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**Title:** Background Information  
for the Themed Item –  
Violence against Women  
and Girls

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## Purpose of the Report

The information contained in this report contain background/topical information to be considered alongside the Panel's themed item on Violence against Women and Girls and contains information on:

- Government Strategy to ensure women and girls are safe everywhere
- Funding received of £1/2m by Slough Borough Council and the PCC to tackle violence against women in Slough
- Press article on what is being done to tackle violence against women in the UK?
- Press article on "austerity hit police's ability to tackle violence against women, say ex-officers"
- HMICFRS Police response to violence against women and girls: Final inspection report
- Data from UN Women on Facts and figures: Ending violence against women
- Press article on "Drink Spiking - Home secretary wants police update on spiking by needles"
- Statement from the Police and Crime Commissioner, following the sentencing of Wayne Couzens
- Press article on crimes committed by police force officers against Women.
- Press article on Sexual offences claims against Thames Valley Police Officers

## Tackling Violence against Women and Girls Strategy

On 21 July a new Government strategy to ensure women and girls are safe everywhere - at home, online and on the streets was published.

The strategy sets out a clear ambition to increase support for victims and survivors, increase the number of perpetrators brought to justice and reduce the prevalence of violence against women and girls in the long term.

The actions and commitments announced mark the start of a radical programme of change in the whole system's response to these crimes. They will further support the action already being taken to improve the criminal justice response to rape, toughen sentences and protection for victims through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, as well as recruit 20,000 more police officers to make our streets safer.

Following the tragic case of Sarah Everard in March and the subsequent public conversation on the safety of women and girls, the Home Secretary reopened the government's call for evidence on tackling crimes that disproportionately affect women. The Home Office received an unprecedented 160,000 further responses over 2 weeks, taking the total to over 180,000 responses which have helped shape the new strategy.

The government will continue to listen to the brave voices of victims, survivors and the public to hear their views and opinions on tackling these crimes, including through the creation of a new online tool 'StreetSafe'.

This platform will build on the Safer Streets Fund and provide women and girls with a way to anonymously and quickly pinpoint areas where they have felt unsafe and say why – be it from a lack of lighting or CCTV or because of the people around them – via a simple online platform. This information will further build local intelligence and be used by police and crime commissioners to work with local authorities and other stakeholders to improve community safety and take more strategic action, including designing out crime. If a crime is being committed people should dial 101 or 999.

While the strategy is focusing on long-term change, the government is also taking immediate steps to improve safety for women and girls, focusing on practical action to bolster physical safety in public spaces. This includes:

- **a new national policing lead on violence against women and girls** who will report into the Home Secretary-chaired National Policing Board – they will also be the point of contact for every police force to ensure best practice is shared and that progress on improving the response to these crimes is being monitored
- **a review of options to limit use of non-disclosure agreements** in cases of sexual harassment in higher education
- **a £5 million 'Safety of Women at Night' Fund**, in addition to the £25 million Safer Streets Fund Round 3, that focuses on the prevention of violence against women and girls in public spaces at night, including in the night-time economy – this could include targeting parks and alleyways, and routes from bars, restaurants and nightclubs as we see a return to the night-time economy
- **criminalising virginity testing**, which some women and girls are being forced to undergo, to send a clear message that this practice is wholly unacceptable in our society
- **appointing 2 new Violence Against Women and Girls Transport Champions**, to drive forward positive change and tackle the problems faced by female passengers on public transport

This follows on from further measures taken this year, including investing an additional £25 million into the Safer Streets Fund focused on increasing the safety of public spaces for all, with a particular focus on areas of concern for women and girls

## **Victim support**

The strategy will increase support for victims and survivors, ensuring they have access to services appropriate to their needs. These include the following commitments:

- an additional £1.5 million per annum in vital specialist support services for those from minority groups and to increase our funding for helplines, such as the Revenge Porn Helpline
- the Ministry of Justice will commission a 24/7 rape and sexual assault helpline
- the Department for Education will develop additional support to help teachers deliver the relationships, sex and health education curriculum effectively and confidently and revise existing guidance
- the Department for Transport announced that Urban Transport Group Chair and Interim West Midlands Combine Authority CEO Laura Shoaf and Transport for West Midlands Interim Managing Director Anne Shaw will be VAWG Transport Champions, working closely with campaign groups, industry and government to identify areas for improvement across the UK's transport network

## **Prevention**

To prevent these crimes from happening in the first place:

- the Department for Education will work with the Office for Students to tackle sexual harassment and abuse in higher education (including universities) and will review options to limit use of non-disclosure agreements in cases of sexual harassment in higher education
- the Department for Transport will launch its call for evidence on street design, to seek views on how the government's manual for streets guidance can be updated to help ensure streets are planned with women's safety at the forefront of any considerations
- the Home Office will invest in understanding 'what works' to prevent violence against women and girls – this will enable us to identify the highest quality, evidence-informed prevention projects: the department will provide £1.5 million in funding for intervention programmes and £1.5 million for evidence building - this will result in high quality, evidence-informed prevention projects, for example which aim to educate and inform children and young people about violence against women and girls, healthy relationships and the consequences of abuse

## **Pursuing perpetrators**

To pursue perpetrators and ensure they are facing the full force of the law:

- the Home Office will appoint an independent reviewer to undertake a review of the management of registered sex offenders by the police and will provide new investment for the National Crime Agency to develop innovative data capability to identify new methods of identifying serial sex offenders
- the Home Office will launch a multi-million communications campaign with a focus on targeting perpetrators and harmful misogynistic attitudes, educating

young people about healthy relationships and ensuring victims can access support.

## **TVP secure half a million pounds to tackle violence against women in Slough**

£1/2million will be spent to tackle violence against women and girls in Chalvey. The PCC will invest £500,000 to create projects within the area to tackle this issue, in the wake of the murder of Sarah Everard in London.

A joint application for the cash was made by the Slough Borough Council, the Thames Valley office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Aik Saath and Lime, a specialist youth engagement organisation.

Slough Borough Council have said the fund from the £23.5m Safer Street Fund, which aims to make public spaces safer for women and girls in wake of Sarah Everard's murder, will be used in Chalvey.

This is because "statistically" there is more of a need to make women and girls safer where local information reveals violence against women and girls is committed by men of all ages and was due to a range of factors including cultural attitudes as well as physical factors such as location and environment.

According to the council, it and its community partnerships will tackle the issue in six parts, including:

- A Street Guardianship team to improve safety through daily street patrols
- A Design Out Crime project to change streets making them safer, from physical changes like street layout to lighting and surveillance
- Specialist intervention and community work with members of the Roma community
- A specialist Youth and Community Worker to work with young people when in or out of school, to challenge signs of sexual harassment and adopt more positive and respectful attitudes towards women and girls
- Developing a communications campaign with young people to educate peers
- Creating an enhanced choices programme working with Year 12 students, practitioners, young people and parents. The choices programme already supports young people to understand themselves and make better choices using interactive, story-driven resources which were co-created by Slough students

## **What is being done to tackle violence against women in the UK?**

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/oct/01/what-is-being-done-to-tackle-violence-against-women-in-the-uk>

***Street lighting, undercover officers in bars and CCTV – safer, or a sticking plaster?***

Both the police and government have been accused of putting the onus on women to keep themselves safe and offering a “sticking plaster” for an intractable society-wide problem. There was outrage at advice published on the Metropolitan police’s website that fearful women could flag down a bus, while a pilot to put plainclothes police officers in bars to protect women announced was derided by campaigners as “bizarre” and “performative”.

The government has also announced a £25m Safer Streets Fund for measures such as better street lighting and CCTV, and last month launched StreetSafe, to allow people to report areas where they feel unsafe.

### ***Hearts and minds***

The government has promised a national communications campaign to tackle violence against women and girls, but details remain vague.

### ***Boots on the ground***

The Met has said 650 new officers would be deployed into busy public places, “including those where women and girls often lack confidence that they are safe”. It also pledged to publish a new strategy for tackling violence against women and girls – but critics have asked why should a strategy is not already in place.

### ***Reviews and strategies***

In June the government published its long-awaited Rape Review, along with an apology, and promised £3.2m for a police pilot focusing investigations on suspects rather than complainants’ credibility, a return to pre-2016 prosecution levels after years of record decline, bi-annual “scorecards” measuring key indicators. Victims were promised they would no longer be subject to a “digital strip searches”, get better communication and access to therapy.

Campaigners welcomed the apology, but said the measures lacked urgency and were underfunded.

In its Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy unveiled in July, the government promised to consider criminalising public street harassment and banning the use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) in cases of sexual harassment and abuse in higher education. It announced a new national police chief with overall responsibility for VAWG and promised a review into offender management.

### ***Misogyny as a hate crime***

In March, following the news of Sarah Everard’s murder, the government said it would require police forces to collect data on crimes apparently motivated by hostility towards women on an “experimental basis” from this autumn, seen as a step towards the criminalisation of misogyny. Some campaigners have expressed doubts about the push, expressing concerns it could be unenforceable; others said it brought useful scrutiny.

## **Austerity hit police's ability to tackle violence against women, say ex-officers**

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/oct/07/austerity-hit-police-ability-tackle-violence-against-women-say-ex-officers>



### **Facts and figures: Ending violence against women**

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>

Availability of data on violence against women and girls has increased significantly in recent years.

**Globally, an estimated 736 million women—almost one in three—have been subjected to intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, or both at least once in their life (30 per cent of women aged 15 and older).** This figure does not include sexual harassment. The rates of depression, anxiety disorders, unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, and HIV are higher in women who have experienced violence compared to women who have not, as well as many other health problems that can last even after the violence has ended.

**Most violence against women is perpetrated by current or former husbands or intimate partners.** More than 640 million women aged 15 and older have been subjected to intimate partner violence (26 per cent of women aged 15 and older).

**Of those who have been in a relationship, almost one in four adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 (24 per cent) have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner or husband.** Sixteen per cent of young women aged 15 to 24 experienced this violence in the past 12 months.

**In 2018, an estimated one in seven women had experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner or husband in the past 12 months (13 per cent of women aged 15 to 49).** These numbers do not reflect the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has increased risk factors for violence against women

**Calls to helplines have increased five-fold in some countries as rates of reported intimate partner violence increase because of the COVID-19 pandemic.** Restricted movement, social isolation, and economic insecurity are increasing women's vulnerability to violence in the home around the world.

**By September 2020, 52 countries had integrated prevention and response to violence against women and girls into COVID-19 response plans**, and 121 countries had adopted measures to strengthen services for women survivors of violence during the global crisis, but more efforts are urgently needed.

**Globally, 6 per cent of women report they have been subjected to sexual violence from someone other than their husband or partner.** However, the true prevalence of non-partner sexual violence is likely to be much higher, considering the stigma related to this form of violence.

**One hundred thirty-seven women are killed by a member of their family every day.** It is estimated that of the 87,000 women who were intentionally killed in 2017 globally, more than half (50,000) were killed by intimate partners or family members. More than one third (30,000) of the women intentionally killed in 2017 were killed by their current or former intimate partner.

**Fewer than 40 per cent of the women who experience violence seek help of any sort.** In the majority of countries with available data on this issue, among women who do seek help, most look to family and friends, and very few look to formal institutions, such as police and health services. Fewer than 10 per cent of those seeking help appealed to the police.

**Globally, violence against women disproportionately affects low- and lower-middle-income countries and regions.** Thirty-seven per cent of women aged 15 to 49 living in countries classified by the Sustainable Development Goals as “least developed” have been subject to physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in their life. Twenty-two per cent of women living in “least developed countries” have been subjected to intimate partner violence in the past 12 months—substantially higher than the world average of 13 per cent.

**At least 155 countries have passed laws on domestic violence, and 140 have laws on sexual harassment in the workplace.** However, even when laws exist, this does not mean they are always compliant with international standards and recommendations, or that the laws are implemented and enforced.

**Adult women account for nearly half (49 per cent) of all human trafficking victims detected globally.** Women and girls together account for 72 per cent, with girls representing more than three out of every four child trafficking victims. Most women and girls are trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

**In 2019, one in five women, aged 20–24 years, were married before the age of 18.** During the past decade, the global rate of child marriage has declined, with South Asia having the largest decline during this time. Today, the risk of child marriage is highest in sub-Saharan Africa, where more than one in three women, aged 20–24 years, were married before the age of 18. Child marriage often results in early pregnancy and social isolation, interrupts schooling, and increases a girl’s risk of experiencing domestic violence.

**At least 200 million women and girls, aged 15–49 years, have undergone female genital mutilation in 31 countries where the practice is concentrated.** Half of these countries are in West Africa. There are still countries where female genital mutilation is almost universal, where at least 9 in 10 girls and women, aged 15–49 years, have been cut.

**15 million adolescent girls worldwide, aged 15–19 years, have experienced forced sex.** In the vast majority of countries, adolescent girls are most at risk of forced sex (forced sexual intercourse or other sexual acts) by a current or former husband, partner, or boyfriend. Based on data from 30 countries, only one per cent have ever sought professional help.

**School-related gender-based violence is a major obstacle to universal schooling and the right to education for girls.** Globally, one in three students, aged 11–15, have been bullied by their peers at school at least once in the past month, with girls and boys equally likely to experience bullying. While boys are more likely to experience physical bullying than girls, girls are more likely to experience psychological bullying, and they report being made fun of because of how their face or body looks more frequently than boys.

**One in 10 women in the European Union report having experienced cyber-harassment since the age of 15.** This included having received unwanted and/or offensive sexually explicit emails or SMS messages, or offensive and/or inappropriate advances on social networking sites. The risk is highest among young women aged 18–29 years.

**In the Middle East and North Africa, 40–60 per cent of women have experienced street-based sexual harassment.** In the multi-country study, women said the harassment was mainly sexual comments, stalking or following, or staring or ogling. Between 31 and 64 per cent of men said they had carried out such acts. Younger men, men with more education, and men who experienced violence as children were more likely to engage in street sexual harassment.

**Across five regions, 82 per cent of women parliamentarians reported having experienced some form of psychological violence while serving their terms.** This included remarks, gestures, and images of a sexist or humiliating sexual nature, threats, and mobbing. Women cited social media as the main channel of this type of violence, and nearly half (44 per cent) reported receiving death, rape, assault, or abduction threats towards them or their families. Sixty-five per cent had been subjected to sexist remarks, primarily by male colleagues in parliament.

## **HMICFRS Police response to violence against women and girls: Final inspection report**

<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publication-html/police-response-to-violence-against-women-and-girls-final-inspection-report/>

Recommendations of the report:



#### Recommendation 1

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.

#### Recommendation 2

The relentless pursuit and disruption of adult perpetrators should be a national priority for the police, and their capability and capacity to do this should be enhanced.

#### Recommendation 3

Structures and funding should be put in place to make sure victims receive tailored and consistent support.

#### Recommendation 4

All chief constables should immediately review and ensure that there are consistently high standards in their forces' responses to violence against women and girls and should be supported in doing so by national standards and data.

#### Recommendation 5

Immediate review of use of outcomes 15 and 16 in violence against women and girls' offences.

## **Drink Spiking**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-58983853>

### **Statement from the Police and Crime Commissioner, following the sentencing of Wayne Couzens**

“The rape and murder of Sarah Everard - an entirely innocent young woman who was simply walking home at night - would rightly have been appalling in any circumstances.

“The fact that Wayne Couzens was a serving police officer makes his evil crime even more shocking, further compounded by the fact that he used his trusted position as a constable to perpetrate these vile acts.

“First and foremost we must remember that Sarah was an individual. A young woman in the prime of her life whose family are still grieving for their horrific loss. Our thoughts and prayers should be with her friends and loved ones.

“Inevitably this raises serious questions about the vetting of police officers. This is clearly an important area and one which is under increased scrutiny, but as important is the culture of an organisation. I am encouraged when officers and staff within Thames Valley Police have raised concerns about inappropriate behaviour by colleagues. I will continue to ensure the police take a robust approach to upholding the highest standards amongst our officers. Officers and staff at all levels of the

organisation should not just be enabled but emboldened to hold their colleagues to account and should do so without fear or favour.

“No one is more shocked and disgusted by these diabolical crimes than the police officers I speak to. Respect and confidence must be earned, but the actions of one man do not represent policing in this country and certainly not in Thames Valley. I want to reassure the public that whilst the police must work hard to demonstrate the correct processes and cultures are in place, people should still have confidence in our police officers. They continue to put on their uniform each day, often putting themselves in harms way, to protect the public.

“I have two young daughters and I want them to grow up knowing they can trust the police and that the sight of someone in uniform should be a sign of reassurance. We can never be complacent about upholding the highest standards within policing and the concerns held by many following this case are understandable. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of police officers join the Force with the purest of motives and a true desire to keep the public safe.

“The greatest threat to women in our society is sadly in their own homes, from domestic abuse. Thames Valley Police dedicate significant resources to tackling this crime, as we are leading the way on tackling predatory offenders in the night-time economy. Strong, effective policing is part of the solution to the concerns about violence against women, but whilst the culture within policing is important, the culture in our wider society is even more important and we all have a responsibility to hold each other to high standards and protect each other.”

### **Crimes committed by Police Force Officers against Women**

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/sep/28/at-least-15-serving-or-former-police-have-killed-women-in-uk-since-2009-report>

### **Sexual offences claims against Thames Valley Police Officers**

<https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/19637763.sexual-offences-claims-thames-valley-police-police-officers/>

Almost 100 allegations of sexual offences were made against serving police officers in Thames Valley over five years, figures reveal.

It comes as Prime Minister Boris Johnson says there is ‘a massive job’ to be done in restoring women’s confidence in police after the kidnap, rape and murder of Sarah Everard by a serving police officer.

Figures obtained by RADAR under the Freedom of Information Act show 91 sexual offences claims were made against Thames Valley Police officers between 2016-17 and 2020-21.

They related to 99 officers, most of whom were male (85). In eight cases the sex was recorded as unknown and in six the officer was female.

Of the allegations, 11 led to dismissals, nine to management action and five resulted in a written warning. In four, the officer would have been dismissed and another was upheld.

Three were resolved internally and one led to 'reflective practise'.

Investigations into a further 13 were still ongoing at the time of the FOI response on June 17.

Meanwhile, 23 saw no further action and five had a result of 'no case to answer' and nine were not upheld.

In two the allegation was not proven and in another it was deemed that 'acceptable service' had been provided by the officer.

Two were withdrawn or de-recorded, and two resulted in disapplication, which means they may no longer be dealt with under complaints legislation.

The data does not specify if the officers were on or off duty at the time the alleged incidents occurred.

The sex of the person making the accusation was also unknown in each case.

Responses from 33 police forces across Great Britain revealed that most claims over five years related to male officers, where their sex was recorded.

The End Violence Against Women Coalition, which includes groups like Rape Crisis, Refuge and Women's Aid, said few officers face 'any meaningful consequences' for violence against women and girls nationally.

The organisation said the murder of Ms Everard took place within a broader context of violence perpetrated by the police, adding that trust in forces from women and girls was now at an all-time low.

The data from Thames Valley Police was in response to a request for the number of complaints of sexual assaults against serving police officers— although the force provided allegations of sexual offences.

It covered public complaints and internal conduct matters, which include those raised by members of the police against their colleagues.

Complaints could relate to historic allegations.

Of the cases against officers in the force between 2016-17 and 2020-21, 36 came from the members of the public and 55 from colleagues.

The Prime Minister has called for a change in the culture of policing following the rape and murder of Sarah Everard by serving police officer Wayne Couzens.