



Meeting	Policing Performance Committee
Date	18 September 2024
Location	Video Conference
Title of Paper	Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy – Progress Update
Presented By	ACC Steve Johnson, Major Crime Public Protection and Local Crime
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	No

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to provide the SPA Policing Performance Committee members with an update on the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.

Members are invited to discuss the content of this report.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Police Scotland has made significant improvements to its service and approach to tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG) since publishing our VAWG strategy in 2023. This places the victim at the heart of prevention and detection of crime through embedding trauma informed practice, by listening to voices of victims and survivors and by upskilling our workforce.

These improvements are designed to be continuous and delivered in multi- agency partnerships to ensure an appropriate and inclusive approach in line with our values and ethics while recognising the gendered nature and impact of such violence. Some examples of cross cutting work include training partners to use the Partner's Intelligence Portal (PIP) which captures valuable information to develop a rich picture of VAWG in Scotland, the embedding of trauma informed practice and listening to and acting on women and girls experience of the criminal justice system and how we can improve what we do. This paper briefly outlines our recent progress on how we tackle and use our influence to deter, divert and detect VAWG.

2. DOMESTIC ABUSE

- 2.1 We are making strong progress against the recommendations made in the HMICS thematic inspection of domestic abuse (published 2023). We have discharged two key recommendations relating to enhancing our response to domestic abuse at first point of contact, with training developed and delivered to police control room officers and staff. The introduction of a new crime recording system (UNIFI) and updates to existing systems (iVPD) are allowing us to progress efficiently towards greater national consistency on how victim safety planning is delivered and recorded and how perpetrators are managed.
- 2.2 We acknowledge that the impact of Covid-19 on police training means that a generation of frontline officers has not been provided with essential Domestic Abuse Matters training. Funding has been approved for additional training to be delivered by the end of March 2025. In consultation with SafeLives, six new domestic abuse CPD modules have been developed and published for officers to complete. These focus on DASA, Multi-agency working, Cybercrime, South Asian Women, Children and Trauma. All CPD modules are shaped and underpinned by the lived experiences of victim survivors of domestic abuse.

- 2.3 We have launched a Victim Survivor Feedback portal on our website to capture experiences of people engaging with the police when domestic or sexual abuse has been perpetrated against them. We promote this locally and nationally through our partners to enhance learning and understand where we can improve.
- 2.4 We have worked alongside Hemat Gryffe Women's Aid to develop and deliver an animated video, which aims to provide support to female migrants who may not be aware they are immediately protected by law from abuse and exploitation as soon as they enter Scotland. This video has been launched and translated into six languages. Work is ongoing to develop a follow up video.
- 2.5 We convene a quarterly national domestic abuse forum with senior detective officers and representatives from our key partner agencies whereby best practice, operational challenges, legal and thematic developments are discussed. This provides a regular route for partner agencies to feedback on our service delivery at senior levels in the police.

3. CHILD PROTECTION

- 3.1 In response to the Evidence and Procedure Review, a national team of experienced officers and social workers developed a new approach to joint investigative interviewing, Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM), in line with national and international research and best practice evidence. This trauma-informed model of practice incorporates an evidence-based interview protocol and is underpinned by specialised training for practitioners and ongoing professional development for interviewers. Multi-agency partnerships led by Social Work and Police drive forward work locally in line with agreed quality standards. Feedback from children and families is crucial in ongoing development and strengthening well evidenced model.
- 3.2 Police Scotland are supporting development of Scottish Government's Barnahus or Bairns' Hoose through local partnership development work as Pathfinder or Affiliate areas and also nationally, to create a consistent approach and response in terms of interviewing equipment for Video Recorded interviews (VRIs) to improve the trauma-informed approach to dealing with and supporting children and young people who have experienced significant harm.

4. NCAIU-ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION (OCSAE)

- 4.1 After review, we have implemented a new shift pattern to combat Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, reduce impacts on local policing resources and provide a specialist response for child victims, the majority of whom are girls. We also revamped a structured investigative response to OCSAE referrals, including internal PSOS referral mechanisms providing specialist support, which has resulted in numerous successful operations targeting those perpetrating High-Harm OCSAE.
- 4.2 Our quarterly Multi Agency Prevent OCSAE group is focussing on new innovation, public safety awareness, and recognition of streamlining media activity and campaigns. A key aspect is ensuring VAWG and Tackling Online Child Sexual Abuse (TOCSA) strategies/outcomes are interrelated as trends around OCSAE can help make informed assessments and decisions regarding VAWG strategies. The group are currently supporting a proposed Sextortion campaign and are considering media campaigns and assessments around the Artificial Intelligence phenomenon and how this may affect OCSAE crime and victims.

5. SEX OFFENDER MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 There was an increase of 7.6% in Registered Sex Offenders (RSO) in Scotland in 2024, around 68% of whom were policed in the community. This is a 5.7% increase for the same period 2023.
- 5.2 Sexual re-offending rates of RSOs remain low and while we can never eliminate risk, Police Scotland continues to work closely with partners under Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) using robust risk assessment processes and latest technologies, to ensure we effectively manage risk. In addition, Police Scotland proactively police Sexual Harm Prevention Orders (SHPO) that impose conditions/prohibitions on certain RSOs living within the community.

6. RAPE AND SERIOUS SEXUAL CRIME

- 6.1 Our award winning 'That Guy' and 'That Guy2' media campaigns are entering the third phase. The campaigns have featured on national television, were shown on billboards at Hampden Stadium during the League Semi- Final and have been translated and aired in numerous countries. The messages are designed to drive a culture

change in men's attitudes towards women and to prevent sexual crime.

- 6.2 Work is ongoing to enhance our workforce to ensure we are trauma informed. Police Scotland are working closely with Dr Caroline Bruce, to develop training to our SOLO's, SIO's and other specialist roles.
- 6.3 We are working with COPFS, Victim Support Scotland and Rape Crisis Scotland to establish how we can work better together to improve a victim's journey through the criminal justice process. Work is ongoing to examine attrition rates to establish when victims disengage from the criminal justice process and to identify why. We are working with a number of survivors to obtain their lived experience.
- 6.4 Improvements have been made to Visionally Recorded Interviews (VRI's) and upskilling our Sexual Offence Liaison Officers (SOLO's) to use the VRI equipment whilst also cascading organisational learning from COPFS about the VRI pilot schemes that have gone through court. The upskilling also includes trauma informed training. This will allow a victim's evidence in chief to be captured by the SOLO's.
- 6.5 We have worked closely with COPFS VIA team to improve our compliance rate for submitting Victim Strategies after an accused is reported for rape and sexual crime. This piece of work allows a smooth handover of information by Police to COPFS about any vulnerabilities a victim has and also how they want to be contacted to ensure that victims receive the support they require at every stage of the Criminal Justice Process.
- 6.6 We have issued guidance and revised question sets to our service advisors and call takers in relation to victims of sexual crime which includes the importance of a trauma informed approach, forensic capture and risk assessment to include both victims and suspects.
- 6.7 We are improving training for front line response officers about the use of sexual offences early evidence kits. This will provide officers with video tutorials on how to use and store the kits and samples in order to capture that crucial evidence.
- 6.8 We are ensuring organisational learning is captured and shared with Senior Investigating Officers (SIO), through national SIO forums and also National SOLO forums.

- 6.9 In March 2024, we hosted a national CPD event at the SPC, which included presentations about Non-Fatal Strangulation and Gender Based Violence (GBV) within education settings. The event was well attended by SIO's, COPFS, Scottish Government and NHS and received positive feedback. We also had a number of survivors who were keen to know more about our training.

7. HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION

- 7.1 We are a lead agency working with Scottish Government and committed to tackling exploitation as GBV and strategically influencing not only our workforce but also our national and international partners. Police Scotland have a global influence in this field beyond our geographical reach due to concerted efforts over the past few years to tackle this crime.
- 7.2 In June 2023 at the Scottish Crime Campus, Police Scotland hosted the Santa Marta Summit to tackle modern slavery across the UK. The summit brought together senior law enforcement leaders, third sector partners and civil society with a shared vision to identify and prevent human trafficking and exploitation and pledge to work together to bring perpetrators to justice. Due to the success of the summit, An Garda Siochana hosted the second summit in July 2024.
- 7.3 We provide training and guidance to officers with changes in reporting systems to recognise women who have been exploited in prostitution and work in partnerships with victim care providers to rescue and support them. International Joint Investigation Teams have been set up with Romanian and Bulgarian authorities to investigate trans-national exploitation of women. Partners are amplifying voices of women through survivor advisory groups to actively inform and improve our practice.
- 7.4 Two Romanian Police Officers were seconded to us in 2024 funded by the Home Office Modern Slavery Fund. We worked together to tackle sexual exploitation of Romanian women and to help our officers understand barriers to women's engagement with criminal justice processes. A media campaign is in development to support this work in the UK and Romania. Furthermore, we have engaged directly with the Albanian, Brazilian, United States, ROI and Romanian Embassies and law enforcement to develop international cooperation on tackling trafficking and exploitation.
- 7.5 National Referral Mechanism (NRM) trafficking victim referrals to Police Scotland continues to rise sharply. 2024 YTD saw a 36% increase in referrals. The number of women and girls reported to be

in slavery has risen by 61%. We engaged with the Trafficking Awareness Raising Alliance (TARA), who have established a lived experience group made up of women who are survivors of human trafficking with a view to them presenting to Police Scotland.

8. PROSTITUTION

- 8.1 The Scottish Government Strategy on their approach to deterring men's demand for prostitution and supporting the recovery of those involved in prostitution was published earlier in the year. We are working closely with Scottish Government and other key partners in setting up Support Hubs across Scotland which will tackle the issue.
- 8.2 To combat significant underreporting of sexual and violent crime by women involved in prostitution, a Single Point of Contact has been established within our National Public Protection Team for National Ugly Mugs (NUM), an organisation who support women involved in prostitution and who operate a concern reporting and sharing service. NUM staff have been trained on Partners Intelligence Portal (PIP) which is a system that allows organisations to share intelligence with Police Scotland directly using a portal on our Police Scotland internet page.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no financial implications in this report.

10. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no personnel implications in this report.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no legal implications in this report.

12 REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 There are no reputational implications in this report.

13. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 There are no social implications in this report.

14. COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 14.1 There are no community implications in this report.

15. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

15.1 There are no equality implications in this report.

16. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

16.1 There are no environmental implications in this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are invited to discuss the content of this report.

