



# HMICFRS violence against women and girls

## Progress report

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## Foreword

### **Deputy Chief Constable Maggie Blyth, National police lead for tackling violence against women and girls**

In July 2021 the UK Government published its strategic response to violence against women and girls (VAWG) in this country. This followed multiple tragic and high-profile homicides and incidents that continue to resonate with so many of us.

In September 2021, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) reviewed the activities of police forces in England and Wales in tackling VAWG and made several recommendations for improvement. The report recognised that we have made vast improvements over the past 10 years in how we respond to and investigate VAWG. However, nationally there remained inconsistencies at every level in our response. We recognise that policing alone cannot solve VAWG and we know we need to work together with our partners, including the specialist VAWG sector, to coordinate our response. We also know that recent incidents, in which police officers have failed to abide by the standards expected of policing, have seriously undermined the trust and confidence of women and girls.

In October 2021, in response to an HMICFRS recommendation, I was appointed to establish and coordinate the national policing response to VAWG. I called this a critical incident for policing and, working in partnership with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), the College of Policing and police forces across the UK, my aim has been to supercharge the work already being delivered by many of my NPCC colleagues to ensure women and girls receive the service they deserve consistently across all 43 police forces. I want to improve the trust and confidence women and girls have in policing.

This progress report covers work underway across policing nationally, regionally and locally, as well as some of the future activity planned. At its conclusion, I focus on the wider community and partnership approaches needed to deliver sustainable change. I am determined that we will continue to learn and develop so that keeping women and girls safe, and feeling safe, remains at the forefront of policing's priorities and actions. Policing is determined to improve. This report sets out the start of that improvement journey. Policing recognises that there is still much to do and prioritise.



**Chief Constable Andy Marsh QPM,  
Chief Executive Officer,  
College of Policing**

Delivering sustainable and meaningful change in the police response to violence against women and girls is critical to improving public safety and increasing public confidence in the service. That is why we have committed significant resources from within the College of Policing and beyond to bring together a truly collaborative team of officers and staff who support DCC Blyth in her work, which is beginning to realise tangible benefits.

I echo and share Maggie's commitment to improving our response to VAWG and to maintaining the drive and pace achieved so far towards delivering that improvement. I am pleased to see in this progress report the foundations of long-term positive improvements in practices and the first steps in rebuilding trust and confidence in the police response to this issue.

# Introduction

In September 2021, HMICFRS published the [findings of its inspection](#) of how effectively the police respond to VAWG offences, making recommendations for government, policing and society. Policing accepted all the recommendations. This report is in response to recommendation 4.2, which is as follows.

“By December 2021, the NPCC VAWG national delivery lead should set a framework for the force-level action plans, and work with chief constables to make sure their action plans are in place. By June 2022, the national lead should then provide HMICFRS with an assessment of national progress, which establishes any potential gaps and areas for improvement.’

That report also made several other recommendations for the police, government and other partners.

This report is structured to first give an overarching review of progress since the publication of the HMICFRS review in September 2021 – particularly focusing on the activity established by policing’s [national VAWG framework](#) for delivery, published in December 2021. It should be read in conjunction with the framework. As an appendix, progress updates against specific HMICFRS recommendations directed towards the police are provided.

# The policing response to VAWG since September 2021

In October 2021 DCC Maggie Blyth was appointed as the NPCC national delivery lead for the policing response to VAWG. In a collaborative cross-policing approach, the NPCC, College of Policing and police forces brought a temporary team of officers and staff together at national level to deliver the immediate priorities and support coordination across all forces.

## New national framework for improving the police response to VAWG

In December 2021, policing's national framework for delivery set out the activity all police forces needed to carry out to make all women and girls safer. This framework was informed by policing, government, the VAWG sector, partnership agencies and the HMICFRS recommendations. It aimed to deliver a fundamental shift in the prioritisation of tackling VAWG and give victims a consistently high standard of service wherever they are, whatever the crime and wherever it is committed. It focused on actions that will get the fundamentals right, that can be quickly implemented and that will have the greatest impact in the next year.

The framework laid out the three immediate priorities for policing.

- 1. Build trust and confidence**
- 2. Relentless perpetrator pursuit**
- 3. Safer spaces**

The framework also laid out a commitment to publish an outcomes and performance framework in March 2022 to monitor and assess the effectiveness of police activity.

## Measuring progress and impact

In April 2022 policing's **outcomes and performance framework** was published, which sets out how policing will measure the impact of the national framework. It explains the holistic approach to outcome setting and performance management over the next two years to understand the police response and its impact over time. The first performance report will be published in November 2022 and then further reports will subsequently be published every six months.

To deliver the framework and provide the transparency and honesty about how well policing is performing, improvements need to be made to the quality of data captured and the systems used. Priority has been given to improvements in misconduct recording with the NPCC lead for conduct. Work is being led by the NPCC lead for diversity and inclusion to improve the recording of protected characteristics.

## Progress across the three pillars in the national VAWG framework for delivery

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### **Pillar one: Build trust and confidence**

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The actions under this section of the VAWG framework set out to tackle the sexism and misogynistic culture within the service and to root out those who do not uphold the culture and high standards that the public rightly expect. Key progress updates against this section are summarised here.

The action for all forces to conduct a review of allegations of sexual misconduct, domestic abuse and other VAWG-related offences against officers and staff is underway and the learning from this review will be shared with the public in autumn 2022. Alongside this, work is underway to improve existing systems used to record complaints and misconduct to allow for transparent reporting around the volume of cases. This will allow the public to see work is being done to root out those who do not belong. This information will be published in November 2022.

The NPCC Lead for Complaints and Misconduct, in conjunction with the College of Policing, is leading a review of professional standards'

practice, which focuses on the use of Regulation 13 of the Police Regulations 2003 to discharge unsatisfactory probationary officers as a result of sexist or misogynistic conduct.

Examples of other work to tackle sexism and a misogynistic culture in policing are as follows.

- Updated police misconduct outcomes guidance published by the College of Policing.
- An NPCC and College of Policing national sexual harassment policy framework supported by an effective practice toolkit for managing sexual harassment in the workplace (winter 2022).
- An update to the Code of Ethics for policing from the College of Policing reflecting the need to ensure policing upholds the culture and high standards the public expect (public consultation October 2022).
- A College of Policing response to actions arising from the forthcoming police perpetrated domestic abuse super-complaint investigation report, including amending relevant authorised professional practice (APP) and reviewing College-owned training and curricula. The College and the Independent Office for Police Conduct will also hold a national learning lessons event with forces in 2023, to share learning and identify best practice.
- A College of Policing supervisors' training framework, which builds on the expectations forces are setting regarding sexist behaviours and drives consistency in approach.

To embed these changes, research to develop a behaviour change approach to sexism and misogynistic behaviours has been commissioned by the College of Policing. The aim is to identify problematic patterns of behaviour and their potential drivers, and develop solutions to drive a change in culture so that sexism and misogyny are not tolerated anywhere in policing.

Upstander programmes are being rolled out in a small number of forces. These programmes encourage everyone, especially men, to speak out, not only when they see something wrong, but also in their everyday roles, to make sexism and misogyny culturally unacceptable.

## **Learning from other inquiries and investigations**

A non-statutory inquiry into issues arising from the murder of Sarah Everard by a serving officer is being led by Lady Elish Angiolini, having been commissioned by the Home Secretary. Further, there is a review by Baroness Louise Casey into the Metropolitan Police Service's culture and standards of behaviour and an inspection by HMICFRS of police capability and capacity to vet and monitor officers and staff (which is also looking at the way forces identify and tackle misogyny). Learning from three VAWG-related police super-complaints is also being developed. Within forces, further cases of misconduct continue to be rooted out and reported. We are monitoring these with a view to identifying and implementing learning to improve our service to the public and learn lessons for the future.

## **Better engaging women and girls**

A key element of the VAWG framework is to engage with, listen to and encourage challenge from women and girls, using this to improve practice. This includes Black and minoritised women who may have been less successfully engaged with in the past.

Regular engagement fora have been established with the national VAWG sector to allow for the NPCC VAWG national delivery lead to share the policing response and to hear the views of the sector. Forces are encouraged to replicate this level of engagement and invite challenge from local VAWG sector representatives.

Listening circles for women in policing are being created nationally and in forces. These will ensure their experiences are heard and themes are identified which can highlight problems and inform good practice to create a working environment that is open and welcoming to everyone.

To seek the views of victims, a national group has gathered to look at potential options and share outputs. The Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) is coordinating the various approaches to prevent duplication.

## **Case study: Involving and engaging women and girls, including Black and minoritised women and girls and those who represent them, Metropolitan Police Service (MPS)**

MPS has developed **safe spaces** in which women and girls can engage. There is recognition that creating a reporting line doesn't equal safe spaces for involvement and engagement and a variety of methods are important.

**Operation Signa:** An internal programme built on the feedback of women in the MPS to increase confidence of reporting sexual harassment and unacceptable conduct. This work ensures that people can actively intervene and challenge any inappropriate behaviours. It includes a toolkit delivered by HeForShe on how to challenge and create an environment in which women feel comfortable to report inappropriate behaviours and strategies for intervention.

**Community and VAWG sector engagement:** Public consultation: 1,400 responses. Providing a feedback mechanism to the public on the VAWG plan to invite involvement and engagement. Roundtables with charities and partners. Visits to charities to further consult with senior leadership meetings, consulting with groups of women about their experiences of dealing with the MPS and the response the force provided to individual cases of VAWG. Seeking and inviting feedback from subject-matter experts and forums, for example the Victims' Voice Forum. Basic Command Unit (BCU) local consultations – inclusive of different age audiences and community groups.

**Walk and Talk:** Female officers walking the streets of London with women from the community to listen to experiences, concerns and reflections. MPS reaches out and actively encourages VAWG specialist organisations and people with lived experience to participate in Walk and Talk. Currently in 12 BCUs.

**MetzGirls:** Young females in education presenting ideas and insight to senior police officers about how to build relationships and improve trust. The engagement also focuses on supporting young girls in relation to exploitation and safeguarding.

## **Building the right specialist VAWG capability and capacity**

The government has confirmed that tackling violence against women and girls will be in the next strategic policing requirement (SPR). This will prioritise tackling VAWG alongside terrorism and child sexual abuse. All forces are completing a skills gap analysis relating to the capability and capacity of their staff to respond to VAWG. Some forces are already using their findings to reshape their operating models for deployment and investigation. The findings from the skills gap analysis across forces will be used to inform training, support, specialist equipment and tactics and future APP.

There is much more to do. Operation Soteria Bluestone's initial findings suggest that there is a clear need for specialist knowledge, learning and development in [\*\*rape and sexual offence investigation\*\*](#). This lack of specialist knowledge leads to poor evidence gathering in rape investigations. Academic-led deep dives found disproportionate testing of victim credibility continues to be the norm. A lack of effective specialist training about sexual offending and sexual abuse, as well as sexist and misogynistic attitudes toward rape complainants held by some officers at all levels of the organisation, stymie change.

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## **Pillar two: Relentless perpetrator pursuit**

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The actions under this section of the VAWG framework set out to target perpetrators, who are the one and only cause of VAWG. The failure to convict perpetrators, a lack of action following breaches and failure to make effective use of protective and preventative tools contributes to a culture in which perpetrators think they can 'get away with it'.

Operation Soteria Bluestone is focused on creating a national operating model for the investigation of rape and other sexual assaults. The programme has nearly completed five deep dives as promised in year one of the programme. In year two it will continue working alongside five forces (Avon and Somerset, MPS, Durham, West Midlands and South Wales Police), using the findings gleaned and refining the working model. The initial draft of the model will be available late in 2022, with

a final version of the model published in June 2023. The learning from year one of Operation Soteria Bluestone suggests that the emerging national operating model for the investigation of rape and other sexual assaults can apply to the investigation of other VAWG offences.

There is a focus on strengthening the joint working between police and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). A strategic working group meets quarterly, chaired by the NPCC VAWG national delivery lead, to support improved collaboration in identifying the strategic inhibitors and opportunities to make VAWG improvements.

Examples of other work underway to improve the investigative response to VAWG offences include the following.

- A review of force processes is underway in relation to the filing of crimes and the outcome codes used to signify the reason for filing. HMICFRS has identified inconsistency in the use of outcome codes which hinders a national understanding of why investigations do not result in a positive criminal justice outcome. The findings for this review will be used by the NPCC VAWG national delivery lead and College of Policing to work with the National Crime Registrar to establish greater scrutiny of those cases finalised with evidential difficulties (spring 2023).
- A College of Policing VAWG toolkit is available to all responders, investigators and those charged with safeguarding to support ethical and robust action against VAWG perpetrators. The toolkit informs officers of the legislation available to them to promote consistent enforcement and has had 3,600 unique user visits. This toolkit will be expanded to improving outcomes and protecting victims (December 2022).
- In response to a super-complaint regarding protective orders, work is underway to understand how they can be made more effective. With first breaches rarely resulting in a charge and courts rarely sanctioning with a custodial sentence, policing is working across the criminal justice system to ensure, when used, charging thresholds allow for the best protection of the vulnerable.
- The Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP) is drawing out learning from multi-agency public protection

arrangement (MAPPA) serious further incident reviews. This will enable national learning and focus on themes to support our ability to effectively manage high-risk and high-harm perpetrators, including those carrying out VAWG offences. This is due to be completed by September 2022.

- To improve our understanding of domestic homicide and suicide following domestic abuse and support prevention activity, the VKPP is tracking reporting levels nationally and characteristics of those committing domestic abuse, victimised by it, their backgrounds and the methods used. The work is ongoing but a year two report sharing key learning is due in September 2022.
- Perpetrator programmes are being rolled out in a number of forces and there are plans to share promising practice from these nationally. The case study below identifies one example of this promising work.

### **Case study: Scrutiny of VAWG investigations and a victim-centred approach (West Yorkshire Police)**

West Yorkshire Police provides a range of initiatives to scrutinise investigations and outcomes, take a victim-centred approach and improve the use of protective and preventative tools and orders. The practice demonstrates **‘wrap around’ evaluation** to gain insight, asking ‘is this having the impact we desired?’

**Victim journey team:** Carry out reality checking exercises, reviewing investigations for quality and adherence with force policy. The team present findings back to force through a governance group attended by all districts, criminal justice, training, contact and corporate services.

**Academic insight: Attrition:** Working with the University of Huddersfield on a research project to identify recurring reasons and patterns to account for the high attribution of rape, serious sexual offences (SSO) and domestic abuse survivors. A second academic study will examine how West Yorkshire Police currently communicates with survivors of rape, SSO and domestic abuse and provide suggestions for how current practice might be enhanced.

**Civil order caseworkers:** Based within Violent and Sex Offender Register (ViSOR) units. Two caseworkers act as subject matter experts in the preparation of civil order applications against those who pose a sexual risk to others. Referrals are accepted from district-based staff and the caseworkers also proactively look at non-positive disposals to assess risk and identify cases in which civil orders would be appropriate to protect the public from sexual risk.

## Trauma-informed approaches

Victims should not feel they are under investigation. Reporting a VAWG offence can be a traumatic experience and we know this can cause people to minimise the abuse they suffer and withdraw their support. Identifying and understanding the effect of trauma on VAWG victims helps ensure the right policing response and decision-making process about how to progress the case.

The VKPP has conducted research into victim experience to produce voice of the victim findings, which is due to report back to policing in November 2022. The College of Policing, together with police forces and the UK government, is implementing a consistent and evidence-based approach to trauma-informed practice. Several forces have developed practice in relation to monitoring victim care, use of a trauma-informed response and consideration of protected characteristics and specific considerations with regards to the response to victims, for example LGBTQ+, sex workers and Black and minoritised women and girls. Once evaluated, promising work will be shared across police and partnerships.

The domestic abuse risk assessment (DARA) is being trialled in three forces (Kent, Bedfordshire and West Midlands). It is designed only for first responders and works seamlessly with the domestic abuse, stalking and honour-based violence (DASH) tool, which remains in use for secondary assessment by specialist investigators, independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs) and victim support organisations. DARA is less dependent on responders having a sophisticated understanding of abuse and is proven to better identify coercive and controlling behaviour.

Additional work underway to improve policing's response to victims and investigations includes the following.

- DA Matters – a nationally accredited programme, designed to transform the response to domestic abuse, ensuring the voice of the victim is placed at the centre of police investigations, and controlling and coercive behaviour is better understood. 31 forces have received this training. The package is being enhanced to ensure the barriers faced by migrant women are better understood.
- Changes to bail legislation have led to a review of its use to ensure the effective management of those who breach their conditions and will result in the introduction of statutory guidance to support a consistent approach (summer 2023).
- Rapid video response – a joint trial between Kent Police and the University of Cambridge allowing a faster response to victims via a video link. Early evaluation shows a quicker response, an increase in victim satisfaction and an increase in arrests.
- Operation Modify – improvements to the College of Policing training offer in relation to VAWG and digital crime to ensure every officer can respond to online offending and digital evidence capture.

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## **Pillar three: Safer spaces**

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The locations where women and girls are most at risk from VAWG may be online, behind closed doors or in public spaces. The actions under this section of the VAWG framework set out to identify the riskiest locations and tactics used by perpetrators to target activity to make them dangerous for predators.

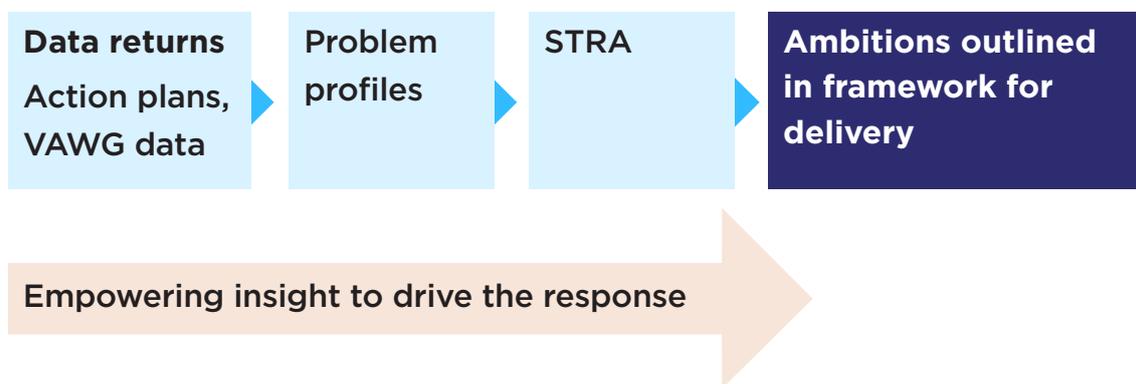
### **Developing a strategic threat and risk assessment (STRA)**

Forces are developing problem profiles to direct local activity and, along with information from other available sources, this will inform a national STRA to be completed in spring 2023. This assessment will further policing's understanding of the threat and risk from VAWG at a national, regional and local level and will help to ensure the right response now,

as well as inform predictions for future demands on services. The development of this STRA is being supported by the National Crime Agency (NCA) and Counter Terrorism Policing. This will ensure a holistic approach to understanding the threat from street-based harassment to targeting serious and organised criminality, right through to the threat faced by extremist or radicalised and misogynistic groups or individuals.

Linked to the regional child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSAE) analyst network model and supported with fixed-term funding, recruitment is underway to select a small team to analyse all the data being collected and produce products to inform policing's response.

**Figure 1: Developing a STRA**



## Safer public spaces

A Gold Public Spaces group has been established under the leadership of the NPCC VAWG national delivery lead. An action from this group is to establish a partnership approach to tackling VAWG in public spaces, which will work to tackle public space harassment, including spiking, in hotspots identified through analysis. Work is already underway to look at night-time economies, festivals and higher education establishments where partners are encouraged to look for preventive solutions that deter offending and create spaces where women and girls feel safe.

Other work in this area includes the following.

- Project Vigilant: The deployment of officers in plain clothes trained to identify potential predatory behaviours and call on uniformed officers to intervene.

- The forensic capture of early evidence in relation to spiking is maximised and prevention opportunities identified and extended.
- Improving consistent approaches to licensing and the night-time economy with industry partners to improve women's safety within entertainment venues and large-scale events.

## **Safer online spaces**

Work being led by the NPCC lead for child protection and abuse investigation (CPAI) to tackle indecent image and online offending. The harmful sexual behaviour task and finish group is focused on the prevention element, through work with partners such as the Internet Watch Foundation and NCA, and informed by the Regional Analysts Network's 'totality' analysis. This informs the partner work coming out of the Online Prevent board, where third-sector partners link in with UK law enforcement in a joined-up response to this threat.

In autumn 2022, the digital strategy for tackling VAWG will be launched. Policing will work with partners to improve the interface between policing and the public, adopt, adapt and upscale products that develop a digitally competent, confident and capable workforce and create offender-hostile online environments.

## **Immediate and unequivocal prioritisation of VAWG**

Within the safer spaces priority there is a call for immediate and unequivocal prioritisation of VAWG. The national framework for delivery called on all forces to build VAWG into their priority plan, policies and processes. In response, all 43 police forces have established action plans, dedicated to improving the public's trust and confidence and committing to pursuing perpetrators, as well as creating safe spaces. A review of these plans shows increasing consistency across forces, as well as promising practice and opportunities to share learning. All force plans have been reviewed.

## Areas of promising improvement activity taken from 43 force action plans

A range of processes and tools, both in place already and under development, aim to proactively identify individuals posing the highest risk of harm to women and girls. These tools are used as part of the policing response, which focuses on enforcement, disruption and prevention and reduction in offending, as well as a range of processes and initiatives to scrutinise VAWG investigations. They include the following.

- Cases proposed for finalisation with evidential difficulties under outcome 15 and 16.
- Practice showing partnership work with the CPS to access early advice.
- Embedding regular routine supervisor scrutiny of VAWG investigations.
- Emerging practice of independent scrutiny of forms of VAWG investigations, for example domestic abuse or rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO) via monitoring boards.
- Training and continuous professional development products to support investigative practice and standards and initiatives such as 'clinics' with subject matter experts to help progress investigations.

There are a range of initiatives to support safer spaces, particularly focused on the night-time economy. These include the following.

- Using information from women and girls on where they feel unsafe, for example Street Safe app data.
- Proactive operational work to identify, disrupt and use enforcement tactics in relation to perpetrators in public spaces.
- Raising awareness and training to improve the response to VAWG in the night-time economy.
- Encouraging upstanders and using professionals such as taxi drivers and door staff to support safer spaces.

## Areas for strengthened response identified in force action plans

Force action plans commonly demonstrate practice that shows challenge to some forms of sexism and misogyny, with a focus on sexual misconduct by police officers, staff and volunteers. Forces should consider a wider focus on all forms of sexism and misogyny.

Action plans commonly demonstrate initiatives in relation to a 'call it out' culture. The focus on the importance of men being upstanders rather than bystanders should be more explicit.

Action plans commonly demonstrate a commitment to improve involvement and engagement with VAWG organisations, including charities supporting Black and minoritised women and girls, as well as individual women and girls with lived experience. This should be strengthened by ensuring independent scrutiny of force performance; creating safe spaces for women and girls to be involved, more co-producing of initiatives with women and girls; changing practice and incorporating the voice of those with lived experience.

The challenges in having a complete picture of the authorised protective and preventative orders to make better use of them is a common theme across the plans. To address this, some forces have included practice changes to improve the understanding of orders (training and continuing professional development) and introduced digital tools to support monitoring along with internal governance processes.

## Sharing good practice

HMICFRS identified a lack of consistency across the services provided by the 43 forces. Each force is different and will respond to local priorities and needs, but under the national VAWG policing framework there is now increased national coordination. The NPCC VAWG national delivery lead is leading a series of learning opportunities in partnership with the College of Policing to share innovative and promising practice identified in force plans to encourage sharing, improving the quality

of service and creating consistency for victims so they can have clear expectations of policing when they call for service.

Sharing good practice is a priority for policing. Monthly workshops during 2022 and a national practice sharing conference in October 2022 hosted by the College of Policing are part of the work being carried out nationally to improve consistency across policing in its response to VAWG.

Processes are also being embedded to ensure sharing practice endures. Some examples are below.

- A new academic advisory group was established in January 2022 to address VAWG in policing. Evaluations and learning are being shared through the College of Policing and via a promising practice VAWG conference in October 2022.
- The VKPP conducted a VAWG call for practice, encouraging forces to submit their promising activity and received 125 submissions, which are being reviewed to share among forces. Briefings are planned in the coming months, along with exploring options for evaluation and developing understanding of what works.
- A review of the activity in forces who record misogyny as a hate crime has been completed and its findings will be used to inform the next steps in improving the policing response.
- A five nations approach has been developed for VAWG across England and Wales, working with Police Scotland, An Garda Síochána and the Police Service of Northern Ireland. This includes work with non-Home Office forces including the British Transport Police, NCA and Civil Nuclear Constabulary.

## Next steps

This report comes nine months after the HMICFRS inspection into the police response to VAWG. This identified that the problem is known, consistent and deep-rooted in its presence, and growing in the form it takes. For policing, it has been important to take steps to make immediate improvements and this report demonstrates the work underway, and the timelines for delivery. The timeline below shows some of the key deliverables planned for the rest of this financial year.

This isn't the end of the story. Policing will keep listening to women and girls, and drive activity to ensure it is held to the highest standards in the conduct of its officers and staff, in delivering the right service and outcomes for victims and leaving perpetrators of VAWG in no doubt that policing is hostile to them.

**Figure 2: Next steps**



## Next steps for policing

### **Build trust and confidence**

- Further develop engagement plans to allow for scrutiny and involvement in planning and performance from Black and minoritised communities, including women and girls.
- Consider the role of upstanders in force plans to challenge and address sexism and misogyny in policing.
- Ensure that victim surveys allow for a consistent and good understanding of the level of trust and confidence of women and girls in the policing and criminal justice response and that consistent measures are used to support the national STRA.

### **Relentless perpetrator pursuit**

- Extend the principles of Operation Soteria Bluestone when considering resource planning and flexible and timely learning to address the serious gaps in capacity and capability of investigators in the VAWG arena.
- Positively test promising practice identified in perpetrator programmes to protect the vulnerable and prevent future victimisation.

### **Safer spaces**

- Ensure sustainability of VAWG as a national priority by providing support to an annual national STRA.
- Continue to embed VAWG performance measurements in policing priorities.

### **A partnership approach**

Zoe Billingham, Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary at the time of its inspection, in response to VAWG, underlined, early and with emphasis, that the police alone cannot 'solve' violence against women and girls. It

is a societal problem which requires a societal response. She stressed the need for a whole-system response to tackle VAWG offences. She emphasised a need for more effective and more collaborative working between policing and other agencies, whether it be with the CPS, victim representatives, housing and education or the Government.

**“If we are to give women and girls confidence that there is not just the will but also the power to improve things, all means possible to improve these joint working relationships need to be deployed.”**

As a society, our aim must be for women and girls to feel safe in online spaces, spend time in public spaces without fear of harassment or assault, and for them to dismiss the belief that experiencing misogyny and hate is an inevitable part of being female. They must also know when it does occur, they can have trust and confidence in reporting it, knowing that services will take their concerns seriously and the criminal justice system will ensure perpetrators are held to account.

There is much to do to truly achieve these aims, but a start must be made now. To this end, in November the APCC and NPCC will launch their first joint partnership plan. This plan will focus on three priorities with an ambition to engage across a number of areas so we can collectively take action to prevent the harm caused by VAWG.

- Tackling child-on-child abuse: Influencing the culture and behaviours of young people. We want to work with those in education, social care and organisations that represent students, teachers and policy writers to explore how we can support embedding the principles of fairness and respect in the architecture of those organisations charged with safeguarding and educating our children.
- Improving the criminal justice system for victims: Supporting local criminal justice boards, driving the learning from Operation Soteria Bluestone and improving the understanding of those across the criminal justice system and beyond of the importance of outcomes

being tailored to the victim rather than a performance framework. We will work with the CPS, courts, the Probation Service, victim care and organisations representing victims to ensure we get this right for them. We also want to ensure the response is right for those women who are themselves in the criminal justice system due to abuse and coercion to ensure the right support is in place to help them escape the abuse. It is also important that we reflect on perpetrator programmes as we know many perpetrators offend against multiple women and girls. We need to change this behaviour to protect future victims from harm.

- Creating safer spaces: Our focus will be particularly on public and online spaces to allow women and girls to use these spaces without feeling they must change their behaviour to protect themselves from predators. We will work with night-time economies, festivals, universities, community safety partnerships, security industries and tech providers to ensure these spaces are hostile to perpetrators.

“We are pleased to see the progress that policing has made since October 2021. They are stepping up to the challenge and have started to implement some positive changes to improve the experiences of women and girls across the country and increase confidence in policing. We are particularly pleased by the important work of Operation Soteria Bluestone and the expansion to further forces. However, more still needs to be done to ensure VAWG is prioritised across every police force, ensuring victims are effectively supported and offenders apprehended.

As police and crime commissioners [PCCs], we are working closely with our chief constables

in the delivery of local VAWG action plans and our ourselves leading multi-agency VAWG partnerships to drive forward improvements across local partners. We are pleased to see policing adopting more of a data-driven, evidence-based approach to this work and will be holding our chief constables to account for delivery against VAWG action plans using the data tools made available.

There is still a considerable way to go in gaining public confidence and trust and challenging some embedded working practices. However, positive steps are being made and the commitment made across policing to engaging in multi-agency work to tackle VAWG is a real strength. We have committed to launching a joint partnership plan focusing on key priority areas. A public health approach to VAWG, working across all partners is the only way we can truly tackle this issue and ensure societal change.

We are grateful to DCC Maggie Blyth and her team for the continued engagement across their workplan. We look forward to our ongoing work together to end violence against women and girls.'

**Donna Jones** (PCC, Hampshire and Isle of Wight) and  
**Sophie Linden** (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, London)  
**Joint Lead for Victims, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners**

# Appendix 1

## HMICFRS VAWG recommendations

## HMICFRS VAWG recommendations

Rec. No.	NPCC owner	Update
1		<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>
	NPCC national delivery lead	<p>Strategic intent document, framework for delivery and performance framework published, national misconduct review commenced, Op Standards Gold terms of reference and minutes establish structure for national delivery of activity. NPCC leads for VAWG-related activity engaged and Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) committed to support VAWG activity across all forces. All forces have a VAWG action plan in place.</p>
1.1		<p><b>Immediately, the National Police Chiefs’ Council and the Home Office should jointly appoint a full-time NPCC VAWG national delivery lead to lead on all police activity related to violence against women and girls. The lead should act as a point of contact for each police force, work closely with the College of Policing to make sure best practice is identified and communicated, ensure progress is monitored, act as the ‘voice of policing’ at cross-sector national discussions and regularly report to the Home Secretary.</b></p>
	NPCC national delivery lead	<p>Lead appointed. Joint approach with the College of Policing has been established. Strategic briefings for all forces held in the lead-up to the launch of the national framework for policing and a regional network to support forces has been created. An embedded governance structure to NPCC leads via Chief Constables Council (CCC) and Violence and Public Protection Board (VPP) is in place. Reporting structures into government are in place.</p>

**HMICFRS VAWG recommendations**

**1.4** By January 2022, the Home Office and the national policing lead should develop a new National Policing Strategy for violence against women and girls (VAWG), to elevate the priority of VAWG and set a clear direction to forces on what is expected. Consideration should be given to establishing an annual strategic assessment of VAWG to support this strategy, and to using the 4Ps as a delivery framework to implement it. This framework should emphasise the role of effective partnership working, a strong and clear policing culture, and continuous improvements across all the four strands.

NPCC national delivery lead	Strategic intent document, framework for delivery (year one) and performance framework published. Policing will publish an annual strategic assessment (STRA) this financial year to inform future service delivery.
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**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.

NPCC national delivery lead	<p>Relentlessly pursuing perpetrators is one of three core pillars of activity within the published framework for delivery. Every force action plan has been reviewed against these pillars to provide support and guidance in ensuring this recommendation is embedded in each force. The NPCC national delivery lead has outlined in the year one delivery framework themes of work designed to support this recommendation. These are the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Relentlessly pursue and actively manage and target the most dangerous and prolific perpetrators.</li> <li>■ Better use of police powers to protect women and girls, and to manage and disrupt perpetrators.</li> <li>■ Adopt a trauma-aware approach at all levels, to better support victims through the criminal justice process, and focus on evidence-led prosecutions where appropriate.</li> <li>■ Enhanced supervision of investigations.</li> </ul>
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<b>HMICFRS VAWG recommendations</b>	
Protecting vulnerable people	<p><b>Vulnerability focus desks</b></p> <p>Trial of dedicated teams of officers providing advice, guidance and live time support to frontline and junior officers to drive forward domestic abuse (DA)/missing from home (MFH)/child sexual exploitation (CSE) investigations and safeguarding practices. Encourage applications for protective measures.</p> <p>Increased domestic violence protection notice (DVPN) output by over 600% in first six months since launch. Greatly increased stalking protection order (SPO) usage and reduced average MFH time from over 25 hours to under 13. DA prosecution possible rate has gone from average of 9% monthly to 15%.</p> <p>Amalgamation and expansion potential opportunities with our partnerships and prevention to increase wider preventative remit and capability.</p>
Protecting Vulnerable People	<p><b>Supporting the Home Office with development of Domestic Abuse Act legislation and new offences</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Critical reads of statutory guidance, controlling or coercive behaviour (CCB).</li> <li>■ Providing advice to Sentencing Council on new offences.</li> <li>■ Supporting the Home Office in development and piloting of domestic abuse protection orders (DAPO), advice and guidance on impact, piloting and feasibility.</li> <li>■ Working with other NPCC portfolios (criminal justice, victims and witnesses) to address the challenges of Section 28 in DA cases.</li> <li>■ Ensuring a consistent NPCC, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) view.</li> <li>■ Working with CPS to review the DA checklist, impact of the Director's Guidance on Charging (6th Edition) (DG6) and charging protocols.</li> <li>■ Working with rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO) portfolio to build the learning from Op Soteria into DA policy.</li> </ul>

<b>HMICFRS VAWG recommendations</b>	
Criminal justice	<p><b>Domestic Abuse Act 2021 implementation</b></p> <p>Wide extension of police powers and changes to existing practices in new legislation, including revenge pornography extended to include threats; changes to how children are dealt with as victims and witnesses in DA offences; new offence of non-fatal strangulation and suffocation; and changes to protection notices, orders and limitations to proceedings timing for domestic abuse.</p>
<b>2.1</b>	<p><b>By March 2022, the Home Office and the relevant National Police Chiefs' Council leads should review police capability and capacity to relentlessly pursue and disrupt the perpetrators of violence against women and girls offences and enhance these, as necessary.</b></p>
NPCC national delivery lead	<p>Skills gap analysis underway, to produce national overview of capability and capacity. Reporting back in November 2022 to NPCC national delivery lead. College of Policing is undertaking the investigation supervision review with a task and finish group established to commence new working practices in spring 2023. Accredited perpetrator programme to be in place by 31 March 2023.</p>
Protecting vulnerable people and domestic abuse	<p>Leading a domestic homicide and suicide following domestic abuse research project to build understanding of the drivers of homicide and opportunities for prevention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Integrated with the NPCC homicide reduction project.</li> <li>■ Rapid learning and spotlight briefings shared with forces.</li> <li>■ Supporting the College with the rollout of the new DA risk assessment (DARA), a capability called emergency alerts will be used to warn and inform the public during mass life-at-risk incidents.</li> <li>■ The NPCC is working to ensure all vulnerable people are catered for in their communications plan. This is particularly important for DA victims, the vast majority of whom are women and girls.</li> <li>■ The NPCC lead for prisons is leading work around unauthorised use of phones/devices to make contact with victims from prison. This is particularly important for DA victims, the vast majority of whom are women and girls.</li> </ul>

<b>HMICFRS VAWG recommendations</b>	
Professional standards and ethics	<p><b>Improve Centurion software to standardise collection of national data on misconduct/discipline</b></p> <p>Centurion, the force software for secure management of discipline caseloads, has been updated to allow national standardisation of analysis and support problem profiling and analysis.</p>
Management of sexual offenders and violent offenders (MOSOVO)/ multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA)/Violent and Sexual Offender Register (ViSOR)	<p><b>ICT database supporting Ministry of Justice (MoJ)/ HMCTS and police to better manage offender/ prevention orders</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Proof of concept on ICT platform which periodically (annually/biannually) flags the need for review of ongoing cases/issues over a long period of time.</li> <li>■ Empowering victims, better enables police to maintain a relentless pursuit of perpetrators, allows police to better maintain ongoing monitoring and supervision of cases by automating case review dates.</li> <li>■ This has been created as a third-party supplier, in agreement with MoJ and HMCTS, to improve data sharing capability.</li> <li>■ Successfully obtained funding from the Home Office for the proof-of-concept pilot stage of 18 months, which is near conclusion.</li> <li>■ Findings to feed into future practice modelling.</li> </ul>

## HMICFRS VAWG recommendations

**2.4** By March 2022, as part of the work to establish and implement the government’s perpetrator strategy, the national policing lead, the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice should co-ordinate work to improve, review and standardise the current arrangements and capability for the management of violence against women and girls (VAWG) offenders. This should aim to increase consistency in the use of multi-agency public protection arrangements, multi-agency tasking and co-ordination, and integrated offender management, and make recommendations to ensure there is sufficient capacity in the system to manage VAWG offenders effectively.

NPCC national delivery lead

- Analysis of force action plan submissions completed to consider whether the approach across forces is consistent and where it is not, consider how we make recommendations and share evidence-based practice.
- Awaiting further developments regarding specific tools to manage VAWG offenders from the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 around tagging/ electronic monitoring.
- The College has launched a VAWG toolkit for officers. It includes protective measures and civil orders, and guidance to protect women and girls from misogyny and bring criminals to justice.
- Authorised Professional Practice (APP) has been reviewed to reflect VAWG, for example managing sexual offenders and violent offenders major investigation and public protection.
- Links made with RESPECT. College of Policing will consider promising practices.

Trauma-informed practice: The College of Policing will share and publish promising practice following completion of the Home Office review. Lead forces such as Lancashire are already undertaking a number of workstreams to ensure trauma-informed policing lies at the heart of all police and partnership responses.

<b>HMICFRS VAWG recommendations</b>	
Stalking and harassment	<p><b>Embedding stalking protection orders (SPOs)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased use and timeliness of SPOs.</li> <li>■ Robust management of prohibitions and positive requirements.</li> <li>■ Improved national consistency of data, applications and management of perpetrators.</li> <li>■ Breach offence management and data to understand patterns and escalation indicators.</li> <li>■ Improved timeliness and efficiency.</li> <li>■ Training pilot (Police Scotland/Wiltshire) feedback review for national rollout.</li> <li>■ Quarterly calls for evidence – good practice, barriers, issues, challenges and emerging trends governed via national stalking and harassment offences working group.</li> </ul>
Stalking and harassment	<p><b>Stalking screening tool (SST) pilot</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Pilot 1 (2020/21) force pilot [N=3] evaluation conducted by Middlesex University – recommendations.</li> <li>■ Improved identification and recording of stalking offences.</li> <li>■ Raised awareness of the core characteristics of stalking behaviours.</li> <li>■ Identify cases that can be classified as stalking.</li> <li>■ Identify behaviours that are red flags for risk of harm.</li> <li>■ Robust safeguarding/risk management plans.</li> <li>■ Support officers in their response to victims to safeguard stalking victims from perpetrator behaviours linked to catastrophic outcomes.</li> <li>■ Increased use of SPOs and improved attrition data.</li> <li>■ Pilot 2 (4 July to 3 December 2022) expanding the number of forces [N=9] testing the SST.</li> </ul>

<b>HMICFRS VAWG recommendations</b>	
<p>Honour-based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM)</p>	<p><b>Automated intelligence safeguarding solution for protection orders – protection orders (FGM and forced marriage) third party supplier creates an ICT database in accordance with MOJ/HMCTS.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Safeguarding solution process expedites the delay that comes with victims going through a prolonged family court process – reduces further risk to victims as this enables effective safeguarding actions to be put into place sooner.</li> <li>■ The new proposals streamline the time taken to input court orders onto police databases and flag expiry dates to case managers to ensure victims are better protected.</li> <li>■ Improved safeguarding and reduced court appearances for victims have already been identified in the pilot, which concludes in November 2022.</li> <li>■ Potential future extension of this application to manage other court order processes and ensure timely interventions to safeguard vulnerable victims from multiple areas of offending.</li> </ul>
<p>Criminal justice/charging</p>	<p><b>Application of bail in high-risk DA cases and changes to service level agreement (SLA) between police and CPS. This is to be embedded as part of a three-stage model for charging practice changes to be applied to policing.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Updates agreed to high-risk (red) category in SLA with CPS for charging decisions. DA high risk now included.</li> <li>■ Use of bail to be tightened in high-risk DA and hate crime cases where a full code test for charging decisions can be made.</li> <li>■ Changes to custody practices now being tested to allow additional time (three hours) for full code test to be applied.</li> <li>■ Stage 1 is consistent use of faster charging decision with CPS support following pilot for high-risk DA.</li> </ul>

## HMICFRS VAWG recommendations

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Stage 2 is use of additional custody time to apply full charging decision tests for breach of bail, to increase application of remand, not further use of bail of high-risk DA and hate crime offences.</li> <li>■ Stage 3 is the extension of these powers and policies to multiple offender crimes of high-risk DA/hate/VAWG.</li> <li>■ Testing of staged model for new SLA is currently being undertaken. Application of the new SLA will commence in March 2023 for stage 1.</li> </ul>
Criminal justice	<p>Forces will be required to have a suitable DA diversionary intervention programme that meets CPS guidelines from April 2023.</p>
MOSOVO/MAPPA/ViSOR	<p>To improve police management of sexual offenders, we have introduced OASys sexual predator (OSP), alongside probation colleagues, to improve the static assessment of sexual recidivism for both contact and internet-based offending. In addition, this assessment forms part of improvements to risk management planning with the introduction into the Active Risk Management System (ARMS) of the four pillars of risk management. This makes plans consistent with MAPPA processes and ensures a more structured and consistent plan.</p> <p><b>Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Act 2022 sexual offender management provisions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Sections of the PCSC Act 2022 will provide additional powers and new processes for policing in the management of and subsequent pursuit of those offenders intent on reoffending.</li> <li>■ This includes streamlined notification orders, flexible arrangements for prescribed police stations and most importantly positive obligations on sexual harm prevention orders (SHPOs) and sexual risk orders (SROs).</li> </ul> <p>This will enable such policing tactics as the use of polygraph to be mandated, ensuring more intrusive supervision and detection for reoffending.</p>

**HMICFRS VAWG recommendations**

<p>Modern slavery</p>	<p><b>Operation Innerste</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ This operation is a multi-agency response to unaccompanied children seeking asylum.</li> <li>■ The activity creates mechanisms for agencies to better share data between police, local authorities and immigration to reduce incidents of missing children and criminal exploitation.</li> <li>■ Outcomes of this operation will be available at the end of the financial year 2022/23.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3 Structures and funding should be put in place to make sure victims receive tailored and consistent support.</b></p>	
<p>Protecting vulnerable people</p>	<p><b>Rape victim/survivor feedback panel</b></p> <p>Outsourced questionnaire to capture victim feedback on the quality and manner of the investigation, as it is being undertaken (rather than months after a case has concluded), to use this information to improve officer attitudes and performance. This is then discussed and assessed by a multi-agency review panel and supplemented by the same company providing training to officers to upskill their appreciation of victims’ perspectives and improve detections overall. Two completed questionnaires to date (two months since go live) have provided invaluable information on our own performance.</p>
<p>Criminal justice</p>	<p><b>Victims Bill</b></p> <p>Code of Practice for Victims to be enshrined in law. Expectation that agencies will collate data on compliance with the Code and use victim feedback to help inform service delivery. Inspectorates will be asked to collaborate on victim-related inspections.</p>

**HMICFRS VAWG recommendations**

<p>RASSO</p>	<p><b>Operation Hydrant responding to females as victims/survivors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 66% of indecent image offenders are children.</li> <li>■ Vast majority of victims are female.</li> <li>■ Thematic rise in self-generated indecent images, not aggravated in nature and normally shared with ‘consent’ massively affecting girls in society.</li> <li>■ In responding to this priority of a harmful sexual practice, activity aligns education and analysis to appropriately respond to child sexual offending.</li> <li>■ Work focuses on ensuring an appropriate response to offending without criminalising children where possible.</li> </ul>
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**3.2 By March 2022, all police forces should ensure information on the protected characteristics of victims is accurately and consistently recorded.**

<p>NPCC national delivery lead</p>	<p>NPCC working group established with key stakeholders considering all aspects of protected characteristics, data quality and compliance.</p> <p>In developing the performance and outcomes framework, a set of data principles was included, which underlines the importance of data quality and consistency.</p>
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<p>Protecting vulnerable people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Data sharing: Development of an NPCC policy to ensure victims are dealt with primarily as victims. Supporting workshops with the Home Office and DA Victims Commissioner and encouraging the Home Office to develop a migrant victim protocol.</li> <li>■ Supporting the College in the rollout of DA Matters training – proven to increase officers’ understanding of abuse and empathy with victims.</li> <li>■ 31 forces have delivered to date, supporting DA Matters’ further development, particularly focused on protected characteristics and the barriers faced by migrant women.</li> </ul>
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**HMICFRS VAWG recommendations**

**3.3** By March 2022, informed by and connected to work on the proposed Victims Bill, the national policing lead, National Police Chiefs’ Council leads and the Home Office should work together to establish guidance for all forces on how the views and experiences of victims should be recorded, analysed and considered as part of performance management of VAWG offences. As a minimum, this should include a single national survey to measure victim satisfaction, and processes to link local performance management data with the proposed national VAWG improvement measures (recommendation 4.4). 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.

	<p>NPCC national delivery lead</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Force action plans have been reviewed with promising practices identified for victims to have a greater say and impact on responses. The interpretation of the data will be informed by victim voices and survivors, who have featured heavily in the publication of each of the framework and performance documents.</li> <li>■ Discussion with APCC on progressing a national victims survey is ongoing and the APCC is progressing this work alongside the government’s national victim survey activity.</li> </ul>
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**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>NPCC national delivery lead</p>	<p>Provided national framework for delivery and performance and outcomes framework. Work commenced in April 2022 to develop interpretation of data with the support of victims’ voices and VAWG stakeholders. Forces will receive feedback.</p>
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HMICFRS VAWG recommendations	
Alcohol harm	<p><b>Accreditation schemes:</b> Encouraging a judgement on whether a licensed premises is a safe space for women and girls when awarding accreditation. National meetings with licensing stakeholders have commenced to progress the potential standardisation of practices and certification across the UK of accreditation schemes for safe licensed premises and events.</p>
Professional Standards and Ethics	<p>National data request for all 43 forces regarding national problem profile for misconduct and discipline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ All forces have been provided with written support for more effective use of Regulation 12 and 13 of the Police Regulations 2003 to ensure effective management of inappropriate behaviours during probationary period and support removal of staff who display sexist/misogynistic tendencies at earliest opportunities.</li> <li>■ This will bring an understanding of the number of VAWG cases within professional standards departments for the calendar year 2021, involving the coordination of data from 43 forces.</li> <li>■ All data is being analysed by a Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP) analyst.</li> <li>■ Learning will be available for publication in September 2022.</li> </ul>

<b>HMICFRS VAWG recommendations</b>	
Professional standards and ethics	<p><b>Code of Ethics and vetting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Guidance on standards of professional behaviour, which will include on and off-duty conduct, referencing abuse of position for a sexual purpose.</li> <li>■ There will be a code of practice, which will include a duty of candour.</li> <li>■ Vetting review is underway and awaiting publication of a number of independent enquiries before considering any recommendations and implementing change. The College of Policing has undertaken an interim review of its vetting practices APP, which has been deemed suitable pending the findings of these further enquiries.</li> </ul>
Criminal justice	<p><b>Operation Soteria (rape review)</b></p> <p>Currently piloting in Avon &amp; Somerset plus four other forces. Expanded to academic involvement into 14 further forces. Scalable and flexible national operating model for RASSO by June 2023.</p>
Modern slavery	<p><b>Annual report of activity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Activity underway as a pilot to improve signs of exploitation to safeguard victims and improve reporting.</li> <li>■ Expansion of abortion clinic awareness training.</li> <li>■ Dedicated third party referral mechanisms to improve reporting and victim support.</li> <li>■ New legislation proposals to improve use and administration mechanisms for slavery and tracking orders.</li> <li>■ Additional Home Office funding provided for web screening of adult social media websites. Action underway to scope and commence work on this action.</li> <li>■ To be published summer 2022.</li> </ul>

## HMICFRS VAWG recommendations

**4.1** By March 2022, chief constables should establish and publish an action plan that specifies in detail what steps the force will take to improve and standardise its approach to responding to violence against women and girls offences, with the aim of ensuring policies, processes and practices are effective, actively monitored and managed, and meeting national standards.

This should include (but is not limited to) improving and standardising: the use of police powers to protect women, including arrest of perpetrators, use of pre-charge bail, the applications for orders (where appropriate) and processes for responding to breaches of non-molestation and other orders, the use of the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, the capability of generalist and specialist staff to respond to violence against women and girls offences effectively, including consistent understanding of newer offences (such as coercive control, the identification and management of high-harm violent offenders against women and girls (in partnership with other organisations), the identification and protection of the most at-risk victims of violence against women and girls offences (in partnership with other organisations); and internal and public communications related to violence against women and girls to ensure that messages raise awareness of the risk and emphasise the seriousness of the issues.

NPCC national delivery lead

All chief officers have established an action plan, which has been shared with the NPCC lead. These specify in some detail the recommendations within VAWG and the delivery framework pillars. These have been reviewed and forces have received feedback on these plans with an aim to share learning and increase consistency.

Management of sexual offenders and violent offenders and public protection

### Operation ATOM

- A £2.7 million programme funded by the Home Office for direct grants to police forces for the purchase of equipment, software and training to pursue online offending and create a safer online space.
- 31 police forces received funding and have delivered in arrests, investigations and enforcement in the online space.

**HMICFRS VAWG recommendations**

**4.2** By December 2021, the NPCC VAWG national delivery lead should set a framework for the force-level action plans, and work with chief constables to make sure their action plans are in place. By June 2022, the national lead should then provide HMICFRS with an assessment of national progress, which establishes any potential gaps and areas for improvement. This force-level activity should be supported by clearer standards and improved performance monitoring, to help chief constables better assure themselves of their forces’ effectiveness in responding to VAWG, and to allow greater accountability, support and direction at local and national levels.

NPCC national delivery lead	VAWG framework for delivery and performance framework documents have been published. A gap analysis of force plans has been conducted and findings published alongside this document identifying recommendations. Workshops are being held to disseminate this work. (43 force action plan review and HMICFRS update report refers).
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**4.3** Immediately, the College of Policing should develop a violence against women and girls minimum standard, creating a consistent and clear standard for police investigations. The Home Secretary or the College of Policing should then consider whether to use their powers under section 53A of the Police Act 1996 to require police forces to adopt the procedures and practices it sets out.

NPCC national delivery lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ College of Policing VAWG toolkit released in December 2022.</li> <li>■ An update to the DARA has been completed and is being trialled across a number of forces for wider rollout by the end of the financial year to provide consistency.</li> <li>■ The College of Policing has produced frontline supervisor guidance that reflects VAWG priorities.</li> <li>■ Behavioural and cultural change will be reinforced through the updated Code of Ethics (see below).</li> <li>■ VAWG investigations will be subject to a Code of Practice update which is currently being drafted for consideration of forces.</li> </ul>
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**HMICFRS VAWG recommendations**

<p><b>4.4</b></p>	<p><b>By March 2022, the College of Policing and the National Police Chiefs’ Council should establish mechanisms and processes to allow rapid and consistent sharing of evidence, information and evaluation on new and effective ways of working in response to violence against women and girls offences.</b></p>
<p>NPCC national delivery lead</p>	<p>Multiple processes in place including VAWG academic reference group, VKPP, tactical workshops, strategic workshops, regional leads, Expert Reference Group (ERG), pillar lead work, stakeholder engagement plan, digital strategy. A VAWG promising practice conference will be held for forces in October 2022.</p>
<p>Protecting vulnerable people</p>	<p>Use of police powers in safeguarding vulnerable people  Working with the College of Policing to ensure forces are aware of best practice in the use of protective orders, APP is refreshed appropriately and supporting the College in developing the response. Sharing early findings with forces and encouraging best practice.</p>

<b>HMICFRS VAWG recommendations</b>	
Stalking and harassment	<p>Introducing a knowledge exchange network (KEN) – Academia Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Sharing innovative solutions to issues and emerging trends supported by an evidence-based approach.</li> <li>■ Identifying and informing on knowledge gaps or problems.</li> <li>■ Promoting collaboration to build an evidence base supporting problem-solving activity and the rollout of best practice.</li> <li>■ Ensuring timely and targeted dissemination of research.</li> <li>■ Support rapid evidence reviews.</li> <li>■ Repository of accessible information.</li> <li>■ Providing an inventory and impact assessment of UK-focused research.</li> <li>■ Inventory of research.</li> <li>■ Developing and hosting training and other professional development.</li> <li>■ Disseminating newly published and emerging research findings with direct implications to the work of the police and stakeholders.</li> <li>■ ERG engagement.</li> </ul>
Professional standards and ethics	<p>Effective practice toolkit for forces to manage sexual harassment in the workplace</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ End stages of a national strategy, a standardised sexual harassment policy framework for all forces</li> <li>■ 43 forces to manage sexual harassment in the workplace consistently, in terms of prevent, protect, prepare, pursue (4Ps).</li> <li>■ Short training video is in production to provide all forces with a ‘standards of behaviour on duty and off’ product for use.</li> </ul>

HMICFRS VAWG recommendations	
Criminal justice	<p>Section 28 (pre-recorded cross-examination) – extensions to DA victims and youth courts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Pilot commencing in West Yorkshire in July 2022 will extend use of pre-recorded cross-examination to DA and youth courts.</li> </ul>
5.2	<p><b>By December 2022, the NPCC VAWG national delivery lead should develop and disseminate to forces a process for consistent and robust monitoring of outcomes 15 and 16 violence against women and girls cases. This should require, as a minimum, inspector-level sign-off of these cases and that evidence on the rationale for these closure codes is recorded and auditable.</b></p>
NPCC national delivery lead	<p>Work is currently underway to establish current practices in forces, with planned engagement with the National Crime Registrar in August 2022.</p> <p>The College has agreed, subject to a further consultation process, for a code of practice for the enhanced supervision of VAWG investigations and this is being progressed by a dedicated multidisciplinary task and finish group. The National Crime Registrar has agreed to update the data quality assurance manual (DQAM) to reflect the changes. Evidence-led prosecutions (ELP) guidance will be incorporated into both pieces of work when completed.</p>