

Meeting	SPA Policing Performance Committee
Date	9 December 2021
Location	Video Conference
Title of Paper	Police Scotland Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)
Presented By	DCC Graham, Crime and Operational Support
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	No

PURPOSE

This paper provides an update and reassurance of ongoing work to improve our efforts to tackle VAWG in all its forms. It also further outlines our commitment to build on existing public trust and confidence, through delivery of systemic and sustainable change across the organisation.

Members are invited to discuss the contents of this report and to note the actions in progress.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The murder of Sarah Everard and the findings of a recent Employment Tribunal have given rise to internal and public concerns. The legitimacy of policing and unacceptable behaviours impact upon trust and confidence.
- 1.2 Whilst significant work has been undertaken over many years to develop our response to VAWG in all its forms, recent events have provided a focal point for increased public interest. Police Scotland has made tangible progress, in tackling VAWG, however, events have highlighted the need to continually improve our response, in collaboration with others.

2. FURTHER DETAIL ON THE REPORT TOPIC

- 2.1 The events present an opportunity to reinforce our commitment and improve our focus. This paper outlines the strategic intention to deliver systemic and sustainable change to ensure a gender-competent workforce capable of recognising gender inequality, whilst delivering an uncompromising contemporary response to VAWG.
- 2.2 We continue to engage with internal and external partners to address the development of strategic and co-ordinated communication and engagement. As an organisation, we remain focused on addressing any bias which might undermine our commitment to gender equality. There are a number of key work streams being progressed under Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and these matters are reported via separate governance.
- 2.3 As an immediate response to the concerns raised following the sentencing of Sarah Everards killer, we introduced the officer verification process, which has been welcomed by the public. Key stakeholder feedback has been supportive especially as Police Scotland were proactive, prompt and took responsibility. Some stakeholders see this case as a catalyst for wider societal reform as opposed to solely a policing matter.
- 2.4 On Monday 11 October 2021, we launched the Police Scotland '*That Guy*' campaign, focusing on male sexual entitlement and misogynistic attitudes, which act as enablers to serious sexual offending. It launched across a variety of platforms on social media, supported by a dedicated mini-site (www.that-guy.co.uk). To date, the campaign has been a resounding success having been viewed

by 2.8 million Twitter users and shared millions of times via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. It has been extensively reported by print and broadcast media in the UK and across the globe and Police Scotland has been commended for their innovative and radical approach to the issue. The response from both stakeholders and the public has been overwhelmingly positive. The campaign has stimulated conversations and generated discussions around VAWG, turning the narrative away from preventative advice to women, towards focussing on men's behaviour which enables serious sexual offending. Partner agencies and wider UK law enforcement have engaged with Police Scotland to support development of their own campaigns within their respective areas and jurisdictions.

- 2.5 Key stakeholders in the VAWG network have advised they are keen that Police Scotland consider an approach which is broader, systemic and sustainable. They seek gender competence across policing, not restricted to certain areas such as tackling domestic abuse or a reaction to a particular case. The concerns raised by partners are compatible with previous engagement and approaches to shaping our services in response to societal challenges.
- 2.6 An opportunity exists to review, refresh and renew our existing approach and improve upon it. The current approach is aligned to the Scottish Government *Equally Safe Strategy to eradicate violence against women and girls* and the NPCC Strategy to Tackle VAWG, which are also subject of review following recent events.
- 2.7 At the formation of Police Scotland in 2013, Public Protection structures were identified and implemented across Local Policing Divisions and specialist national functions within Specialist Crime Division (SCD). Those structures have continued to serve the communities of Scotland well, however, the demand has increased in terms of volume and complexity. Crime profiles have radically altered, creating challenges in terms of offending methodologies, alongside wider public service capabilities and expectations.
- 2.8 As previously highlighted, Police Scotland has made significant progress in tackling VAWG, however, there is much more that can be achieved to ensure we effectively protect the most vulnerable in our communities. It is clear that the shifting and increasingly complex landscape requires the service to change and adapt, to enable us to respond appropriately and effectively. Policing is, fundamentally, Public Protection, however the growing demand in terms of policing response to the abuse and exploitation of people,

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creates challenging decisions around resources, prioritisation and funding.

- 2.9 In response to the foregoing, a comprehensive review of the national policing response to Public Protection was commissioned. Following initial scoping and planning work, it was agreed that the work should be broader than a review of demand, resources and structures. As such, this will become a programme of work to improve national and local approaches, enabling us to continue to adapt and respond to shifting demand and vulnerabilities. A 'Public Protection Development Programme' Programme Board has been developed to ensure appropriate governance and work is commencing on internal and external engagement and communication. The work will be developed under the strategic leadership of SCD Public Protection alongside Local Policing.
- 2.10 Concurrent to this, work has commenced on the development of a Police Scotland strategy to tackle VAWG. Police Scotland recognise the impact of broader societal issues and the need for attitudinal and cultural change. Policing cannot address the challenges of VAWG, misogyny, sexism and discrimination in isolation and effective partnerships in prevention and education will be critical to the success of any strategy. We constantly evaluate our approach and seek learning and best practice. As such the strategy will be developed in consultation with key stakeholders. This will ensure it is gender competent, whilst addressing vulnerabilities including those outside the scope of recent high profile events but which, equally, require our attention.
- 2.11 Prevention will be a significant element of the strategy and our Partnerships, Prevention and Community Wellbeing (PPCW) portfolio are leading on preventative action on behalf of Police Scotland in conjunction with strategic partners. Police Scotland has a pivotal function to play in primary, secondary and tertiary prevention, much of which can be influenced by societal change. The priority, along with our partners, is to engage with our communities, understand concerns, perspectives and barriers to delivery and thereafter adopt a Whole System Approach to addressing and maintaining community confidence.
- 2.12 Police Scotland provided a written response to the Scottish Government's ongoing Misogyny and Criminal Justice in Scotland Working Group, chaired by Baroness Helena Kennedy QC. The group was established to build a picture of the experiences of

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women and girls in Scotland and to independently consider how the wider Scottish Criminal Justice System deals with misogyny.

2.13 PPCW are liaising with stakeholders through established governance routes. Recognising that VAWG is a complex matter, given there is considerable intersectionality across our communities which might prevent reporting and/or put individuals at further risk, PPCW are prioritising an inclusive approach. This includes focusing on seldom heard groups and maximising engagement.

2.14 In addition to the Officer Verification Scheme outlined previously, our response includes:-

- Key stakeholder engagement, including strategic and co-ordinated communications.
- Public Protection Strategic Board, chaired by DCC Crime and Operational Support, will be established, in line with other Strategic Priorities in the Policing Plan, to ensure an appropriate focus on priorities, resource and capacity, governance and continued effective partnership working.
- Public Protection Development Programme, a Detective Superintendent has been appointed to undertake a comprehensive review of our approach to tackling VAWG and other areas of vulnerability. The programme of work, whilst in its infancy, is ambitious but is predicated on careful listening to, and hearing, public and partner concerns and expectations.
- A calendar of activities and calls to action, in support of the 16 Days of Activism campaign (25 November 2021 to 10 December 2021), to end violence against women and girls.

2.15 In terms of emerging issues, in recent months we have seen increased public concern in respect of reported instances of spiking by injection across the UK. This heightened anxiety follows from, and builds upon the recognised concerns surrounding VAWG as seen in the media and protests. It centres on the need for people – predominantly women and girls, to both feel safe and be safe in public spaces.

2.16 In response, Police Scotland implemented a command structure, to ensure effective coordination of policing activity and links with strategic partnerships internally and externally. The priority of this work was to understand the scale and nature of the 'spiking'

problem and ensure delivery of a consistent and professional policing service to support victims. A focus of the work is also to contribute to the wider societal solutions to creating safer spaces, promoting wellbeing, and crime prevention through participation at the Scottish Government Round Table event and partnership engagement.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 As outlined in the detail, the Public Protection landscape has altered considerably. There is evidenced growth in both volume and complexity of crimes, occurring within public, private and virtual space environments. The increased reporting may, in part, be attributed to increased public trust and confidence in the policing response, coupled with a proactive approach to policing VAWG. Whilst a business case will be developed by the Public Protection Development Programme, it is clear from the outset that improving our response will require commitment and significant investment. Such investment, in terms of finance and resource, will enable a focus on developing a proactive approach to tackling VAWG supported by effective partnerships, prevention strategies and technology.

4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Strategic Workforce Plan outlined a number of areas within Public Protection, both within National and Local Policing, which required increased capacity to manage demand. A number of areas of significant risk have seen significant growth in demand, with subsequent demand on finite resource. Our victim-centred, perpetrator focused approach is resource intensive and this requires to be recognised across all areas.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Scottish Government have already introduced a number of changes to legislation and the Criminal Justice process to improve the national response to VAWG. A number of future legislative changes are also under consideration. Police Scotland are appropriately engaged in the legislative change process and committed to the safe delivery of new legislation or procedural change which supports the work to eradicate VAWG, recognising that such change brings additional demand and associated financial implications.

6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Police Scotland is committed to ensuring public trust and confidence and enhanced confidence in our policing response to VAWG is reflected in increased reporting. It is recognised, however, that there is more that can be done. The continued demonstrable commitment to delivering systemic and sustainable change to improve our approach to tackling these issues will further enhance public and partner trust and confidence.

7. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Police Scotland aspire to be a catalyst for societal change in attitudes, behaviours and actions towards preventing VAWG. We acknowledge the current and ongoing anxieties and the crisis of confidence which has been clearly articulated across the country and beyond. Whilst Police Scotland has demonstrated a commitment to delivering a quality service to victims and witnesses, the issues outlined in this paper remain at the forefront of public discourse. Policing alone cannot address VAWG in isolation, however delivery of a wide ranging and contemporary response will allow us to build on existing public confidence and drive meaningful societal change.
- 7.2 There exists a genuine appetite for change within our communities and the reputational risk of a failure to act cannot be underestimated. It is imperative therefore that our response considers intersectionality and caters to the diversity of all women and girls in Scotland, hearing and understanding their bespoke experiences.

8. COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 8.1 VAWG presents increased risk to local communities if the issues are not addressed efficiently and effectively. Notwithstanding the reputational risk to Police Scotland, we require to continue to meet current and future demand, working in partnership to drive societal change, reducing VAWG in our communities

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Police Scotland recognise the need for attitudinal and cultural change to address the challenges of VAWG, misogyny, sexism and discrimination, both within our organisation and the communities we serve.

10. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

10.1 N/A

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are invited to:

1. Note the actions in progress as highlighted within this report.
2. Acknowledge the need to drive improvement in this critically important, challenging and high profile area of policing.
3. Acknowledge, support and endorse the actions and future investment requirements, recognising the fundamental link between public trust and confidence in our response and the success of this work.