

PFCC Decision Report

Report reference number: 102-22

Classification: Not protectively marked

Title of report: Essex Restorative and Mediation Service (ERMS) Co-ordinators – Increase in hours

Area of county / stakeholders affected: Countywide

Report by: Emma Goddard (Restorative and Mediation Service Manager)

Chief Officer: Greg Myddelton (Strategic Head of Partnerships and Delivery)

Date of report: 10th August 2022

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report seeks endorsement of a proposal to increase the hours of the Essex Restorative and Mediation Service (ERMS) Co-ordinators from 1.6 FTE to 2.0 FTE.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 This report recommends that the PFCC approves:
1. The increase in the ERMS co-ordinators' hours from 1.6 FTE to 2.0 FTE
 2. The allocation of £14,742 p.a. from the PFCC's annual victims' fund to the ERMS budget to accommodate the additional 0.4 FTE resource
 3. The recruitment of an additional part time (0.6 FTE) ERMS Co-ordinator

3. Background to the Proposal

- 3.1 The Essex Restorative and Mediation Service (ERMS) has gone from strength to strength since its launch in 2015. The team has established ERMS

as a high performing service which delivers on the commitments in the Police and Crime Plan, allows victims to feel heard in the criminal justice process, and reduces the reoffending rate of perpetrators. Referral numbers into ERMS have increased by 378% since its first year and 24% in the last year alone. This increasing demand is placing pressure on current resources.

- 3.2 In addition to greater volumes, cases referred into ERMS are becoming more complex as partners see the evidence and benefit of using a restorative justice (RJ) approach. Complex and sensitive case referrals increased by 118% in the last year. These cases require a more in-depth and rigorous supervision approach, which increases the workload for the ERMS Co-ordinators.
- 3.3 ERMS resources have not increased since 2018, when the team recruited a new administrator. That role has proved vital in providing additional resource to the Co-ordinators and support to volunteers. By increasing the Co-ordinator hours we will ensure we are well placed to meet the increasing demands of referring agencies, and sustain the high quality offer we give to those that engage in the service.
- 3.4 Restorative justice and restorative practice are gaining more traction in Government and we expect the demands on our service to rise further as anticipated changes come into effect. The Independent Office for Police Conduct has included restorative practice in its Business Plan and the joint RJ Strategy formulated by the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) has recently triggered a local change of process to increase referrals for cases of domestic abuse. An All-Party Parliamentary Group has been set up for Restorative Justice and a Minister for Restorative Justice has been established.
- 3.5 The benefits of RJ are also being realised locally and the Essex Police and Crime Plan, Business Crime Strategy 2020-2024, Hate Crime Prevention Strategy and Reducing Reoffending Strategy all include reference to Restorative Justice. This proposed expansion of the resources of the ERMS will better equip the team to meet the current and expected demand.
- 3.6 The ERMS is often approached to be part of bigger projects, including prevention work in schools through restorative approaches, external research studies, and the development and delivery of training and awareness raising packages. Recently, the service has had to decline a number of these requests due to capacity pressures but will be able to re-engage with such work if this proposal is approved.
- 3.7 In comparison to other areas, despite Essex's size, it has been shown to be only the 13th highest cost service out of 35 services nationally. Spend on RJ services across England and Wales ranges from £50,000 to more than £250,000. The current (2022-23) ERMS budget for Essex, allocated from the 2022-23 Victims' Fund, is £170,323. Anecdotally, we know many other services do not cover the same geographical area or the breadth of referrals that we do, which includes out of court disposals, anti-social behaviour,

neighbour disputes, and opportunities for victims of domestic and sexual abuse. This suggests the ERMS offers excellent value for money.

- 3.8 Due to the pressure of current workloads, our ERMS Co-ordinators built up an outstanding balance of more than 90 hours in lieu as a result of working overtime, which recently had to be converted into overtime payments due to the inability of these staff to take their accrued time off in lieu within the required timescales due to the demand challenges described above. Our part-time Co-ordinator logged 126.25 overtime hours in her first eight months in post. This proposal will help to reduce the necessity of overtime hours and ease the pressure on the team.
- 3.9 The current full time Co-ordinator is also taking on the new, part time ICV Manager role within the PFCC's office, reducing the ERMS team by 0.6 FTE with effect from 5 September 2022. In response, the proposal is to increase the current part time coordinator to full time (1.0 FTE) by mutual consent, to retain 0.4 FTE of the current full time Co-ordinator once she takes on the ICV role and recruit an additional 0.6 FTE Co-ordinator.

4. Proposal and Associated Benefits

- 4.1 The proposal is to increase the total ERMS Co-ordinator resource from 1.6 FTE to 2.0 FTE. This would require an increase in the funds allocated to RJ from the Victims' Fund of £14,742 p.a.
- 4.2 The Essex Restorative and Mediation Service is a well-regarded service with a good reputation amongst partners and referral agencies. The higher demand and reduced resource (due to the vacant Administrator post being recruited to) that the service has seen recently has led to delays in the allocation and progress of cases. The proposed increase in resource would support the service to resume its previous levels of service delivery and maintain its reputation as a high quality, effective and efficient service. It would also increase the resilience of the service by creating an additional part time role to provide cover and support to volunteers in the absence of either or both of the other two roles.
- 4.3 This proposal will support the PFCC to deliver on the commitment set out in the Police and Crime Plan to "promote and expand the use of Restorative Justice across the county".

5. Options Analysis

- 5.1 An alternative option is to reject the request to increase the ERMS Co-ordinator resource, thereby reducing the total resource from 1.6 FTE to 1.4 FTE once the current full time Co-ordinator takes on their new part time role within the team. The result of this would be to increase the pressure on the team still further and may result in a review and narrowing of the service's referral criteria in order to provide an effective service with the available resources.

5.2 It is recognised that the allocation of an additional £14,742 into the ERMS comes at an opportunity cost of investing in other victim services provision. Given the relatively modest cost of the ERMS, this feels like a proportionate investment and can be met from unallocated elements of the victims' budget.

6. Consultation and Engagement

6.1 This proposal has been discussed with the PFCC's Head of Paid Service and HR partner, who are both supportive of the recommendations. The decision sheet was referenced at the PFCC's Senior Management Team meeting on 16th August 2022.

7. Strategic Links

7.1 The Police and Crime Plan 2021-2024 commits to "promote and expand the use of Restorative Justice across the county as a proven method to aid recovery for victims and reduce reoffending". This proposal allows the service to expand and adapt to welcome likely new referral sources so that every victim has an equal right to effective Restorative Justice.

7.2 The Police and Crime Plan 2021-2024 also commits to "Invest in those who volunteer for the roles embedded in the PFCC's Office including Restorative Justice Volunteers, to ensure they feel skilled, valued and appreciated". A large proportion of the ERMS Co-ordinator roles is focused on valuing, up-skilling and supporting our 40 RJ volunteers.

7.3 Restorative Justice is also included in other strategies across Essex including the Business Crime Strategy 2020-2024, Hate Crime Prevention Strategy and Reducing Reoffending Strategy. It is important that the resource is appropriate to meet the commitments and expectations outlined in these strategies.

8. Police operational implications

8.1 An increase in ERMS resource means that more referrals can be processed and managed by the team, the majority of which come from Essex Police. This may lead to a reduction in workload for Essex Police officers as RJ can reduce escalation and repeat offending.

9. Financial implications

9.1 The current 2022-23 ERMS budget, allocated from the 2022-23 Victims' Fund, is £170,323.

9.2 This proposal requests an increase in the ERMS budget from £170,323 to £185,065 (the increase will be pro-rata for 2022-23). This funding would be allocated from the PFCC's Victims' Fund.

10. Legal implications

- 10.1 This would increase the establishment of the PFCC's office by 0.4 FTE, with recruitment and any associated changes to the terms and conditions of existing staff being managed in line with adopted policies and procedures.

11. Staffing implications

- 11.1 The proposal would increase the PFCC's establishment by 0.4 FTE with immediate effect.
- 11.2 The proposal would increase the hours of the current part time ERMS Co-ordinator from 0.6 to 1.0 FTE (by mutual consent), reduce the hours of the current full-time coordinator, and new ICV manager, from 1.0 to 0.4 FTE (again, by mutual consent), and recruit into a new part-time (0.6 FTE) post.

12. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion implications

- 12.1 Further resource in the ERMS team would allow the service to expand to deliver the same service to victims and perpetrators of all offences as well as to take on projects areas that are traditionally less well-served, such as complex and sensitive cases.

13. Risks and Mitigations

- 13.1 Allocating additional funding to the ERMS reduces the opportunity to invest in other victim services. As set out above, given the relatively modest cost of the ERMS, this feels like a proportionate investment and can be met from unallocated elements of the victims' budget.
- 13.2 Should the proposal be rejected, there is a reputational risk to the ERMS and wider PFCC's office, as well as a risk of overwhelming current staff (possibly resulting in retention challenges) and causing re-victimisation and delays to victims accessing services.

14. Governance Boards

- 14.1 The decision sheet was referenced at the PFCC's Senior Management Team meeting on 16th August 2022.

15. Links to Future Plans

- 15.1 This proposal would support delivery of the PFCC's Police and Crime Plan as described above, as well as the PFCC's ERMS Strategy.

16. Background Papers and Appendices

- 16.1 n/a

Report Approval

The report will be signed off by the PFCC's Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer prior to review and sign off by the PFCC / DPFCC.


Chief Executive / M.O.

Sign: 

Print: P. Brent-Isherwood

Date: 11 August 2022

Chief Finance Officer

Sign: 

Print: Janet Perry

Date: 17 August 2022

Publication

Is the report for publication?

YES
NO

If 'NO', please give reasons for non-publication *(Where relevant, cite the security classification of the document(s). State 'None' if applicable)*

None

If the report is not for publication, the Chief Executive will decide if and how the public can be informed of the decision.

Redaction

If the report is for publication, is redaction required:

1. Of Decision Sheet?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Of Appendix?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>
	NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		NO	<input type="checkbox"/>

If 'YES', please provide details of required redaction:

N/A

Date redaction carried out:

Chief Finance Officer / Chief Executive Sign Off – for Redactions only

If redaction is required, the Treasurer or Chief Executive is to sign off that redaction has been completed.

Sign:

Print:

Chief Executive / Chief Finance Officer

Decision and Final Sign Off

I agree the recommendations to this report:

Sign: 

Print: Jane Gardner

Deputy PFCC

Date signed: 22 August 2022

I do not agree the recommendations to this report because:

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Sign:

Print:

PFCC/Deputy PFCC

Date signed: