



Association of  
Police and Crime  
Commissioners

# **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS**

## **ACTION PLAN 2022-23**



# APCC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (VAWG) ACTION PLAN 2022-23

**Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)** has been brought into sharp focus by recent tragic and high-profile cases, however these are neither isolated incidents nor is VAWG a new challenge. In 2021, the Office for National Statistics reported that 32% of women over the age of 16 had experienced one form of harassment over the last 16 months<sup>1</sup>. A 2021 Ofsted report found nearly 90% of girls were sent explicit pictures to either themselves or their peers<sup>2</sup>. VAWG is endemic, and currently the system is failing to tackle these crimes effectively.

Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) are challenging the system to do better and driving positive change through the delivery of high-quality commissioned services to protect women and girls through prevention, challenging offending behaviour and where crime does occur delivery of vital victim and survivor support.

However, PCCs recognise that a whole system approach is needed which draws together partners from across the board to affect change, and we hope to lead the way. PCCs want to see an end to all violence against women and girls in both public and private spaces.

This action plan sets out the actions and key deliverables that the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) will take forward, working with and through PCCs and their teams and with wider partners, to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls. Throughout this plan we define VAWG as any act of violence, including non-physical violence, perpetrated in public, private or online spaces against women and girls.

<sup>1</sup>Office for National Statistics, 'Perceptions of personal safety and experiences of harassment, Great Britain', 24 August 2021, All data related to Perceptions of personal safety and experiences of harassment, Great Britain: 2 to 27 June 2021 - Office for National Statistics

<sup>2</sup>Ofsted, 'Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges', 10 June 2021, Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))



## OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this Action Plan is to:

- Support and develop co-ordinated PCC activity to tackle VAWG across our APCC portfolio areas, helping PCCs to deliver against the Government's national VAWG strategy and local police and crime plans.
- Ensure our work is closely aligned with that of key national partners - including the Home Office, Ministry of Justice, National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), Local Government Association, third sector partners and more widely.

## OUTCOMES

The Action Plan seeks to achieve the following outcomes:

1. **Deliver a system wide approach to tackling VAWG** - working effectively with partners at a local and national level.
2. **Prevent VAWG from happening in the first place** - by developing a public health approach to tackling VAWG including through education and awareness raising.
3. **Support PCCs to:**
  - a. **Commission quality victims' services** to ensure victims get the support they need.
  - b. **Commission effective interventions**, diversionary and rehabilitative programmes for perpetrators to create lasting behavioural change.
4. **Hold police and criminal justice agencies to account** for delivering an effective, supportive and timely criminal justice service for victims and offenders, driving improvements where needed.
5. **Build public confidence in policing**, supporting women and girls to feel able to report VAWG, and putting women, girls and victims at the centre of decision making.

## SOURCES AND EVIDENCE BASE

The Action Plan draws on a number of sources including recommendations made in national reviews and reports; APCC priorities identified through our portfolios and our VAWG working group; PCC priorities within local Police and Crime Plans; the Government's Beating Crime Plan and VAWG and domestic abuse strategies; and the NPCC's VAWG Framework.



# APCC VAWG ACTION PLAN 2022/23

THIS ACTION PLAN CAPTURES THE CURRENT NATIONAL WORK AND AMBITION ON VAWG. IT IS AN ITERATIVE DOCUMENT WHICH THE APCC WILL CONTINUE TO REVIEW AND EVALUATE TO ENSURE IT REMAINS UP TO DATE.

## ACTION 1 FUNDING AND FINANCES

The APCC will proactively engage with the Ministry of Justice on the core funding for victims, including victims of VAWG, following the Spending Review (SR) to ensure that the victims funding allocations from the Ministry of Justice is reflective of local needs, fully supports the commissioning of specialist services for victims of VAWG, and delivers sustainability of funding over the SR period. We will engage across government including with Home Office and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on additional funding opportunities to ensure a consistency of approach across commissioners. We will engage on the broader cultural issues in funding delivered across government, including on short application windows, match funding requirements and short spending windows.

APCC will engage Ministry of Justice, wider government departments and other commissioners of services to secure a clear and more transparent approach to funding victims services, which avoids duplication, is reflective of demand and is fairly distributed. Above all funding should focus on outcomes for victims.

**SUCCESS MEASURES:** *Sustainable funding; more accessible and transparent funding processes; better outcomes for victims.*

## ACTION 2 WORKFORCE

The APCC will work with all partners to ensure that the VAWG workforce (including third sector providers, and specialists within the police and criminal justice system - those working in child and adult victims services and with perpetrators) is sustainable and those working across the sector are supported, trained and equipped to undertake these critical roles and ensure their wellbeing needs are met.

**SUCCESS MEASURES:** *A sustainable workforce; high quality training, skills and development in place to support roles.*





## ACTION 3 HOLDING POLICING TO ACCOUNT

The APCC will support PCCs with information, toolkits and notable practice examples to hold their Chief Constables to account for implementation of the NPCC's VAWG Framework and for VAWG priorities within their police and crime plans.

The APCC will engage with the NPCC's VAWG Lead on the second phase of their VAWG Performance Framework development to ensure that the PCC voice is represented and that partnership working is fully considered within its formulation. The APCC will support PCCs to access the data and use it to hold policing to account.

The APCC will engage with the NPCC's VAWG Lead on the implementation of the Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR) to now include VAWG.

**SUCCESS MEASURES:** *Measurable improvements to the way policing tackles VAWG; successful delivery against local police and crime plan VAWG priorities and national VAWG framework.*

## ACTION 4 OFFENDER MANAGEMENT

PCCs as Chairs of Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJBs) to work across criminal justice partners to ensure effective, multiagency approaches to offender management are in place for perpetrators of VAWG, including the effective sharing of data across partners.

PCCs to ensure their respective forces can provide the NPCC's nationally required data to support whole system change and to ensure their forces have robust processes for identifying and targeting repeat offenders of VAWG and using past offending history to drive positive criminal justice outcomes.

**SUCCESS MEASURES:** *There is a robust response to targeting perpetrators across agencies and on reducing reoffending.*

## ACTION 5 DOMESTIC ABUSE PERPETRATORS

The APCC will engage the Ministry of Justice and Home Office on perpetrator programme funding and work with PCCs and sector partners including the NPCC and the College of Policing to share evidence and notable practice to understand what good looks like, understand the role of accreditation and the efficacy of such programmes and relation to stalking, and inform the roll out of evidence based commissioning of perpetrator programmes across England and Wales.

**SUCCESS MEASURES:** *Quality interventions are in place to support long-term behavioural change.*

*A multi-agency approach is taken to perpetrator support and management.*



## ACTION 6 VICTIMS AND PUBLIC CONFIDENCE

The APCC will work with NPCC /Home Office/Ministry of Justice/Victims' Commissioner's Office/College of Policing on the development of national victims' satisfaction, and public confidence survey/s to ensure the voice of victims and the public is heard.

**SUCCESS MEASURES:** *National victims' satisfaction and public confidence survey(s) in place to inform feedback and improvements.*

## ACTION 7 LOCAL POLICING - UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC CONFIDENCE

The APCC Local Policing Portfolio will lead a national public engagement survey on police contact management - reviewing the public's understanding, preference and experience of reporting crime and incidents to the police through all channels. The survey will seek to understand any hindrances or challenges from victims in reporting incidents, as well as highlighting the many routes victims can report.

The Portfolio will also review effective partnerships on tackling and preventing crime, through effective multi agency partnership approaches, and better use of capabilities such as CCTV and Anti-social behaviour powers to prevent VAWG.

**SUCCESS MEASURES:** *National survey informs PCCs on challenges victims face in reporting crime.*

## ACTION 8 RESPONSE TO RAPE REVIEW

The APCC will work with partners to deliver against the actions set out within the Government's Rape Review through attendance at the Rape Review Implementation Group and through scrutiny of the published Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) scorecards.

Working with the APCC Criminal Justice portfolio leads, we will also continue to press for prioritisation of RASSO cases moving through the courts.

We will hold chief constables to account for delivering a culture change across policing. In our role as LCJB Chairs, we will hold wider sector partners across the criminal justice system to account for local delivery against the review.

We will also support the implementation of changes and the roll out of learning following Operation Soteria. We will review the benefits of Victims' Hubs and share learning across PCCs.

**SUCCESS MEASURES:** *The findings/practices of Operation Soteria are rolled out/picked up by further forces in order to support perpetrator focused investigation.*

*Notable practice is shared across PCCs in the development of the Victims Hub models.*

*Commitment from government and partners to prioritise rape cases and evidence of real attitudinal change to the charging of rape cases.*



## ACTION 9 SUPPORTING VICTIMS TO GIVE EVIDENCE

Support the roll out of all special measures in court, engaging with system partners to ensure appropriate and consistent use and that there is effective cultural change alongside implementation.

We will support PCCs to implement these changes at a local level, working with policing and partners.

We will support the roll out of Section 28 (use of video evidence for vulnerable victims in court) to all courts, engage government and lobby for appropriate use of Section 28 for vulnerable victims.

**SUCCESS MEASURES:** *Better knowledge of special measures amongst PCCs and partners in order to advocate for victims.*

*Evidence of wider use of section 28 across all courts through feedback from HM Courts and Tribunals Service/Crown Prosecution Service to LCJBs.*

## ACTION 10 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services report recommended that by March 2022, all police forces should ensure information on the protected characteristics of victims is accurately and consistently recorded.

We will work with policing partners to collate and share data, support improvements in the collection and recording of data, and develop tools to support PCCs in their role monitoring this within forces.

We will hold policing to account for the delivery of the Uplift money, using staff and public satisfaction surveying to understand the extent of positive change.

We will support PCCs and partners to understand the data and any potential disproportionate impact on marginalised and minoritised groups, such as Black women, Gypsy/Traveller women and refugee/asylum seeking women. We will highlight and celebrate action plans that seek to address these disparities.

We will support PCCs to understand the importance of intersectionality and ensuring the full experiences of survivors and victims are understood so that their needs can be met.

We will also work with the APCC Race Disparity Working Group to ensure read across with their action plan and ensure complementary actions are taken forward.

**SUCCESS MEASURES:** *All forces accurately record protected characteristics of victims.*

*Action Plans to reduce disparities in access, experience and/or outcomes will be routinely developed and published.*



## ACTION 11 SHARING NOTABLE PRACTICE

Develop a 'what works' guide for PCCs, in collaboration with partners such as the NPCC and the College of Policing, on VAWG to guide Commissioners on the services and areas of work that are effective in tackling offending behaviour, working with perpetrators and supporting victims.

**SUCCESS MEASURES:** *A developed understanding and iterative guide and substantial evidence base for and by PCCs of what measures work in tackling VAWG.*

## ACTION 12 SYSTEM LEADERSHIP AND PARTNERSHIPS

The PCC Review will investigate placing LCJBs on a statutory footing. APCC and the criminal justice system will examine how to strengthen the role of PCCs in the interim as chairs of LCJBs and how they might be used to adopt a public health approach to tackling VAWG, bringing system partners to the table to discuss issues including VAWG. Greater data sharing between partners is also an outcome of the review. We will work locally and nationally to deliver an MoU with Probation and to hold partners to account more broadly on VAWG. We support PCCs to utilise the published local scorecards.

The Victims' Bill is in draft following consultation, however the APCC through the Victims Leads will engage with the Ministry of Justice on delivering a Bill that advocates for victims and sees the PCC leading the way by holding partners to account, providing for better data collection and promoting greater compliance with the Victims Code in order to deliver for all victims. The APCC will consider how to avoid duplication in local governance structures to avoid duplication in delivery work for victims, for example linking into the local statutory domestic abuse boards at local authority level.

The statutory definition for serious violence (SV) was recently amended to include domestic abuse and sexual violence. The APCC's Serious Violence Leads will lead engagement with the Home Office on the consultation of the guidance for the Serious Violence Duty to help shape and support the role of the PCC in convening partners to discharge the duty.

The Strategic Policing Requirement has been amended to include VAWG, the APCC will work with the NPCC's lead for VAWG to ensure PCCs and forces fully understand the practical implications and can work across partners to deliver against the requirement.

**SUCCESS MEASURES:** *PCCs lead and convene their local partnerships, drawing in partners to drive a public health approach in relation to VAWG and other criminal justice system areas.*

*The Victims' Bill delivers effective recommendations which support PCCs to better deliver for victims.*

*PCCs hold policing to account for the delivery on VAWG and activity including discharging of duties relating to SV and the Victims Code.*





## **ACTION 13** **WOMEN IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM**

It is recognised nationally that many women in the criminal justice system experience chaotic lifestyles involving substance misuse, mental health problems, homelessness and offending behaviour - as the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy has acknowledged, these are often the product of histories of abuse and trauma including domestic abuse, sexual offences, and historic abuse, and often have addictions to drugs and alcohol (and likely gambling too - the PHE report on Gambling Related Harm (GRH) in Sept 2021 identified a clear relationship between domestic abuse that this type of harm).

A trauma informed approach for many of these women includes specific substance misuse treatment services for women - including female only group work. PCCs should ensure treatment services locally (with Public Health) are identified and are meeting the needs of women.

Following the report from the National Audit Office on the Ministry of Justice's Female Offender Strategy the Government has prioritised work with women in the criminal justice system. The Government propose to take a more holistic view of women who come into contact with the system, taking a trauma informed approach.

The APCC will work with the Ministry of Justice and NPCC to drive forward standards and consistency in this area, and will support PCCs in their role commissioning services to women who offend, and charring LCJBs to ensure an end to end service to support women out of offending.

**SUCCESS MEASURES:** *Increase in the numbers of women successfully referred through the criminal justice system into drug and alcohol services and improved outcomes.*

*Delivery of supporting documents in collaboration with NPCC to support delivery of women's' services.*

*The APCC are represented at the appropriate level on Ministry of Justice governance structures to ensure effective engagement.*

## **ACTION 14** **DOMESTIC HOMICIDE REVIEWS**

Currently the quality of Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR) varies significantly across the country with some evidence that learning is not been applied or shared across the system. The Home Office is currently reviewing the DHR process to inform improvements.

APCC Serious Violence Leads will work with the Home Office to develop the role of PCCs in the DHR process to ensure that key messages and learning lead to organisational and professional change and improvements on the ground.

**SUCCESS MEASURES:** *DHR review encompasses role of PCC to ensure positive change across practice.*



## **ACTION 15** CREATING SAFER SPACES

PCCs will take a collective stand on calling out violence and supporting others to do the same, ensuring our local communities are safe from male or any perpetrator violence against women and girls.

We want to maintain a strong VAWG focus within future rounds of the Home Office Safer Streets Fund, ensuring PCCs and local authorities can access national funds to deliver local VAWG prevention activities.

We will support PCCs to access national funding opportunities relating to VAWG i.e. Safer Streets Fund, by raising awareness of funding criteria and evidence-based practice on VAWG related activities and engaging with the Government on these opportunities. This will support the NPCC's VAWG national framework which includes a pillar within it on 'safe spaces'.

Being intoxicated may lead to women and girls becoming more vulnerable to violent crime. Awareness of the impact of drugs and alcohol in increasing risk to being vulnerable is also key. Access to support and treatment for substance misuse, including binge drinking is essential.

Bystander training provides that additional layer of support to women and girls in the community including members of the public, Street Marshals/Pastors and night-time economy staff - including signposting to support if they appear to have substance misuse issues. In addition, safe buses/hubs provide that local access to both support and emergency health treatment.

PCCs with local public health treatment services can ensure these links are made and referral routes are available to access relevant support.

**SUCCESS MEASURES:** *PCCs access and bid successfully for funds, and notable practice is shared to ensure women and girls feel safer in their communities.*

*More PCCs and local partners providing appropriate interventions and support services in the night-time economy to support women's safety.*



## **ACTION 16** **BUSINESS CRIME VAWG STRATEGIES**

The APCC Business Crime Portfolio will develop a workplan to help tackle domestic abuse and violence against women and girls working in partnership with the business community - with revised guidance for PCCs on their partnership with local businesses.

The APCC will work with the NPCC, national business groups and other stakeholders to develop a national offer for businesses about implementing both domestic abuse and sexual harassment policies for their staff and customers and ensuring an effective approach to tackling VAWG.

The APCC is working to collaborate with the National Business Crime Centre on a joint 'SafeSpace' campaign - the model is for retailers to be a 'safer space' in partnership with the police and business community to support people who are feeling vulnerable.

Participating businesses will have a designated 'safe space' on their premises with access to support including training for staff. We will be looking to use and exploit appropriate user-friendly technology to make safe spaces identifiable and accessible including developing apps for mobiles.

**SUCCESS MEASURES:** *Positive engagement from national business groups, PCCs and Business Crime Reduction Partnerships with revised guidance for effective PCC and business community partnerships in tackling crime and VAWG.*

## **FUTURE ACTIONS**

### **POLICE CRIME SENTENCING AND COURTS BILL**

When the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill passes, the APCC will identify key actions to feed into the Action Plan and take forward under the auspices of the working group.





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