



# Violence against women and girls Inquiry

**Report**

Summer 2022

# Contents

Foreword by Matthew Scott, Kent's Police & Crime Commissioner	1
Context	3
Big data highlights	4
Survey results	8
Actions already taken	11
Recommendations	14
Next steps and Governance	16
Making Kent Safer Police & Crime Plan	18

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# Foreword

## Matthew Scott, PCC for Kent

I am not only writing this foreword as the county's Police and Crime Commissioner, but as a husband and father of two daughters. I believe it is my moral duty to do everything I can to keep Kent safe for women and girls.

Tragic events have highlighted that more needs to be done to address cases of violence against women and girls nationwide. Tackling this is one of my key priorities in Kent's new Police and Crime Plan, called Making Kent Safer. I will be monitoring how the force deals with incidents, how offenders are brought to justice and how victims are being supported.

More than 8,200 people filled in my survey. It proved how strongly people feel about this: respondents told me they didn't feel safe in their town centres at night; they told me they viewed harassment as something to be endured, not reported; 63% of those who had been a victim admitted they had not reported the crime to any agency, often because they felt nothing would or could be done.

As well as the survey, I commissioned specialist analysis that will lead to a perpetrator problem profile using crime data held by Kent Police. This focused on male offenders and female victims for the purposes of this inquiry. Between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2022 there have been 49,055 male offenders, over the age of 18, and 56,358 different victims of violence against women and girls related crimes, including domestic abuse, stalking, harassment, sexual offences, and drink spiking. These statistics only include those women and girls who have reported cases to the Police, the actual figure will be significantly higher.

However, over the course of this inquiry, I have been encouraged to hear about the excellent work already going on to make women and girls feel safer in the county. My office has secured Safer Streets funding from the Government to provide several local safety partnerships with improved lighting, active by-stander training, safe space havens in local businesses and personal security devices. I have heard how one Community Safety Partnership is working with a local transport company to provide safe travel for women on nights out. Other Community Safety Partnerships and Kent Police have been promoting the use of the Hollie Guard app (designed to monitor a woman's journey and alert friends or family should they not arrive).

Personal safety training has been provided in some areas whilst increased and improved CCTV has been installed in others. This is all good progress and I hope sharing best practice county-wide will encourage others to develop their own strategies.

My office has also secured funding for a bespoke offender rehabilitation scheme, which although in its infancy, is confident of yielding encouraging results. I also welcome the new Kent police force strategy to tackle violence against women and girls. It is my job to hold the Chief Constable to account and I shall be monitoring the results of these changes closely. The series of engagement events, held with women and girls across the county, showed there was still work to do to re-build trust in some areas. However, this issue cannot be tackled by the Police, my office or local community safety partnerships alone.

We must continue to work together to achieve success across four key pillars: Prevention, Engagement, the Victim's Journey and Rehabilitation. Only then can we say we have done all we can to make women and girls feel safer in Kent. The Report below includes highlights from the data analysis of reported crime; my survey results; what work has already been undertaken, and some recommendations for partner agencies to consider.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'MPSA', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

# Context

The Inquiry was set up to create a legacy of partnership-working, designed to make Kent even safer for Women and Girls wherever they are. In the wake of several high-profile shocking events and a Government refresh of the national Violence against women and girls (VAWG) strategy, my aim was to work in partnership to understand what more could be done locally, including identifying gaps in provision, seeking ways of preventing these crimes and improving victims' journeys through the Criminal Justice System.

**Four pillars.** The inquiry focused on four pillars: Prevention, Engagement, the Victim's Journey, and Rehabilitation. The work was carried out with a wide range of partners.

**Themes.** We examined what victims told us, what the criminal data told us, criminal justice outcomes, what support was available for victims, as well as what we'd learned and best practice recommendations. The crimes we looked at included Sexual offences, Assault, Domestic abuse, Stalking, Harassment and Drink spiking, amongst others. We looked solely at cases involving female victims and male offenders.

This inquiry was built with partnership-working in mind. We consulted victims and witnesses, support services, partnership agencies and authorities.

Our thanks to everyone who filled in our call for evidence survey and for those who participated in our roundtable events.

**Process.** We published a "Call for Evidence" survey and promoted this through local media and social media. Its aim was to understand how safe women and girls felt in Kent, whether they had been a victim and whether they reported it. It ran from August 2021 until October 2021. Detailed analysis of the data highlighted areas of concern and careful logging of its free-text commentary provided additional substance and highlighted themes and trends. (November 2021 – February 2022)

A Steering Group of stakeholders was set up to guide direction and priorities, as well as to complete a Gap Analysis (August 2021). A Big Data exercise, carried out by i3 Analytics, was commissioned to look at victim and offender profiles and trends. Their work looked at ten years of data.

**Set piece events.** As the PCC, I held the Force to account through a specially VAWG tailored Performance and Delivery Board (September 2021). I discussed pertinent issues with criminal justice agencies at the Kent Criminal Justice Board. (September 2021). Several Roundtable events were held with different stakeholders, to listen to the variety of ways partners were tackling VAWG: discussions included how to improve provision for victims through commissioned services, as well as preventing misogyny through education. (September 2021 to February 2022).

Nationally there has been a significant change of pace to tackle what was described as an "endemic" issue by the Association of Police & Crime Commissioners and the National Police Chief's Council. The Government set out its plans through its VAWG and Domestic Abuse Strategies, with the NPCC's VAWG Framework being led by DCC Maggie Blyth.

# Big data highlights

In 2021 I commissioned i3 analytics to analyse 6 years of Kent Police data, specifically those crimes related to violence against women and girls, between 2016 and March 2022.

The analysis objectives were to produce a detailed problem profile of Violence against women and girls. Furthermore, it was to identify insights regarding trends, extents and patterns of repeat offending and victimisation, geographic profiles, and nominal characteristics. Seasons and time of day were also analysed, potential drivers of crime, and what crime looked like in different districts across Kent.

The key statistics coming out from the analysis identified 49,055 male offenders, over the age of 18, and 56,358 different victims of violence against women and girls related crimes, between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2022.

Since July 2020, almost three quarters of VAWG crimes were Violence without injury, Stalking, and Harassment. Rape and other sexual offences are far less common with 9%, with the remaining portion being Violence with injury at 17%.

When comparing volume and severity crime, the highest harm offences are low in number (e.g. Rape) with the most crimes being assault without injury, which brings with it a much lower level of harm, based on academic studies of harm caused by specific crimes.

Looking at time of year, spikes in recorded VAWG crimes in the Summer months between 2016 and 2021 were evident, except for 2019 for some reason. From this we can hypothesise that the hot weather does in fact contribute to crime increases.

Dispelling what we thought about lockdowns increasing VAWG crime, there was little evidence of substantial increases in police recorded domestic or non-domestic VAWG crimes during lockdowns. However, there was a short-lived uptick in crime in Summer 2020 before it fell again.

The data shows this was mostly non-domestic violence.

Differences in crime types were highlighted showing Stalking as the fastest growing VAWG crime since January 2020 when contrasting all crimes under the VAWG umbrella.

Investigating further into the criminal justice outcomes the data provides difficult reading. Taking Rape as an example, the percentage of cases where the victim does not support further action has increased to over 64%. Adding this to the approximate 30% resulting in insufficient evidence, means on average, Rape is only being charged or summonsed 4.3% of the time. The picture for other sexual offences is fractionally better, with 48% of victims not supporting and 7.5% of offences being charged. The highest percentage of cases closed due to insufficient evidence is seen in cases of Stalking and Robbery. Rape is a priority for Kent Police and our partners. Significant work together is being undertaken to improve these outcomes with full commitment to Operation Soteria, a national response to improving Criminal Justice Outcomes. Whilst much more needs to be done, there is early evidence of an improving picture. I will continue to represent the needs of victims by focusing on these improvements through meetings such as the Kent Criminal Justice Board and my Performance and Delivery Board which is held in public.

A very interesting finding, when focusing on VAWG crime demand on certain days of the week and times of the day, shows the primary time for VAWG crimes is early to mid-afternoon into early evening, especially mid-week. Tuesdays and Wednesdays saw the highest peak, but this then falls as you move through to the evening between Monday and Thursday. Night-time economy does not dominate peak crime rates and, in general, does not appear to be the **most** dominant driver. It does still account for 40% of all VAWG crime though, so it is still significant.

Breaking this trend down further into four crime types (Assault with and without injury, Rape, and Harassment) there are slight differences when these are perpetrated. Assault with injury evidences the closest link to the night-time economy, however assault without injury is seen in mid-afternoon nearly as much as Saturday nights. Although Rape does not have as clear-cut time or day effects, it is still common in the afternoon, whereas Harassment is almost exclusively an afternoon crime.

Focusing on seasonality demand, the 2021 crime volumes were highest throughout 2021 compared to previous years except for January, September and August 2020. The latter month saw the highest levels, which could be down to when society came out of lockdown for the first time.

Moving on to where crime is committed across Kent, there is another dispelling of a common perception. VAWG crimes are committed in the home more than 4 times as much as those on roads or streets. During the night-time economy hours, a higher proportion of crimes occurred in the home than at other times. Other locations were a part of the analysis, including bars, hotels, vehicles, public transport, and health settings.

When excluding Domestic violence crimes, the number of VAWG crimes occurring in the home was still approximately half of all crime.

Zooming out to look at comparisons across districts, it is evident VAWG crimes affect almost all areas in Kent, with town centres experiencing the most. Maidstone Town Centre is top and has been for several years as well as never being below 3<sup>rd</sup>. Thanet has 2 areas in the top 10, whereas Medway has 4. The top 10 LSOAs (Lower Layer Super Output Areas) for most crimes have remained similar across several years, however in terms of districts Medway has the most crimes. Looking at current crime trends and if they continue, Maidstone and Swale will take over Medway and Thanet as the districts with most VAWG crimes in the next 2 years.

Analysis of potential drivers of crime uncovered an interesting finding. A heat map was used, which clearly showed the areas with the highest concentration of pubs were also the areas with higher crime rates, although Tunbridge Wells is an anomaly here. When adding deprivation as a factor into the equation, there were strong links between high deprivation, high concentration of pubs and higher levels of VAWG. When delving into the link between age of victim and deprivation levels, the highest number of crimes are perpetrated by offenders in their early 30s, especially in deprived areas.

Looking at another driver of VAWG crime, temperature has a major impact on VAWG volumes with an increase of 40 crimes per day for every 10 additional degrees centigrade. High temperatures have a major impact specifically on those aged 30-35 with only moderate effects for other ages and little or none after 40. 25-29 dominate in colder seasons.

Another area analysed was the number of different victims per crime type. Looking at 9 different crimes, with majority being VAWG-specific, the number of overall victims seem to be reducing in the last few years, however Stalking and Harassment victims are increasing.

Age of VAWG victims was again under the spotlight. Those aged between 19 and 28 are most vulnerable to becoming a victim. Even though there is a gradual reduction in victimhood as you get older, those in their 30s are just as likely to be a victim as teenagers are. There was a spike in the data with 14–15-year-olds becoming victims; this is largely down to sexual offences involving children under 16. This only applies when including male offenders under 18 in the data.

Although age is a factor, it has been discovered that date of birth is a greater determinant of VAWG than age, especially among males in deprived areas. Every year peak offending has consistently been highest amongst those born around 1989, most especially those living in more deprived areas. Younger cohorts are not committing as many VAWG offences at the same age.

Continuing with the teenager theme, this cohort buck the trend slightly when it comes to crime location. Crime in the home dominates for all ages, however those girls in their early teens are victims more often in outdoor public areas and in education settings than their older counterparts.

Analysing the distances travelled between crime location and home picked up a very intriguing trend. 76% of all VAWG crimes either occurred in the home or within ½ mile away from the home of the victim, with very few crimes committed further than 3 miles away.

Another interesting fact is that, in general, offenders committing violent or Stalking & Harassment offences are more likely to commit a further offence within a year than sex offenders.

Looking closer at an offender's history of VAWG, there is a pattern emerging. Having the combination of Stalking & Harassment, Malicious Communications and Controlling and Coercive behaviour in a VAWG offender's history multiplies the chance of them committing assault with injury by 2.3x. 75% of these offenders also commit assault with injury.

A pattern is also apparent when looking at Rape. Having the combination of Harassment and Controlling & Coercive behaviour in a VAWG offender's history multiplies the chance of them committing assault with injury by 2.6x. 22% of these offenders also commit rape of a female over 16.

Location and severity of crime was then analysed. For victims who have the same address as the offender the most likely place to be a victim is at that location. When offenders and victims do not live together the victim's home is more likely to be the scene than the offenders. However, the opposite is seen when looking at severity of harm caused. The evidential pattern shows a higher chance of crime occurring in the victim's home but more serious crimes occurring at the offender's address. 3 out of 4 fatal and near fatal VAWG crimes occurred in a home.

Finally, when looking at how crimes are reported there are only slight differences between children and adults reporting habits. Understandably, there are higher numbers of third-party reporting by adults/carers/parents on behalf of children. There is minimal difference with online reporting.



Many sexual crimes and stalking are now reported via the 101 (non-emergency number) or online. More than a ¼ of rapes and 1/3 of other sexual offences are reported via 101. Stalking and harassment is reported most often via online or 101. This could present a risk of missed forensic opportunities, Kent Police has ensured robust recording and reporting processes are in place to ensure vital evidence is not missed when victims choose these methods of reporting.

## **Key conclusions:**

### **Location**

- Substantial proportion of VAWG is hidden behind closed doors at home, during the day
- Maidstone Town Centre has the highest concentration of VAWG and is attracting offenders from further afield than the other key hot spots
- Parts of Swale are becoming more problematic
- But Chatham/ Medway remains the area with greatest volumes

### **Offenders**

- 30-35 years old are now the leading offender group
- Year of birth is now a stronger determinant of violence than age, with 1989 being the peak birth year
- 10% of offenders are responsible for 63% of harm
- The presence of a small selection of crime types is linked with substantial increases in the risk of rapes or violence.

### **Victims**

- In deprived areas, up to 1 in 8 of those aged 25-30 are victims.

### **Weather**

- Increasing temperatures sparks much higher violence, especially among those aged 30-35 in deprived areas.

# Survey results

In August, I launched a survey to find out the extent of violence and abuse being perpetrated against women and girls in Kent, including online. I also wanted to know how safe women and girls felt in different aspects of their lives. The questionnaire was open for 3 months, during which time 8,263 people filled it in. This is an unprecedented number of respondents for a questionnaire launched by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and attracted answers from all age groups, ethnicities and districts.

## **We asked people how safe they felt at night and in the day.**

We divided this down into categories, for example in your local street, or in public spaces, e.g. railway stations, bus stations or in open spaces like parks.

Perhaps unsurprisingly all women and girls felt safer during the day. However, the survey suggests the older you are, the safer you feel in most places – ‘online’ being an exception.

According to our data, on average the ‘18-20’ cohort felt the least safe in 7 out of 12 places at night. However, if you compare different age groups during the day, it is the ‘17 and under’ cohort who feel least safe in 6 out of 12 places.

The ‘70 or older’ category felt the safest in 8 out of 12 areas, both during the day and at night.

## **We asked people what made them feel safer.**

We asked whether people took precautions to increase their sense of security and the majority did. Many people employed several measures, but the vast majority either kept to well-lit areas or walked home with someone; many avoided areas or kept to busier streets. **Less than 3% of respondents** (239 out of 8,184) **took no action**.

## **We asked if people had been a victim of crime in the last year.**

We accept that because of repeated lockdowns people have not been socialising as much as before, however we gave people crime types they could select from, for example: domestic violence, sexual assault, harassment, up-skirting, drink spiking, and online abuse.

The good news is that the majority of respondents had not been a victim of crime (69%), but that does not detract from the high number of people who said they had. Some have been a victim of several crimes.

Younger women were more likely to have experienced harassment.

## **We asked those victims if they had reported crimes to any organisation.**

Only just under 37% had reported these crimes. When asked why the others did not, the narrative repeatedly suggested they didn’t think they would be believed, or they didn’t think it would be taken seriously, or they felt it would have been too hard to prove, or it would have been her word against another’s.

## **We also asked people to tell us about their experiences and provide us with any feedback.**

We received overwhelming feedback in our narrative questions, and these have all been read by OPCC staff and has fed into this wider inquiry. Here is a selection of some of the responses in this field.

*"I was grabbed by a man while walking down the road and he grabbed me in places he shouldn't. When I tried to report this no one helped."* **17 and under, Maidstone.**

*"I was touched inappropriately in a club without consent, when I reported to club staff they said to take it as a compliment. Was a horrible experience and happens far too often, police should make efforts to train event staff for this sort of occurrence."* **21-29, Tonbridge & Malling**

*"From the age of 10 I have been constantly harassed on the streets, being shouted at, whistled at, followed."* **18-20, Tunbridge Wells**

*"I have been stalked, harassed, intimidated and groped, all done by white men, none of them faced consequences. The only time I tried to report stalking and feared for my life I was told that unless he 'does' something, police hands are tied. Should girls and women be stabbed and raped for their concern to be taken seriously?"* **30-39, Maidstone**

*"I am a survivor of historic rape. Even though I knew who raped me and I could give a detailed account of what happened, the CPS didn't take it to court because there was a lack of evidence. How is the percentage of rape cases going to court ever going to increase if the CPS don't give these kind of cases a chance for the jury to decide whether the perpetrator was guilty? I was 12 years old when I was raped – justice has not been served."* **50-59, Canterbury**

*"CPS need to be tougher on crimes."* **21-29, Thanet**

**We asked about our partner agencies, like local authorities, charities, and support groups. We wondered how these partners could improve services for women and girls in Kent.**

Again, we had a great deal of feedback on this matter. Here is a selection of comments which emerged:

*"My partner lives in Germany parts of the year and I go with him a lot. The streets there are all very well-lit and I feel this makes a tremendous difference and the streets have more going on, i.e. because people will go out in well-lit communities which in turn become safer communities."* **60-69, Thanet**

*"The courts I feel have not done enough to stick to their word. I have been in and out of court with my son over ten times and still not resolved due to the offender not turning up. They have not been dealt with appropriately and a year and a half later still not finished."* **30-39, Tonbridge & Malling**

*"...of all the stories shared with me, none of them have received justice through the system as the onus is on them to enter another traumatising environment, have a spotlight shone on their already fragile sense of self and lay themselves open for more attacks, on the basis of lack of clear cut evidence for crimes that are murky, multifaceted and don't stand up to a black and white approach. The system is not set up for victims of such crimes; so few people receive justice due to a lack of evidence."* **40-49, Tunbridge Wells**

*"Many eateries have the 'Ask Angela' scheme, something similar to this should be encouraged on public transport, not only between travellers and workers but commuter to commuter. We can all make one another feel more safe if we know what to look out for."* **21-29, Sevenoaks**

**We asked which public spaces should be improved to make women and girls feel safer.**

*The main themes that came up here were police presence, better lighting and CCTV in many areas across Kent.*

*Some examples were: Brenchley Gardens, Chatham High street, surrounding residential areas in many towns once people left the high street on nights out, Dane John Gardens, Albany Park, Cliftonville, Pencester Gardens, Ashford Town Centre, more staff at railway stations with open waiting rooms, Bus stations, Jubilee Square, Trinity Park, Whatman Park, Mote Park, Westgate Towers, Dartford Heath, alley ways and car parks.“*

**We asked how we better educate, at an early age, that violence is not acceptable in our society.**

Here is a selection of the responses:

*“...I believe that education at home and in school is key. This needs to be tackling basic prejudices and stereotypes around gender roles to breakdown toxic masculinity so that boys are encouraged from a young age to see girls as their equals. Microbehaviours need addressing early on - no more 'don't cry' to boys, no more 'you run like a girl', no more 'boys will be boys’” 40-49, Tunbridge Wells.*

*“Role play in health lessons, to demonstrate to boys how it is appropriate to talk/approach girls and for girls to voice how they feel in certain situations.” 21-29, Dover*

*“I would like agencies such as police, victim support etc to give talks in schools to show students what happens when crimes, especially sexual crimes, are reported. I think a lot of victims are still worried about reporting things to the police as they are worried about what will happen. We need to break down these barriers and reassure people that they will be treated fairly and with respect.” 50-59, Ashford*

# Actions already taken

Over the past year, agencies at a local and national level have taken actions to address violence against women and girls. We have seen legislative reforms that deal directly with domestic abuse and other offences against women and girls. There have been advertising campaigns, funding announcements and action plans. It is important therefore to recognise that some of the recommendations that this inquiry would have made, have already begun and are starting to make a difference.

## **Violence against women and girls strategy**

As a direct response to the launch of this inquiry, Kent Police has introduced a new strategy which deals directly with VAWG. It has five strands – holding offenders to account, supporting victims, keeping people safe, raising standards of professional behaviour, and strengthening systems of governance and partnerships.

## **Violence against women and girls forum**

Kent Police held engagement events across the county following the killing of Sarah Everard by a serving Metropolitan Police Officer. These reached over 1000 women and girls and gave them an opportunity to have their say on local safety issues and crime. This has led to the establishment of a regular forum which is giving the Force the opportunity to hear regular feedback.

## **HMICFRS Improvement Plan**

The independent inspectorate of policing, HMICFRS, recently identified issues with Kent Police's response to crime investigation and in particular, Domestic abuse. The Force has put together an improvement plan which will be scrutinised and the Force held to account for.

## **Officer verification checks**

If a member of the public requests it, an Officer must radio the Force Control Room to undertake an identity verification check. Officers are encouraged to be proactive in offering them especially if they feel someone feels uncomfortable asking for one. A reference number should be issued. If further verification is required, the reference should be verifiable by phoning 999.

## **New patrolling strategy**

As a result of the VAWG Survey, and feedback from the Force's work with women and girls, Kent Police's patrol strategy has been amended to increase visibility in those areas where women and girls tell them that they do not feel safe.

## **Street Safe tool**

There is a new national reporting mechanism for people to tell the Police areas where they feel unsafe, which is being used by the Force in conjunction with the new patrolling strategy.

## **Safer Streets funding**

The Office of the Kent Police & Crime Commissioner (OPCC) secured funding in partnership with Medway and Ashford Councils to run specific projects that are making women and girls safer. This has

included the street scene and physical interventions to improve feelings of safety, such as CCTV and lighting, signposting events, the establishment of safe spaces and active bystander training.

### **Kent Police Domestic Abuse Hub launched**

The Domestic Abuse Hub builds on from the Vulnerability Hub that has been in operation for a few years now. It will operate 7 days a week 8am – 10pm and will bolster the force's resource & responsibility to become a centre of excellence for operational Domestic Abuse matters. It will provide additional support to victims too.

### **Established Vulnerability Investigation Proactive Teams**

All divisions across Kent Police have already created their own Proactive teams - the new model will establish these teams and develop a consistent approach across the county, in line with the Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Action Plan.

### **Domestic abuse and stalking perpetrator programme**

The OPCC secured funding from the Home Office to set up a programme to change and challenge the behaviour of perpetrators of domestic abuse and stalking. This is being delivered by Interventions Alliance.

### **IDVA and ISVA funding**

Further funding (£664,540.39 for Kent) has been given to PCCs by the Ministry of Justice to provide vital independent services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault so that they can offer extra help to those in need.

### **Criminal justice scorecards**

The Government is now publishing scorecards showing how well local criminal justice areas are performing against key measures. These are publicly available.

### **NPCC VAWG Framework and action plans**

The NPCC has launched a new framework which focuses on how Police forces prioritise its violence against women and girls strategy. The three-year framework will initially focus on challenging sexism and misogyny and sexualised behaviour within all forces across England and Wales.

The three pillars of the framework are:

1. Build trust and confidence
2. Relentless perpetrator pursuit
3. Safer spaces

It focuses on the following themes:

- a. Respond unequivocally to allegations of police-perpetrated abuse. Learning from mistakes and best practice.
- b. To challenge and address sexism and misogyny in policing. Communicate immediately, clearly and frequently that misogynistic, sexist and sexualised behaviour will not be tolerated by anyone in policing.

- c. Involve VAWG organisations including charities supporting black and minoritised women and girls as well as individual women and girls with lived experience. Establish regular independent scrutiny of force performance in responding to VAWG.
- d. Collect consistent local and national information on availability of specialist and VAWG investigators to build the right capability and capacity. Complete an urgent skills gap analysis of the number of trained staff relative to current demand.
- e. Relentlessly pursue and actively manage and target the most dangerous and prolific perpetrators. Ensure processes are in place to proactively identify individuals who pose the highest risk of harm to women and girls and actively manage them to prevent or reduce offending.
- f. Better use of police powers to protect women and girls, and to manage and disrupt perpetrators. Increase effective use of protective and preventative tools and orders.
- g. Adapt a trauma aware approach at all levels, to better support victims through the criminal justice process, and focus on evidence led prosecutions where appropriate. Raise officer and staff awareness of how the trauma of violent and abusive behaviours can affect VAWG victims.
- h. Enhanced supervision of VAWG investigations. Develop a force process for enhanced and standardised supervision of VAWG investigations.

Kent Police is committed to supporting the NPCC framework.

# Recommendations

I would like to thank everyone who has taken the time to be a part of this review and for the suggestions that have been made. Some of these have already been actioned. But for all the good work that the Police, councils, and others are doing, people are still telling us that they want to see more. As such, the following recommendations are made by me the Police and Crime Commissioner for Kent:

## **Listening to women and girls**

I will look to continue with my Victims' Panel to listen to the views of women and girls and consult them on the response to crime, getting feedback on new proposals, commissioning strategies, education programmes, and the service provided by criminal justice agencies.

## **Holding to account**

In considering the mechanisms through which different agencies can be held to account for their response to violence against women and girls, I will use my position as Chair of the Kent Criminal Justice Board to agree a shared data set and terms of reference so that those agencies responsible for delivering justice can hold and be held to account. This data will be published quarterly after each meeting.

## **Victim satisfaction surveys**

Kent Police currently runs three victim satisfaction surveys – domestic abuse, rape and hate crime. Data on the service offered to other victims is therefore not available. The Annual Policing Survey has a limited amount of information from victims. As part of the re-tendering of the main Victims' Service contract, I will make sure that there is an independent victim satisfaction survey as part of this contract. This will test victim satisfaction across all crime types and provide a specific report on VAWG.

## **Supporting men and boys**

It is disappointing that men and boys do not have their own national strategy and are included within the violence against women and girls definition. I will hold the system to account for the service they provide to male victims, commission services to help them, and campaign for a separate men and boys national strategy.

## **Performance audit**

Every six months, an audit should be published using publicly available information and data held by criminal justice agencies showing how well they are performing for victims of crime, and specifically VAWG. Bringing together official published data, criminal justice scorecards, victim satisfaction surveys and criminal justice outcomes. This will be published for all to see and be an opportunity to assess whether further VAWG inquiries need to be held.

## **Schools intervention programme**

One of the most common recommendations made was to increase the amount of education on VAWG in schools, and at an early age. With education, I will commission a schools intervention programme which will focus on VAWG, violent crime and online harm and charities and other organisations will be invited to bid to run this.



**Further commissioning**

In addition to the proposal for a schools intervention programme, my office will make further funding available for VAWG-related projects and encourage Community Safety Partnerships to use the existing funding they receive from my Office to run local VAWG initiatives.

**Victim Champion training**

There is low public awareness of the rights that victims of crime have and how they can exercise them. We will raise awareness of the Victims' Code and key opportunities to challenge criminal justice agencies with a training programme called Victim Champion, which will bring all of these issues together. Delivered in the community, it will enable neighbours, councillors, and others to support one another.

**Street Safe tool outcomes**

The success of reporting mechanisms like StreetSafe isn't just the number of reports that people are making, but the results which come from it. Local agencies should work together to provide regular updates on what action has been taken as a result of the concerns reported via Street Safe.

# Next steps & Governance

A Victims' Panel has been set up, with the help of commissioned victim services, to obtain views from those with lived experience of VAWG crimes. A group of volunteers shared their experiences, with a view to helping services improve for future victims. This feedback has been shared with Kent Police and partners who provide a service to victims, so that we can all identify and share good practice, as well as identify areas where service delivery could improve. Their views mirrored some of those expressed in the larger survey undertaken last year.

We will introduce a wider independent victims' survey, so we capture feedback from even more victims.

Below are some common themes from the Victims' Panel:

1. **Lack of communication from authorities (including Police and CPS). When there is an update it does not come across as meaningful (believe it was a tick box exercise every 28 days with 'update is no update').**
2. **Victims felt the burden of proof fell on them.**
3. **Victims felt as traumatised, if not more so, by the criminal justice process as the crime(s) themselves.**
4. **Lack of clarity on what the Police can and cannot do – managing expectations needs to be improved.**
5. **No consideration or flexibility to work around victim's life. It is the victim that must work around the system regarding timing and location.**
6. **Perception the system favours the suspect rather than the victim.**
7. **It feels like the CPS plays ping pong with their cases.**
8. **Investigating evidence on victims' phones is disproportionate to the case and victims reported feeling more stressed because their phones were taken for long periods.**
9. **Belief that their first interview or ABE is their 'one shot' to get it right but if testimonies/statements differ between statements then it is seen as the victim is lying or changing their story. (Need more trauma-informed training).**
10. **Perception that Police decide there will be NFA due to lack of evidence too quickly.**
11. **A common belief that there is unconscious bias and that more training needed.**
12. **Legislative changes needed to bring CJS into 21st Century.**

**Perpetrator Problem Profile.** Holding perpetrators to account for their behaviour will be key to making women and girls safer. A detailed analysis of Kent Police offender data has been commissioned to build a perpetrator problem profile in Kent. This will be presented to the PCC and Kent Police Chief officers soon. It is hoped the findings will provide further insight into the extent of VAWG crime in Kent. Moreover, it is hoped the data will highlight areas where proactive and prevention work can be carried out, as well as informing offender management processes.

**Kent Police is trialling a new role: Domestic Abuse Liaison Officer.** The role is currently being piloted in one area of the county. The DALO's impact will be assessed and considered by Chief Officers who will make a decision as to whether to roll it out further. The piloted role:

- provides consistent and coordinated support to safeguard victims most at risk from repeat offending, especially those reticent to engage.
- responds swiftly in response to incidents, working in tandem with OICs to secure golden hour evidence from victims, including video evidence
- carries out bespoke victim needs assessments and maintain contact in accordance with victims' needs and wishes

- signposts and deploy a full range of appropriate IDVA services
- carries out hidden harm visits to repeat victims to ensure safeguarding and arresting offenders where appropriate
- refers into and engage fully with MARAC, MATAAC and MASIP processes.

**I will utilise an action plan to hold the force to account** for the delivery of relevant recommendations, as well as the performance of work in their new VAWG strategy. The Association of Police and Crime Commissioners have built an action plan to hold organisations to account. This action plan will be incorporated into our work to keep track of performance against different areas of business.

**This report will be a living document** and a platform to work from to improve the safety and fear of crime of women and girls across Kent. The coordination of all activity under the VAWG umbrella will be managed by a coordinator in the office to work closer alongside the force, charities, and criminal justice agencies.

**Using statutory meetings as a way to hold to account.** VAWG will be a significant part of the report the Chief Constable presents to me at my quarterly Performance and Delivery Board. I will continue to update the Police and Crime Panel on this inquiry work even after the report has been published to lay out how my office and the force are working towards tackling VAWG in all its guises.

# Making Kent Safer Plan on a page

## Making Kent Safer 2022-2025: The Plan on a Page

### Integrity and transparency:

Highest standards of integrity and transparency to strengthen public trust and confidence

### Guiding principles:

- Crime is important no matter where it takes place - urban, rural or coastal communities
- Victims and witnesses at the heart of everything we do
- Ensure that vulnerable people and those suffering mental ill health get support from the right agency



### My priorities for the Chief Constable are to:

- Work with residents, communities and businesses to prevent crime and antisocial behaviour
- Tackle violence against women and girls
- Protect people from exploitation and abuse
- Combat organised crime and county lines
- Be visible and responsive to the needs of communities
- Prevent road danger and support Vision Zero
- Protect young people and provide opportunities



### As the Police and Crime Commissioner, I will:

- Hold all agencies to account for the delivery of an effective and efficient criminal justice system
- Work in partnership with the police and others to prevent crime and antisocial behaviour
- Be responsive to emerging issues and trends through innovation
- Secure the funding that Kent needs through specific grants and the funding formula review
- Support volunteering
- Commission services for victims that are needs-led



### Delivered in the context of national expectations:

- The Strategic Policing Requirement
- National Crime and Policing Measures
- Policing Vision 2025
- Legislation

