

To: Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel
Subject: Violence Against Women and Girls Inquiry - update
Date: 27 June 2023

Introduction:

1. Further to the most recent paper presented at the 6 December 2022 meeting, this report provides an update on the Police and Crime Commissioner's VAWG Inquiry.

Background:

2. On 10 December 2020, the Government launched a 10 week call for evidence on violence against women and girls (VAWG) to inform a new national strategy. Following the tragic murder of Sarah Everard, the national call for evidence was re-opened for a further two weeks.
3. Building on the 2016-2020 strategy, the Government's refreshed 'Tackling violence against women and girls' strategy was published on 21 July 2021 with specific policy commitments.
4. In the wake of Sarah Everard's murder and several other high-profile shocking events, as well as the Government's refresh of the national VAWG strategy, the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) launched his own Inquiry on Wednesday 4 August 2021. The aim was to understand the extent to which such crimes are being committed and to work in partnership to understand what more could be done to prevent and tackle them.
5. The Inquiry was designed with partnership-working in mind and the PCC was determined to consult with victims, witnesses, support services and partnership agencies and authorities.
6. To oversee the Inquiry, a Steering group of stakeholders was set-up to provide direction, complete a Gap Analysis and set priorities. It included the Chief Constable, the Chief Executive of Maidstone Borough Council, a representative from Kent County Council, Medway Council and some of the Office of the PCC commissioned services.

Activity:

VAWG Survey

7. From 31 August to 19 November 2021, the PCC ran a 'Call for Evidence' survey to:
 - find out the extent of violence and abuse being perpetrated against women and girls in Kent, including online; and
 - understand how safe women and girls felt in different aspects of their lives.
8. In total, 8,263 responses were received, an unprecedented number for a survey launched by the PCC and evidence of the strength of public feeling. The survey was open to anyone over the age of 16 and just over 93% of responses were from women and 3.5% from men.
9. A [full report](#) on the findings from the survey can be found on the Office of the PCC website.

Big Data exercise

10. The PCC commissioned i3 Analytics to analyse Kent Police data to look at victim and offender profiles and trends.

11. The analysis objectives were to produce a detailed problem profile of VAWG. Furthermore, it was to identify insights regarding trends, extents and patterns of repeat offending and victimisation, geographic profiles, and nominal characteristics. Seasons and time of day were also analysed, potential drivers of crime, and what crime looked like in different districts across Kent.
12. As outlined in the previous paper, key conclusions included:
- 30-35 year olds being the leading offender group
 - Year of birth being a stronger determinant of violence than age, with 1989 being the peak birth year
 - 10% of offenders being responsible for 63% of harm
 - 1 in 8 victims being aged 25-30 in deprived areas
 - Increased temperatures sparked greater violence, especially among those aged 30-35 in deprived areas

Roundtables

13. The PCC hosted several Roundtable events with different stakeholders to understand how they were tackling VAWG. Discussions included how to improve provision for victims through commissioned services, and how to prevent misogyny through education.
14. The roundtables also included representation from the British Transport Police to gain a better understanding of how residents and visitors were being kept safe on the railways.

Victim Panel focus group

15. On 24 May 2022, the PCC hosted a Victim Panel focus group for those with lived experience of VAWG.
16. The focus group was a great success, with each victim speaking forcefully about their experiences. As outlined in the previous paper, common themes included:
- Lack of communication from authorities (including the police and the CPS)
 - Victims feeling the burden of proof fell on them
 - Victims feeling more traumatised by the criminal justice process, than the crime itself
 - A perception that the system favoured the suspect rather than the victim
 - Feeling like the CPS played ping pong with cases
 - A belief that the first interview was their 'one shot' to get it right and if testimonies/statements differed between statements it was seen as them lying or changing their story
17. Valuable feedback was provided to Kent Police and the wider criminal justice system (CJS) through the PCC's role as chair of the Kent Criminal Justice Board (KCJB).

Outcome:

18. On 26 July 2022, the PCC published his [Violence against women and girls Inquiry Report](#). The PCC would like to thank everyone who took the time to inform his Inquiry.
19. The report notes that over the course of the Inquiry, Kent Police and other agencies took action to address VAWG. As a result, some of the recommendations the Inquiry would have made were already being delivered, including:
- VAWG strategy - tackling offences against women and girls was always a prime concern for Kent Police with victims and witnesses being a top priority, and central to the Control Strategy. However, to enhance the service provided, a new strategy to tackle VAWG was implemented with the Force investing in over 900 officers to work in local areas specifically investigating VAWG related offences, such as domestic abuse and rape Investigation.
 - VAWG forum - Kent Police held engagement events across the county which reached over 1,000 women and girls, giving them an opportunity to have their say on local safety issues and crime. This led to the establishment of a VAWG Community Forum which meets regularly and is chaired by the Assistant Chief Constable for Local Policing. It also led to immediate changes and a review of local patrol deployment strategies where concerns were raised around public safety in particular areas, to enhance the visibility of patrols at key times and locations.
 - Officer verification checks - this process enables members of the public, if concerned about an officer's identity, to ask for a check to be made through the Force Control Room operator who will confirm the officer is on duty and respond via the officer's radio. Officers are encouraged to be proactive in offering checks, especially if they believe the individual feels uncomfortable asking.

- [StreetSafe](#) tool - as part of the Home Office's strategy to tackle VAWG it launched this online tool. It is available to anyone wishing to anonymously tell the police about public places where they have felt or feel unsafe because of environmental issues (e.g. street lighting, abandoned buildings or vandalism) and/or because of some behaviours (e.g. being followed or verbally abused).
- Kent Police Domestic Abuse Hub – operating seven days a week, the skilled workforce provides a prompt response to domestic abuse victims, utilising video technology (Rapid Video Response) and telephony to capture evidence first-hand, assess risk, safeguard victims and make referrals to a wide range of support services. Rapid Video Response has also attracted national interest and the National Police Chiefs' Council wants to work with Kent Police to promote the Domestic Abuse Hub as part of the response to VAWG.

20. For all the good work that the police, councils and other agencies and partners were doing, people wanted to see more. As a result, the report also made several recommendations which have been prioritised by the PCC; updates are provided below for information:

- Listening to women and girls
 - Further Victim Panel focus groups have not taken place as yet, but members were consulted when the PCC launched [Victim Voice](#) and gave very positive feedback.
 - Kent Police's VAWG [Walk and Talk events](#) continue and have been warmly received by partners and members of the public. They allow the Force to engage with women and girls across the county, to learn from their experience of living and socialising in areas identified through analysis (GRIP Hot spots and the StreetSafe tool). The Force is in the process of evaluating responses so it can provide feedback to communities about what action has been taken as a result (e.g. mirrors in underpasses, improved lighting).
 - The PCC has participated in Walk and Talk events and continues to receive feedback from the Force on a regular basis.
- Holding to account
 - In April 2022, the PCC published his Police and Crime Plan '[Making Kent Safer – April 2022 to March 2023](#)' which includes tackling VAWG as a priority for the Chief Constable. In February 2023, the Home Office also published the new [Strategic Policing Requirement](#) (SPR) which includes VAWG as a national threat. The PCC therefore continues to use his [Performance and Delivery Board](#) as a mechanism to hold Kent Police to account for delivery of their VAWG strategy, the Police and Crime Plan priority and the capacity/capability associated with the SPR.
 - In his capacity as chair of the KCJB, the PCC has made VAWG a standing Agenda item and recent meetings have focused on progress around reporting, charging, timeliness and outcomes for domestic abuse, rape and serious sexual offence cases. To date there has been limited discussion around a shared data set and terms of reference to enable agencies to be held to account.
 - In relation to the Serious Violence Duty, a partnership Board which the PCC will chair is being created and will include the Violence Reduction Unit and representation from youth justice, secure estate, probation and other partners. For the purposes of the Duty, violence includes domestic abuse, sexual offences, violence against property and threats of violence, and therefore the Board will ensure activity is joined up and enable the PCC to hold agencies to account.
- Victim satisfaction surveys
 - As part of the re-commissioning of the main victim referral and support service contract, a requirement was included to undertake independent victim satisfaction surveys into their experiences within the CJS and of relevant agencies. This will enable a clear understanding of victims' experiences to be identified and action to be taken.
 - Victim Support were successful in being awarded the tender and discussions are underway to develop the survey, including the use of technology to enable a wider number of individuals to share their views.
 - Commissioned services also report on client satisfaction with the service they have received, and the PCC is required to report annually on the reasons for victims withdrawing from the CJS or not reporting to the police. Responses to this indicate victims are fearful of not being believed or they are seen as the problem, they have concerns about lack of communication from the police and the length of the CJS process, as well as the impact on their mental health.

- Supporting men and boys
 - Please see Appendix A.

- Performance audit
 - Unfortunately, the Office of the PCC was unsuccessful in appointing an Analyst; as a result, the regular publication of an audit using publicly available information and data held by criminal justice agencies to show how well they are performing for victims of crime, and specifically VAWG has been delayed.
 - However, the PCC is currently considering using an analytics company to collate and interpret relevant datasets.

- Schools Intervention programme
 - Collaborate Digital has been commissioned to deliver universal, open to all, age-appropriate messages to children and young people with the aim of building social skills, aiding decision-making, supporting resilience, and changing behaviours. The aim is to support them in making better, informed choices regarding healthy relationships (attitudes, behaviours, and safety), online harms and cyber-safety and cyber-bullying. These messages are delivered to those aged 9 years to a maximum age of 14 years, within targeted educational and youth settings to help tackle VAWG.
 - Collaborate Digital deliver interactive, media workshops and assemblies with the emphasis on active learning and participation. They use video, creative thinking, myth-busting, discussion, and mind-mapping to explain and explore the facts about healthy relationships and online safety and offer sources of advice and support. Following the inputs, the facilitators, provide workshops with small groups of young people so they can create their own scripts, and produce their own podcasts, Tik Toks or YouTube videos, based on their new knowledge. During this part of the workshop the young people reflect on what they have heard and learned and actively demonstrate their understanding. The best podcasts and videos across all schools participating will be submitted to a public vote to identify the most popular.
 - Delivery commenced in the east of the county in January, with 33 schools able to receive the programme during 2023. Over 90 schools applied, demonstrating the high need for the intervention. 21 primary, 11 secondary and 1 specialist school (33 in total) have now received the programme and feedback has been exceptionally positive from both teachers and those young people involved.
 - The options to commence delivery in north and west Kent are currently being explored as demand is expected to be high in these areas.
 - To illustrate how successful the programme has been, the following feedback was received from the headteacher of a primary school:
 - 'I just wanted to say a huge thank you for this lovely opportunity that you brought to our children. I know that you have been dealing with my colleague, but I felt I just had to say thank you myself. We are so proud of our children and so grateful to people like yourself who make this kind of thing happen for them. The recordings are fabulous!*
 - It is such an important message and what a wonderful way to get it out there. Not only that but our children had an amazing day and learned lots whilst doing it!*
 - Thank you.'*

- A youth survey has also been created and shared by the Office of the PCC to build on Collaborate Digital's work. The survey aimed to understand the experiences of young people online and feelings of safety around their neighbourhood, particularly journeys between home and school. It was distributed to all schools and colleges in Kent and to youth clubs, scout and guide groups etc. In total, 4,400 responses were received; the full survey report is due to be published on the Office of the PCC website imminently.

- Further commissioning
 - On 14 June, the Office of the PCC hosted a Commissioned Services event which Members were invited to join virtually. It was designed to promote and improve understanding of the variety of commissioned services located across the county, many of which focus on domestic abuse and sexual violence, as well as increase referrals to them. Over 150 representatives from Kent Police, commissioned services and partner agencies participated and a booklet providing the details of all commissioned services was also given out

- The Office of the PCC Communications Team have developed a specific page on the Kent Police intranet (inSite) which is designed to be a 'one-stop-shop' to help officers and staff find the most suitable service for a victim.
- Please also see Appendix A.
- Victim Champion training
 - Through an information sharing programme called [Victim Voice](#), the PCC has started to raise awareness of the Victims' Code and key opportunities to challenge criminal justice agencies.
 - A [Victim Voice pamphlet](#) has been produced and it has been widely distributed across the county; the online version has been downloaded and the QR code scanned over 600 times. Presentations have been given to promote Victim Voice at the KALC AGM, the Commissioned Services event, and at Parish Council, Rotary Club and WI meetings. There is a short training video and Podcast available. Over 25,000 business cards are being distributed by the Office of the PCC and Kent Police with a Victim Voice advert and a link to My Community Voice.
- StreetSafe tool outcomes
 - A number of Safer Street funding bids (see Appendix A) have utilised data from the [StreetSafe](#) tool to assist in the identification of areas that would benefit the most.

Next steps:

21. The PCC intends for the report to be a living document; a platform to work from to improve women and girls' physical safety and feelings of safety. The Association of PCCs have also built an action plan to hold organisations to account and this will be factored into the PCC's work to keep track of performance against different areas of business.
22. Whilst tackling VAWG has always been a priority for the Force, the PCC is reassured that progress continues to be made and opportunities seized to prevent offending and improve the service to victims. By way of example, this has included:
 - the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Hub;
 - securing support to include VAWG as a priority across the key partnership boards;
 - leading the field nationally with a review of the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC);
 - working collaboratively with the University of Kent to improve the response to stalking; and
 - securing funding (in collaboration with Essex) for a risk identification pilot that it is hoped will provide proactive intervention points to reduce the risk of domestic abuse.
23. Importantly though, VAWG is a priority in the PCC's [Making Kent Safer](#) Plan and included in the SPR, therefore the Chief Constable will be required to continue providing regular updates on Force activity and outcomes at the quarterly Performance and Delivery Board.
24. Open to Panel Members and the public on a non-participating basis and also live streamed, the Performance and Delivery Board is chaired by the PCC and papers are submitted by the Force in advance and published [here](#).
25. The PCC acknowledges that VAWG is one of the challenges of our time and that as a society, there is a need to come together to address it. He wants to ensure offenders are brought to justice and improve the journey for victims and survivors. That is why the PCC will continue to monitor and evaluate how Kent Police and the Office of the PCC are working towards tackling VAWG in all its guises.
26. In Kent there is already good work going on, from Kent Police to that provided by partners and commissioned services, but the PCC recognises that there is a continued need to pull together to make a difference and make things better.

Recommendation:

27. The Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel is asked to note this report.

Introduction

PCCs can commission or grant fund services to support the delivery of their Police and Crime Plan priorities.

As one of the PCC's key priorities, several services have been commissioned or grant funded with the aim of ensuring appropriate support and interventions are available to those impacted by VAWG.

The following is a summary of those services; it is not an exhaustive list but highlights key activities that align to the PCC's VAWG Inquiry.

Additional Funding Secured

The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) recognised the greater demand for victim support services and the positive impact being made through PCC commissioning approaches. As a result, they extended the additional funding received during 2021/22 until 2024/25 to ensure that victims could continue to access effective support.

The additional funding awarded for 2023/24 is:

Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA) and Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) Funding (£861,926) aimed at increasing the number of ISVAs and IDVAs available in Kent. This funding has increased the number by 18.5 FTE, including Child and Young Person (CYP) IDVA's across 10 services.

Domestic Abuse (DA) and Sexual Violence (SV) Ringfence Funding (£936,104) aims to increase the availability and capacity of DA and SV support services in Kent. This funding has enabled additional posts to be recruited such as a specialist IDVA for the 16-25 age group and an IDVA to support older victims of DA, alongside additional Outreach Workers, a free legal advice service, stalking advocates, therapy, and counselling.

Support Services for Men and Boys

Through the additional funding awards, the PCC has allocated funding to specialist support services for men and boys who have been or are victims of DA or SV. These services include:

Dads Unlimited have been commissioned to provide the only dedicated male IDVA Service in Kent, DA Victim Empowerment (DAVE). This service provides confidential advice, support and advocacy across Kent and Medway. They are also piloting a male victim recovery programme called Discovery. 718 males were supported by Dads Unlimited during 2022/23 because of this funding.

Health Action started in 2006 to support African males who were victims of domestic abuse; whilst originally aimed at the BAME community, all male victims of DA are now supported. 53 males were supported in 2022/23 because of this funding.

East Kent Rape Crisis Centre (EKRCC) and Family Matters have been funded £31,504 for 2023/24 to continue providing a collaborative approach to men and boys impacted by rape and SV across Kent. Detailed research into the barriers to men accessing support has also been conducted, with the findings used to inform service delivery. 56 males were supported in 2022/23 because of this funding.

Perpetrator Interventions

The PCC has been successful in securing approximately £1.6 million in additional funding from the Home Office to extend and enhance the delivery of domestic abuse and stalking perpetrator interventions in Kent. This funding commenced on 1 April 2023 and runs to 31 March 2025.

Delivery will entail intensive multi-agency case management through a team consisting of Kent Police, the perpetrator interventions provider (Interventions Alliance), and victim services (Lookahead and Victim Support). The team will provide

- Early response that delivers targeted motivational, denial and minimisation work to increase the motivation to engage with programmes.
- Two 1:1 Behaviour Change interventions - Healthy Relationships (HR) for domestic abuse perpetrators and Compulsive Obsessive Behaviour Interventions (COBI) for stalking perpetrators.
- Through a Victim Link Worker (Qualified IDVA) and a Step-Down Worker, Victim Support will manage support needs after the perpetrator intervention has concluded.

Crime Reduction Grant – Community Safety Partnerships

Each year a portion of the PCC's commissioning budget is allocated to Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) via the Crime Reduction Grant. £558,385 was given to support delivery of the Police and Crime Plan priorities.

To support the PCC's priority, CSPs were asked to consider VAWG projects as one of the priority areas for the 2023/24 grant funding. Whilst the approval process for 2023/24 CSP project spend is progressing, it is estimated at this point that £110,413 of the overall grant to CSPs will be spent on VAWG related activities, with £51,524 planned for a Safer Streets approach to crime prevention.

Examples of the projects identified to date include,

- Thanet (£7,500) - continuing support for a self defence programme for women, support the Ask Angela / Andrew scheme and drink spiking awareness campaign.
- Canterbury (£5,000) - to extend the Best Bar None accreditation programme which promotes good practice in licensed premises.
- Maidstone (£8,000) - to support the Urban Blue Bus that provides vulnerable people in the night-time economy with a safe haven, first aid and also provides educational talks to young people about keeping safe.
- Medway (£5,500) - working in partnership to continue the successful Night Safety Sessions implemented through the Safer Streets 3 funding round.

Safer Streets Funding

Safer Streets is a Home Office initiative aimed at supporting crime prevention and reduction in targeted areas. The PCC was successful in being awarded funding from the previous three Safer Streets funding rounds.

The latest round, Safer Streets 4, focused on preventing VAWG in public places and improving perceptions and feelings of safety regarding VAWG, anti-social behaviour or neighbourhood crime, such as burglary, robbery and theft. Once again, the PCC was successful in the four bids submitted and secured £1.4 million.

The projects are in the last four months of delivery and have been successful in delivering a range of activities in the identified bid areas of Canterbury, Gravesham, Maidstone, and Medway including:

- Installation of CCTV and additional / improved street lighting
- Recruitment of additional Street Pastors and Urban Blue volunteers to provide suitable guardians in the night-time economy
- Provision of Safe Spaces
- Delivery of Active Bystander Training
- Partnership community events to support signposting and distribution of personal security equipment
- Delivery of Youth Outreach Workers
- Extending the 'Best Bar None' Scheme
- Education and awareness raising VAWG campaigns