

Meeting	SPA Authority Meeting
Date	19 January 2022
Location	By video Conference
Title of Paper	Violence Against Women and Girls
Presented By	DCC Graham
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	No

PURPOSE

This paper provides an update of ongoing work to improve our efforts to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls in all its forms. It 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 paper and members to note and support progress to date, and actions in progress.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Since the inception of Police Scotland, there has been a clear organisational commitment to tackling Violence Against Women and Girls, with a number of areas including rape and sexual crime, domestic abuse and child protection, recognised and designated as force priorities.
- 1.2 Significant work has been undertaken over many years to develop our response to Violence Against Women and Girls in all its forms, however, the murder of Sarah Everard and other high profile events have given rise to widely reported public concerns at UK level, and provided a focal point for increased public interest. Whilst Police Scotland has made tangible progress in tackling Violence Against Women and Girls, these events have further highlighted the need to continually review and improve our approaches.

2. FURTHER DETAIL ON THE REPORT TOPIC

- 2.1 The events require us to refocus, to demonstrate our continued willingness to listen and respond to victims' voices, and to reinforce our commitment to tackling Violence Against Women and Girls in collaboration with key stakeholders. 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 effective contemporary response to Violence Against Women and Girls.

Public Communication and Engagement

- 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 and there are a number of key work streams being progressed under our broader Equality, Diversity and Inclusion work.
- 2.3 As an immediate response to the concerns raised following the sentencing of Sarah Everard's killer, Police Scotland introduced the officer verification process, which has been welcomed by the public. Key stakeholder feedback has been supportive, particularly 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 In autumn 2021, the Police Scotland 'That Guy' campaign focused 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 2.9 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.
- 2.5 The campaign stimulated conversations and generated discussions around Violence Against Women and Girls, turning the narrative away from preventative advice to women, towards focusing on men's behaviour. Police Scotland subsequently supported a number of partner agencies and wider UK law enforcement in the development of their own campaigns within their respective areas and jurisdictions.
- 2.6 Key stakeholders in the Violence Against Women and Girls 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.
- 2.7 An opportunity exists to review, refresh and renew our existing approach and improve upon it. Whilst Police Scotland has made significant progress in tackling Violence Against Women and Girls, we recognise there is much more that can be achieved to ensure we effectively protect women and girls.
- 2.8 The current approach is aligned to the Scottish Government *Equally Safe Strategy to eradicate violence against women and girls* and the National Police Chiefs' Council Strategy to Tackle Violence Against Women and Girls, which are also subject of review following recent events. Work has commenced on the development of a bespoke Police Scotland Strategy to Tackle Violence Against Women and

Girls, to ensure women and girls are respected and live free from all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation and harassment. The strategy will recognise the impact of broader societal issues, the need for attitudinal and cultural change and seek to inspire and influence change through education, intervention, prevention and the robust pursuit of perpetrators.

Collaborative Approach

- 2.9 Policing cannot address the challenges of Violence Against Women and Girls, 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.
- 2.10 Police Scotland also recognise the importance and need to listen to, and act upon, survivor feedback and over recent years have made significant efforts to ensure appropriate engagement with survivor groups across the Violence Against Women and Girls network.
- 2.11 Since 2016, the Police Scotland National Rape Review Team have worked closely with Rape Crisis Scotland to provide a qualitative review process in respect of survivor feedback. This was developed to coincide with the implementation of the Rape Crisis Scotland National Advocacy Project, to provide an opportunity for survivors to speak independently and provide qualitative data on their experience in dealing with the police. Once captured, the data is interpreted to inform our national response to survivors of rape and provide a basis to identify good and bad practice and identify areas of improvement in the investigation of sexual offences.
- 2.12 In 2021, the National Rape Review Team and Rape Crisis Scotland worked closely to review and further develop the process and consequently formulated an improved question set to enrich the qualitative information provided. A robust governance process is in place to maintain an oversight of divisional responses to feedback, particularly where negative feedback identified specific learning opportunities or particular trends, to ensure an improved quality of service was achieved.

Feedback on Performance

- 2.13 Since April 2020, Police Scotland have received feedback from 358 rape survivors, 77.5% of which was positive, in respect of our communication and engagement, explanation of the process, support provided and compassion/empathy demonstrated by our officers.
- 2.14 In November 2021 Rape Crisis Scotland released a report by survivors of rape, sexual violence, and abuse. The Survivor Reference Group report detailed experiences of Police responses to reports of sexual crimes and outlined recommendations aimed at transforming survivors' experiences of reporting sexual violence.
- 2.15 The Chief Constable met with some of the survivors involved in the creation of the report and thanked them for sharing their views and experiences. He acknowledged the report and confirmed Police Scotland's support for a number of the recommendations relating to policing and his commitment to continued collaborative working, to improve the response to victims and survivors.
- 2.16 To ensure the feedback process also captures learning in respect of wider Violence Against Women and Girls, Police Scotland is leading a multi-agency working group.
- 2.17 This includes a wide range of victim survivor groups and support services, particularly in domestic abuse, forced marriage and stalking and harassment, to establish a structured pathway for victim/survivor feedback.

Creation of External Reference Group

- 2.18 To build on this, an External Reference Group will be established to inform discussion around strategic direction, ensuring the views of key stakeholders, including victim support services representatives, are captured. Terms of Reference are currently under development and will provide an opportunity for the Group to offer well-informed and effective challenge and guidance around strategy development and implementation. The External Reference Group will be convened prior to the end of the financial year, and will also allow discussion on future ways of enhancing the voice of current experiences of victims in shaping our standards, actions and policy direction.

Prevention

- 2.19 Prevention is a significant element of the strategy and our Partnerships, Prevention and Community Wellbeing 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.
- 2.20 There are a number of additional impacting factors, including the enduring public health crisis, which influence both the development of the strategy and a holistic and comprehensive review of the policing response to all vulnerability.
- 2.21 The COVID pandemic has impacted upon every area of life in Scotland. It has also, however, engendered positive change in how statutory and non-statutory organisations operate, with evidence of creative and innovative approaches across organisational boundaries and increased collaborative working. The benefits of strong partnership approaches will continue to be maximised in the development of the strategy. Demand and crime profiles have radically altered, creating challenges in terms of offending methodologies, alongside wider public service capabilities and expectations.

Increasing Complex Demands

- 2.22 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 the policing response to Violence Against Women and Girls and indeed all abuse and exploitation of people, creates challenging decisions around resources, prioritisation and funding.
- 2.23 In total, 7,519 sexual crimes were recorded (year to date up to Q2) of 2021/22, compared to 6,629 for the same period the previous year, an increase of 13.4 % (890 Crimes). Detections also increased by 6% for the same period (225 crimes).
- 2.24 Of these, the number of rapes reported increased by 12% (132 crimes): 1229 rapes have been reported (as at Q2), compared to

OFFICIAL

1097 for the same period of 2020/21. Detections for the same time period in 2021-22, were at the highest level over a six year period, up 69 detections (11.4%) compared to last year. The number of detections is 16.4% higher than the five year average and currently stands at 54.8%.

- 2.25 It is of note that since the inception of Police Scotland in 2013 to March 2020, reported rapes and attempted rapes increased by 27.1% from 1808 to 2343.
- 2.26 This is testimony to the work undertaken to improve our response, particularly in respect of investigative structures and processes. In addition, it is reasonable to assess increased confidence in reporting such crimes.
- 2.27 In terms of domestic abuse, tackling this issue, remains a priority for Police Scotland and we are committed to working with our partners to reduce the harm it causes and ultimately eradicate it.
- 2.28 In total, 65,251 domestic abuse incidents were recorded in 2020/21, compared to 62,907 in 2019/20, an increase of 4%. This represents an increase in incidents each year for the past 5 years.
- 2.29 Of these, the number of charges reported to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service with a domestic abuse identifier increased by 9%. 33,425 charges have been reported compared to 30,718 in 2019/20. In 2020/21 1660 crimes under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 (DASA) were recorded by Police Scotland, with a detection rate of 95%. Detections for 2019/20 were 69%.
- 2.30 In terms of online child sexual abuse and exploitation, demand continues to increase exponentially. Based on 2021 Q3 performance statistics, 1,412 online child sexual abuse crimes were recorded an increase of 12% on the five year mean.
- 2.31 Online child sexual abuse and exploitation referrals to Police Scotland have also increased significantly over the last 3 years. Having received 1961 in 2018/19 we have seen an increase of 24% increase (2422) in 2019/20 and a further 28% increase in 2020-21 with 3,111 received. In this period 2,498 Suspect investigations were generated from these referrals and 759 Child at Risk packages. Each child at risk package represents a child that's been protected.

- 2.32 Since 1 September 2020, Police Scotland online child sexual abuse and exploitation enforcement teams have undertaken action in respect of 1226 of the suspect investigation packages generated from these referrals. This has resulted in the apprehension of 586 individuals and 1081 children protected.
- 2.33 Police Scotland lead a Multi-Agency Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Group, working with key partners including the Scottish Government, statutory and third sector organisations, to share learning and deliver collaborative preventative and educational messaging.
- 2.34 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 Violence Against Women and Girls 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.
- 2.35 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 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.

Public Protection Development Programme

- 2.36 In response to the foregoing and in addition to the development of the strategy to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls, 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' Board has been established to ensure appropriate governance and work is commencing on internal and external engagement and communication. The work will be

delivered under the strategic leadership of our Specialist Crime Division Public Protection business area, alongside Local Policing.

- 2.37 Police Scotland have engaged with and 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 women and girls in Scotland and to independently consider how the wider Scottish Criminal Justice System deals with misogyny.

Sex Equality and Tackling Misogyny

- 2.38 The Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Human Rights Strategic Oversight Board chaired by DCC Taylor has been taking forward significant work, including the establishment of an Independent Reference Group, during the course of last year, and this has separately been reported to the SPA.
- 2.39 This Board has recently endorsed proposals for next steps in further improving sex equality and tackling misogyny within Police Scotland. DCC Graham will lead on this work as the executive sponsor and create a strategic working group of senior leaders to co-ordinate activity and develop an associated action plan. This will also include key involvement of relevant staff associations.
- 2.40 The ambition is to create a workplace that is respectful and inclusive of both sexes (and by extension all protected groups) recognising that service delivery to the public is enhanced by a diverse and representative workforce supporting our communities.
- 2.41 The Service will seek to tackle barriers that have a foundation in sex that result in a disproportionate negative impact, particularly on women. We also seek to ensure that our workforce is accountable for its attitudes and behaviours, rooted in our values of fairness, integrity, and respect which will ensure an inclusive culture and enhance our interactions with the public. The first meeting is scheduled to take place on 17 January 2022.

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 Violence Against Women and Girls. 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 Violence Against Women and Girls 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 substantial 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 Violence Against Women and Girls. 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 Violence Against Women and Girls, 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 Violence Against Women and Girls 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 Violence Against Women and Girls. We acknowledge concerns which have been articulated about the whole justice system response, and are committed to enhancing our structures for hearing and responding to the views and experiences of victims. 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 cannot address Violence Against Women and Girls 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. It is imperative that our response considers intersectionality issues, those from different marginalised or minoritised groups, and caters to the diversity of all women and girls in Scotland, hearing and understanding their bespoke experiences.

8. COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 8.1 Violence Against Women and Girls presents increased risk to local communities if the issues are not addressed efficiently and effectively. Notwithstanding the risks to Police Scotland in terms of public confidence, we require to continue to meet current and future demand, working in partnership to drive societal change and reduce Violence Against Women and Girls in our communities

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Police Scotland recognise the need for attitudinal and cultural change to address the challenges of Violence Against Women and Girls, misogyny, sexism and discrimination, both within our organisation and the communities we serve. Fundamentally, this is an equalities issue, and prevention will be most likely to succeed within a broadly more equal and inclusive, diverse society.

10. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no Environmental Implications.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are invited to discuss the contents of this paper and members to note and support progress to date, and actions in progress.

1. Acknowledge the need to drive improvement in this critically important, challenging and high profile area of policing.
2. Acknowledge and support the actions and future likely investment requirements, recognising the fundamental link between this work, and public trust and confidence in our response. This includes the establishment of an External Reference Group and the Public Protection Development Programme.