



**Respond
and
Reassure**



**Prevent
and
Protect**

**Our strategy to tackle Violence,
Abuse and Intimidation
against Women and Girls in
Warwickshire
2021 - 2024**

Our Ambition

‘To make Warwickshire a place where women and girls can live, work, study, socialise and travel safely and confidently, free of fear, violence, intimidation and harassment. Working with our partners and ensuring we are Fit for the Future, our vision is to protect people from harm, to be great at protecting the most vulnerable and effectively disrupt and pursue offenders.’

Introduction

By Detective Chief Superintendent Suzanne Baker,
Head of Protective Services & Strategic Lead for Violence, Abuse & Intimidation against Women & Girls in Warwickshire (VAIWG)

The recent tragic murder of Sarah Everard has brought into sharp focus the significant issue of violence, abuse and intimidation against women and girls (VAIWG) which is still all too prevalent in our society. These crimes are deeply harmful, not only because of the profound effect they can have on victims, survivors and their loved ones, but also because of the impact they can have on wider society, impacting on the freedom and equality that we all should value and enjoy.

The policing response to the prevention of VAIWG has been widely criticised and there is an expectation that the police can and must do better to ensure public confidence and improve the feeling of safety both in public and private.

The VAIWG strategy is a priority for Warwickshire Police and our partners. A great deal of work has already been done through the dedicated working group in the county that features partners and charitable organisations pooling their collective efforts and focusing on providing consistent and streamlined activity and action to protect women and girls in Warwickshire from crimes which disproportionately affect them, such as sexual violence, domestic abuse, forced marriage and stalking all of which have devastating consequences. They can have a profound and long-lasting impact on those directly affected as well as on communities and society as a whole. There is however much more we need to do in order to tackle the perpetrators of VAIWG whether through intervention or prevention or robustly bringing offenders to justice, and, ultimately, reduce the prevalence of violence against women and girls.

This strategy reflects the NPCC strategy and aims to focus on priority areas that have limited attention to date or require more focus on emerging issues. We also recognise we play a key role in ensuring legitimacy in everything we do and that starts with our own high standards of professional behaviour.

Key Principles

- Violence, abuse, and intimidation against women and girls in any form is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. This includes against our own staff.
- Every public space and education establishment should be a safe place for all women and girls.
- Women and girls should feel confident to report their experiences of harm to the police directly or indirectly, safe in the knowledge that they will be taken seriously and that they will be treated with dignity and respect. This includes when women and girls present to police as offenders.
- The lived experiences of women and girls will be heard and their opinions respected.
- We expect the highest standards of professional behaviour from all our staff. We recognise that the small minority of cases where staff abuse their position of power for sexual or emotional gain and we will ensure internal accountability and legitimacy.
- The involvement and engagement of men and boys, both in the workplace and community, in this work is vital.

Safety In Public

Lead: Chief Inspector Karl Faulkner, Chief Inspector Communities & Response

Key messages heard in recent times tells us that many women and girls do not feel safe in public or on line and girls do not feel safe in school or other educational establishments. Furthermore, a majority of women and girls in the UK have experienced sexual harassment in public spaces.

As such we will:

- Work in partnership (statutory and non-statutory) to ensure public spaces, parks, streets, the night time economy, education establishments, public transport hubs and other publically accessible places where the women and girls tell us they do not feel safe, are safe and feel safe.
- Will focus around the concept of a 'Good Night Out' in town centres, to include training for taxi drivers, licensees and an awareness raising campaign.
- Work with Community Safety Partnerships, Local Planning Authorities, Secured by Design and Designing out Crime Officers to ensure that the prevention of VAIWG is prioritised when considering new developments and opportunities to create safer environments.

- Leverage our responsibilities in licensing, traffic management and event planning to insist upon effective measures by landlords, licensees and event organisers to prevent VAIWG.
- Develop methods to increase the confidence in the reporting of offences and improve the ease and speed of such reporting, including in educational establishments.
- Consider best practice by Police Forces to spot and intervene in instances of aggressive, predatory and intrusive sexual behaviour by using police powers such as dispersal orders (Operation Vigilant – Dorset Police).
- Maximise opportunities to secure safer streets funding to assist in delivering this strategy.
- Work with women and girls, and partners to identify, review and remove barriers for women and girls when accessing relevant services, ensuring equality of service and prevention/reduction of harm.

Criminal Justice / Offender and Suspect Management

Lead: Detective Superintendent for Proactive Anna Middleton / Detective Superintendent for Reactive Caroline Corfield

Low prosecution rates and failures in the Criminal Justice System (CJS), impact upon the low confidence of victims to report crimes to the police. We have heard repeatedly that some women simply do not trust the Criminal Justice System and we recognise that in order to improve victim confidence, increase reporting and achieve better outcomes we must work with partners to enhance the entire process and bring perpetrators to justice. The new Victim's code has been produced to ensure better support from the police, courts and other criminal justice agencies. Robustly managing offenders to protect victims, prevent offending and further harm is an essential part of this strategy.

As such we will:

- Through the RASSO Steering Group we will support and deliver the National Joint Rape Action Plan with the CPS to improve the timeliness of investigations and outcomes for victims. We will seek to transform our response to RASSO ensuring our investigations are more suspect focused, working to disrupt repeat and risky perpetrators, whilst delivering a procedural justice approach to victim engagement.

- Ensure we understand and apply the learning from the Operation Sorteria pilot.
- Improve our understanding of the threat and risk that sits within offences recorded as stalking and harassment, understand the issue of repeat victims, offenders and locations and develop our investigative response including our approaches to restorative justice and out of court disposals. We will develop our understanding and response to this for both real world and online offending of this type.
- Increase prosecution rates for violence, abuse and intimidation offences against women and girls. Using the Crime Allocation Model to identify incidents that specifically target Women and Girls, ensuring these investigations are allocated to appropriate resources in a timely manner to ensure the best investigative outcomes for victims.
- Maximise forensic opportunities, both digital and traditional.
- Ensure effective support for victims of VAIWG (all areas) embedding the new victims code changes.
- Develop the full use of civil and criminal protective measures to target perpetrators and safeguard women and girls.
- Build transparency and confidence in the investigative process through independent scrutiny via the Investigative Standards and Scrutiny Panel (ISSP).
- Offer an enhanced response to victims of high risk crimes such as domestic abuse, where women and girls are disproportionately affected, by working with our statutory and non-statutory partners to support victims and survivors through a multi-agency framework.
- Ensure the needs of the victims are a central consideration in any investigation. Victims will be supported in achieving the right outcome for their individual case and circumstances.
- Protect victims by improving offender management & tailor our service offer for highest harm offenders who offend against women and girls.
- Develop our understanding and deployment of effective suspect management strategies.

- Improve the content, quality and linkage of data, to expand our understanding of suspect profiles and their patterns of behaviour.

Recording of Crimes and Incidents

Lead: Andy Shipman, Crime and Incident Registrar

In 2020 the Law Commission made proposals to reform hate crime laws. The commission proposed that sex and gender be added to the list of protected characteristics for the purpose of hate crime and that there was parity in how each was treated. The final recommendations are expected in Autumn 2021. Aside of this (pending) decision it is vital that we have good data and are able to access and exploit it to enable us to understand the problem.

As such we will:

- Implement any nationally agreed definitions and recording processes.
- Review and determine options for Warwickshire to record gender based data.
- Work with CPS to ensure gender based hatred is promoted and accepted as an aggravating factor prior to any change in the law.
- Promote internally and externally the fact that under the new Victims code victims of sexual violence and domestic abuse will be able to choose the gender of the police officer/staff that interviews them (as per the new Victim's Code).
- Develop a reporting mechanism/performance framework to ensure openness and transparency in reporting gender/sex-based hate crimes.
- Develop effective training for officers and staff to ensure that they have the confidence and knowledge to be able to identify crimes and incidents where gender is an aggravating factor and subsequently build strong prosecution cases to obtain justice.
- Review the ability to identify those investigations, where from the outset of contact, the victim has made it clear that they do not want a police investigation at this time (use of outcomes 15 and 16 in violence against women and girls offences).

- Learning and Development to support the production and delivery of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) training to improve the understanding of Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) for officers and staff who are involved in receiving reports of reported crime.
- To conduct victim surveys to include non-DA stalking in mandatory victim experience surveys and the potential to change weighting of current surveys to increase sample of particular offences (assault) where the victim is a woman or girl and suspect/offender is a man or boy.

Our Behaviour

Lead: Superintendent Daf Goddard, Head of Professional Standards

The public expect the highest standards of behaviour from the police service. How we behave as individuals and collectively impacts on the trust and confidence of communities. This is particularly the case with VAIWG and we must acknowledge and take steps to ensure greater internal accountability and legitimacy.

As such we will:

- Work with stakeholders, key partners and staff representative bodies, to understand the 'lived experiences' of our staff in the work place and beyond.
- Using the NPCC Sexual Harassment Plan, develop and embed a sexual harassment policy.
- Recognise that to achieve a cultural change we should adopt a zero-tolerance approach within our workplaces to all forms of VAIWG, robustly dealing with any perpetrators, and offering enhanced support to victims.
- Attain 'White Ribbon' accreditation.
- Increase the knowledge and skills of our workforce to address VAIWG.
- Through our 'Ethics, Culture and Conduct Board' we will have an ethical culture and environment where the workforce understand what is expected of them, the force is reflective and the public are treated fairly. We will also review complaints and behaviour data to understand themes and behaviours of our workforce we would want to address.

Communications & Engagement

Lead: Kate Quilley, Head of Corporate Communications and CI Karl Faulkner, Chief Inspector
Communities & Response

How we engage and communicate is important in setting the tone and making it clear that VAIWG is abhorrent and will not be tolerated. It is vital that we are clear that women and girls are never to blame for the behaviours of others and that, listening to, understanding and responding to the lived experiences of women and girls must be an enduring part of our work.

As such we will:

- Develop an internal and external communications and engagement plan. The overall aim to build trust and confidence in Warwickshire Police showing that we care, we listen, we are professional and we can be trusted.
- Work with OPCC to launch and then be informed by a 'Call it Out' public survey, encouraging women and girls to share the experiences.
- Ensure the Force integrates into educational establishments so as to compliment curriculums and recognise that the class room can be a great place to build trust and confidence with young people as well as allow young people to learn what is acceptable in society.
- Identify perpetrators of harmful sexual behaviour at the earliest opportunity providing evidence based interventions to ensure behavioural change, ensuring there is a multi-agency response.
- Divert emerging perpetrators of VAIWG into treatment and education to address the early signs of harmful behaviour.
- Review how we can encourage the reporting of offences and promote alternative reporting mechanisms.
- Develop a Public Consultation & Engagement process to consider focusing on Experience (own or vicarious), Perception of / Fear (& Impact – feelings & behaviour change) of VAIWG and Perceptions of police (force & officers) and the prevention and response to VAIWG.

- Require all staff to maintain the highest standards of professionalism and integrity and demand it of each other – and take robust action against any who fall below these standards.
- Prioritise diversity, equality and inclusion across the workplace, to ensure that we have a workforce with the capability and capacity to address VAWG policing needs.
- Establishment of a Women’s Independent Advisory group to ensure we maximise the trust and confidence of our communities, to help shape our service delivery of VAIWG and act as the Force’s critical friend to scrutinise our police legitimacy.

Accountability, Monitoring and Scrutiny

Underpinning the VAIWG strategy will be a delivery plan that reflects the four strands of both CONTEST and the SOC Plan (Pursue – Prevent – Protect – Prepare). The delivery plan will form the basis of the changes we will make to improve the service and outcomes for women and girls. Each work strand lead will be expected to report into the VAIWG Strategy Board chaired by DCS Suzanne Baker and will be subject of scrutiny by the Assistant Chief Constable at the Vulnerability & Exploitation Steering Group.