

**To: Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel**  
**Subject: Violence Against Women and Girls Inquiry - update**  
**Date: 6 December 2022**

**Introduction:**

1. Further to previous papers presented at meetings in December 2021 and June 2022, this provides an update on the PCC'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 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 focused on four pillars:
  - Prevention
  - Engagement
  - The Victim's Journey
  - Rehabilitation
6. It was designed with partnership-working in mind and the PCC was determined to consult with victims, witnesses, support services and partnership agencies and authorities.
7. 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**

8. 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.
9. The survey asked:
  - how safe people felt at night and in the day
  - what made them feel safer
  - if they had been a victim of crime in the last year
  - for those who had been a victim, had reported the crime to any organisation
  - to describe their experiences and provide any feedback
  - about partner agencies, and how they could improve services for women and girls in Kent

- which public spaces should be improved to make women and girls feel safer
- how to better educate, at an early age, that violence is not acceptable in society

10. 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.

11. A [full report](#) on the findings from the survey can be found on the OPCC website.

#### Big Data exercise

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

13. 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.

14. The key conclusions were as follows:

#### Location

- Substantial proportion of VAWG is hidden behind closed doors at home, during the day
- Maidstone Town Centre has the highest concentration of VAWG and is attracting offenders from further afield than the other key hot spots
- Parts of Swale are becoming more problematic
- Chatham/ Medway remain the areas with the greatest volume

#### Offenders

- 30-35 years old are now the leading offender group
- Year of birth is now a stronger determinant of violence than age, with 1989 being the peak birth year
- 10% of offenders are responsible for 63% of harm
- The presence of a small selection of crime types is linked with substantial increases in the risk of rape or violence.

#### Victims

- In deprived areas, up to 1 in 8 of those aged 25-30 are victims.
- Total harm over the last 5 years is equivalent to over 4,500 homicides

#### Weather

- Increasing temperatures sparks much higher violence, especially among those aged 30-35 in deprived areas.

#### Roundtables

15. 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.

16. Notable examples of activity captured at the events include Community Safety Partnerships creating safe spaces in town centres; the utilisation of technology, such as the Holly Guard app; providing safety training for women and girls; and improving CCTV.

17. The roundtables also included representation from the British Transport Police to gain a better understanding of how residents and visitors are being kept safe on the railways.

#### Victim Panel focus group

18. On 24 May 2022, the PCC hosted an initial Victim Panel focus group for those with lived experience of VAWG.

19. The OPCC worked with relevant charities to identify victims who were agreeable to taking part and developed the Terms of Reference to ensure their needs and preferences were reflected in its organisation.
20. The aim of the focus group was to create a feedback loop in how support services and Kent Police could improve, but equally to identify where they are getting it right.
21. The initial focus group was a great success, with each victim speaking forcefully about their experiences. Common themes included:
  - Lack of communication from authorities (including Police and CPS). When there is an update, it does not come across as meaningful.
  - Victims felt the burden of proof fell on them.
  - Victims felt as traumatised, if not more so, by the criminal justice process as the crime(s) themselves.
  - Lack of clarity on what the Police can and cannot do – managing expectations needs to be improved.
  - No consideration or flexibility to work around victim's life. It is the victim that must work around the system regarding timing and location.
  - Perception the system favours the suspect rather than the victim.
  - It feels like the CPS plays ping pong with cases.
  - Investigating evidence on victims' phones is disproportionate to the case and victims reported feeling more stressed because their phones were taken for long periods.
  - Belief that their first interview or ABE is their 'one shot' to get it right but if testimonies/statements differ between statements then it is seen as the victim lying or changing their story.
  - Perception that Police decide there will be NFA due to lack of evidence too quickly.
  - A belief there is unconscious bias and that more training was needed.
22. Valuable feedback was provided to Kent Police and the wider criminal justice system through the PCC's role as Chair of the Kent Criminal Justice Board.
23. In the future the PCC will consult the focus group on new proposals to tackle VAWG, commissioning strategies, education programmes and to further explore the service provided by criminal justice agencies.

### **Outcome:**

24. 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.
25. The report notes that over the course of the Inquiry, agencies at a local and national level took action to address VAWG. As a result, some of the recommendations the inquiry would have made were already being delivered, these include:
  - VAWG strategy - As a direct response to the inquiry, Kent Police introduced a new strategy which deals directly with VAWG.
  - 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 has led to the establishment of a regular forum where the Force receives feedback.
  - Officer verification checks - If a member of the public requests it, an Officer must radio the Force Control Room to undertake an identity verification check. Officers are encouraged to be proactive in offering them, especially if they believe the individual feels uncomfortable asking.
  - New patrolling strategy - As a result of the VAWG Survey, and feedback from the Force's work with women and girls, Kent Police's patrol strategy has been amended to increase visibility in those areas where women and girls tell them they do not feel safe.
  - [Street Safe](#) – As part of the Home Office's strategy to tackle VAWG it launched this online tool. It is a pilot service available to anyone wishing to anonymously tell police services about public places where they have felt or feel unsafe because of environmental issues e.g., street lighting, abandoned buildings, vandalism, or unwanted behaviours.
  - Kent Police Domestic Abuse Hub – this builds on the Vulnerability Hub that has been in operation for a few years. It operates 7 days a week and bolsters the force's resource for operational Domestic Abuse matters and provides additional support to victims.

26. For all the good work that the Police, councils and other agencies and partners are doing, people want to see more. As a result, the report also makes several recommendations which are listed below with an update:
- Listening to women and girls
    - Further Victim Panels are planned touching on different crime types to capture as many views on VAWG as possible.
    - The PCC also receives feedback from the walk and talk events Kent Police are facilitating. It is an evolving piece of work; however it has been warmly received by partners and members of the public.
  - Holding to account
    - The PCC continues to use his Performance and Delivery Board as a mechanism to hold Kent Police to account for delivery of their VAWG strategy and relevant priorities in the Police and Crime Plan.
    - The PCC has a standing agenda item on VAWG at the Kent Criminal Justice Board and has an outstanding action to share relevant data once it is ready which will enable further scrutiny.
  - Victim satisfaction surveys
    - As part of the re-commissioning of the main victim referral and support service contract a requirement has been included to undertake independent victim satisfaction surveys into their experiences within the criminal justice system and of relevant agencies. This will enable a clear understanding of victims' experiences to be identified and actions to be undertaken.
    - Commissioned services also report on client satisfaction and experiences within the CJS. These indicate clients have welcomed more face-to-face specialist support and the creation of more survivor recovery groups.
  - Supporting men and boys
    - Please see Appendix A.
  - Performance audit
    - Awaiting the appointment of an Analyst in the Office of the PCC, as well as the completion of the re-commissioning of the main victim referral and support service contract.
  - 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 make better, informed choices regarding healthy relationships (attitudes, behaviours, and safety), online harms and cyber-safety and cyber-bullying. These messages will be delivered to those aged 9 years to a maximum age of 14 years, within targeted educational and youth settings to help tackle VAWG.
  - Further commissioning
    - Please see Appendix A.
  - Victim Champion training
    - The Office of the PCC is working on a set of power point slides for the PCC to present to audiences across Kent to raise awareness of victims' rights and how they can exercise them. Through an information sharing programme called Victim Voice, the intention is to raise awareness of the Victims' Code and key opportunities to challenge criminal justice agencies. An information pamphlet, which builds on the slides will also be provided to the audience, so they have material to refer to should they need to signpost victims.
  - Street Safe tool outcomes
    - Awaiting provision of information by the Home Office to facilitate analysis and monitoring of outcomes.

### **Next steps:**

27. Holding perpetrators to account for their behaviour will be key to making women and girls safer. A detailed analysis of Kent Police offender data has been commissioned to build a perpetrator problem profile in Kent. It is hoped the findings will provide further insight into the extent of VAWG crime in Kent. Moreover, it is hoped the data will highlight areas where proactive and prevention work can be carried out, as well as informing offender management processes.

28. The PCC will utilise an action plan to hold the force to account for the delivery of relevant recommendations, as well as the performance of work in their new VAWG strategy. The Association of PCCs have built an action plan to hold organisations to account. This action plan will be incorporated into the PCC's work to keep track of performance against different areas of business.
29. 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 coordination of all activity under the VAWG umbrella is being managed by a coordinator within the OPCC to promote closer working between Kent Police, charities and criminal justice agencies.
30. As Members will be aware, VAWG is a priority in the PCC's [Making Kent Safer](#) Plan. As such, the Chief Constable will be required to continue providing regular updates on Force activity and outcomes at the PCC's quarterly Performance and Delivery Board.
31. 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](#).
32. 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 update the Police and Crime Panel on his Inquiry work to lay out how Kent Police and the OPCC are working towards tackling VAWG in all its guises.
33. In Kent there is already a lot of 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:**

34. The Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel is asked to note this report and agree to a further update at their June 2023 meeting.

**Introduction**

Police & Crime Commissioners (PCCs) can commission or grant fund services to support the delivery of their priorities. As one of the PCCs key priorities, a number of 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**

Additional funding opportunities have been made available to the PCC by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) in recognition that there is greater demand for victims support services and that victims are requiring longer-term support. The additional funding awarded for 2022-23 is:

**Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA) and Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) Funding (£861,926)** aimed at increasing the number of IDVAs and ISVAs available in Kent. This funding increased the number of IDVAs by 14.5 FTE, including 2 x Child and Young Person (CYP) IDVA's and an additional 4 ISVAs, including 1 (CYP) ISVA.

**Domestic Abuse (DA) and Sexual Violence (SV) Ringfence Funding (£936,104)** aimed at increasing 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 LGBTQIA ISVA, an IDVA for the 16-25 age group and an IDVA supporting 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.

**Health Action** have been funded to support African men living in Kent who are in an abusive domestic relationship, with 60 males engaging with this service between April to September 2022.

**East Kent Rape Crisis Centre (EKRCC) and Family Matters** have been funded to provide a collaborative approach to men and boys impacted by rape and SV across Kent. This also involved detailed research into the barriers to men accessing support, with the findings being used to inform service delivery. To date 41 males have been supported during the first 6 months of 2022.

**Perpetrator Interventions**

The PCC worked collaboratively with Kent Police, the Community Rehabilitation Company at the time and a victim services provider to develop a bid to the Home Offices Perpetrator Funding opportunity. This bid was successful, and Kent was awarded £378,967 in July 2021 and a further £378,967 in July 2022 to deliver both DA and Stalking Perpetrator Programmes, alongside support for victims and their children. These programmes consist of a Healthy Relationships Programme which can be delivered via group work or 1:1 and a Stalking Programme, Compulsive Obsessive Behavioural Intervention (COBI) that is delivered 1:1. The programmes are delivered alongside a dedicated Victims Link Worker to ensure support and risk to the victims and their children are also effectively managed.

**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 to support delivery of the Police and Crime Plan priorities.

It is estimated £122,000 of the overall grant to CSPs will be spent on VAWG related activities and examples of projects funded through the Crime Reduction Grant are listed below:

- **Dover (£21,744)** - to deliver a Safer Spaces Project consisting of a series of workstreams designed to make Dover Town Centre safer, including designated safer spaces, digital boards, and additional CCTV.
- **Thanet (£9,733)** - to provide a self defence programme for women, support the Ask Angela / Andrew scheme and drink spiking awareness campaign.
- **Canterbury (£3,300)** - to deliver a Personal Safety campaign, which includes purse bells, glow sticks and posters and to support student safety by providing one platform that provides safety advice in one location.
- **Maidstone (£4,744)** - to deliver a new project to support children aged between 5 and 13 impacted by DA.
- **Medway (£3,289)** - 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 3 Safer Streets funding rounds.

The current 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 4 bids submitted and secured £1.4 million over 4 areas in Kent.

The Office of the PCC is now working in partnership with Canterbury, Gravesham, Maidstone, and Medway (the identified bid areas) to deliver a range of interventions 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