



PUBLIC ASSURANCE MEETING

REPORT TITLE	VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (VAWG)
REPORT BY	CHIEF CONSTABLE
DATE	3 NOVEMBER 2021

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- To update the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) on the force activity to tackle violence against women and girls.
- To provide the PCC with an update on action taken to address issues raised from the conviction of Wayne Couzens, a serving Metropolitan Police Officer, recognising the impact this has had on trust and confidence in our communities, and especially within women and girls.

ATTACHMENTS

None

RECOMMENDATIONS

To determine if the PCC can gain direct assurance that this area of business is being prioritised and being managed efficiently and effectively.

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1. OVERVIEW

- 1.1 The rape and murder of Sarah Everard by serving Metropolitan Police Officer, Wayne Couzens brought into sharp focus the significant issue of violence, abuse, and intimidation against women and girls that is still very much present in our society. As the court case proceeded, the true nature of Couzen's actions became clear, recognised in the ruling of a whole life sentence. He had used his position as a police officer in order to facilitate his crimes. This has damaged the trust and confidence in policing from all communities, but most significantly among women and girls.
- 1.2 Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) covers many aspects of policing, where women and girls are disproportionately affected, for example domestic abuse. These areas are all led by senior leaders. Earlier this year, the force created a specific workstream of VAWG to bring all aspects together, working to the Deputy Chief Constable Kate Meynell, led by Chief Superintendent Tracy Lewis. Progress is reported to the PCC on a regular basis. This report will cover the on-going work. However, it will also feature the more recent activity, taken to reassure women and girls, in direct response to the conviction of Wayne Couzens and the impact his actions have had.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A number of significant publications have been produced in the past few months relevant to this work. In July the Home Office released its 'Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy' strategy. In September HMICFRS released their report 'Police Engagement with Women and Girls Inspection' and the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) have produced a VAWG strategy for policing. In addition, the HMICFRS recommended NPCC create a full-time chief officer position to lead VAWG work across policing in the UK. This position is now in place with DCC Maggie Blyth commencing in the role in early October 2021.
- 2.2 There is significant impetus nationally to tackle VAWG and this has been mirrored within the Constabulary, and across the partners in Derby and Derbyshire, fully supported by the PCC.
- 2.3 More recently, the force has undertaken specific activity internally and externally to provide reassurance to women and girls in the county. It has sought to ensure any lessons from the case within the Metropolitan Police are applied within force. There are a number of nationally commissioned reviews and the force is working with NPCC so that when the information is known, the learning can be taken back into the force.
- 2.4 From November the force will utilise a Chief Inspector as a full-time position to support and co-ordinate all of the force's relevant activity.

3. LOCAL POLICE RESPONSE TO VAWG

- 3.1 The force has a comprehensive plan to tackle VAWG and is currently working to develop a countywide multi-agency strategy. An overview of key aspects of the force's local plan will now be outlined below.
- 3.2 **Information and Intelligence Gathering**
- 3.3 Police have access to a wealth of data to understand where incidents and crimes against women and girls are taking place, both in private and in public. Information is taken from

the force's incident and crime recording systems and is used together with information from local officers and partners to identify hotspots.

3.4 The monitoring of trends is supported by access to a new force "Power BI dashboard" for VAWG and issues are discussed at local and force performance meetings and partnership Boards such as the county Safeguarding Children Partnership, Adult Safeguarding Boards, Domestic and Sexual Abuse Governance Board and Safer Communities Boards.

3.5 To improve the force's understanding of VAWG, positive steps have taken place this year including:

- Gender-Based Hate Recording - In April 2021 the force launched its own programme around gender-based hate, recognising this as an issue. Gender-based hate and misogyny are not yet formally recognised as hate crimes in legislation and are not recorded in all forces. However, Derbyshire recognised the impact gender-based hate could have, especially if based in misogyny, on the impact of feelings of safety of women and girls in the city and county. Since this date it has recorded over 50 reports. This includes instances which have been investigated and recorded as crimes which might not have been reported to the force had it not adopted this approach. Other instances have been recorded which have not met the threshold of a crime but which have been very frightening instances for women. In these cases, the force has been able to provide reassurance and access to victim support services.
- StreetSafe Portal – In August, the Home Office launched this new national anonymous reporting tool for women and girls to report places where they had felt unsafe, either due to the environment or because an incident had taken place. The force accesses this information daily to help identify if any immediate action is needed and in time, the information can be analysed to help influence future police and partner activity.
- OPCC Public Survey – police have worked with the OPCC to develop a public survey, to be launched in November, which will ask Derbyshire residents to share their thoughts on and experiences of violence, including the identification of locations where they feel less safe.

3.6 Safety Initiatives

3.7 Using information and intelligence, the force directs its activity towards identifiable hotspots together with local partner agencies. Recent activity includes

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- Safer Streets Bids – the force has worked closely with the OPCC and partners this year to help prepare bids for the national Safer Streets funding grant. At the beginning of October, the force learnt that Derby City had been successful and as such, £550,000 will be invested in to around 15 initiatives in the coming months to help improve feelings of safety e.g. lighting improvements, investment in CCTV, awareness raising campaigns and creation of Safe Spaces in communities.
- SWAN fund – the outcome of a separate bid will be known in November which if successful would see funding provided to both Derby and Chesterfield for dedicated night-time economy patrols, to help identify and support vulnerable women on a night out and target males that appear to be acting inappropriately.

- Op Wintershield – this is a new initiative for this Winter and whilst still in the planning stage, will see additional police patrols targeting hot spot locations for where more serious violence can occur.
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- Neighbourhood Safeguarding Team initiatives – the force’s neighbourhood and safeguarding officers continue to work on a number of other initiatives with key stakeholders to improve safety such as:
 - Safeguarding Hubs – in night-time economy locations which provide a place for females to go to if they find themselves stranded, need to re-charge their phones, require first aid, or need help to get home safely.
 - Taxi marshal and street pastor schemes which assist vulnerable people out in the night-time economy
 - Pub watch and hotel watch schemes, including work with Trading Standards at premises thought to be allowing exploitation to take place on their premises and vulnerability training to door supervisors.
 - “Ask for Angela” and “Angel Shot” initiatives which allow females to pass code words to others if feeling unsafe and in need of help.
 - Awareness raising campaigns e.g. drink-spiking, “intoxicated” campaign, University “Drink Aware” and Peer support schemes
 - Op Scarlet – police working with partners to support street workers and take enforcement action against male offenders.
 - Homelessness Project – police and partners working together on a range of interventions to support a cohort of 31 homeless females, most of whom have been victims of domestic abuse in their past.
 - Provision of police radios to staff monitoring local CCTV
 - Weekly briefings to all officers on night-time economy patrols to look out for and support vulnerable females and identify any males acting inappropriately.

3.8 Assistance to Vulnerable People

3.9 Whilst no one should have to take steps to feel safer going about their daily lives, a number of tools and services are available to help give people added reassurance. These include:

- Standard and medium risk domestic abuse victims are contacted by the force’s Neighbourhood Safeguarding teams. Victims are telephoned, written to, or visited and help is offered. High risk victims receive specialist support from the force’s Public Protection Unit.
- High risk and many medium risk domestic abuse victims are referred for specialist support from the county’s Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs)
- Vulnerability boxes can be issued to high risk victims including alarms, cameras and mobile phones and home security surveys can be arranged through the Sanctuary in the city and Safer Homes in the county.
- Apps such as Hollie Guard and TecSOS are promoted to people that may need to call for assistance when feeling threatened or unsafe.
- The force’s external website contains a wealth of information and advice to support vulnerable people.

3.10 Capacity and Capability

3.11 The force recognises the adverse impact living with domestic abuse can have, both for the victim, who are disproportionately women, and any children residing within these environments. Domestic abuse is a force priority. Officers and staff adopt a stance of

'positive' action when dealing with such incidents. This removes the onus for victims to support prosecutions and instead focuses on the actions of the perpetrator, pursuing evidence led prosecutions wherever possible.

- 3.12 Dedicated specialist investigators within the Constabulary's Public Protection Unit lead on the investigation of high-risk domestic abuse cases. These cases are also managed through a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), whereby statutory and non-statutory agencies work together to increase the safety of adult victims and children. Currently there are 1615 cases being actively managed through MARAC. A review is currently underway to ensure the MARAC arrangements remain as effective and efficient as possible.
- 3.13 The force has invested in improving its approach to domestic abuse risk assessments through the introduction of a Domestic Abuse Review Team (DART). In line with authorised professional practice, the new team ensures that following the initial response to an incident, research is undertaken to inform a secondary risk assessment that considers cumulative risk. In doing so, it prevents dealing with incidents in isolation, improving the overall quality of risk assessments by identifying escalation. Furthermore, the unit takes a proactive role in referring, where appropriate, to partner agencies. This team will be fully operational from 15 November 2021.
- 3.14 Following a review, in May 2021, the force made changes to its operating model in relation to rape investigations. As a result, non-recent rape investigations are now undertaken by local detectives based within the Criminal Investigations Department (CID). Recent rape investigations (within 31 days of report) together with high-risk domestic abuse cases remain within the Public Protection Unit for investigation. The purpose of these changes is to improve the quality of investigations by maximising the allocation of investigations across a broader number of detectives. A post implementation review is currently underway, however initial qualitative assessments has shown an improvement in terms of the timeliness of case progression, quality of investigator updates and supervisory oversight and direction. These changes are being monitored closely due to an increase in demand trends since the model's inception, which has seen a 30% increase. However, analysis over a 12-month period demonstrates a 9% increase in reporting for Derbyshire which is lower than the national trends which highlight a 18% increase. Relevant to violence towards girls is the forces review of its response to child protection arrangements. This has resulted in re-establishing dedicated child investigation units in February 2021 whereby reports of child abuse are undertaken by a team of specialist child abuse investigators, which was seen positively during a recent HMICFRS inspection. In addition, a full review of the forces approach to online child protection has been undertaken, resulting in a new operating model and additional resources within this area of policing which has seen a 77% increase in demand since 2017. Lastly, in relation to children at risk of sexual exploitation, the force is currently restructuring its approach to improve the consistency in the forces approach to missing and exploitation.
- 3.15 **Training and Guidance**
- 3.16 The force is committed to building capability across the workforce to identify and respond to areas of vulnerability. Resources have been dedicated to coordinating the development of specific vulnerability training that shall see various strands converge, including domestic abuse, stalking and harassment and child protection and neglect. Meanwhile, the force has and continues to deliver Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability and Engage (Thrive+), DA Matters and Stalking and harassment training across the force.

- 3.17 From an investigative perspective, investment has been made in upskilling investigators on rape and serious sexual violence offences (RASSO) in conjunction with the Crown Prosecution Service. Virtual training inputs have included areas such as Director General Guidance version 6 concerning disclosure requirements, forensic and trauma informed approach as well as myth busting surrounding RASSO investigators.
- 3.18 Furthermore, internal guidance has been refreshed and developed via a new vulnerability portal and the development of a child protection practitioners guide, which considers the learning following a recent child protection inspection.
- 3.19 **Investigative Standards and Scrutiny**
- 3.20 The Forces Achieving Excellence in Investigations Board focuses on improving investigative standards, identifying themes and areas of focus in line with new and emerging practice or legislation, as well as in response to the results from quality assurance assessments. There has been a renewed focus on ensuring quality assurance audits are qualitative and extend their focus beyond the investigation to incorporate safeguarding. The introduction of Divisional Investigative Process (DIP) teams bring together staff from specialist and non-specialist department to review cases and share learning and perspectives, reinforcing a one team approach to responding to vulnerability.
- 3.21 The force continues to work collaboratively with partner agencies to ensure a joined-up approach to tackling violence against women and girls. In relation to domestic abuse, sexual violence and child protection, well established governance arrangements are in place across Derby City Adults Safeguarding Board, Derbyshire and County Adults Safeguarding Board and the Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership. In addition, the force has strong working relationships with the Crown Prosecution Service. Within these arrangements' various scrutiny panels, some of which are independently chaired, provide scrutiny in relation to our response as a partnership.
- 3.22 In relation to rape investigations, a strategic rape profile has been undertaken to provide insights in relation to the trends and potential opportunities to improve our approach. As a result, this has highlighted an opportunity to re-engage victims after 3 months of reporting, to determine their wishes and feelings to support an investigation. This practice is reinforced by victim service guidance and in response an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) who's role is to provide support for victims throughout an investigation and any subsequent prosecution, is being embedded within the investigation teams to pilot this approach.
- 3.23 The force is committed to keeping pace with good practice and assessing its current position to seek opportunities for improvements. For example, a peer review was commissioned in relation to the forces approach to stalking and harassment, whereby a number of recommendations were provided. These have been absorbed into force governance arrangements for progression.
- 3.24 **Offender Management**
- 3.25 The force has a specific work stream which focusses on the Management of Offenders which is led by a Detective Superintendent. Also, the force has dedicated offender managers who proactively assess and manage the risk posed by sexual and violent

offenders through Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).

3.26 Committed to reducing repeat victimisation and serial offending for the long-term, in May 2021, the force commenced its DRIVE programme. This is a perpetrator focused programme which aims to reduce the number of repeat and new victims of domestic abuse. It focuses on early intervention, proactively developing disruption plans together with diversion support, to drive behavioural change. Currently, 26 individuals have been adopted onto the programme however this is due to increase up to 100. As a force we are also actively engaged with wider partnerships and other perpetrator schemes have been commissioned in conjunction with the County Council and OPCC such as intuitive thinking and Kick-It which is an anger management programme.

3.27 **Victim Support and Interventions**

3.28 The force has invested in a dedicated Domestic Abuse Intervention Management (DAIM) unit, which focuses on working with repeat victims of domestic abuse. Its aim is to reduce the risk of victimisation through adopting of a problem-solving approach to break the cycle of abuse. This heavily focuses on coordinating partnership support, which may relate to housing, substance misuse support, employment, or family support. Since commencing in November 2020, 54 victims have received intensive intervention via DAIM, of which there are currently 26 open cases. Although a relatively new initiative, there has been 78% reduction in calls for police service overall across the cohort to date. Additionally, since 1st October 2021, the units focus has now extended to include serial and repeat perpetrators which are not high-risk and therefore fall outside of the DRIVE programme. This seeks to ensure intervention is targeted at those causing repeated harm.

3.29 As a force, Derbyshire are proactive when maximising the use of protection orders, noticeably Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs). During the last 12 months, a total of 173 DVPNs have been authorised. These provide additional control measures to safeguard victims of abuse including enforcement opportunities should perpetrators breach such orders. Both partnership and internal force scrutiny panels provide forums for DVPNs and domestic abuse investigations to be quality assured. Attended by the Crown Prosecution Service, this forum proactively reviews the quality of investigations together with the use of protection orders to ensure they are appropriately considered and sought.

3.30 In addition, the force has focused on increasing awareness surrounding Stalking Prevention Orders (SPOs). The force has delivered training to operational officers and senior authorising officers to ensure SPOs are considered during investigations and importantly progressed efficiency. Training has incorporated legislation, power of search and the homicide timeline, which is also being delivered to all call operators. This specific training is being delivered by Professor Jane Monkton-Smith (Professor of Public Protection) and consists of 5 modules.

3.31 The force has seen a significant increase in reported stalking offences, the first rise in April 2020 when the National Crime Recording Standards (NCRS) crime rules changed, seeing a realignment from harassment to stalking and again after the tragic non-domestic homicide in June this year of a local resident Gracie Spinks.

3.32 A significant level of work has been undertaken to promote the reporting of stalking offences in Derbyshire, this has seen a rise to 11 reports per day leading to a significant increase, (nationally a 43% increase has been evidenced). The force is now seeing some

benefits to the hard work of officers and staff with support from the public, with a 100% increase in SPO submissions to the courts between July 2021 and September 2021, compared to the previous 18 months.

- 3.33 Finally, in relation to engagement with communities and victims, during the pandemic the force introduced domestic abuse virtual surgeries to ensure open lines of engagement and advice could be provided. 16 events saw 525 participants join the live chat with 184 questions raised and answered. This practice has continued and been adopted to provide another way of engaging with victims. This content resulted in a social media reach of 170,500 impressions and 3394 engagements. In addition, the force has made further developments in gaining feedback from victims of domestic abuse, through a specifically tailored domestic abuse user satisfaction survey. Also, guidance provided to frontline officers when signposting victims to domestic abuse has been simplified to ensure victims have clarity over the support services available and true consent is obtained. Overall user satisfaction data relating to domestic abuse has seen an increase this year from 84.9% to 85.3%.

4. INTERNAL STANDARDS - REASSURANCE

4.1 Communication

- 4.2 Following Couzen's conviction the force responded with internal and external messages recognising the impact on public confidence and the need for policing to work to regain the trust and confidence lost. This messaging is on-going. The force has provided officers and staff with guidance to support them to create safe and reassuring interactions with women and girls. The force recognises that the onus must be on its officers and staff to create that safe environment and not on the women or girl they are interacting with. The force does not routinely deploy single crewed male officers in plain clothes in unmarked vehicles, however, recognises there could be a very rare occasion when this might happen. Specific guidance in that circumstance has been issued to provide reassurance and also to seek for alternatives to that where possible. This includes using their radio to speak to the control room to identify themselves, calling other colleagues to their location etc. However, these instances are very rare.

- 4.3 We are taking a proactive and robust stance on publicising our action following any internal cases of sexual misconduct. This is intended to provide transparency and reassurance that we take these matters seriously.

- 4.4 We are working closely with our partners to ensure that messaging around acceptable behaviour in the workplace is consistent, and we have focused specifically on stalking and harassment. The force is providing them with some material for their workforces. The force recognises that it needs to demonstrate that it takes positive action in all cases of VAWG, not simply focus on its staff, to improve confidence and encourage reporting. We are maximising opportunities of cases where positive action has been taken against those committing VAWG, including domestic abuse, rape, and gender-based hate crime.

4.5 Vetting

- 4.6 The force follows the national Authorised Professional Practice for vetting. Regular checks are in place around this and it reports through the head of the Professional Standards Department (PSD) to the DCC. There are various levels of vetting in the force with different review timescales and the DCC oversees this compliance. HMICFRS are due to inspect

the force Vetting compliance with APP at the end of the year.

- 4.7 Transferees are vetted thoroughly and the force has rejected some transferees on the basis of vetting – reporting back to their host force the concerns raised. There are additional aspects that can trigger a vetting review, such as a change in personal circumstances, movement to new roles requiring higher levels of vetting, or a misconduct investigation. Where circumstances dictate, conditional vetting can be imposed that takes account of relevant changes, or if identified risks cannot be safely managed by this method, vetting clearance will be withdrawn.
- 4.8 **Professional Standards Department**
- 4.9 The force recognises the impact any allegation which relates to VAWG against its officers and staff can have on trust and confidence. PSD ensures there is oversight of any allegations and that criminal aspects are considered where appropriate, along with misconduct investigations and both the aspects of abuse of position for sexual gain, along with sexual harassment are key priority workstreams within the department, subject to bespoke action plans. There are a number of instances where officers have been dismissed for such actions. For example, recently a former officer was sentenced to 12 weeks imprisonment, suspended for 12 months, for harassment without violence towards a female colleague in the workplace. Other recent examples include two special constables who were dismissed for sexual comments about a colleague on 'WhatsApp'. Both had resigned but the force continued with the misconduct hearings. We are taking a proactive and robust stance on publicising our action following internal cases of sexual misconduct where legislation and other legal restrictions allow. This is intended to provide transparency and reassurance that we take these matters seriously. It is worth noting that all officers who resign from the force before the misconduct procedures are finalised are still subject to those procedures as "former officers". This is so that in the event of a finding that they would have been dismissed as had they still been a serving member of the force, they are entered onto the "barred list" held by the College of Policing. This prevents them finding employment in the police family elsewhere or in the future, the same as officers who are dismissed whilst still in service.
- 4.10 There is regular review and oversight of any allegations relating to VAWG through the DCC to ensure a consistent robust approach to investigation and misconduct. Criminal investigations will always take priority over misconduct in the first instance. In every case where a criminal investigation has been initially pursued, irrespective of its final outcome at court, PSD will review the allegations and follow a misconduct investigation where the circumstances would support this.
- 4.11 **Culture**
- 4.12 As can be seen from the examples above, we cannot say that misogyny does not exist within the force, however much we believe the most serious behaviour to exist only within the minority of staff and officers, we know attitudes in society and therefore policing still need change to bring about true equality. The force is committed to dealing with this as part of the wider change needed to tackle VAWG.
- 4.13 The profile of the workforce is changing with over 40% of officers now being female and over 60% of police staff. However, in senior positions for both officers and staff it is still disproportionately male. The force is committed to improving this, and its recruitment of

under-represented groups and has work programmes in place to do so.

- 4.14 There will be work undertaken to raise awareness of misogyny and sexist behaviour and staff and officers will be encouraged to challenge this and report it. This work is not intended to isolate male colleagues but will be focused on using them as advocates of change and positive behaviour. ACC Dave Kirby as the senior #HeforShe has a key part to play in this. The force will utilise best practice in other forces, and other industries and take these lessons into our own workplace. The Chief Constable is committed that the force has an inclusive workplace which delivers inclusive services to its communities.

5. SUMMARY

- 5.1 The force recognises the impact its approach to VAWG has on feelings of safety and confidence in women and girls. It has been undertaking work on this for some time, working with partners to help bring about the change needed. It recognises the responsibility does not simply sit with policing, but policing plays a key role in this. The force also recognises the damage recent national events have had to trust and confidence in women and girls and has taken steps to repair this.