

PCC and CC Force Inspection response record

Version:

Force	Staffordshire
Police and Crime Commissioner	Ben Adams
Chief Constable	Emma Barnett
Title of inspection	Police response to violence against women and girls - Final inspection report
Inspectorate	 <p>Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services</p>
Summary of inspection	<p>In March 2021, the Home Secretary commissioned Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to inspect the effectiveness of police engagement with women and girls. This report sets out findings and recommendations from one part of this inspection, which focuses on how effectively the police respond to violence against women and girls (VAWG). It builds on the interim report we published in July 2021.</p> <p>VAWG offences are acts of violence or abuse that disproportionately affect women and girls (in this report, girls are those who are 17 years old or younger). Crimes and behaviour covered by this term include rape and other sexual offences, domestic abuse, stalking and so-called honour-based abuse (including female genital mutilation, forced marriage and honour killings), as well as many others, including offences committed online.</p> <p>While we were commissioned specifically to inspect police effectiveness in engaging with women and girls, men and boys can be victims of many of these crimes too. We hope that some of our recommendations, if adopted, will lead to improvements for all.</p>
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Recommendations	<p>Recommendation 1</p> <p>There should be an immediate and unequivocal commitment that the response to VAWG offences is an absolute priority for government, policing, the criminal justice system, and public-sector partnerships. This needs to be supported at a minimum by a relentless focus on these crimes; mandated responsibilities; and sufficient funding so that all partner agencies can work effectively as part of a whole-system approach to reduce and prevent the harms these offences are causing.</p> <p>There needs to be an immediate upwards shift in the prioritisation of VAWG offences in policing. Our recommendations in this area include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the introduction of a new statutory duty for partners to work together to protect women and girls; • the development of a statutory framework for wider partnership working, which we suggest could have the same intent and focus as the frameworks in place for child protection in England and Wales; and • other work to better define and mandate joint working arrangements. <p>Recommendation 2: The relentless pursuit and disruption of adult perpetrators should be a national priority for the police, and their capability and capacity to do this should be enhanced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Home Office and the NPCC should review police capability and capacity to relentlessly pursue and disrupt the perpetrators of VAWG offences and enhance these, as necessary.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NPCC and the Home Office should review whether the ‘4Ps’ approach used for counter-terrorism and serious and organised crime should be adopted for policing VAWG. • The Home Office should carry out an urgent review of the role of the detective constable. This should establish appropriate incentives, progression and support for both officer and staff investigators to encourage this career path. It should include specific recommendations to make sure there is adequate capacity and capability in every force to thoroughly and effectively investigate VAWG offences. • The Home Office, together with the Ministry of Justice, should improve the evidence it has about perpetrators. This includes considering how to consistently evaluate the effectiveness of perpetrator programmes and use models to plot a perpetrator’s progress through the system more effectively. <p>Recommendation 3: Structures and funding should be put in place to make sure victims receive tailored and consistent support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Home Office and other government departments should provide funding so that an independent advisor/advocate is available to support victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence as they go through the criminal justice system (and should consider this for victims of other crimes that disproportionately affect women). This support should be designed in consultation with the victim and should continue after a perpetrator is released from prison. • All police forces should ensure information on the protected characteristics of victims is accurately and consistently recorded. • The Home Office and the NPCC should introduce a single national survey to measure victim satisfaction. This should allow for both local and national quality assurance, as well as the identification of any emerging issues, risks or variables that need further action to resolve. Police forces and partner agencies should have clear responsibilities in supporting victims through every stage of the case. The victim’s voice should play a central role in shaping this, and their individual needs should be understood and addressed throughout. <p>Recommendation 4 All chief constables should immediately review and ensure that there are consistently high standards in their forces’ responses to violence against women and girls and should be supported in doing so by national standards and data.</p> <p>Recommendation 5 Immediate review of use of outcomes 15 and 16 in violence against women and girls offences.</p>
Areas for improvement	

Police Crime and Commissioner’s initial response

I welcome this report inspecting the effectiveness of police engagement with women and girls and agree that it is a societal problem that requires a societal response. There needs to be better working across the public sector to respond to VAWG offences, including activity to prevent them happening in the first place. Staffordshire already commissions a local victim satisfaction survey but a national survey with clear accountability for partner agencies at each stage of a case will provide invaluable insight to further improve services and increase victim and witness engagement.

Many of the recommendations for societal change, education and target hardening have been taken forward in our successful Safer Streets bids. Our consultation for Safer Streets highlighted education, awareness and target hardening as high priorities to address local concerns. This has informed our approach which combines practical interventions for immediate impact with others aimed at longer term behavioural change.

The combination of traditional and innovative measures proposed includes installing additional lighting, CCTV and environmental measures (e.g. clean-ups, graffiti removal) in identified areas where they will have maximum impact such as parks.

It also includes the development of universal and targeted educational programmes. These will be quality assured, age appropriate, support traditional teaching methods but also provide innovative immersive learning methods. The resources will be delivered as an integral part of the Personal,

Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) curriculum, overseen by a PSHE coordinator and a Safer Schools Alliance.

Additionally, there will be campaign to raise community awareness generally, and focus on particular groups and certain types of behaviour. By complementing target hardening interventions with longer term initiatives to challenge behaviour we are more likely to achieve sustainable reductions in violence against women and girls. We also expect this work to impact on anti-social behaviour, robbery, theft, online abuse, other violence against a person and gang initiations/violence against women and girls.

Chief Constable's response

Staffordshire Police has always taken violence, abuse and intimidation of women and girls very seriously. VAWG offences such as domestic abuse, stalking and harassment and rape and serious sexual offending remain force priorities and there is significant work being undertaken through a whole system approach to prevent, protect and bring justice for those affected. It is, however, not just a problem that can be solved by policing alone and requires a societal response and commitment to improve the lives and experiences of women and girls.

In the first instance, the force has implemented its own Violence, Abuse, and Intimidation against Women and Girl's strategy. This has focussed on key work streams, Criminal Justice, Prevention and Engagement, Safety in Public, Offender and Suspect Management and Our Behaviour. Underpinning the strategy is a comprehensive delivery plan which looks at each of these strands individually and seeks to identify and implement measures to improve service provision, effectively engage with women and girls and to continue to work in partnership to fulfil these plans.

Trust and confidence

The force understands that recent tragic events have undermined the public's trust in policing and therefore there is a real emphasis within the delivery plans on how we can restore this confidence and reinforce our own standards and behaviours. We continue to improve our internal and external reporting mechanisms so that people have the confidence to report and the confidence in our investigations. The force, through staff engagement, strive to create a safe work environment and to root out those individuals who cause the most harm. A strong 'call it out' culture is being developed where there is real focus on inclusivity, and the promotion of ethical behaviour, all of which is underpinned by a clear, open and transparent communication strategy.

Safety in public

Our partnership work will make streets safer. The successful Safer Streets and Safety of Women at Night commissioner funding bids support a range of initiatives including safe routes to and from busy night-time locations, working with public transport and licenced premises to recognise vulnerable situations, and provide marshals or street pastors to offer advice and support. Our work within the Community Safety Partnerships will continue to improve services and ensure there is a robust approach to both the prevention of violence and the protection of those who don't feel safe. Our analytical use of data will inform our problem profiles, identifying high risk/high harm locations and offenders and enabling a more targeted policing and partnership approach.

Pursuit of perpetrators

To improve the end to end response from the force in the investigation of VAWG related offences, we are undertaking a skills gap analysis to ensure that the number of specialist trained staff investigating

VAWG offences are relative to the current demand and that there is appropriate cover across the organisation to deal with this demand.

There will be enhanced training to improve our expertise and skills in the investigation of digital and cyber related offences and increased joint working practices between investigations and CPS, including early investigative advice surgeries, joint workshops and training opportunities.

The delivery plans highlight the importance of effective support for all victims of VAWG and show a strong commitment to embedding the new victims' code changes and monitoring compliance.

There will be enhanced work within our support charities and third sector organisations across Staffordshire to identify and understand the availability and provision of support and to ensure that our referrals are made in a timely and consistent manner. We will ensure that in our approach to victims, they are afforded the best protection at all stages of the investigative process and will look to make the best use possible of civil and preventative orders to further protect.

Throughout the force VAWG delivery plans there is strong emphasis on consultation, engagement and education both with women and girls but also with men and boys. Men and boys are part of the solution and need to be involved.

We continue to engage with our communities and local neighbourhood groups, in person and online, to gather community feedback and develop a process for sharing this information with our key stakeholders, i.e. health, education, local authorities etc. for a wider problem solving partnership approach. Walk and Talk sessions, hearing and listening to women and girls experiences, concerns and reflections will be key in understanding their lived experiences.

Moving forward, our force plans are ambitious in convening a multi-agency tactical network of relevant partners to ensure effective prioritisation and management of VAWG including a commitment to information share, raise awareness and prioritise early identification, intervention and safeguarding measures.

Police Crime and Commissioner's overall comments

I am committed to supporting Staffordshire Police and partners to build a foundation of an effective whole-system approach in which all partner agencies (such as police, local authorities, and health and education services) work together to safeguard victims and help prevent further offending.