

Violence Against Women and Girls



**Prevent
and
Protect**

Warwickshire Police Strategy 2023

Where are we now?

Crimes of violence against women and girls are many and varied. They include rape and other sexual offences, stalking, domestic abuse, 'honour-based' abuse - including female genital mutilation, forced marriage and 'honour' killings - 'revenge porn' and 'upskirting', as well as many others.

While different types of violence against women and girls each have distinct causes and impacts on victims and survivors, these crimes share a significant factor: they all disproportionately, and unacceptably, affect women and girls.

Today in 2023, crime statistics nationally demonstrate the continued prevalence of the abuse, harassment and violence against women and girls. Many more incidents go unreported.

Warwickshire Police has always taken violence, abuse and intimidation of women and girls (VAWG) seriously. However, we know we need to do more, and we are committed to doing more.

This strategy outlines what we at Warwickshire Police will do. We want to more effectively tackle violence, abuse and intimidation of women and girls in communities in Warwickshire, online, as well as within our own workplace.

We want women and girls who live, work, socialise or study in Warwickshire not only to be safe, but to feel safe. This should be in public spaces, at home or online. Women and girls should be able to live here confidently, without feeling frightened, intimidated, or harassed.

Our role as police

Police play an important role in preventing harm and bringing offenders to justice. However, our ability to give our communities trust, confidence and reassurance in our approach to violence against women and girls has been severely tested through horrific incidents of police-perpetrated violence in recent years.

We cannot have legitimacy in dealing with perpetrators without first looking at our own culture and behavior in policing. We recognise the importance of raising our own professional standards, rooting out any and all predatory behavior towards women, and ensuring we have a supportive working environment that is safe, respectful and inclusive for all.

This strategy encompasses the significant work we're undertaking to ensure the public can have confidence in our ability to deliver the best possible response to VAWG.

Areas such as domestic abuse, stalking, harassment, rape and serious sexual offending remain at the forefront of our focus. Significant work to prevent these heinous crimes, to protect the vulnerable and to investigate effectively to ensure justice for women and girls will continue under our robust existing arrangements.

However, in this strategy we do not attempt to encompass the entire VAWG landscape. Rather, we focus on the areas that we know have had limited police attention to date, and that need significant improvement.

Working in partnership

Many of the underlying causes of violence against women and girls are societal. Alongside enforcement, prevention also plays a key role. Therefore, it is essential for us to work in partnership with key stakeholders within the region and nationally if we are to effectively tackle VAWG as a society. All of society needs to be engaged and committed to change.

We must take an inclusive approach: the views of all members of our communities, regardless of gender, are vital. Independent scrutiny will be invaluable and academic contribution will be required to ensure our interventions are evidence-based and effective. Our delivery plan must remain flexible and responsive to feedback, learning and engagement in this context.

Whilst this is the strategy of Warwickshire Police, we cannot deliver it alone. This strategy therefore complements the requirements of the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) national framework which, for the first time, recognises VAWG as a national threat alongside terrorism as part of national strategic policing requirements. It also complements the Safer Warwickshire's Violence Against Women and Girls strategy, for which we're proud to be a partner.

Our ambition is for all women and girls in Warwickshire to be safe and to feel safe.

There are key principles that underpin our strategic approach:

- We will not accept or tolerate violence, abuse, and intimidation against women and girls in any form, anywhere. This includes against our own workforce.
- We will hold perpetrators of VAWG accountable for their behaviour.
- We will not hold victims and survivors responsible for the behaviour of perpetrators.
- 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 we will take them seriously and treat them with dignity and respect.
- We will listen to lived experiences of women and girls, and respect their opinions.
- We expect the highest standards of professional behaviour from all our officers and staff. Where members of our workforce abuse their position for sexual or emotional gain, we will deal with them robustly.
- The involvement and engagement of all sections of society – regardless of gender - is vital.
- It's essential that we work in partnership.
- Our reactive and preventative actions to tackle violence, abuse and intimidation against women and girls will be open and transparent to external scrutiny.

How will we get there?

There are three overarching pillars of activity through which we will achieve our ambitions.

Pillar 1: build trust and confidence.

Rightly, the public expect the highest standards of behavior and service from the police. By improving trust and confidence, we build connections with communities and strengthen our legitimacy.

To do this we will:

- **Respond unequivocally to allegations of police perpetrator abuse, learning from mistakes and best practice.**
 - Complete an urgent review of all current allegations of sexual misconduct, domestic abuse and other VAWG-related offences against members of our workforce, ensuring that we investigate allegations fully and quickly.
 - Develop and implement a sexual harassment policy within the force, utilising the NPCC Sexual Harassment Framework.
 - Refresh our Domestic Abuse Policy to improve our response to Police Perpetrated Domestic Abuse (PPDA), ensuring that we treat any allegations of PPDA seriously and ensuring victims receive the support and respect they deserve.

- **Challenge and address sexism and misogyny within policing.**
 - Embed 'Operation Amethyst' as an awareness-raising campaign on ethical behaviour and professional standards, including effective reporting and support mechanisms for people who suffer from or witness inappropriate and unacceptable behaviours.
 - Communicate clearly and frequently what standards of behaviour we expect from everyone in Warwickshire Police, and make clear that we will not tolerate any misogynistic, sexist and sexualised behaviour from anyone within the force.
 - Nurture an inclusive workplace culture to ensure that individuals feel safe and supported to report inappropriate behaviours they experience or witness. This includes building awareness and skills, safe processes for reporting and swift interventions where necessary.
 - Attain 'White Ribbon' status.

- **Involve VAWG organisations, as well as women and girls with lived experience.**
 - Involve and empower women and girls at every stage, ensuring that we create safe environments for this to take place.
 - Review how we incorporate learning and lived experience of women and girls into our training and awareness materials.
 - Seek to expand the reach of our communications on VAWG, including engagement with third sector organisations that are working with different groups of women and girls.
 - Work with partners to raise their awareness of abuse of position for a sexual purpose and encourage third party reporting.
 - Utilise 'Domestic Abuse Matters' specialist inputs to raise awareness across the force.
 - Establish regular scrutiny of our performance in responding to VAWG, aligned to internal audit activity.

- **Ensure that VAWG investigators have the right skills to fulfil their roles effectively and build capability and capacity to evaluate and report on VAWG performance.**
 - Audit the skills and accreditation levels of specialist investigators and look ahead to ensure the force has enough specialist resources to sustainably manage VAWG-related demand.
 - Launch and embed specialist domestic abuse and rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO) and child abuse, trafficking and exploitation teams to ensure that we have specialist trained staff in place to enable our effective response and swift investigation.

- Embed Operation Soteria within the force following involvement in the national pilot project, aiming to drive more rape cases successfully through the Criminal Justice system and deliver a consistent operating model for RASSO investigation.
- Create a VAWG performance framework for targeted levels of victim satisfaction for relevant offences.
- Introduce separate RASSO and VAWG public scrutiny panels, including partners and those with lived experience as panel members, to ensure the force's approach to relevant investigations is open to transparent and open scrutiny and feedback and to build trust and confidence.

Pillar 2: relentless perpetrator pursuit.

We will be unrelenting in our pursuit and disruption of perpetrators of violence against women and girls.

To do this we will:

- **Relentlessly pursue and actively manage and target the most dangerous and prolific perpetrators.**
 - Ensure that we have effective processes to proactively identify individuals who pose the highest risk of harm to women and girls, and actively manage those people to prevent or reduce offending.
 - Continue to develop and embed an integrated offender management (IOM) high-harm cohort and ensure adequate identification and tasking to enable the force to proactively disrupt and manage offenders. This includes ensuring that we flag serial VAWG perpetrators on the Police National Computer.
 - Conduct enquiries into any breaches of bail conditions or civil orders and, where appropriate, explore whether the actions of the perpetrator would amount to a further VAWG crime such as harassment or stalking.
 - Seek to make more effective use of the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme (DAPP) commissioned by the Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner.
 - Work with partners to consider a multi-agency 'whole system' approach to offender management to include education, prevention, diversion, disruption and enforcement tactics, including the use of electronic tagging.

- **Ensure better use of police powers to protect women and girls, and to manage and disrupt perpetrators.**
 - Increase use of protective and preventative tools and orders, ensuring that we monitor and govern our use of these in an effective, risk-assessed way.
 - Put measures in place to ensure that we use Stalking Protection Orders effectively in relevant cases.
 - Put measures in place to ensure we effectively apply the Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme (CSODS) – also known as Sarah’s Law - and the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) – also known as Claire’s Law.
 - Ensure that we respond to breaches with swift action and robust enforcement.
 - Continue to monitor data on children who are arrested as a result of child-to-parent abuse to reduce vulnerability and risks of future criminality.

- **Support victims through the criminal justice process and focus on evidence-led prosecutions where appropriate.**
 - Use specialist training to raise workforce understanding of the traumatic impact of violent and abusive behaviours on VAWG victims and survivors, including the prevalence and physical, social and emotional impact of trauma.
 - Continue positive engagement with specialist Independent Domestic Violence Advisers
 - Ensure evidence-led prosecutions are considered and used wherever appropriate.
 - Prioritise the examination of digital devices recovered from the victim-survivors of RASSO to reduce the impact on the victim and to enable the force to progress criminal investigation in a more timely manner.
 - Produce a learning package for front-line staff to raise awareness of the Victim’s Code and the lived experience of women and girls who have survived VAWG.
 - Promote the Victims’ Right to Review (VRR) scheme with victim-survivors to empower them to challenge where the police or CPS decide to take no further action against an identified perpetrator.

- **Enhance supervision of VAWG investigations to improve outcomes for VAWG-related offences.**
 - Increase the scrutiny of rape and high-risk domestic abuse offences through introducing mandatory oversight of investigations by an Inspector.
 - Establish greater scrutiny of those cases proposed for finalisation with evidential difficulties under outcomes codes 15 and 16.

- Ensure that we respond to VAWG-related incidents in accordance with a THRIVE (Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability, Engagement) risk assessment in all cases, and review any delay in police attendance at regular intervals.
- Put HARMS (Hazards, Alerts and Risks markers) on victims' addresses where appropriate to ensure that incidents involving those at most risk are prioritised.

Pillar 3: safer spaces

Women and girls in Warwickshire should be free and feel free to live their lives without fear of violence, intimidation or harassment at home, in public spaces and online.

To do this we will:

- **Work with partners to raise awareness amongst young men of the risks and impacts of VAWG and change poor behaviours before they escalate.**
 - Utilise creative and impactful technology, including Virtual Reality, to raise awareness amongst young men of the issues faced by women and girls in Warwickshire.
 - Explore the feasibility of launching Project Vigilant. This initiative, linked to the night-time economy (NTE), will equip police officers with enhanced training so they are better able to identify perpetrators who could pose a risk to women and girls.
 - Ensure increased use of data to identify target locations for location-based prevention activity, to inform offender management and to increase understanding of the most vulnerable victims.
 - Work with local partners in wider criminal justice, education and health to target prevention activity.
 - Assess online provision to enhance safety and confidence for women and girls and provide signposting, resources and tools via our own channels where we can.
- **Focus prevention activities on the most dangerous online, private and public spaces.**
 - Target activity at high-risk and high-harm locations to make them safer, including places associated with NTE and large capacity venues.
 - Refresh our policing approach for NTE to ensure there is sufficient focus on VAWG, and continue partnership initiatives to improve women's safety and raise awareness with key stakeholders such as taxi drivers and licensees.
 - Work with Community Safety Partnerships, Planning Authorities and Designing Out Crime Officers to ensure that safety issues related to VAWG are considered when designing new developments and to ensure that opportunities are maximised to create safer environments.
 - Leverage our responsibilities in licensing, traffic management and event-planning to insist upon effective measures by event organisers and licensees to help to prevent VAWG.

How will we measure delivery?

We will create a Violence and Against Women and Girls delivery group that will drive activity against this strategy. The chair of that group will report directly to the Assistant Chief Constable with overall responsibility for VAWG, within the Vulnerability and Exploitation Steering Group.

In turn, the work of that group will be held to account by the Chief Constable through the force's Executive Board in order to ensure full accountability, monitoring and scrutiny.

Version as at 28/7/23