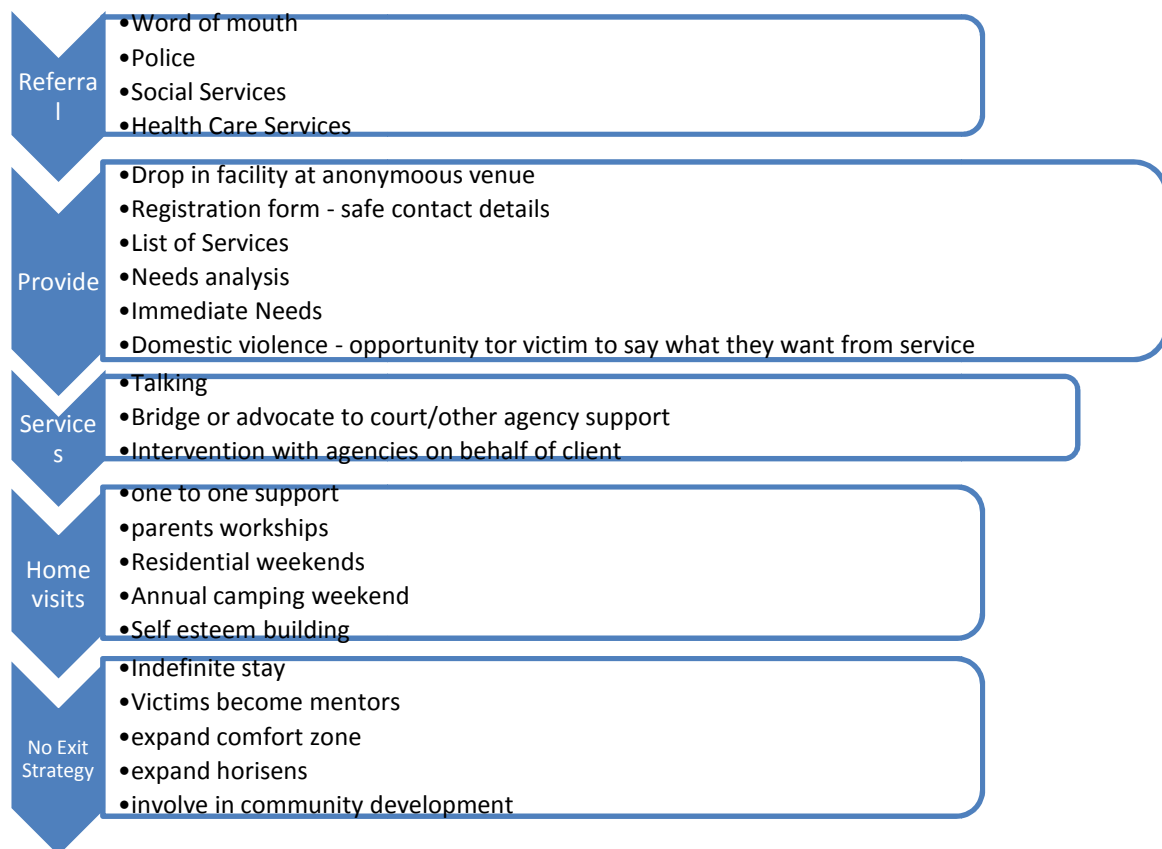
It would need to be gov funded or local authority funded

Have you any questions/concerns around cost that you would like to pose?

Training costs – need to standardise training packages to give quality

Would like to know if there would be some clever discreet promotional campaigns to help people be aware of it – perhaps targeted at charities not at victims.

Typical Client Pathway



Annex 2 List of Contacted Organisations

Virtual Home - contact list									
Organisation	Address	Name	Tel	Email					
Below from Richard Sowden									
St Basils	Heath Mill La,	Steve Rainbow	0121 772 2483	steve.rainbow@stbasils.org.uk					
	Birmingham, W Mids	Blair Kessler		blair.kessler@stbasils.org.uk					
	B9 4AX	Lorna Esien		lorna.esien@stbasils.org.uk					
Digital Birmingham		Annette King	0121 675 1170	annette.c.king@birmingham.gov.uk					
		Richard Sowden		sowden33@tiscali.co.uk					

Connexions, B & SI		Martin Lorimer		Martin.Lorimer@connexions-bs.co.uk					
Connexions, B & SI	NEETS	Ken Jones							
Primary Care Trust	Trust HQ, Bart House		0121 224 4600						
Job Centre Plus		Antonina Robinson	07769 672186	antonina.robinson@jobcentrepplus.gsi.gov.uk					
				-					
Probation Service	P'ship Working	Stephen Gill	0121 248 6666	-	very helpful provided Harjinders details				
(Partnership Ext Fund Mgr	Birmingham, B1 1BD	Harjinder Singh	0121 248264 1		sending email contact list for ex offenders VCS support				
Drug Action Team				info@birmingham-dat.org.uk					

Birmingham CC		Julie Homer		Julie.A.Homer@birmingham.gov.uk					
Neighbourhood Offices									
Birmingham CC		Gail Walters	0121 427 7988	gail.walters@birmingham.gov.uk					
Housing Dept									
Shropshire County C		Gill Jones	01743 252263	Gill.Jones@shropshire.gov.uk					
		Grahame James		Grahame.James@shropshire.gov.uk					
Below given by Heike									
Birmingham CC	Domestic Violence	Julia Lowndes	0121 303 2326	juliaelowndes@birmingham.gov.uk	no response so far				
Birmingham CC	Domestic Violence	Paula Harding	0121 464	paula_harding@birmingham.gov.uk	yes provided links to loads of VCS groups				

			8696						
Birmingham & Solihull Womens Aid		Maria Harvey	0121 685 8686 (ext 207)	Maria.harvey@bswaid.org	Telephoned in January, would like report. Also sits on regional forum for DV.				
Sexual Health in schools	PSHE Consultant	Nial Crawford	0121 303 8200	0121 464 0997 d line	not right person given Jill Nathan				
?	Youth Service Deliver	Jill Nathan	0121 459 9395		not willing to participate or provide names of VCS support groups				
Wolverhampton CYP Partnership	Travellers? ?	Phil Denley		pdenley@wolverhamptoncyp.org.uk	no response so far				