



Matthew Barber
Police & Crime Commissioner

Report to the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel

Violence Against Women & Girls

19th November 2021

Strategic Context and Accountability

The Police & Criminal Justice Plan sets out a number of priority areas, both within policing, across the wider criminal justice system and with local authorities that align with the Government's definition of Violence Against Women and Girls. This definition includes:

- Rape & Sexual Violence
- Sexual and other forms of harassment
- Stalking
- Honour-based abuse, female genital mutilation, and forced marriage
- Domestic Abuse
- Violence against women and girls in public places
- Violence against women and girls perpetrated online
- Prostitution and sex work

The priorities set out in the Plan adopted in June include a wide range of success measures that look to address these issues, as well as the intention to develop future strategies to further refine the focus both of police and partners.

Violence against women affects the lives of everyone. Policing is accustomed to dealing with crimes of rape, sexual assault, domestic abuse, stalking, harassment, honour based abuse and indecent exposures. However, new concerns such as 'revenge porn' and 'upskirting' show that the level and types of sexual offending continue to evolve and develop. These crimes disproportionately affect women and girls and in so doing are harmful to victims, their families and society.

Strategic Response from Thames Valley Police

In addition to the provisions set out in the Police & Criminal Justice Plan a strategic approach is being developed within the Force which includes:

- An ambition to be an outstanding Force in practice relating to violence against women and girls
- To have in place as soon as possible, and no later than 6 months, arrangements to provide for the 5 overarching recommendations of HMICFRS and the NPCC Plan
- Exemplary standards, service and performance in our response to rape and sexual offences
- Exemplary standards, service and performance in our response to domestic abuse
- Drastically improved standards of recording, investigation, crime management and victim satisfaction
- A data-driven approach to identifying, understanding and managing threat and risk. An ambition to identify, understand and respond to under-reporting of VAWG and its precursor offences – according to location and communities. A demonstrable improvement in our ability to identify, understand and manage chronic or repeat threat and risk to women and girls
- Ensure our workforce integrity through regular vetting according to national standards, conducting prompt and effective investigations where breaches of the standards are indicated
- Root out those who abuse their position for sexual purposes

- Review all current cases of domestic abuse and sexual offences involving police officers and staff to ensure appropriate scrutiny and oversight
- Organisational culture which enables equality and diversity of opportunity for women in TVP and which manifestly has no tolerance of misogyny & sexual harassment

Operational response: current and in development

- Dedicated Superintendent leadership for Rape & Sexual Offences (RaSO) to lead the drive to increase reporting, reduce disengagement, develop forensic infrastructure which enables us more swiftly to deal with evidence on digital devices, improve submissions to the CPS and meet Prime Ministerial expectations in respect of rape charges and convictions.
- Dedicated Superintendent leadership for Domestic Abuse (DA) to lead the drive to increase arrests, make greater use of Body Worn Video and “evidence-led” victimless prosecutions, DVPNs and other provisions
- Exploration of initiatives which enable us precisely to identify public spaces where women do not feel safe and to address them with partners. Moreover to increase reporting of street level harassment and our recording and investigation thereof
- Move swiftly through better crime management and prioritization to respond to precursor offences (e.g. harassment, exposure, voyeurism, stalking) which are both serious in their own right and which tend to develop into even more serious offending
- Project Vigilant - launched in Oxford in 2019 to target predatory behaviour and aims to prevent sexual abuse and reduce violence against women and girls. Following the project’s success in Oxford and the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson announced that Project Vigilant would be rolled out to police forces across the country. The key aim of the project is to proactively prevent sexual offences taking place in the night time economy. The PCC has successfully bid for an additional £300k to support this work.
- Thames Valley Police’s work in respect of VAWG is to be led by ACC Tim De Meyer as Gold with Chief Superintendent Katy Barrow-Grint as Silver and senior leader “Bronzes” for areas of particular tactical responsibility.
- Working with local authorities the PCC has been successful in securing funding as part of the Home Office Safer Streets programme. Chalvey, in Slough, will benefit from over £500,000 to tackle safety in public places and a second programme for Oxfordshire will see more than £420,000 to improve safety in the night time economy and on public transport routes.