



Ethics and Integrity Panel

Title: Violence Against Women and Girls

Date: 8TH May 2024

Agenda Item No: 06

Originating Officer: Detective Inspector, Mike Taylor (VAWG Operational Lead)

CC:

1. Introduction & Background

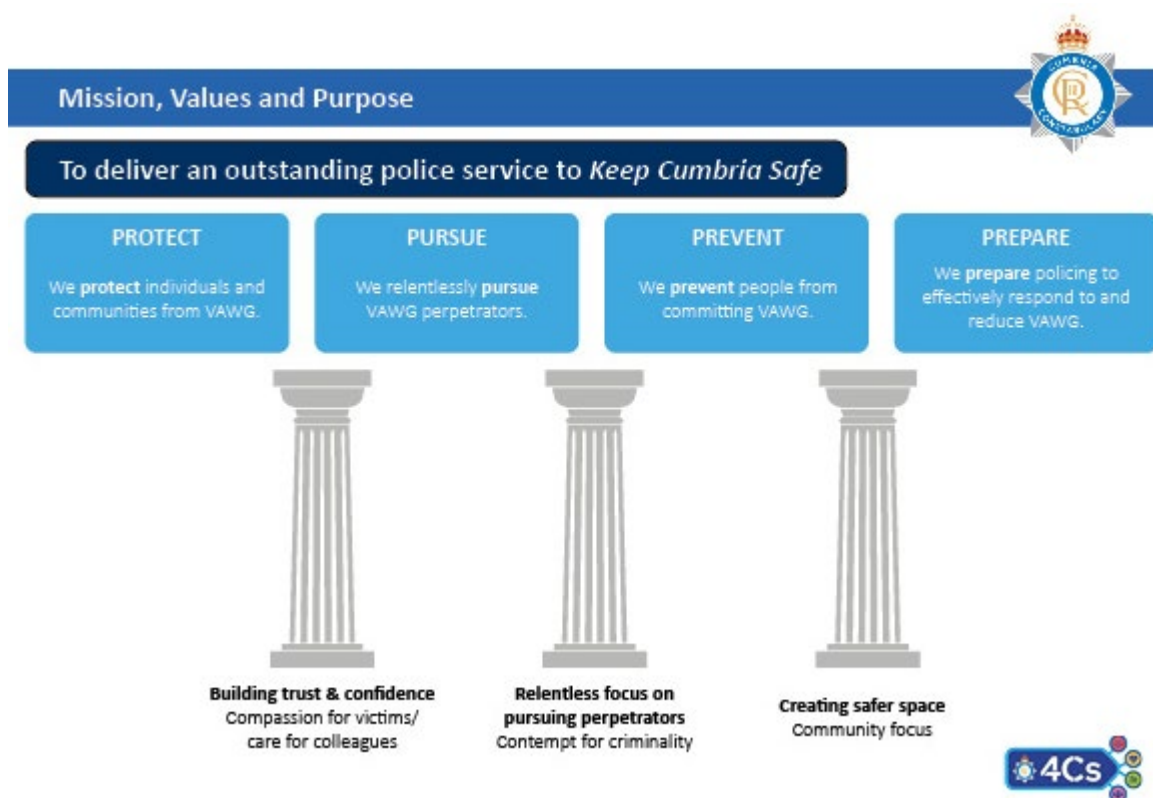
Home Office definition of VAWG: “The term ‘violence against women and girls’ refers to acts of violence or abuse that we know disproportionately affect women and girls. Crimes and behaviour covered by this term include rape and other sexual offences, domestic abuse, stalking, ‘honour’-based abuse (including female genital mutilation forced marriage, and ‘honour’ killings), as well as many others, including offences committed online.

Actions are organised under three overarching objectives:

- improving trust and confidence in policing
- relentlessly pursuing perpetrators
- creating safer spaces

VAWG Offences:

- Control & Coercive Behaviour
- Domestic Abuse
- Exposure
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Forced Marriage
- Hate Crime
- Murder & Manslaughter
- Public Order
- Rape and Serious Sexual Offences
- Stalking & Harassment
- Voyeurism and Upskirting



13th March 2024. The National Police Chiefs Council launched a new / more focussed approach to tackling violence against women and girls.

Police chiefs adopt a counter-terrorism approach to tackling violence against women and girls.

A revised national framework for England and Wales outlines how police forces will work to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). In December 2021, policing launched a [national framework for delivery](#) which laid out the immediate actions policing committed to take to build trust and confidence, relentlessly pursue perpetrators and create safer spaces. This revised framework, which covers the next three years, is the next step in ensuring policing is focused on outcomes that make a real difference to tackling the epidemic of VAWG.

In February 2023, the Home Secretary included VAWG within the Strategic Policing Requirement, which means that the national policing response to VAWG should be on par with terrorism and serious and organised crime.

The framework for delivery uses a '4P approach', a tried and tested methodology that was developed in counter-terrorism.

The 4P approach ensures forces focus on being well prepared to tackle VAWG offending, that action is being taken to protect individuals, families and communities and that perpetrators of VAWG are being relentlessly pursued. This approach also has a focus on preventing VAWG,

with a commitment from policing to support our partners in taking the lead to a whole system approach to tackle VAWG.

Police chiefs have committed to building trust and confidence among communities, and as part of the framework, forces will self-assess their local plans using a template developed over the last two years to identify best practice in the four key areas.

Deputy Chief Constable Maggie Blyth, Deputy CEO of the College of Policing and National Police Chiefs' Council lead for Violence Against Women and Girls, said:

“The publication of the Angiolini report earlier this month laid bare the work policing must do to improve its response to violence against women and girls.

“Whilst we have developed our approach and capabilities to tackle VAWG in recent years, there is much more for us to do.

“We have been working at a national and local level to broaden our understanding of all aspects of VAWG, including how policing can better support victims and hold perpetrators to account through the criminal justice system.

“The 4P approach already helps police to tackle some of the most serious threats to our communities, and by including VAWG in the Strategic Policing Requirement, we are recognising as a society the gravity of the epidemic of VAWG.

“We must now galvanise progress in policing to ensure that we are doing all that we can to protect women and girls and deliver against the priorities outlined in the framework.”

Assistant Chief Constable Samantha Millar, National Police Chiefs' Council Strategic Programme Director for Violence Against Women and Girls, said:

“Setting a strategic direction for policing to effectively respond to violence against women and girls means that across the country forces will be able to better target their resources and capabilities to make meaningful improvements to the safety of women and girls.

“Our understanding of the threat VAWG poses to our communities is evolving all the time, which is why the voices of women and girls, and victims and survivors, are fundamental to how we move forward and drive progress.”

Q. How will Cumbria Police comply with this requirement? Update provided at 2.1 Cumbria Constabulary VAWG Board

2. Update – Cumbria Constabulary (VAWG)

(Items to include - links to plans and priorities; consultation processes conducted, or which will need to be conducted; impact assessments / implications; timescales of decision requirement)

The Cumbria Police VAWG Strategy 2024-2025 is in the process of being written. The updated strategy will be in line with the national directives of targeting the three strategic pillars of VAWG, using the 4p method /approach. This will be used to ensure that standards, service and outcomes are implemented and monitored to provide the people of Cumbria with an outstanding service, when considering all issues relevant to VAWG.

Below is the link to the 2022-23 VAWG Strategy.

https://cumbriapolice.sharepoint.com/sites/PoliciesProceduresandForms/_layouts/15/viewer.aspx?sourcedoc={c99876a5-6af8-4246-9bf5-46e6b0ff67be}

2.1 Cumbria Constabulary VAWG Board

Cumbria Constabulary measure VAWG performance and accountability via the bi-monthly VAWG Board Meeting and Action Plan. The VAWG board is chaired by the Detective Superintendent with strategic responsibility for VAWG. The meeting is attended by senior strategic & tactical departmental leads, ensuring VAWG is embedded into all aspects of operational policing activity. The action plan is based on the three strategic pillars of VAWG, tasks are allocated to action owners. The tasks are documented on a Teams Action Planner system, DI Taylor is the Cumbria Police VAWG Operational Lead, and is responsible for ensuring that all actions receive a documented update by the action owners and completed within the timeframe set by the strategic lead / chair.

The NPCC have recently launched Policing VAWG – The National Framework for Delivery:2024-2027 This document will be used to ensure that the strategic and operational direction of VAWG in Cumbria is in-line with the national direction of travel. Also, the NPCC / CoP have created a VAWG Self-Assessment product that is designed for all forces to review their Action Plans and conduct a gap analysis. The Cumbria VAWG Board Action Plan will be subjected to a full and thorough review using the NPCC self-assessment. All forces are advised to submit their self-assessment review to the CoP by September 2024.

2.2 VAWG Performance – Cumbria v National

Statistics provided by the National Police Chiefs Council in partnership with the CPS.

VAWG offences RYTD Feb 2024 – Cumbria ranked sixth out of forty-three forces with a positive outcome / conviction rate of 80.6% (639 cases, 515 convictions)

National average 76.2%, highest performing force 82%

In line with national guidelines, Cumbria Constabulary has recently introduced an extra level of supervisory scrutiny when reviewing and finalising serious (VAWG) rape & high-risk domestic abuse cases that are categorised under the home office counting rules as outcomes 15 & 16.

Serious VAWG - New Home office counting rules: Guidance for closure of outcome 15 and 16

Sally Blaiklock (Detective Superintendent)

This process has been developed nationally to ensure consistent and robust monitoring of outcome 15 and 16 in VAWG cases. The recommendation was initially set by HMICFRS in the police's response to violence against women and girls. This has been delivered by the VAWG taskforce.

National guidance to Crime Registrars has been published on this area. It specifies closure requirements for outcome 15 and 16 in rape and high-risk domestic abuse crimes.

In Cumbria there is a disproportionate use of Outcome 15 and 16 used in domestic abuse investigations and VAWG. This is where we have a named suspect identified but evidential difficulties prevent us from taking some form of action. We need to understand why victims are unsupportive of police action and that we have conducted the best investigation possible to safeguard the individuals involved and bring offenders to justice.

To do this, and to ensure we are applying the most appropriate outcomes and recording our rationale, we have made part of force response to Domestic abuse and VAWG that **inspectors will hold responsibility for conducting a final review of crimes with outcome 15 and 16 for all rape and sexual assault by penetrations cases and all domestic abuse investigations including controlling and coercive behaviour and stalking investigations.**

The Inspectors must satisfy themselves that:

- *The dedicated decision maker must be of the rank of police inspector or police staff equivalent or be part of an independent decision-making team working directly to the Force Crime Registrar Unit.*
- *It is the role of the supervisor in seeking to apply an outcome 15 to ensure the following has been considered throughout the investigation from report to finalisation:*
- *Safety of everyone involved comes first and will be considered continually throughout an investigation.*
- *Investigations will focus on the allegations not the victim.*
- *Victims will be kept updated throughout an investigation.*
- *The views of victims will be central to decisions about how to proceed with cases but may not always be determinative.*
- *Investigating officers and staff must be aware of the impact of trauma on victims and take this into account.*
- *The policing system must support effective investigations. Chief officers must have the data and other information from these reviews so that they can be assured that the arrangements in their force are sufficient.*

Prior to finalisation by an inspector, it is the combined responsibility of the OIC, DA evidence review officer and Sgt to ensure that the minimum standards of investigation are met and recorded at the earliest opportunity that reflect your lines of enquiry in a meaningful sense; remembering the victim at the heart of the investigation. Evidence-led prosecutions must be considered.

2.3 VAWG Scrutiny Panel

The implementation and function of the VAWG Scrutiny Panel is the responsibility of the Office of Police & Fire Commissioner (OPFC), the victim's quality champion (OPFC) arranges and implements all required admin and functions, ensuring the Terms of Reference are adhered to.

The intention of the Panel is to provide an independent review of how Cumbria Constabulary deals with violence against women and girls (VAWG). Its scrutiny of cases aims to identify good practice and ways to improve the service the Police provides to victims, including providing the Rights within the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime. For the public, including victims of crime, this aims to provide transparency and accountability for the Police's handling of such incidents.

The Panel provides constructive scrutiny at an organisational and individual level to promote best practices, identify potential policy or staff development needs and prompt more effective working

practices. It works to ensure the voice of victims, including the lived experience of victims, is heard and to provide challenge where it appears not to have been considered.

The Scrutiny Process

The Panel will consider cases involving all types of Violence Against the Person offences which have been committed against female victims. Some of these areas may be reviewed as an annual theme, rather than at each meeting.

A detailed form has been developed for completion by the Constabulary to provide information which will be considered by the Panel, to help to review/ refine the above areas of focus.

In reviewing a case, the Panel will discuss and agree an outcome decision against five options:

- A. Excellent victim care overall
- B. Good victim care overall but with some comments or concerns raised.
- C. Adequate victim care but with areas for improvement
- D. Poor victim care in most or all aspects considered.
- E. Narrative assessment for cases which do not easily translate into any of the above categories.

The panel cannot change the outcome of the case, but where it is appropriate to do so, can give feedback at an organisational level or, where fitting, which can be conveyed to individuals of each agency involved in a particular case.

The aim of providing feedback is to promote best practice and identify potential policy development or training needs for consideration by the force or other agencies.

Decisions reached by the Panel on each case file are recorded, together with observations and recommendations, to inform changes in Policy or Practice.

Panel Membership

Role	Member Organisation
CVCT Chair (Chair)	Cumbria Victims' Charitable Trust
Trustee (Vice Chair)	Cumbria Victims' Charitable Trust
Trustee	Cumbria Victims' Charitable Trust
Trustee	Cumbria Victims' Charitable Trust
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Trustee	Cumbria Victims' Charitable Trust

Attendance in support of the Panel:

Role	Organisation
Victims' Quality Champion	Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
VAWG Operational Lead	Cumbria Constabulary
Subject Matter Expert (as required)	Cumbria Constabulary

2.4 Call It Out – Public Engagement Survey

In March 2023 Cumbria Constabulary launched its second “#CallitOut” public consultation survey, which was aimed primarily at women and girls within the county, to ascertain how safe they said they felt in certain situations. The survey was also designed to determine the prevalence of certain

types of crimes and incidents that women and girls are more likely to be victims of, and the degree to which these crimes / incidents were reported to either the Constabulary or another agency.

The original “#CallitOut” survey, ran in the spring of 2021, following the murder of Sarah Everard on 3rd March 2021. That survey generated unprecedented levels of engagement from the public with 3,338 fully completed, and 2,364 partially completed surveys submitted.

In this follow up survey a total of 1,956 responses were received, which means we can be 95% confident that the feedback received from women (and girls) in the county, reflect those of the wider female population of Cumbria with a confidence error of 2.2%.

In response to the March 2023 survey a Call It Out Action Plan has been created in which the VAWG Operational Lead works in partnership with internal and external partners to target areas of concern raised. The performance and accountability of this is contained in a Call It Out action plan that is owned by the Cumbria Constabulary VAWG Strategic Lead.

2.5 VAWG – Working in Partnership

Between April 2023 & April 2024 Cumbria Constabulary’s Operational VAWG lead and a Domestic Abuse / Safeguarding Detective Constable have delivered a presentation to approximately seven hundred and fifty front-line staff from Cumbria NHS. The presentation is a guide to recognising abuse, receiving disclosures and taking responsibility for acting / reporting on concerns or disclosures.

The VAWG Operational Lead holds a monthly Cumbria Police VAWG Champions meeting. The VAWG Champions are male and female officers and staff of all ranks (Circa 80 members) that want to be an active member in improving service and outcomes for victims of VAWG. Each meeting starts with a 30-minute presentation from a subject matter expert e.g. Mar 24 presentation by a lawyer from Legal Services providing advice on how to obtain civil injunctions against perpetrators of VAWG and D/A offences. An example of the work done by the champions for is, we have at least x1 champion who is a named point of contact and regular attender at the women’s centres around Cumbria e.g. Barrow Women’s Community Matters and Gateway 4 Women. Of note, recently the VAWG Champions were instrumental in a campaign called “re-gifting beauty” in which 43 boxes, thousands of pounds worth of unused beauty products was donated and collected within Cumbria Constabulary, and then distributed to Cumbria’s women’s centres and refuges, to be given as a pack to victims of domestic abuse in crisis or need of immediate financial or welfare and wellbeing support.

The VAWG Operational Lead works in-partnership with Cumbria Constabulary’s Professional Standards Department. All new recruits, Uniformed and CID Sergeants & Inspectors courses receive a joint VAWG / PSD training input.

In the next month all officers and staff will be mandated to complete the College of Policing e-learning training package, “Being an Upstander, not a Bystander.” This is to inform and educate police and police staff of their professional responsibility to report inappropriate conduct and behaviour by Constabulary personnel, committed both in and outside of the workplace.

A recent academic report supported by Cumbria Constabulary identified a level of under-reporting of domestic abuse / VAWG from those who live in rural and isolated parts of the county. In response the VAWG Operational Lead has commenced an initiative to improve and increase this area, by initially working in partnership with local businesses who are respected in the rural and agricultural parts of Cumbria e.g. NFU, auction marts, on-line farmers networks – plus doctors surgeries and young farmers associations, seeking to promote knowledge and awareness by sign-posting areas of access and information to statutory, specialist and voluntary services who are able to help and support victims of D/A & VAWG.

The VAWG Operational Lead has recently commenced a project of delivering VAWG presentations to year 9, 10 & 11 school pupils and students. The presentation specifically focuses on how Young People can take the lead “Upstanders” by refusing to accept previously socially acceptable and ingrained misogynistic values and behaviours.

The VAWG Operational Lead is also the operational lead for Cumbria Constabulary’s approach to tackling “SPIKNG.” An offence that predominantly takes place in the Nighttime Economy with females predominantly being the victims of this type of offence. In the previous 12 months Cumbria recorded 64 Spiking offences, 54 of the reports had a female victim. In March 2024 Cumbria Police successfully bid for home office funding to assist with our efforts to promote awareness and prevent this type of offence. Cumbria was one of only eight forces nationally awarded funding. During the National Spiking Intensification Week of Action (Mar 24) dedicated officers patrolled the NTEs under OP Vigilant and provided revellers and those who work in the NTE’s with information and anti-spiking and stay-safe devices and merchandise. Part of the home office funding will be used to set up a Safer Streets Welfare Hub facility in the Westmorland and Furness area to replicate the success of the Welfare Hub in Carlisle’s NTE. To increase investigation, standards and increase positive outcome rates for spiking offences, Cumbria Constabulary’s Learning & Development department are to create a specific training package to guide front-line officers / 1st responders to a report of Spiking, and detectives to increase awareness of investigatory timescale and requirements.

Recommendation:

That the Panel note the report.

3. Implications

(List and include views of all those consulted, whether they agree or disagree and why)

- 3.1 Financial
- 3.2 Legal
- 3.3 Risk
- 3.4 HR / Equality (Where applicable have Trade Unions been consulted on specified implications)

4. Supplementary information

List appended documents such as business case, EIA, PID, Media Strategy (remember all key points of information should be summarised within this document)