



Chief Officer Team Briefing for COM

Title: Violence Against Women and Girls
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Summary

This report will provide an update on how West Yorkshire Police are responding to Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). Good progress has been made since the last update in June 2021, with the appointment of a force lead who is coordinating the force's response and approach to all aspects of VAWG related matters through a countywide strategic plan. West Yorkshire Police are also helping to shape the national approach and response to VAWG through proactively seconding the force lead to a national VAWG taskforce.

Firstly, the report will provide an update on the national context which will be followed by local context. The report will then specifically cover the three direct questions raised by the Mayor's Office in respect of:

- Inclusion of misogyny in hate crime recording.
- HMICFRS – what can be said around good practice re engagement with women and girls.
- Current impact of Sarah Everard sentencing and offer reassurance around trust and confidence for women and girls.

National Update

Since the last update (June 2021), the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) have appointed Deputy Chief Constable Maggie Blyth as the Violence Against Women and Girls national lead. DCC Blyth is charged with developing the National Strategic Intent, National Delivery Framework and Performance Framework for VAWG. West Yorkshire Police have been proactive in helping shape the national approach through seconding the force lead for Violence Against Women and Girls and Rape and Serious Sexual Offences to the National Taskforce under DCC Blyth. The Strategic Intent and Framework for Delivery and Performance will be completed by mid-December 2021.

In addition to this, a plethora of other formative reports have been finalised which include, but are not limited to, HMICFRS Police Response to Violence Against Women and Girls (Final Inspection Report), HMICFRS A joint thematic inspection of the police and Crown Prosecution Service's response to rape Phase one: *From report to police or CPS decision to take no further action (Criminal Justice Joint Inspection)*, The end to end rape review (MoJ) and A duty to protect, *Police use of protective measures in cases involving violence against women and girls (A joint inspection by HMICFRS, CoP and IOPC)* and the HM Government Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls report.

These reports, recommendations and findings will help shape the national approach and therefore the local Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.

Local Update

A multi-dimensional overarching West Yorkshire Police strategy is being finalised that will coordinate the Police response to Violence Against Women and Girls. This will not only take cognisance of the NPCC strategic intent, the national reports and recommendations but will also address local need by focussing on key areas of the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Plan and the Mayoral Pledges.

The overarching Force VAWG Strategy is aligned to the following existing Force Strategic and Tactical Plans:

- Protecting Vulnerable People
- Reassuring the Public
- Criminal Justice
- People Plan

In addition to this, West Yorkshire Police have a dedicated communications lead who is coordinating the work in respect of VAWG and associated matters.

Following the report submitted in June 2021, work has been progressed in the following areas:

- Appointment of a dedicated corporate communications resource and the ongoing development of a media strategy.
- A strong partnership with the Combined Authority will see £870,658 invested into the county through the Safer Street Fund 3 & Public Space bid £655,281 and the Safety of Women at Night Fund bid £215,377 (TBC).
- Launch the Home Office Street Safe Tool.
- Commenced the review of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) across the five Districts.
- Continued push for expansion of male perpetrator programmes.
- Established a Rape and Serious Sexual Assault Improvement Group which sees all ISVA service providers and Police meet to discuss ways of improving service.

- In collaboration with the WYVRU introduced forensic marking (SmartTag) into the NTE to deter Violent and Sexual Offences.
- Introduced forensic marking to deter Domestic Abuse perpetrators and protect repeat victims of domestic abuse in Leeds, Kirklees and Wakefield.

Inclusion of misogyny in hate crime recording

There have been growing concerns relating to the amount of crimes which are motivated by gender hostility. Currently there is no agreed definition of the crime types which would be included in offences related to misogyny and sex/gender-based crimes.

In a Domestic Abuse bill debated in Parliament in March 2021, Baroness Williams confirmed police forces would be asked to record and flag the below crimes, where the victim perceives it to be motivated by sex and gender-based hostility:

- violence against the person
- stalking & harassment
- sexual offences

The below guidance has been provided by the Home Office (National Annual Data Returns consultation) to provide Forces with a basis to commence data collection.

The data collection is consciously limited to:

1. Experimental basis
2. Is based only on the victim's perception of being motivated by a hostility based on their sex
3. Contains no reference to "hate crime"
4. Would not cover non-crime incidents
5. Specific to violence against the person including stalking and harassment and sexual offences

West Yorkshire Police, recognising the concerns of victims and our communities are from December 2021, going beyond the guidance and will flag all recorded crime where a victim believes the crime was motivated by the perpetrator's hostility to their gender and will include misogyny and misandry. Prior to implementation of this approach a force-wide training and awareness programme will be delivered.

HMICFRS – What can be said around good practice re engagement with women and girls.

The HMICFRS Final Inspection Report – police response to violence against women and girls was published in September 2021. Section 4 of the document provides evidence and notable good practice in respect of how well the police engage with women and girls.

Online engagement events where questions could be asked anonymously, surveys and the use of Independent Advisory Groups (IAG) were identified as good practice. West Yorkshire Police hold IAGs across the five districts as well as a countywide Independent Scrutiny

Advisory Group. These functions are also supported by Engagement Officers who regularly attend local meetings and forums to engage and understand community concerns.

The Local Authority Community Safety Partnerships, through existing priorities that fall within the VAWG umbrella also contribute to the engagement of women and girls against specific crime types.

Consideration has been given to using existing IAG and the ISAG structures to introduce VAWG as a means of community engagement. However, it is recognised that the demographic of these existing groups may not achieve the desired outcome and as such a county-wide IAG for VAWG is a priority action identified on the West Yorkshire Police strategy. It is intended that this will be in partnership with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and other key stakeholders.

The joint thematic inspection of the police and Crown Prosecution Service's response to rape Phase one: *From report to police or CPS decision to take no further action* also recommends Police forces and support services should work together at a local level to better understand each other's roles. The recommendation recognises that a co-ordinated approach will help make sure that all available and bespoke wrap-around support is offered to victims and the input of victims and their experiences should play a central role in shaping the support offered.

Albeit further work is to be done in this area, West Yorkshire Police have established a Rape and Serious Sexual Offences working group which sees ISVA services and Police coming together, to discuss ways that improvements can be made to deliver services to victims. This is in addition to the Sexual Violence Forum which sees a wider stakeholder group that includes West Yorkshire Police, Crown Prosecution Service (Rape and Serious Sexual Offences Legal Manager), SARC, Witness Service from Leeds and Bradford Crown Court, ISVAs from Victim Support and voluntary sector agencies coming together. The aim of this group is to bring all agencies together who work with victims/survivors of sexual violence as they progress through the criminal justice process, from report to Court. Through a process of open and honest dialogue, sharing good practice and areas for improvement, and discussion of ideas and actions, the intention is to improve the experience of, and support for victims and survivors, no matter how long they remain within the criminal justice process, and no matter what the outcome of the investigation.

A recent Domestic Abuse workshop also saw victims, supported by an IDVA engaged to better understand how the police impacted on them through investigations. More recently a strong partnership with the Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust is seeing police and partners working more closely to ensure the best possible service is provided to victims.

Capture current impact of Sarah Everard sentencing and offer reassurance around trust and confidence for women and girls.

Trust and confidence in policing by women and girls is a priority for a West Yorkshire Police. Through existing strong community engagement, partnerships with the Local Authorities and the Community Safety Partnerships, Neighbourhood Teams were able to quickly engage our

communities and offer reassurance and support. No significant or adverse events were experienced across West Yorkshire which is testament to the communities within.

The increase in Drink Spiking and Spiking through Injections is another example where West Yorkshire Police have responded quickly with partners and created a dedicated multi-agency co-ordinated response under Operation Jeanhaven. This approach is supported by Health, the dedicated CSP's, Education providers and other key partners including licensing and pubs, clubs, and bars and across the NTE in Leeds and WY. The aim is to safeguard the public and protect against this offending and bring those responsible to justice.

Building trust and confidence is a significant area of focus for the VAWG strategy and will be delivered through:

- The effective management of perpetrators, with a focus of bringing more charges and convictions through quality investigations, the effective use and policing of protective measures and a sharp focus on those who perpetrate most harm.
- With partners and communities, the creation of safer spaces for women and girls considering public, private and online areas.
- Ensuring the highest professional standards of our officers and staff and robust action to be taken if their standards fall below what is expected.
- A trauma informed approach to victims and survivors, to ensure that they are actively listened to and their needs are understood and addressed.