

Call to action as violence against women and girls epidemic deepens

Published on 23 July 2024

Our report shows 3,000 crimes of violence against women and girls (VAWG) are recorded each day.

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Our Deputy Chief Constable, Maggie Blyth, has outlined the scale of violence against women and girls (VAWG) in England and Wales in a national policing statement bringing together comprehensive data and analysis.

Policing has undergone significant changes to the way it tackles violence against women and girls in recent years. Progress has been made to drive standards and consistency across all police forces.

However, due to the epidemic scale of offending, we are calling for a whole-system approach that brings together criminal justice partners, government bodies and industry, in a new partnership that seeks to reduce the scale and impact of VAWG.

Scale

The National Policing Statement for VAWG, commissioned by us and the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), found:

- Over one million VAWG related crimes were recorded during 2022/23, accounting for 20% of all police recorded crime.
- Police recorded VAWG related crime increased by 37% between 2018/23.
- At least 1 in every 12 women will be a victim per year, with the exact number expected to be much higher.
- Child sexual abuse and exploitation increased by more than 400% between 2013 and 2022.

Not only is VAWG growing, but we are also seeing ever more complicated types of offending which causes significant harm to victims and society as a whole. One in every six murders related to domestic abuse in 22/23, with suspected victim suicides following domestic abuse rising year-on-

year.

Police progress

We are transforming the way police officers investigate rape and serious sexual offences and over the last year we have trained over 4,500 new officers in investigating this complex crime. We are also working closer than ever with prosecutors and ensuring all investigations are focussed on the actions of the alleged perpetrator, not the victim.

Early data shows a 25% increase in the number of arrests (2022/23 compared with 2019/20), and a 38% increase in charges for rape (year to December 2023 compared with the same period).

Domestic abuse remains one of the biggest demands on policing, with arrests for domestic abuse related offences increasing by over 22% in the year ending March 2023, compared to the previous period. Whilst this is a positive shift, we acknowledge that this is only the start and there is still more to do.

Policing has ensured violence against women and girls is now officially classed as a national threat by government and a refreshed national framework has brought the police response to VAWG in line with counter-terrorism. This includes the adoption of a tried and tested methodology used in counter-terrorism policing – the ‘4P’ approach, which underpins every police force's plan to tackle VAWG:

- Prepare: forces must have the right culture, skills and resources
- Protect: action is being taken to protect individuals, families and communities
- Pursue: perpetrators of violence are being relentlessly pursued
- Prevent: policing must work with partners as part of a whole-system approach

We are absolutely determined to turn the tide on violence and abuse faced by women and girls and will continue to work tirelessly to do better for victims.

Our focus will always be to bring the men behind these pervasive crimes to justice. By enhancing the way we use data and intelligence, we will improve our ability to identify, intercept and arrest those causing the most harm in communities.

We know that continuous improvement is needed to strengthen policing's response to VAWG. Improvements must be driven nationally, ensuring consistency from force to force to give victims the service they expect and deserve.

Deputy Chief Constable Maggie Blyth

Whole-system approach

Violence against women and girls is at such a scale that it cannot be addressed through law enforcement alone. 1 in 20 people are estimated to be perpetrators of VAWG per year, with the actual number thought to be significantly higher.

Evidence shows many of these perpetrators will have touch points with a number of agencies outside of policing through their life, presenting opportunities for intervention.

This includes health, education, local authority, voluntary sector and industry all working in tandem with the criminal justice system, sharing data and responsibilities to effect change across the board.

Policing next steps

We are committed to the pursuit of perpetrators who cause significant harm and often offend repeatedly, through a new invigorated approach to offender management. This will maximise the use of technology and intelligence across law enforcement.

The creation of a dedicated policing hub, the National Centre for Public Protection, would support forces with specialist knowledge and training for investigators and officers, and lead on a national approach to preventative work with other agencies. Ultimately, this would deliver a better service to victims through quality investigations and victim care.

A centralised hub within policing that brings together specialised skill sets and capabilities would support police forces in improving their response to VAWG.

However, this will only achieve progress as part of a wider, effective criminal justice system, which at present is overwhelmed and under-performing for victims.

Violence against women and girls is a national emergency. We need the support and direction of government to intervene and address the current problems within the criminal justice system and lead the way on a whole-system approach to VAWG.

We aspire to a position where an effective criminal justice response to VAWG is the last resort. We need to move forward as a society to make change and no longer accept VAWG as inevitable.

Deputy Chief Constable Maggie Blyth

While the findings of the National Polices Chiefs' Council and College into the scale of violence against women and girls in this country are alarming, it is important to remember that many survivors will not report their experiences to the police, therefore we know the issue will be much larger than the data shows.

Women's Aid agree that violence against women and girls is a national threat, and echoes calls for a whole-system approach to tackling the problem and centres on the most marginalised. This includes coordination between the criminal justice system, the government, and experts, and enhanced training and education, delivered by specialist services, to those working in statutory services like the police. Without meaningful collaboration and action, women and children will continue to be failed when it comes to being protected and when seeking justice for the abuse they have endured.

Sophie Francis-Cansfield, Head of External Affairs at Women's Aid

- [Read the full report on the NPCC website.](#)

Tags

Violence against women and girls Domestic abuse