

From: Matthew Scott, Kent Police and Crime Commissioner
To: Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel
Subject: Violence Against Women and Girls Inquiry
Date: 8 December 2021



Introduction:

1. On 10 December 2020 the Government launched a call for evidence on violence against women and girls (VAWG) to inform a new national strategy due for publication in 2021. Open to all genders, the call for evidence initially ran for 10 weeks and closed in February 2021.
2. The strength of feeling from women and girls was intensified with the tragic murder of Sarah Everard, which rightfully brought VAWG back into the spotlight. This led to the Government re-opening the national call for evidence on 12 March 2021 to hear the views of more women and girls who had been directly or indirectly affected by violence in its many forms. The call for evidence closed on 26 March 2021.
3. The Government's refreshed strategy, building on the progress already made from its 2016 - 2020 strategy and responding to the changing nature of such crimes, stated the vision was still for everyone to live in a society where people can live without fear of abuse or violence. It was published on 21 July 2021 with specific policy commitments.

Aims and purpose:

4. This turn of events led the Commissioner to launch his own Inquiry on Wednesday 4 August, with the aim of understanding the extent to which such crimes are being committed and what more can be done to prevent and tackle them.
5. The Commissioner applauds the great work already taking place throughout the county, which has certainly had a positive impact. However, he will look to build on this foundation and create a lasting legacy to make Kent even safer for women and girls wherever they are.
6. The Inquiry is focused on four overarching themes:
 - Prevention
 - Engagement
 - The Victim's Journey
 - RehabilitationAnd the following sub-themes:
 - What victims tell us
 - What the data tells us on crime
 - Criminal Justice outcomes
 - Support for victims (commissioned services)
 - Learning and best practice recommendations
7. Although various topics will be covered, to date the focus has been on sexual offences, domestic abuse, stalking, drink spiking and sexual harassment perpetrated by male offenders on female victims.

Structure:

8. From 31 August to 19 November 2021, the Commissioner ran a call for evidence survey to understand the strength of feeling in relation to the safety of women and girls in Kent. Over 8,000 responses were received and analysis of the results is currently underway.
9. The survey was promoted countywide through:
 - local media;
 - the Office of the PCC website, social media and a special edition Newsletter;
 - Women's Institutes;
 - Parish Council Clerks;

- Rotary Clubs;
- the universities;
- schools and colleges via the Schools Officer Coordinator; and
- posts on Facebook Groups with a potential readership of 219,000 residents.

It was also shared with Office of PCC commissioned services and the Community Safety Partnerships, with a request to share more widely internally as well as with clients and the public.

10. In August 2021, the Steering Group set the themes and direction, as well as completed a Gap Analysis. This Group includes the Chief Constable, the Chief Executive of Maidstone Borough Council, and a representative from Kent County Council, Medway Council and some of the Office of PCC commissioned services.
11. To understand victim and offender profiles, as well as demand trends to inform the current picture, 10 years of data is currently being analysed as part of a big data exercise.
12. To explore how partners are addressing the issue, set piece events to date have included:
 - ACC Wilson presenting on how Kent Police is tackling VAWG at a recent Performance and Delivery Board; and
 - at a recent Kent Criminal Justice Board, members discussing VAWG and committing to make the plan a success within their own areas.
13. September to December 2021, roundtables are taking place with a wider network of stakeholders. Two additional roundtables have already taken place, with almost all the Community Safety Partnerships and a wider network of commissioned services.
14. Currently being organised, workshops will be held in December 2021 with victims touching on different themes.
15. In 2022, the Commissioner intends to hold a VAWG Summit with Ministerial keynote and to write the final report which will include recommendations and an action plan as to what each partner agency will do.

Governance and oversight:

16. The initial Steering Group assisted in the direction of the Inquiry, but the plan is to reconvene to update on actions soon.
17. Regular discussions take place between the project lead and his supervisor. A regular meeting between the project lead and the Commissioner has also been diarised to ensure the Inquiry stays on track.
18. The roundtables and set piece events have also enabled oversight of the work other agencies are doing in an effort to tackle VAWG.

Planned future activity:

19. This includes:
 - Analysis of survey findings – to be published mid-December
 - More roundtables with a wider network of professionals
 - Smaller focus groups to delve further into views, which will build on the survey findings
 - A second Steering Group meeting to review progress
 - An event/summit to include everyone who has been a part of the project to update on work
 - Final report to be written, to include an action plan to hold all agencies to account

Recommendation:

20. The Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel is asked to note this report and agree to a further update at the June 2022 meeting.