



College of
Policing



NPCC
National Police Chiefs' Council

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

National Policing Statement 2024

July 2024

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Foreword



Foreword

DCC Maggie Blyth

Deputy CEO of the College of Policing and National Police Chiefs' Council lead for Violence Against Women and Girls

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) has reached epidemic levels in England and Wales, in terms of its scale, complexity and impact on victims. We have seen a **37% increase** in recorded VAWG-related crimes from 2018/19 to 2022/23 and we estimate that **at least 1 in every 12 women will be a victim of VAWG every year (2 million victims) and 1 in 20 adults in England and Wales will be a perpetrator of VAWG every year (2.3 million perpetrators)**. These are cautious estimates as we know much crime goes unreported and in policing, we often only see the tip of the iceberg.

The data in our first VAWG National Policing Statement, which follows the Strategic Risk Assessment and Progress Report published last year, is staggering. In recognition of the threat, in February 2023, the Home Office classified VAWG for the

first time as a national threat to public safety and made it part of the Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR). This means that police forces prioritise their response to VAWG as they do terrorism and serious and organised crime.

We have worked hard to improve the public's trust and confidence in policing and have brought our response in line with the 4Ps model used in counter terrorism to reflect how seriously policing takes VAWG. We continue to work at pace to make our response to VAWG more consistent, by; relentlessly **pursuing** high harm and repeat perpetrators; by **preparing** to more effectively respond by improving our workforce capability and culture; by **protecting** victims; and by delivering on our statutory commitments to **prevent** VAWG happening in the first place.

However, we recognise there is more to do.

In this statement, we outline our commitment to provide **enhanced support to our forces and frontline officers** by establishing a **National Centre for Public Protection (NC4PP)**. This will provide coordination across forces and help to embed improvements.

Our analysis has identified five critical threats to women and girls; rape and serious sexual offences, domestic abuse, stalking and harassment, child sexual abuse and exploitation, and online and tech-enabled VAWG. The last of these continues to evolve at pace, testing our response and focusing attention on the ability of the technology industry to protect people following the recent online safety legislation. Policing **must** focus on these five critical threats because that is where we can make the most impact - going after those repeat offenders whose pattern of behaviour causes such harm.

But law enforcement alone cannot reduce the scale and impact of VAWG.

Support is needed to improve the overall criminal justice response. For example, tackling the courts backlog, prison capacity pressures and challenges in through the gate offender management will help to ensure that a policing response has real consequences.

To respond effectively to those wider offences, often referred to as public spaces VAWG offences, policing needs to work in partnership. **A coherent and robust whole-system approach is needed to prevent VAWG from happening in the first place.** Reinvigorating partnerships at a national, regional and local level between statutory agencies, charities and the private sector will help to prevent initial harm, its escalation and impact, both behind closed doors and in public spaces.

This statement provides a detailed assessment of the threat VAWG poses to public safety and how policing intends to improve its response to this threat. However, I believe it also sets out the need for other agencies and sectors to contribute to wholesale change in order to make women and girls both feel and be safer.

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is a strategic national threat, which has a devastating and long-term impact on the public (disproportionately so on women and girls). For policing, VAWG is **high harm and high volume**, which in many cases requires specialist skills to respond. The volume continues to grow, and offending methods are becoming increasingly complex.

At least 1 in every 12 women will be a victim of VAWG per year (2 million victims) and we expect the exact number to be higher.¹

An overall estimate of the number of VAWG victims each year doesn't exist, so we have identified a lower estimate. This is a lower estimate of female VAWG victims based on sexual harassment data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales.² There are a substantial number of victims of other offence types who will not be counted within our 1 in 12 figure. VAWG is not a single type of crime, but a collection of offences including Domestic Abuse (DA), sexual assault, stalking and harassment.

The 2 million women who experience sexual harassment³ each year will include some, but not all, of the 1.4 million women who experience DA⁴, the 700,000 women who

experience non-DA sexual assault,⁵ or the 850,000 women who are subjected to non-DA related stalking.^{6,i}

The scale of VAWG has a direct impact on policing with an estimated 2,959 VAWG-related crimes recorded daily.⁷ Between April 2022 to March 2023 **VAWG offending equated to just under 20% of all police recorded crime.**^{8 ii} Our assessment has identified five key high harm threats; sexual violence, domestic abuse, stalking, Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE), and online and tech-enabled VAWG.⁹ In the year ending March 2023, police recorded:

- 103,135 rape and serious sexual offences
- 400,213 domestic abuse-related crimesⁱⁱⁱ
- 436,196 stalking and harassment offences
- From August 2022 - July 2023, 41,540 CSAE offences were committed against girls aged 10-17.¹⁰

Online and tech-enabled VAWG is an evolving threat

- August 2022 - July 2023 there were at least 123,515 VAWG offences which had an online element.¹¹
- Stalking and harassment accounts for 85% of all online and tech-enabled offences.¹²

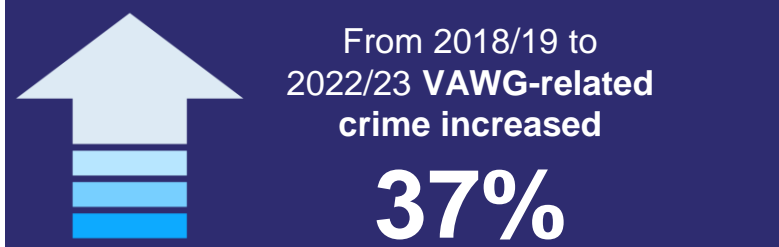
At least 1 in 20 adults in England and Wales will be a perpetrator of VAWG per year (2.3 million perpetrators)^{13, iv}

Estimating the number of perpetrators of VAWG is even more challenging than estimating victims as it relies on people self-reporting their criminal behaviour. The 1 in 20 figure above is a lower-bound estimate of prevalence calculated by UCL in a 2023 study for the Home Office.^{14, iv} Overall, robust data on VAWG perpetrator prevalence is lacking, and the actual number of perpetrators is likely substantially higher than this estimate.

VAWG perpetrators cause significant harm, often offending repeatedly. This is evidenced by findings from and cited by Operation Soteria,^v which paints a compelling picture of the level of threat posed by individual perpetrators. Of the 2,900 defendants prosecuted for rape in 2011, they were prosecuted for an average of 2.3 rape offences.¹⁵

The proportion of named suspects linked to more than one sex offence is high – ranging from 19.5% to 45.6% of the 66,062 suspects in the five forces sampled. The largest number of sex offences committed by one suspect in the forces sampled was 173.¹⁶

The scale of demand on policing from VAWG-related crime is increasing. In the last 4 years (2018-19 to 2022-23), we have seen police recorded VAWG-related crimes increase by 37% (estimated 789,703 to 1,080,157).¹⁷ These increases become even more alarming when we take into account the victimisation of children; current data shows a four-fold increase in Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE) between 2013 and 2022 from just over 20,000 to nearly 107,000,¹⁸ and that the first six months of 2023 saw peer-on-peer CSAE increase by 55.6% of cases compared to 40% of cases in the whole of the previous year.¹⁹



Increase in demand is made further difficult for us to respond to because of the proliferation of online and tech-enabled VAWG. For example, DA charity Refuge's tech abuse team saw a 258% increase in survivors needing support between 2018-2022.²⁰

VAWG has devastating consequences. In the 12 months up to March 2023, 1 in every 6 homicides were domestic abuse related

homicides (100 DA homicides to 590 total homicides).²¹ Across a three-year dataset between 2020 and 2023, the Domestic Homicide Project found suspected victim suicides following domestic abuse has increased year on year, almost doubling (Y1:51/222, Y2:72/259, Y3:93/723).²²

One month after being sexually assaulted, 75% of 2,106 survivors met the criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).²³

Collectively **responding to VAWG requires a clear and consistent definition** of what constitutes VAWG. This will ensure that the police and other agencies have a common understanding of the scale and complexity of the threat. This report uses the policing definition, referred to below, of VAWG which refers to acts of violence or abuse that we know disproportionately affect women and girls.

“The harm caused to victims and society by violence against women and girls (VAWG) in all its forms – including but not limited to harassment, stalking, rape, sexual assault, murder, honour-based abuse, coercive control”²⁴

VAWG offences are more complex in

their make-up when compared to more 'traditional' volume crime types such as burglary, theft and criminal damage. This has a significant impact on our resources because responding and investigating them requires more time, greater capacity and differing skill sets.

In the context of increasing complexity, it takes on average 8 times longer for police to build a complex case than a non-complex case.²⁵ This is a comparator of 112 versus 14 hours.

The complexity of VAWG offending, improved reporting and the evolution of perpetrator behaviour is placing **unprecedented demand** on our ability to pursue perpetrators, to protect victims, whilst continuing to drive up the quality, capability and professionalisation of our response.

The learnings from Operation Soteria,²⁶ as well as the perspectives gained from independent reviews and inquiries (e.g. Casey Review²⁷ and the Angiolini Inquiry²⁸) have supported our view that there is a need for change in how we as law enforcement and society should more effectively respond to VAWG.

Policing progress

We have been proactive in our response to this threat. Since 2021, we have taken a number of definitive actions designed to tackle VAWG and enhance our response. Taken together, these represent incremental, but crucial progress:



Primarily we have focused on raising the standard and consistency of response across all police forces. This was initially set out in the first National Framework for Delivery, launched in December 2021. This framework aimed to improve, coordinate and standardise the policing response to VAWG. As a result, forces responded by developing their own VAWG action plans. This was a precursor to the former Home Secretary’s decision in February 2023, to include VAWG as part of the national Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR) and therefore treat it as a national threat.

Following this we refreshed our **National Framework for Delivery (NFD)**²⁹ to strengthen our policing response accordingly. **We applied and adapted the tried and tested methodology of the 4P approach** (Prepare, Protect, Pursue, and Prevent) through which the UK’s counter terrorism strategy has been delivered effectively since 2003. Using this approach, we identified and defined our roles and responsibilities in tackling VAWG, integrating the lessons learned from Operation Soteria.^{30 v}

Central to our **NFD**, under **Prepare**, is a commitment for **us to be fit to serve**, meaning to ensure we have the right skills and capability to respond to victims with empathy and focus on the behaviour of perpetrators. We accept that our response to VAWG requires continuous improvement. We have accepted the recommendations from the Angiolini Inquiry Part 1³¹ and have begun to implement these through targeted workstreams which cover culture, professional standards and workforce vetting.

The **NFD** has allowed us to consider the boundaries within which policing can be effective and efficient. **We are not content**

with the current outcomes and accept that too few perpetrators are being brought to justice.

This negatively impacts on the level of trust and confidence that victims of VAWG and the wider public have in policing. We will further embed our **NFD**, focusing on the five key threats outlined in this statement - to address the scale of the challenge by relentlessly **pursuing** perpetrators; **preparing** to effectively respond to VAWG (ensuring the highest standards, culture and professionalism); **protecting** victims; and delivering on our statutory commitments to **prevent** VAWG.

Due to the stark increases in VAWG and the threat it poses, there is a need to better coordinate our overall response to public protection; with a critical focus on the relationship between the five VAWG threats and those wider offences (public space harassment of women and girls and non-contact offending e.g. spiking, indecent exposure) and that sit within a broader policing public protection portfolio.

We will establish a National Centre for Public Protection (NC4PP) driven by the College of Policing (CoP) and the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) to support and improve forces response and to create the right foundation within which to bring policing and external partners together.

The difference between the CSEW statistics and that of formally recorded crime demonstrates the vast and largely hidden extent of VAWG. In response to the scale of this threat, agencies and services must play an enhanced role in the prevention, identification, early action to address VAWG and timely access to justice.

In isolation we cannot offer the sole solution. To complement our **NFD** we ask for a government-led long term whole system response that is mandated through effective legislation, robust performance management and joint inspection, congruent to the level of demand.

Estimated victims versus police recorded crime



Key Commitments

This statement provides a detailed assessment of the VAWG threat and our commitments (aligned to the **NFD**) to continue our efforts to improve our consistent national policing response to it. Based on evidence, this will be specific to the critical five threats; Rape And Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO), Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment, Online and Tech-enabled VAWG and Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE).

Pursue: We are responsible for pursuing VAWG perpetrators as they cause significant harm and often offend repeatedly.

Our judgement: There is a need for us to target our limited resources to pursue the highest harm and repeat perpetrators - related to our five key threats.

We commit to conducting victim-centred, suspect-focused and context-led investigations, including (where appropriate) evidence-led prosecutions.

We commit to being more proactive and intelligence led to inform a more robust approach to offender management for VAWG through:

- evaluating and sharing the learning from the Met Police V100 approach to the pursuit of VAWG perpetrators
- robust implementation and management of protective orders supported by the digitalisation of systems which will improve the timeliness and accuracy of protective order outcomes from all courts (criminal, civil and family) to all forces
- effective pursuit of perpetrators is enhanced through national join up across forces. To be effective this requires an improved approach to consistent recording and the effective use of technology, for example artificial intelligence (AI) to extract and interpret data to improve our national understanding of the nature of VAWG.
- use of technology to build a robust evidence base of the high harm and repeat perpetrators
- working collaboratively with criminal justice partners and government to enhance our approach to pursue through refreshed offender management.

Prepare: A fundamental requirement to effectively pursuing VAWG perpetrators is to ensure we have the right capabilities, capacity and culture

Our judgement: There is a need for us to prioritise the professionalisation and specialism of our workforce, with the effective use of finite resources, whilst not undermining our operational requirements.

We commit to ensuring we have the right capability to respond to all VAWG threats through

- professionalising public protection, meaning we will have the right skills, training, evidence and specialist knowledge (across all forces) to respond to VAWG
- our continued work to improve our internal culture, through our adopted COM-B behavioural change programme and embedding the learning of Operation Soteria, which is aimed at encouraging professional curiosity amongst our officers and staff
- collecting high quality and consistent data with the support from the Centre for Performance, Innovation and Productivity (CPIP).^{vii}

We commit to improving our response to online and tech-enabled VAWG, through

- providing a tailored responses to online harm to protect victims of all ages
- recognising, understanding, and being prepared to respond to the threat of generative artificial intelligence (in particular the threat this poses to young people)
- sufficient dedicated resources and specialist training and recruitment
- encouraging the government to strengthen regulation to effectively deter and prevent the ongoing proliferation of VAWG online.

Protect: We have a statutory duty to protect and safeguard victims of VAWG

Our judgement: There is a need for us to enhance our approach to protect victims of VAWG - recognising the balance required between timely enforcement and meeting wider victims needs

Alongside our commitment to upholding the Victims' Code and aligning with Op Soteria's principle of embedding procedural justice and engaging victims, we commit to upholding our duty to victims through:

- adopting a victim-centred approach throughout our investigations of VAWG offences
- enhancing our use of protective orders and injunctions and subsequent breaches
- sharing information consistently and courageously through disclosure schemes such as "Clare's Law" and "Sarah's Law".^{viii}
- improving our understanding of the evolving online harms
- improving our understanding of the victims of VAWG and their needs through an enhanced intersectional approach
- working with our specialist colleagues in the Voluntary and Community Sector to better support victims and to enhance our own skills and to inform our decision making and prioritisation. For example, having independent domestic abuse and sexual violence advocates within police control rooms and more broadly through our investigations.

Prevent: We are clear on our role within a whole-system approach to prevent VAWG.

Our judgement: There is a need for an enhanced coordinated partnership response to VAWG with a focus on early prevention within which we will play a proportionate role

We commit to playing an active role in partnerships at a national, regional and local level through:

- upholding our statutory safeguarding duties to protect victims of VAWG
- resourcing partnership engagement through existing statutory and operational partnerships, for example Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH)^{ix} and Multi-Agency risk assessment conference (MARACs)^x which are focused on the early identification of risk
- assuring the proportionate and effective sharing of data and intelligence to support partners in the early identification and risk of VAWG

Scale and nature of VAWG threat and the challenge to policing

Scale and nature of VAWG threat and the challenge to policing

VAWG is a collection of crimes which pose a serious threat with its significant volume, high harm nature. There is not currently a clear estimate of the total number of victims of VAWG but recorded VAWG crimes are rapidly growing and increasing in complexity. **VAWG represents significant volume and is rapidly growing.**

At least 1 in every 12 women will be a victim of VAWG per year (2 million victims)³³

This is a lower-bound estimate of female VAWG victims based on sexual harassment data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW).³⁴ There are a substantial number of victims of other offence types who will not be counted within our 1 in 12 figure. VAWG is not a single type of crime, but a collection of offences including Domestic Abuse (DA), sexual assault, stalking and harassment. The 2 million women who experience sexual harassment³⁵ each year will include some, but not all, of the 1.4 million women who experience DA³⁶, the 700,000 women who experience non-DA sexual assault³⁷ or the 850,000 women who are subjected to non-DA related stalking.³⁸ A result of VAWG not being a single type of crime means this report relies on different datasets which use different time periods.

Estimated number of female victims aged 16 and over of different VAWG offence types, year ending March 2023, CSEW



In 2022/23 an estimated 1,080,157ⁱ VAWG-related crimes were recorded by the police.³⁹ This represents a 37% increase in number of VAWG-related crimes compared with 2018/19. **This equates to around 2,959 VAWG-related crimes recorded daily and represents just under 20%ⁱⁱ of all recorded crime in England and Wales (excluding fraud).**⁴⁰

These increases become even alarming when we take into account the victimisation of children. There has been an estimated **435% increase** in child sexual abuse and exploitation offences between 2013 and 2022 (from just over 20,000 to nearly 107,000) - the scale of the threat and demand increases further.⁴¹

VAWG is complex by nature, is not easily defined by one or more offence types - on this basis we currently classify VAWG into nine different threats; domestic abuse, rape and serious sexual offences, stalking and harassment, child sexual abuse and exploitation, online and tech-enabled, modern slavery and human trafficking, spiking, sex work and honour-based abuse.

Each of these threats can co-exist or be standalone. For example, child sexual abuse and exploitation can occur without

any of the other threats, however it can also include, for example, the online and tech-enabled threat. Therefore, each threat requires us to have the right skill and resource to respond effectively - recognising that too often many victims have experienced multiple victimisation. This can become more complex when the threats co-exist.

Our analysis ⁴² indicates five high harm and high-volume threat areas which we will focus on next year:

- Rape And Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO)
- Domestic Abuse (DA)
- Stalking and harassment
- Online and tech-enabled VAWG
- Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE)

Rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO)⁴³ iii

103,135 rape and serious sexual offences were police recorded between April 22 - March 23. This equates to **10%** of all VAWG offences

- Sexual assault offences make up **nearly half** (48%) of all RASSO offences
- **54%** of victims (16+) are aged between **16-29 years old**
- **Average age** of suspects in police recorded RASSO is **37** years old (range between 10-100 years old)
- In RASSO cases, **suspects are more likely to be an ex-partner or a current partner** (38%) or individuals known to the victim (29%) compared to a stranger (26%)
- In 30% of RASSO offences the victim has also experienced domestic abuse⁴⁴

Domestic abuse⁴⁵

400,213 domestic abuse-related offences were police recorded between April 22 - March 23. This equates to **37%** of all VAWG offences.

- Stalking and harassment offences are **the most recorded offences accounting for 50% of overall DA offences**
- **36,309 DA controlling and coercive behaviour offences** recorded from April 2022 to March 2023.
- The average age of police recorded **victims is 38** years old
- Average **suspect age is 37** years old

Stalking and harassment⁴⁶

436,196 stalking and harassment offences were police recorded between April 22 - March 23. This equates to **40%** of all VAWG offences.

- 1 in 5 stalking and harassment offences are recorded as 'online'
- Average age of victims is 35 years old
- The average age of suspects is 35 years old

Child sexual abuse and exploitation⁴⁷

41,540 offences committed against girls aged 10-17 from August 2022 - July 2023

- 93% of crimes involved contact sexual offences and sexual grooming, and 7% were in relation to offences of Indecent Imagery of Children (IIOC)
- Where age was recorded, child sexual abuse and exploitation committed by children has increased to 55.6% of cases (Jan 23 - July 23) compared to 40% cases in last year's VAWG STRA
- Average age of victims is 13 years old
- Average age of suspects is 15 years old

Online and tech-enabled VAWG⁴⁸ iv

123,515 recorded VAWG offences had an online element between August 22 - July 23.

- 7% of police recorded VAWG offences could be identified as 'online'. Police recorded crime data is almost certainly underrepresented
- Stalking and harassment accounts for 85% of all online and tech-enabled VAWG.
- 39% of recorded online and tech-enabled VAWG offences were related to a domestic abuse flag.
- 258% increase in survivors supported by DA charity Refuge's tech abuse team between 2018-2022.⁴⁹
- Victims aged 10-15 years old are the most common age range (14%)
- The average age of the police recorded suspects is 32 years old

VAWG is a serious threat that has devastating consequences on an individual and societal level that are long lasting which increase the demand placed on other statutory and voluntary services.

- In March 2023, 1 in every 6 homicides were domestic abuse homicides (100 DA homicides to 590 total homicides).⁵⁰
- Across a three-year dataset between 2020 and 2023, the Domestic Homicide Project found suspected victim suicides following domestic abuse has increased year on year, almost doubling (Y1:51/222, Y2:72/259, Y3:93/723).⁵¹
- Over 50% (206/373) of DA victims report having mental health issues.⁵² One month after being sexually assaulted, 75% of 2,106 survivors of sexual assault met the criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).⁵³
- Of women who were victims of rape or assault by penetration (including attempts) since the age of 16 years, the crime survey, year ending March 2017 and year ending March 2020 combined estimated 63% reported mental or emotional problems and

10% reported that they had tried to kill themselves as a result.⁵⁴

- A 2019 Home Office report estimated the social and economic costs for victims of domestic abuse in 2017 was approximately £66 billion.^v The largest component of this was physical and emotional harm incurred by victim at £47 billion.^{55 vi}

The categorisation of VAWG as a Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR) in February 2023 is demonstrable of this growth and impact; one which requires a national response that is on par with serious and organised crime and counter terrorism. In response, we have developed the **NFD**⁵⁶ which applies and adapts the 4P approach (Prepare, Protect, Pursue, and Prevent) effectively used in counter terrorism.

To evaluate and respond to this threat we have **applied our detailed assessment and key judgements to our NFD**. From this assessment we have set out specific policing commitments which **ensures continuous improvement of our response to VAWG**.

Pursue

Pursue

At least 1 in 20 adults in England and Wales will be a perpetrator of VAWG per year (2.3 million perpetrators)^{57, i}

Estimating the number of perpetrators of VAWG is even more challenging than estimating victims as it relies on people self-reporting their criminal behaviour. The 1 in 20 figure above is again a lower-bound estimate, is based on a lower bound estimate of prevalence calculated by UCL in a 2023 study for the Home Office.^{58, i} Overall, robust data on VAWG perpetrator prevalence is lacking, and the actual number of perpetrators is likely substantially higher than this estimate.

At the forefront of our approach to tackling VAWG is to **relentlessly pursue perpetrators enabled by enhancing and improving our approach**. The NFD states that policing will; **“Relentlessly Pursue VAWG perpetrators. We recognise that VAWG-related crimes are rooted in misogyny and perpetrators can cause serious harm. We will strive to bring them to justice”⁵⁹**

VAWG perpetrators cause significant harm, often offending repeatedly. This is

evidenced by findings from and cited by Operation Soteria, which paints a compelling picture of the level of threat posed by individual perpetrators.

- Of the 2,900 defendants prosecuted for rape in 2011, they were prosecuted for an average of 2.3 rape offences.⁶⁰
- The proportion of named suspects linked to more than one sex offence is high - ranging from 19.5% to 45.6% of the 66,062 suspects in the five forces sampled.
- The largest number of sex offences committed by one suspect in the forces sampled was 173.⁶¹

We recognise that improvements are needed to enhance our commitment further. Police forces have different processes for flagging the nature of different types of VAWG, such as online and tech-enabled VAWG, honour-based abuse (HBA), and sex work offences often under-represented or misrepresented. There are also data gaps due to a lack of information sharing between frontline response and specialist operation teams where coordination is required to prevent forms of VAWG; this is particularly prevalent across modern slavery and human trafficking (MSHT) cases.

Op Soteria specifically stated that police

recorded data often does not identify patterns in VAWG offending and does not cross-reference different offending categories to understand overlaps. As a result, data inconsistencies mean it is difficult for forces to reliably track repeat perpetrators.

Evidence suggests a lack of robust and consistent risk management in our ability to identify risk early, to manage, and disrupt repeat perpetrators which is of paramount importance given the increasing scale of recorded VAWG.

- The 2020 Femicide Census found 53% of perpetrators of femicide were known to have histories of violence against women and 48% had a known history of violence and abuse.⁶²
- Op Soteria found that background checks on identified suspects of rape and serious sexual offences were conducted in as few as 38.9% of cases in one police force.⁶³
- Across a three-year dataset, only 10% (75/754) of domestic homicide suspects (or prior DA perpetrators of Suspected Victim Suicide following Domestic Abuse (SVSDA) were recorded as (currently or previously) having been managed by police or probation (under MAPPA, IOM or DRIVE). This rose by 16% when

calculated as a proportion of those suspects/perpetrators previously known to police as DA perpetrators.⁶⁴

- The average wait time for sexual offences is 11 months from arrest to charge and a further 7 months from charge to completion.⁶⁵

We have already gone some way to make improvements in our response. Where we have prioritised DA as a volume crime, we have increased our arrests per 100 DA-related recorded crimes from 29.6 in the year ending March 2022 to 36.3 arrests in the year ending March 2023. However, we acknowledge there is more we need to do.

To improve our response to pursuing perpetrators we need to be **more proactive, and intelligence led at an earlier stage**, to recognise patterns of behaviour and to build our capability **to identify and target the most dangerous high harm and repeat perpetrators**.

We are encouraging forces to utilise 'big tech' to identify, manage and prosecute high harm and repeat perpetrators; enabling us to be more efficient in our response. The Metropolitan Police are focused on the top tier high harm and repeat perpetrators through their V100 approach which is relentlessly pursuing the top 100 most dangerous VAWG perpetrators in London.

Case Study - Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) V100 Perpetrators

Aim:

The MPS V100 is a data programme used by the police to pursue high harm and repeat perpetrators of VAWG. This tool, drawn from a counter-terrorism model, uses data analytics to identify and allocate resources to pursue the top hundred VAWG perpetrators across London.

The MPS V100 aims to:

- Target the top hundred VAWG perpetrators on a rolling monthly basis
- Prioritise VAWG cases using an action-based approach
- Optimise allocation of available resources
- Attract experts and specialist teams to support VAWG investigations

Impact:

The MPS V100 has been impactful in improving the policing response both to pursuing perpetrators and protecting victims of VAWG. A series of case studies and a comparison with a control group of the next 100 perpetrators have shown that the V100:

- Successfully brings perpetrators to justice
- Enhances safeguarding for victims through effective prioritisation
- Champions a whole-system approach

This programme is currently under full evaluation by the Metropolitan Police.

Critical to our pursuit of high harm and repeat perpetrators is for us to continue to **grow our understanding of the behaviours and patterns (modus operandi (MO)) of VAWG perpetrators** - and to use this information to inform a **victim-centred, suspect-focused and context-led investigation.**

The 2024 Angiolini Inquiry⁶⁶ ii exposed a paucity in research regarding the potential causal relationship between precursory incidents such as indecent exposure and higher harm offending. What we know from our assessment is that most sex offending is perpetrated by someone known to the victim (very often a current or ex-partner), that offences most often happen inside the victim or perpetrators home, without the use of violence. Grooming is most often cited as a key behaviour which falls under controlling and coercive behaviour. The Domestic Homicide Project cited controlling and coercive behaviour as a key risk factor related to domestic homicide suspects.⁶⁷

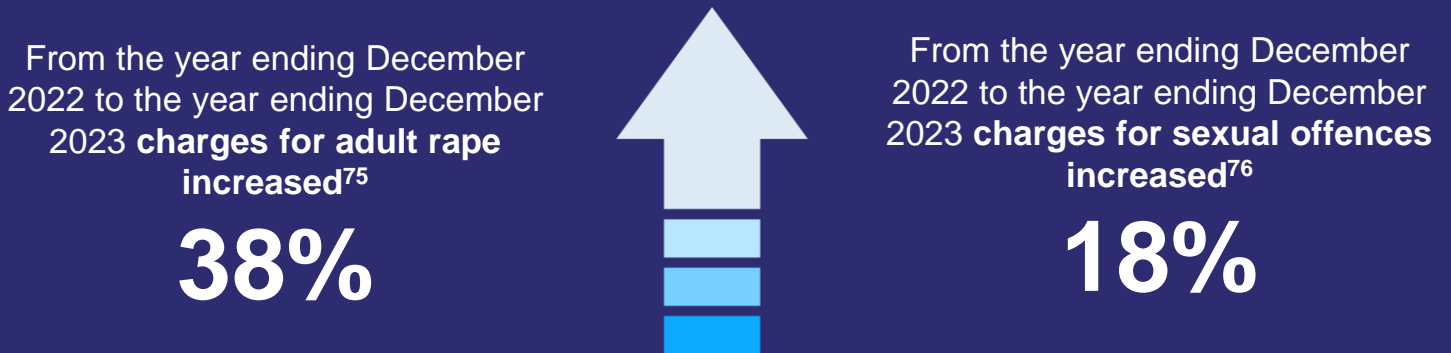
“[they (sex perpetrators)] create a relationship of power, control and/or authority over the intended victim, then move the relationship into a sexualised frame. Grooming is present in every offence, however quickly it occurs”⁶⁸

Our commitment to pursue high harm and repeat perpetrators is dependent upon effective offender management - which requires commensurate prioritisation, resources and commitment from our prison and probation colleagues.

However, the current prison and probation crisis significantly limits their ability to meet this need.

- **The prison population continues to increase** - 6% from the previous year (as at March 2023).⁶⁹ Whilst 23% of prisoners are held in crowded accommodation which is an increase of 2% from the previous year.⁷⁰ This demand is at odds with the current usable capacity, which is currently (June 2024) 88,815 while the population is 87,347.⁷¹
- **The probation service is experiencing significant resourcing challengesⁱⁱⁱ** - staff shortages and high caseloads, whilst for example their caseload for registered sex offenders (RSOs) managed under category 1 of MAPPAs has increased by 111% since 2006/2007, reaching over 64,000 in 2021, with persistent year-on-year growth between 3-8%.⁷²

- The criminal justice system is struggling with timeliness^{iv}, **both magistrates' and crown courts** have a huge backlog which is continuing to increase - case backlog at the Crown Court reached 67,573 cases between October - December 2023 (Q4) an increase of 9% compared to Jan - March 2023 (Q1).⁷³
- Only **4.4% of DA recorded by police** resulted in the perpetrators being **convicted** (as of March 2023).⁷⁴



To be able to effectively target, pursue and disrupt high harm and repeat VAWG perpetrators we need an **enhanced VAWG offender management** process that applies to all criminal justice partners and is enabled through **current models of practice (MAPPA and IOM), re-allocation of resources**, revised **professional guidance** and **technical solutions** to help us track perpetrators through the system.

We are encouraged by the positive impact that Op Soteria has had on the wider criminal justice system as well as policing. Since Op Soteria began, we have had more cases being referred to prosecutors and we are seeing more suspects being charged. In the year ending December 2023, charges for sexual offences were up by 18% compared to the previous year, while adult rape charges increased by 38% in the same period. We are pleased with this positive impact and welcome further improvements to enhance VAWG offender management processes.⁷⁷

Our judgement - There is a need for us to target our limited resources to pursue the highest harm and repeat perpetrators - related to our five key threats.

Prepare

Prepare

A fundamental requirement to effectively pursue VAWG perpetrators is **to ensure we prepare ourselves to be as effective as possible** to respond to and reduce VAWG. To achieve this we must efficiently resource, continue to improve our training and supervision and ensure the right tools are in place for us to pursue VAWG perpetrators.

The complex nature and scale of VAWG drives us to seek both change and continuous improvement - to achieve effective and efficient responses. Within our **NFD** we recognise the importance of continuous improvement within our response to VAWG stating that **“This P is the foundation to ensure readiness to tackle VAWG. ensuring that - We are fit to serve thanks to the right culture, skills and resources”**⁷⁸

Challenges to our current capacity and capability to respond. The 20,000 newly recruited officers, introduced by the end of 2023, may have uplifted police officers levels to those in place in 2010, but this uplift does not adequately address the 30% increase in recorded crime since 2010,⁷⁹ nor the changing nature of crime (greater

complexity and focus on vulnerability) which has resulted in our officers increasingly dealing with more complex cases involving vulnerable individuals.⁸⁰ This means officers are spending more time on average dealing with each crime and there are more crimes for them to deal with.

In addition, this intense recruitment drive has inevitably **changed the composition of our workforce bringing in new and inexperienced officers.** The most recent state of policing report (HMICFRS) states that the level of inexperience now is quite significant.⁸¹ It was estimated by 2023-24, about 30% of officers will have under five years' service and most of those will be on the front line.⁸²

These changes therefore leave a deficit of more experienced detectives - the Institute for Government police performance tracker (2021) illustrated that at that point we had a shortfall of 6,851 level 2 accredited investigators (dealing with the most complex investigations), a 38% increase on the previous year.⁸³ This inexperience deficit can damage both the quantity and the quality of our police investigations. Operation Soteria also found a lack of specialist knowledge of sexual violence and

sex offending, noting inexperienced officers and a lack of supervision and guidance.⁸⁴

Due to the complexity and scale of VAWG, it is essential that we maximise our skills and capabilities to respond more effectively to all VAWG threats. We are committed to professionalising public protection in a sustainable manner, by providing our workforce with access to a suite of products that will support high quality learning, knowledge, development, and accreditation across both leadership and technical practice. The programme acknowledges and embraces Operation Soteria's work to professionalise sexual offence investigations and sets out to ensure the learning is applied to VAWG offences.

This is complimented by **our ongoing overhaul of standards, performance and leadership to build on our Code of Ethics.** We have made changes in police vetting in the last 18 month, with work ongoing to ensure robust national compliance.¹ This work is being underpinned by our COM-B behavioural change work, which is helping us to enable the required broader cultural change, as highlighted through the Angiolini Inquiry⁸⁵

and the Casey Review.⁸⁶

Engagement with forces has identified the priority areas for development. In response to this and wider analysis the College of Policing is currently developing and implementing significant changes to training and practice. The following act as some key examples:

- **A public protection learning suite** - this suite will host a digital non contact/indecent exposure module which meets the requirements of Angiolini (recommendation 2) providing officers with better core skills and knowledge to better investigate non-contact sexual offending and to identify patterns in perpetrator behaviour.
- **Professionalising Investigation Programme (PIP 1) Supervisors Programme** - This will improve skills with regard to investigation, criminal justice outcomes and supervisory processes. This will enhance the service received by victims and increase the number of perpetrators held to account.

- **Public Protection and Safeguarding Leaders' Programme (PPSLP)** - Continued rollout of this programme offers the highest level of training and accreditation to police officers and staff working in public protection, putting it on the same level to other policing fields such as firearms and public order. It equips public protection leads on how to manage vulnerable risk as well as workforce performance in public protection with a keen focus on protecting the wellbeing of our workforce.
- **Specialist sexual assault investigators development programme (SSAIDP)** - a refreshed safeguarding programme for specialist officers. It provides trainee rape and sexual offences investigators with the knowledge, understanding and skills to be able to conduct professional and thorough rape and sexual offences investigations, while maintaining a victim-centred approach.
- **Rape and Serious Sexual Offences Investigate Skills Development Programme (RISDP)** - minimum level of training to existing or new rape and serious sex offences (RASSO) investigators, who have not received specialist training to ensure that can deliver an acceptable level of service to victims of these very serious crimes.
- **Rape and serious sexual offences training for first responders** - The training focuses on the whole story surrounding a rape or sexual assault, rather than looking at an incident in isolation. This means looking at the whole relationship between the suspect and the victim, however brief, including any grooming or manipulation.
- **Domestic Abuse (DA) Matters** - evidence based training programme aimed at increasing first responders' understanding of the dynamics of abuse and their empathy with victims. It is a CoP licensed programme delivered jointly with third sector organisations (CoP currently licence Women's Aid Federation England, Welsh Women's Aid and SafeLives) to deliver it. Currently 37 forces are running the programme and the further 5 will deliver it this financial year. This is now informing the development of the DA investigator programme.

Work continues at pace to review wider training and development needs for our workforce - for example we are currently reviewing both the Domestic Abuse Investigator’s Programme and the Specialist Child Abuse Investigator’s Programme. Longer term we recognise the need for greater coordination across all elements of public protection training.

This training and development is supported by our investment in COM-B behavioural change work, which is helping officer and police staff to develop a different mindset in training, allowing them to identify and tackle wider barriers to effective public protection investigations and an accompanying CPD and accreditation process.

In addition to our robust approach to professionalism we also recognise the need to enhance the consistency of our wellbeing offer to police officers and staff working within this highly impactful area.

Additionally, **the emergence of new technologies provides another layer of complexity that requires us to prepare and future-proof ourselves to effectively investigate VAWG-related crimes** (which have an online element). There were a total

of at least 123,515 VAWG offences recorded (between August 22 and July 2023) which were flagged as having an online element.⁸⁷

In 2021, 1 in 3 women in the UK (36%) have experienced online abuse perpetrated on social media or other online platforms at some point in their lives, which equates to over 11 million women across the UK.⁸⁸

Operation Soteria highlighted a concern with the lack of expert digital knowledge and a lack of appropriate training across the police. Soteria explains that expert digital knowledge is becoming a routine requirement for Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) investigations. To better respond it is essential for us to also improve the quality, accuracy, and completeness of data on VAWG offending to aid our understanding of the true scale and nature of the online VAWG threat. In particular, data regarding VAWG within private and online spaces is either not possible to extract from forces’ crime recording system, or inconsistencies in how that data was captured result in inaccuracies. In recognition of the challenge of data collection and the increase in tech-enabled

VAWG, we look forward to working with and being supported by the Centre for Performance, Innovation and Productivity (CPIP).ⁱⁱ

Evolving online harms are particularly prevalent among young people, likely due to higher social media usage and digital literacy. In 2022-23, the most common age of victims of online and tech-enabled VAWG was 10-15 years old.⁸⁹ Refuge found that online abuse is twice as common among young women they surveyed, with 62% experiencing online abuse⁹⁰ and 1 in 7 young female respondents have experienced threats to share their intimate images or videos.⁹¹ Girlguiding found a third of young female respondents aged 17 to 21 were harassed online in 2021.⁹²

The threat of online abuse is expected to continue to change rapidly, not least due to the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Ofcom (2023) found that children and teenagers are more likely to have embraced generative AI, with 79% of teenager respondents aged between 13 and 17 had already experimented with this technology.⁹³

It is also highly likely that implementation of the Online Safety Act 2023 will increase the demands on and expectations of policing to

identify and tackle online and tech-enabled VAWG. As it stands, over 50% of the public do not currently think that the police have enough resources to deal with online offences.⁹⁴

We cannot provide the appropriate solution to either control or regulate people's safe use of online platforms and technology. It is our view that to address this evolving threat more timely **robust action is required from government to improve the response by the industry.**

To prepare us to effectively respond to and reduce VAWG, we need the right capabilities, capacity and culture (knowledge, skills, support, and insight). We acknowledge our current experience, culture and specialist knowledge within public protection is still not sufficient to prepare for the volume and complexity of VAWG-related crimes.

However, we are fully committed to addressing these. We have taken significant steps to address and improve our professional standards through investment, transparency, and taking ownership of our own culture. We continue to work collaboratively to respond to the Part 1 Angiolini recommendations;ⁱⁱⁱ providing regular robust and consistent reporting on our progress. Most notably following public

consultation, the College of Policing will publish a Vetting Authorised Professional Practice (APP), which addresses the recommendations in Autumn 2024.

We have moved beyond the initial strategic review of our internal culture and quality of

professional standards. Our forces are committed to fully participating in and thinking about how they continue the conversation and wider improvement work. The case studies below are good examples of this innovation.

Our judgement - There is a need for us to prioritise the professionalisation and specialism of our workforce, whilst not undermining our operational requirements.

Case study - Thames Valley Police Courageous Conversation Series

Aims:

Thames Valley Police has developed the Courageous Conversation series, as part of Operation Reassure, which seek to raise awareness of internal issues that affect external public confidence in the police ability to address VAWG through online conversations with guest speakers.

These conversation series consist of six sessions and aim to:

- Improve the organisational understanding of how VAWG impacts the policing practice
- Create a healthy team culture where everyone is treated with fairness and respect
- Address specific feedback shared by the police force
- Highlight action attendees can take to drive change and respond to sexual misconduct

Impact:

In 2022, 512 officers (8% of the workforce) attended and actively engaged in the sessions. Attendees have given positive feedback and stated that the sessions have:

- Provided practical insights and coping strategies
- Increased their awareness of issues such as casual sexism and stereotyping
- Inspired behavioural changes with challenging inappropriate behaviour and promoting a more inclusive team culture
- Allowed for greater context from supervisors into local officer briefings

Case study - West Yorkshire Scrutiny Panels

Aims:

The West Yorkshire Scrutiny Panels consist of relevant professionals (for example CPS, independent sexual violence advisors, sexual assault referral centre and police and are chaired by community members, who meet on a regular basis to maintain effective scrutiny of the West Yorkshire Police. These panels hold West Yorkshire Police to account by offering external scrutiny of how they deliver their services and help increase public understanding, confidence and trust in policing.

The Scrutiny Panels aim to:

- Provide an open and transparent scrutiny review of VAWG-related offences
- Prepare the police foundations to police by consent and respond to VAWG effectively
- Allow for continuous learning and identification of promising practice
- Increase public, stakeholder, and in particular victim, understanding, trust and confidence in West Yorkshire Police in their investigation and handling of VAWG-related offences

Impact:

Although not yet formally evaluated, the scrutiny panel model is an example of promising practice by:

- Offering a whole-systems approach to respond to VAWG-related offences
- Engaging with the community to build trust and confidence with victims, the wider public and other agencies
- Sharing lessons and recommendations across agencies (force and strategic level)
- Inspiring interest from other forces to develop own scrutiny panels
- Building better and more effective relationships between agencies and improving understanding of available services or limitations within each agency – helping with transparent communication between police and victims

Protect

Protect

We have a fundamental and statutory duty to **protect** victims from the **high-harm** nature of VAWG. To do this, it is vital that we uphold the Victims' Code,ⁱ utilise all tools available to us to protect victims at point of disclosure, whilst simultaneously improving our understanding of who victims are.

Meeting this challenge requires adopting a victim-centred approach, developing specialist knowledge, and collecting high-quality data. This is embedded within our **NFD**, in which we make a commitment to **“Protect individuals and communities from VAWG. This P focuses on victims and their needs. We will keep victims, witnesses and communities safe, and their needs will direct and balance the police response. We consider individuals over incidents”**⁹⁵

We have a formal and statutory duty to protect, safeguard, and provide a good response to victims.

The Victims' Code for policing states that, **“everyone in policing has a professional**

and personal duty to victims as part of their core role”.⁹⁶ Once a crime has been reported, we have a duty to ensure that all commitments in the code are met.⁹⁷ Our duty is reinforced by the Victim and Prisoners Act 2024.

Our role alongside other criminal justice bodies is to monitor compliance with the Victims' Code. The objective of which is listen to victims, give them agency and understanding their unique needs which will inform more effective enforcement and protection.⁹⁸ The findings of the Review of Compliance with the Victims' Code of Practice found that victims were being failed and re-traumatised when they report to the police and that victims often felt pressured, were given insufficient time to consider their statement, were being asked to repeatedly make the same statement, and faced a lack of empathy and discretion from the policing personnel.⁹⁹ Operation Soteria pointed to a wider sentiment amongst victims that police forces are “massively statistic-driven” and fail to formally prioritise good treatment and protection for victims.¹⁰⁰

The following case study offers a promising and innovative practice focused on aligning victims needs with a more effective police response.

Case study: Kent Rapid Video Response (RVR)

Rapid Video Response (RVR) is a virtual policing response available to victims of domestic abuse, where the victim will receive the same service from the police, but in quicker time by talking to a police officer over video instead of a physical location. RVR improves the victim journey by increasing the timeliness of response, expediting safeguarding of victims to reduce risk, and capturing evidence faster.

RVR aims to:

- Reduce victim anxiety
- Increase victim satisfaction with the police
- Increase trust and confidence in the police
- Reduce time taken to respond to domestic abuse victims
- Increase arrest rates
- Increase efficiency through a reduction in officer taken time per call and a decrease in call backs

In May 2022, Kent Police designed and built a team to deliver RVR within their specialist domestic abuse hub. After being operational for a year, Kent's RVR has received more than 3,000 domestic abuse RVR calls and showed improvements. An evaluation of Kent's RVR found:

- there was an improvement in satisfaction for female victims of intimate domestic abuse (from 78% to 89%)
- reduction in response delay for victims from a mean of 32 hours 49 minutes to three minutes
- 50% increase in the number of arrests
- reduction in officer taken time per call of one hour 23 minutes
- prevention of 25% call backs into the force control and incident room

This programme is currently under evaluation by the College of Policing.

In order for us to enhance our approach to protect victims, it is essential that we utilise all available powers whether civil or criminal to reduce repeat incidences and/or escalation of harm. Notably our power to disclose under “Clare’s Law” and “Sarah’s Law”ⁱⁱ and our ability to implement various protective orders. However, we recognise that there is inconsistency in our application of these and specifically in the robustness of our response to breaches of protective orders.

The 2021 HMICFRS inspection into the police response to VAWG found ‘unexplained variations between forces across England and Wales in how often protective powers are used (such as Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs), and Stalking Protection Orders (SPOs)).¹⁰¹ This inspection highlighted that police failed to correctly identify when a protective order had been breached.

The joint investigation into the police use of protective measures in cases involving VAWG echoed these findings showing a **lack of standardisation within police forces in the use of DVPOs** and that police were often failing to arrest people who breach non-molestation orders.¹⁰²

It was also demonstrated that police officers experienced difficulties in gaining access to orders due to delays in recording key information or unclear wording used in orders issued by the civil courts.¹⁰³ These inspections recommended **the need for better recording systems and local, national and Government oversight of such powers.** We support this recommendation and believe these steps would aid us to be more effective in our protection of victims and overall pursuit of VAWG perpetrators. We have begun to make progress, introducing new digital solutions to focus on automating information from courts to policing when an order has been granted, amended or rescinded at court.

In the pursuit of high harm and repeat perpetrators, **we will also look at disruption opportunities in parallel to the investigation** and planning activity for suspects who are classified as No Further Action (NFA). For example, Operation Soteria forces are moving to the investigator having to document why they are not applying for protective orders.

In addition to the use of protective orders some forces and councils have started to utilise the use of Public Spaces Protection

Orders (PSPOs) as a means of **thinking beyond the protection of an individual but also to consider the protection of a particular public space.**ⁱⁱⁱ This approach enables us to consider with our partners the use of VAWG data specifically sexual harassment data as referenced within this assessment. We note this is merely a starting point; **more work is needed across all statutory partners to better protect public space with regards to the five key VAWG threats.**

We have also developed the VAWG toolkit^{iv} which supports police officers and staff to protect women and girls from misogyny and bring criminals to justice.

It is important to note that there is a direct relationship between the effective use of orders to protect victims and the overall effectiveness of the wider criminal justice system. We need the full support of our CPS and HMPPS colleagues to create an effective overall offender management approach - **the wider system needs to be able to assure that there are consequences to non-compliance.** In addition, we recognise the complexity of the number of orders and training needed for our officers to understand how and when to

apply for which order – simplification of the number of orders with refreshed guidance to all criminal justice partners is much needed.

In order for us to enhance our approach to meeting our statutory duty to protect victims, we must continue to improve our understanding of victims of VAWG.

Currently, police recorded data does not meet the standards required to provide an appropriate response, and level of protection, to victims of VAWG. Data on protected characteristics and indicators of vulnerability is often incomplete or of poor quality. Operation Soteria states that Black and Ethnic Minority respondents were less likely than White respondents to feel the police had looked at all the evidence or make them feel like the rape or sexual assault was not their fault.¹⁰⁴

This is particularly pertinent when considering the needs of victims from minoritised backgrounds who we know often have worse experiences and outcomes, are less likely than other demographics to engage, and are subsequently less likely to be protected by the police.¹⁰⁵

In 2023, Rape Crisis found that 44% of minoritised victims who engaged with their research had prior negative experiences of engaging with the police, meaning they have experienced discrimination, racism, ableism and xenophobia.¹⁰⁶ The victims surveyed were from Black, Minoritised, Migrant, Deaf or disabled communities. A 2023 VKPP study which aimed to explore perceptions, attitudes and behaviours towards capturing the 'voice of the victim' among police personnel found 'personnel can hold perceptions about particular communities and victims which can negatively affect their perceived credibility and impedes the willingness of personnel to capture their voice'.¹⁰⁷

Limited information can lead to missed opportunities; SafeLives' data shows that, on average, high-risk victims report abuse to the police 2.8 times in the year before receiving effective help.¹⁰⁸ Op Soteria found that 82% of cases examined showed missed opportunities to progress investigation, and that an excessive reliance on 'victim credibility'

assessments were prematurely halting investigations.¹⁰⁹

We recognise the critical role that policing should, and will continue to, play in the protection of victims who are seeking a criminal justice response.

However, it sits beyond the remit and capabilities of policing to identify - and by extension, provide protection to victims who have not entered the system through formally reporting a VAWG offence. We recognise the critical role that our VCS specialist VAWG colleagues play in providing advocacy and support to victims of VAWG. Their skills, experience and knowledge can enhance both our first response and investigation, for example placing specialist DA workers within police control rooms and in within investigation teams.

Therefore, we call on the wider system to support us in protecting victims from the high-harm of VAWG, by enabling earlier identification and providing vital services and support to those choosing not to pursue a criminal justice response.

Our judgement - There is a need for us to enhance our approach to protect victims of VAWG - recognising the balance required between timely enforcement and meeting victims needs

Prevent

Prevent

The **NFD** has allowed us **to consider the boundaries within which policing can be effective and efficient**. We are not content with the current outcomes and accept that too few perpetrators are being brought to justice. This negatively impacts on the level of trust and confidence that victims of VAWG and the wider public have in policing.

We believe that **“This P can only be delivered in partnership with other relevant agencies. We recognise that policing has a specific role to play in a whole system response in order to prevent VAWG”¹¹⁰**

Preventing VAWG requires actions to stop it from happening in the first place, identifying early warning signs and implementing interventions and reducing the escalation of further harm. Such activities will reduce demand on policing and importantly reduce the severity of the impact on women and girls.

We play an important and specific role in the prevention of VAWG where we, appropriately and proportionately, share our

expertise, specialist knowledge, intelligence and data to all relevant agencies to enable proactive prevention of VAWG.

We have a **statutory duty to safeguard** children and vulnerable adults at risk of abuse and harm. We are under a legal duty to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and to act on any concerns by following safeguarding policies and procedures and reporting all concerns to our designated safeguarding leads. If an immediate risk is present, we will provide an immediate response. We have a joint responsibility with local authorities to address all safeguarding concerns - we primarily are responsible for the criminal investigation whereas the local authority leads on safeguarding procedures and interventions. We will continue to work with other agencies when making enquiries to safeguard and secure the welfare of vulnerable adults and children including but not limited to our participation in Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) and Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR).ⁱ

Effective data sharing practices strengthen the response to safeguarding concerns. We acknowledge **our responsibility to collect and share data with relevant agencies** to support in gathering all relevant information to build a clearer understanding of risk (potential or actual) and for agencies to identify possible intervention opportunities. We recognise we need to continue to strengthen our data sharing practices to further support this.

Victims and perpetrators have a complex intersection of wider vulnerabilities and needs

- Male perpetrators of DA show strong correlations between substance use and values of male dominance; themes emerging from interviews with 37 male DA perpetrators were intoxication, craving, and withdrawal, financial abuse, sexual betrayal/jealousy, mutual combat and protection/control.¹¹¹
- An evaluation of the Drive project illustrated from a dip sample of 25 DRIVE service users almost half (12/25) had been known to one or more services prior to DRIVE including mental health, probation, substance misuse, police, adult and children social care.¹¹²

- The Domestic Homicide Project found that, across a three-year dataset (1st April 2020 - 31st March 2023) of 723 domestic homicide cases, the victim and/or suspect was known to a partner agency in 60% of cases (417). In year 3 (2022 - 2023) the most common agencies were mental health services and child social services.¹¹³
- The 2021 Girls' Attitudes Survey found that more disabled girls and young women are harassed online (40% of those aged 11-21) than those without disabilities (25%).¹¹⁴

Victims and perpetrators of VAWG are getting younger

- In 2022 and where age was known, 52% of Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE) perpetrators were children aged 10-17 with the most common age being 14 years old.¹¹⁵
- 16-19 years is the most common age for RASSO (16+)¹¹⁶

- In addition, a child who has experienced DA also has an increased risk of entering a cycle of abuse. Research from the Centre for Social Justice illustrated that 10% of children engaging with children and young people (CYP) DA services were beginning to show signs of developing harmful behaviour.¹¹⁷

It is evident that our role in prevention should be limited to being one that compliments and enables our statutory, voluntary and private sector partners to take a robust and effective approach.

The scale and nature of the VAWG threat requires a shift in the overall national approach; a move from acceptance of the inevitability of VAWG to a longer-term commitment to preventing it from happening in the first place. Therefore, this requires a step beyond just having effective partnership working, early identification and support to victims, to a commitment to address the underlying misogyny that drives VAWG.

Statutory, voluntary and community sector services have the expertise and specialist knowledge in supporting complex vulnerabilities and needs.

The evidence shows us that both victims and high harm and repeat perpetrators of VAWG are highly likely to have come into contact with their services at an early point and that many victims are not represented within the criminal justice system due to underreporting.¹¹⁸ They are therefore presented with an opportunity to enhance the early identification of unhealthy behaviour/s, victimisation and or offending as well as increase reporting.

- Research by the National Centre for Domestic Violence estimated that less than 24% of domestic abuse-related crime is reported to the police.¹¹⁹ When victims do report, it is often the most severe or recent offence that will prompt a victim to report.¹²⁰
- A study found 44% of DA victims told health organisations (highest percentage) first of their DA experience with police being the second highest organisation first told (43%).¹²¹

Coupled with this, our assessment has outlined the young age of victims and perpetrators, which places greater emphasis on the opportunities presented by early years services and interventions (most likely in the health, education and social services arena). For example, the education sector is in the privileged position to recognise warning signs, implement early interventions and provide cultural change. **Providing both the victims and perpetrators with the right care from the right people to prevent VAWG.**

Operation Encompass acts as an excellent example, and the only DA scheme recommended by HMICFRS. It highlights how timely and accurate sharing of data and intelligence can enable, in this case, an education partner to respond differently, with a focus on the trauma and impact of domestic abuse within the home.

Our judgement - There is a need for an enhanced coordinated partnership response to VAWG, with a focus on early prevention within which we will administer our safeguarding and data sharing responsibilities to a high standard.

Case Study: Operation Encompass

Aim:

Operation Encompass is a programme which ensures that policing informs a child's school's safeguarding lead of a recent Domestic Abuse (DA) incident where the child is involved (mandated by the Victims and Prisoners Act). The programme provides schools with appropriate training and a helpline to ensure teachers can identify and support children affected by DA.

Operation Encompass aims to:

- Support child and young person (CYP) victims of DA
- Improve police reporting
- Equip school staff with the knowledge and skills for early intervention

Impact:

Operation Encompass is currently available to registered nurseries, pre-schools, childminders and has the opportunity to support all children. The Operation Encompass 2023/24 impact report and written evidence to the Home Office Committee Inquiry revealed benefits for both the police and children affected by DA. It found that:

- 4,000 children are supported daily with better and faster help after trauma
- Police have gained a better understanding of children's experiences of DA
- The education sector has a unique position to recognise early warning signs and provide appropriate care to CYP

Conclusion

Conclusion

This report provides a detailed threat assessment and sets out our commitments which will underpin our efforts to improve our response to VAWG. Based on evidence this will be specific to the critical five threats; rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO), domestic abuse, stalking, online and tech-enabled VAWG and Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE). Below is a concise summary of these commitments aligned to each of the 4 Ps.

Pursue: We are responsible for pursuing VAWG perpetrators as they cause significant harm and often offend repeatedly.

Our judgement: There is a need for us to target our limited resources to pursue the highest harm and repeat perpetrators - related to our five key threats.

We commit to conducting victim-centred, suspect-focused and context-led investigations, including (where appropriate) evidence-led prosecutions.

We commit to being more proactive and intelligence led to inform a more robust approach to offender management for VAWG through:

- evaluating and sharing the learning from the Met Police V100 approach to the pursuit of VAWG perpetrators
- robust implementation and management of protective orders supported by the digitalisation of systems which will improve the timeliness and accuracy of protective order outcomes from all courts (criminal, civil and family) to all forces
- effective pursuit of perpetrators is enhanced through national join up across forces. To be effective this requires an improved approach to consistent recording and the effective use of technology, for example artificial intelligence (AI) to extract and interpret data to improve our national understanding of the nature of VAWG.
- use of technology to build a robust evidence base of the high harm and repeat perpetrators
- working collaboratively with criminal justice partners and government to enhance our approach to pursue through refreshed offender management.

Prepare: A fundamental requirement to effectively pursuing VAWG perpetrators is to ensure we have the right capabilities, capacity and culture

Our judgement: There is a need for us to prioritise the professionalisation and specialism of our workforce, with the effective use of finite resources, whilst not undermining our operational requirements.

We commit to ensuring we have the right capability to respond to all VAWG threats through

- professionalising public protection, meaning we will have the right skills, training, evidence and specialist knowledge (across all forces) to respond to VAWG
- our continued work to improve our internal culture, through our adopted COM-B behavioural change programme and embedding the learning of Operation Soteria, which is aimed at encouraging professional curiosity amongst our officers and staff
- collecting high quality and consistent data with the support from the Centre for Performance, Innovation and Productivity (CPIP).ⁱ

We commit to improving our response to online and tech-enabled VAWG, through

- providing a tailored responses to online harm to protect victims of all ages
- recognising, understanding, and being prepared to respond to the threat of generative artificial intelligence (in particular the threat this poses to young people)
- sufficient dedicated resources and specialist training and recruitment
- encouraging the government to strengthen regulation to effectively deter and prevent the ongoing proliferation of VAWG online.

Protect: We have a statutory duty to protect and safeguard victims of VAWG

Our judgement: There is a need for us to enhance our approach to protect victims of VAWG - recognising the balance required between timely enforcement and meeting wider victims needs

Alongside our commitment to upholding the Victims' Code and aligning with Op Soteria's principle of embedding procedural justice and engaging victims, we commit to upholding our duty to victims through:

- adopting a victim-centred approach throughout our investigations of VAWG offences
- enhancing our use of protective orders and injunctions and subsequent breaches
- sharing information consistently and courageously through disclosure schemes such as "Clare's Law" and "Sarah's Law".ⁱⁱ
- improving our understanding of the evolving online harms
- improving our understanding of the victims of VAWG and their needs through an enhanced intersectional approach
- working with our specialist colleagues in the Voluntary and Community Sector to better support victims and to enhance our own skills and to inform our decision making and prioritisation. For example, having independent domestic abuse and sexual violence advocates within police control rooms and more broadly through our investigations.

Prevent: We are clear on our role within a whole-system approach to prevent VAWG.

Our judgement: There is a need for an enhanced coordinated partnership response to VAWG with a focus on early prevention within which we will play a proportionate role

We commit to playing an active role in partnerships at a national, regional and local level through:

- upholding our statutory safeguarding duties to protect victims of VAWG
- resourcing partnership engagement through existing statutory and operational partnerships, for example Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH)ⁱⁱⁱ and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARACs)^{iv} which are focused on the early identification of risk
- assuring the proportionate and effective sharing of data and intelligence to support partners in the early identification and risk of VAWG

We have mobilised to improve our understanding of VAWG and enhanced our ability to respond. We have embedded standards and brought VAWG to the top of the agenda. Incremental progress has been made, and we will continue to commit to leading the creation of a nationally consistent suspect-focused and victim-centred response across policing. However, we still have an inconsistent police response - so continuous improvement is needed.

To address this moving forward our focus is in two critical areas

- **effective implementation of the NFD** to ensure an improved and consistent national response to VAWG
- providing **enhanced support to our forces and frontline officers** through greater coordination which will be delivered by the establishment of **a National Centre for Public Protection (NC4PP)**.

We will further embed the **NFD**, focusing on the five key threats outlined in this assessment - to address the scale of the challenge by relentlessly **pursuing**

perpetrators; **preparing** to effectively respond to VAWG; **protecting** victims seeking a criminal justice outcome; and delivering on our statutory commitments to **prevent** VAWG.

Police forces must be better supported to deliver a high-quality response to public protection, and to be able understand the **relationship between VAWG threats and those that sit within a broader public protection portfolio** (i.e. public space harassment of women and girls and non-contact offending e.g. spiking, indecent exposure).

The NC4PP can build this whole-policing response, supporting forces and creating the right foundation within which to bring partners together at a national level through the pursuit of six strategic objectives:

1. To provide national cultural and strategic leadership for policing around public protection demand
2. To set and improve standards for policing public protection
3. To improve police productivity and performance through centralised sharing of public protection knowledge and good practice

4. To provide guidance, implementation and peer/ operational support to forces with public protection demand
5. To have evidence-based and data-driven national conversations between policing and HO regarding policy and resources required to respond to public protection demand
6. To provide a front door for developing and enhancing national and regional partnerships with statutory and non-statutory agencies on public protection demand

However, the scale of VAWG is such that it cannot be addressed through law enforcement alone.

We rely on an effective justice system to pursue perpetrators and protect victims. Like policing, the criminal justice system is facing acute capacity challenges, leaving the system to be overwhelmed by the scale of the VAWG threat. The system functions as a whole; an under-resourced and under-performing justice system directly impacts our ability to pursue the perpetrators of VAWG and protect the victims. **We need the support and direction of the government to intervene and address the problems within the criminal justice system.**

No one agency can address these issues in isolation. **The continued increase and scale of VAWG requires a significant shift in national policy with focus applied to prevention as well as to the enforcement of perpetrators and support to victims.**

Our statutory, private and voluntary sector partners provide critical capabilities and capacity. While we recognise that these organisation face financial and demand pressures too, we set out the opportunities available to enhance our VAWG response by working with them:

- **Health** - services and interventions in the health sector present significant opportunities to identify early risk factors or signs of victimisation, opportunities to increase disclosure, which can lead to improvements in the quality of evidence supporting better investigations. They can also provide enhanced specialist provision that treats the trauma caused by VAWG.
- **Voluntary Community Sector (VCS)** - these specialist services provide independent advocacy and support to victims helping to meet

- their specific needs to cope and recover. Their expertise can also enhance policing and other criminal justice partners capabilities improving outcomes from first response through to prosecution.
- **Local Authorities** - councils have statutory responsibilities for safeguarding (children and adults) and ensuring that public spaces are safe, and we welcome support and collaboration which begins to address public space VAWG.
- **Education** - schools and wider educational settings provide an essential setting within which to deliver early awareness of VAWG and cultural change.
- **Technology** - following the introduction of the Online Safety Act 2023, businesses and regulators in this sector have the opportunity, with strong and timely government regulation, to support efforts to reduce offending by ensuring that robust systems are in place to remove illegal or banned content linked to VAWG.
- **Academics** - building the evidence base from Op Soteria learning and approaches to wider VAWG offences most notably domestic abuse and

- stalking as well as evidence re: perpetrator pathology aligned to the Angiolini recommendations.

However, our collective efforts to reduce and tackle VAWG risk being hindered by the absence of a single understanding of the true volume of this crime type. This, in part, is due to the lack of a single definition of VAWG across all agencies. This means police recorded crime, the CSEW and other sources do not offer a single VAWG dataset. Because of this, we are currently only able to estimate the scale of VAWG and its component parts.

It is widely accepted that all types of VAWG are likely to be underestimated significantly and we recognise that the figures in this statement represent the minimum volume in our estimates of VAWG. This poses a major challenge to our response to VAWG and is a disservice to victims and the wider society. It means both we and our colleagues in the statutory, private and VCS sectors efforts are unable to base our response to VAWG on its true volume.

We recognise the need for a single definition of VAWG to underpin better data collection and a robust picture of the true VAWG threat by volume and harm.

We aspire to a position where an effective criminal justice response to VAWG is the last resort. We know that VAWG offences are driven by the often-accepted misogynistic values and culture; we should no longer accept VAWG as inevitable. **We therefore would welcome a coherent and robust whole system approach, bringing together criminal justice partners, wider public, VCS and private sector agencies, in a new partnership that seeks to reduce the scale and impact of VAWG.**

Notes

Notes from executive summary

- I. A result of VAWG not being a single type of crime means this report relies on different datasets which use different time periods.
- II. This proportion was calculated using ONS Police recorded crime data 2023 and so is an approximation.
- III. Please note - domestic abuse is a contextual flag that may be applied to any of the offence categories.
- IV. This estimate is based on a nationally representative sample of 1,461 people who were asked about behaviour that could be considered to be Domestic Abuse. The sample contained both male and females.
- V. In response to the police failings in investigating rape and sexual offences and bringing perpetrators to justice, the Home Office funded Operation Soteria in 2021. Operation Soteria brought police forces and academics together to build a strong evidence-based to transform the way police respond to and investigate rape and sexual offences.
- VI. Excludes Devon and Cornwall year ending March 2023. This table includes men and women.
- VII. The **Centre for Performance, Innovation and Productivity (CPIP)** will be the first of its kind in British policing and will use new tools to spot emerging crime trends and tactics to drive efficiency. The centre will work with police forces to develop new tactics before testing and sharing them to tackle crime early on and save officer time. One of its first tasks will be to work with partners in policing on a central hub for police data. The productivity centre will include expert teams who understand data and behaviour change. The teams will visit police forces across the country to ensure high quality and consistent information is being shared and used to create new tactics to tackle criminals and enhance productivity.
- VIII. "Clare's Law" enables the police to disclose information to a victim or potential victim of domestic abuse about their partner's or ex-partner's previous abusive or violent offending. 'Sarah's Law' enables the police can tell parents, carers and guardians if someone has a record for child sexual offences.
- IX. **Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)** - Arrangements that allow organisations with responsibility for the safety of vulnerable people to work together. Organisations work alongside each other, share information and co-ordinate activities, often through co-locating staff from the local authority, health agencies and the police. Most safeguarding partner agencies support these arrangements so that risks to vulnerable children can be identified early.

- X. Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) - A locally held meeting where statutory and voluntary agency representatives share information about people at high risk of domestic abuse. Any agency can refer an adult or child they believe to be at high risk of harm. The aim of the meeting is to produce a co-ordinated action plan to increase an adult or child's safety, health and well-being. Agencies that attend vary, but are likely to include the police, probation, health and housing services.

Notes from scale and nature of VAWG threat and the challenge to policing

- I. The total number of VAWG-related crimes has been derived through a bespoke data collection exercise collating police data meeting the NPCC VAWG definition from a combination of the Home Office Data Hub and a standardised data collection template sent to forces where it was not possible to extract the data from the Hub. These figures will therefore be different to the government published statistics.
- II. This proportion was calculated using ONS Police recorded crime data 2023 and so is an approximation.
- III. We only draw on age as a demographic indicator throughout the five threats as more data is required for all other demographics to draw out any valuable understandings.
- IV. Police recorded data is unable to capture the true scale of the threat and harm posed to women and girls within technology and the online space.
- V. Not adjusted for inflation.
- VI. The physical and emotional harm to the victims is calculated as the likelihood of sustaining physical and emotional injuries (LIKE), multiplied by the percentage reduction in health-related quality of life (REDUCEQL), multiplied by the duration of the recovery period (including the length of abuse where appropriate) as a fraction of a total year (DUR). This is then multiplied by the value of a year of life at full health (VOLY) to give an estimate of the average cost.

Notes from pursue

- I. See note iv from executive summary
- II. The Angiolini Inquiry, 2024 was established to investigate how an off-duty police officer was able to abduct, rape and murder Sarah Everard. The Inquiry found Wayne Couzens had a history of alleged sexual offending dating back 20 years including indecent exposure prior to Sarah Everard's murder.
- III. For further examples of probation service experiencing significant challenges see the [HM Inspectorate of Probation latest findings](#)
- IV. For further examples of the challenges in CPS see the latest inspection report from [HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate](#)

Notes from prepare

- I. See our work to improve standards [here](#)
- II. See note vii from executive summary
- III. The Angiolini Inquiry Part 1 (2024) set out 16 recommendations. Recommendation 1: Approach to investigating indecent exposure. Recommendation 2: Guidance and training on indecent exposure. Recommendation 3: Treatment of masturbatory indecent exposure within the criminal justice system. Recommendation 4: Research into masturbatory indecent exposure. Recommendation 5: Public information campaign on indecent exposure. Recommendation 6: Review of indecent exposure allegations and other sexual offences recorded against serving police officers. Recommendation 7: In-person interviews and home visits. Recommendation 8: Recruitment and vetting policy, processes and practices. Recommendation 9: Professional rigour in decision-making. Recommendation 10: Vetting Code of Practice and transfers Recommendation 11: Information-sharing. Recommendation 12: Right to privacy. Recommendation 13: Aftercare. Recommendation 14: Positive culture and elimination of misconduct or criminality often excused as 'banter'. Recommendation 15: Reporting by police officers and staff of harassment, sexual offences and inappropriate behaviour committed by fellow officers. Recommendation 16: Recruitment and retention of women in police forces

Notes from protect

- I. The [Victims' Code 2024](#) focuses on victims' rights and sets out the minimum standard that organisations must provide to victims of crime.
- II. See note viii from executive summary
- III. For example, [West Yorkshire Police and Crime](#) and [Redbridge Council](#) and the forces use of the [CoP VAWG toolkit](#) which supports police officers and staff to protect women and girls from misogyny and bring criminals to justice.
- IV. This toolkit supports police officers and staff to protect women and girls from misogyny and bring criminals to justice. It contains: a list of misogynistic behaviours and the offences under which they could be prosecuted other tactics and protective tools that can be used to prevent further reoffending, such as civil orders

Notes from prevent

- I. A Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) is a multi-agency review of the circumstances in which the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by a person to whom they were related or with whom they were, or had been, in an intimate personal relationship, or a member of the same household as themselves

Notes from conclusion

- I. See note vii from executive summary
- II. See note viii from executive summary
- III. See note ix from executive summary
- IV. See note x from executive summary

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