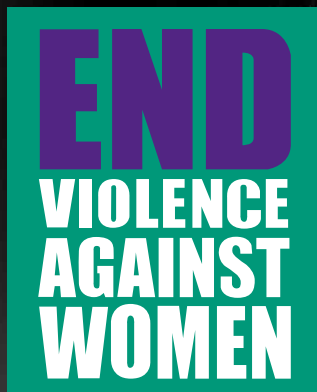


England and Wales
Police and Crime
Commissioners:
Are they
working for
women
and girls?



EVAW COALITION
BRIEFING
July 2019

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About the End Violence Against Women Coalition

EVAW is a leading coalition of specialist women’s support services, researchers, activists, survivors and NGOs working to end violence against women and girls in all its forms.

The EVAW Coalition is a company limited by guarantee (no. 7317881) and a registered charity (no. 1161132).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2012 Police and Crime Commissioners have acquired considerable executive power over the determination of local policing priorities, and how policing funds are spent in England and Wales. National Government expects that policing priorities and victim-related spending be evidence-based, focusing on local crime prevalence and local victims' needs.

Crimes of violence against women and girls, including sexual violence and domestic violence, are sadly extremely common crimes which form a large proportion of all police call-outs, investigations, and protection duties. The police receive more than a million calls related to domestic violence every year¹; and it is estimated that there are around half a million rapes and sexual assaults every year². These crimes are committed very disproportionately against women and by men, and the scale and impact of them means they are never marginal – they are truly 'everyday policing,' relevant in every police force area. Violence against women and girls does enormous social as well as individual harm – its prevalence is so high that most if not all women are accustomed to some degree of routine 'safety planning' and assessing their risk of abuse.

Domestic violence, different kinds of sexual violence and exploitation, forced marriage, FGM, stalking and online harassment have different features, but they are connected by (1) the way they are commonly hidden and committed in private spaces, especially the home; and (2) by their connection to women's inequality, which gives some men a sense of entitlement to control women in their lives and even women who are strangers.

From a policing perspective, these crimes are significantly affected by the impunity perpetrators believe they have, and the excuses that are still often made for these crimes, including for example: questioning why women do not leave violent men; suggesting that women provoke or do not take adequate steps to avoid rape; simplistically blaming "culture" for the phenomenon of forced marriage. Any attempt to disrupt and prevent these crimes needs to be based on evidence including an appreciation of what is driving them.

This report is a brief examination of whether England and Wales' 42 PCCs adequately appreciate the scale and impact of these crimes, whether they are taking an evidence-based approach, and whether they are setting the necessary strategic priorities on responding to victims of violence against women and girls. It is based on an examination of all of their Police and Crime Plans as published and available in 2018.

Key finding – The response of Police and Crime Commissioners overall to violence against women and girls is very inconsistent, and even haphazard, resulting in women and girls in different parts of England and Wales receiving very different commitments to their safety and protection.

While the large majority of PCCs refer to domestic violence and to sexual violence somewhere in their Police & Crime Plans, it is extremely concerning that less than half mention forced marriage, so-called ‘honour-based violence’ or FGM (all of which are relevant in every police force area³). The definitions and categorising of these crimes are widely varying in the Plans, and betray a poor appreciation of what causes them.

Our review of all the Police & Crime Plans also reveals that it is very common for PCCs to present domestic and sexual violence as ‘gender neutral’. Women’s and girls’ very disproportionate victimisation and men’s predominant perpetration of the offences are rarely mentioned, and the need for attention to the deep connection to women’s inequality is avoided. The Police and Crime Plans similarly fail to recognise the way that other urgent inequalities, including social background, ethnicity, disability and age, make some



women and girls more vulnerable to victimisation and less likely to be believed and protected. It is not possible to address these crimes unless you work from an understanding of how inequality is a key conducive context for violence.

This failure to acknowledge and centre gender and other inequalities matters because it shuts down the possibility of perceiving and acting on the drivers of these crimes and developing the best quality response to them. This leads ultimately to actual policing activity such as the recent West Yorkshire sexual violence poster campaign which told young women not to ‘party hard’⁴, and the absurd confining of abuse such as forced

marriage into anti-terrorism and ‘Prevent’ work rather than women’s and girls’ rights and equality. There is more than enough knowledge and understanding of sexual violence and of forced marriage at local and national levels to recommend more effective policing approaches than these, but this can be difficult now when a PCC has a poor or even no appreciation of what drives these abuses.

Critically, we are also seeing a divergence from the well established, national strategic policy framework on these deeply related crimes which since 2010 has been the Home Office-led and cross-departmental Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy⁵. This ‘VAWG Strategy’ has a Ministerial lead and Secretary of State level accountability. It has considerable investment, spending, data gathering and policy development, which are available to all systems leaders and local decision makers. Our review of PCCs’ Police and Crime Plans finds that, rather than making use of this established strategic approach and accompanying data and research, many PCCs seem to have gone back to ‘ground zero’ on domestic and sexual violence. There are important exceptions to this, including London and the North East PCCs, who were early adopters of a Strategic ‘VAWG’ approach. But there are others, in Gloucestershire for example, who have arbitrarily declared these crimes to have no significant connection to gender.

The effect of this failure by many PCCs to make use of the established national framework and knowledge, combined with some determination to approach this set of crimes as though they are ‘gender neutral’, is likely to be seriously impacting both the setting of policing priorities and the commissioning of victims’ services. We need to reflect here on the failure of national government to require PCCs to work within the established framework and perspective. But it is also not unreasonable to expect those elected to this unique and special office to be able to take an evidence-based approach, and make use of existing knowledge and best practice in this area in order to set about tackling crimes which are fundamentally about abuse of power.



OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

We urge the key Secretaries of State to instruct PCCs to recognise the seriousness and connectedness of crimes of violence against women and girls, and to rewrite their Plans and policing and victims strategies accordingly.

We urge the PCCs who have not done so to make a proper assessment of the scale and nature of all forms of violence against women and girls in their area, and then to review their policing priorities and spending plans accordingly. They should involve local communities and especially local women's organisations while doing this.

We urge chief constables, other police leaders, and CPS leaders, to make representations to their PCC about their operational reality of responding to these crimes, and then to support

the development of a more joined up and strategic local approach.

We urge MPs to make representations to and meet with their PCCs and enquire directly about their specific aims on ending violence against women and girls, and their commitments to sustainable support services for survivors of abuse.

We also urge local media organisations to commission investigations into the prevalence and impact of violence against women and girls locally, and to encourage local debate on how it needs to be tackled; the invisibility of much of this abuse compared to other crime types arguably reduces the pressure on PCCs, police and courts to make it a priority.

PCCs are set to stand for re-election in 2020. Unless there is radical change in PCCs' approach to crimes of violence against women and girls, we will be forced to question if this form of devolution of policing power works for women and girls.

INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of violence against women and girls, and the national policy framework

Violence against women and girls includes multiple forms of sexual violence, domestic violence (including the recently criminalised ‘coercive and controlling behaviour’ which is widely understood to be the key behaviour at the core of an abusive intimate relationship), forced marriage and so-called ‘honour-based violence’, FGM (female genital mutilation; which is related to families’ and communities’ aim of controlling women’s and girls’ choices in relation to marriage), stalking and harassment which maybe online and offline, image-based abuse, and trafficking and prostitution.

Official prevalence statistics are problematic as they are usually estimates based on the Crime Survey England and Wales and organisations working in VAWG would argue they are massively underestimated.

DOMESTIC ABUSE

Last year it is estimated that 1.3 million women experienced domestic abuse – that’s 8% of women.

In the same year Police recorded domestic abuse crimes were 599,549.⁶

SEXUAL ABUSE AND RAPE

Last year an estimated 560,000 women were sexually assaulted or raped. 80% of all rape victims were women.

Last year 150,847 sexual offences were reported to the police.⁷

FGM

In 2011 research suggested there are around 137,000 women and girls living with the consequences of FGM resident in the UK.⁸

Last year the NHS newly recorded just under 5000 incidents of FGM.⁹

FORCED MARRIAGE

In 2018, the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) supported in almost 1200 forced marriage cases – 78% of the victims were women.¹⁰

HONOUR BASED VIOLENCE

Research suggests that one person is killed in the UK every month as a result of so-called ‘honour-based’ violence.¹¹

STALKING

1 in 5 adult women has experienced some form of stalking.¹²

“More than  2 women are killed every week in the UK.”

FEMICIDE CENSUS¹³

There is considerable national and international research on the different forms of violence against women and girls, their prevalence, impacts, what drives them, and assessments of what works to end and prevent. International human rights treaties recognise violence against women and girls as a “cause and consequence” of women’s inequality, and the UN has set out recommended programmes of work for states across economic income levels to adopt in order to specifically end and prevent violence against women and girls¹⁴. English case law has started to recognise that women have a human right to an adequate level of protection from gender-based violence from the police¹⁵.

In 2010 the UK Government announced a new national approach to these crimes. It instituted the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy¹⁰ which brought together key departmental and system leaders to strategically address what action and resources were needed if our society was truly aiming to reduce and then end these forms of abuse rather than accept their inevitability. The Strategy has had Prime Minister input and endorsement, and has always had a Ministerial lead and Secretary of State level accountability. It has dedicated, expert officials working constantly on its action plan, data, monitoring and reporting, and an expert stakeholder group who contribute knowledge and advise on innovation and delivery.

Considerable central government spending has been invested in collecting and analysing national data on these crimes; piloting new approaches in policing, health, housing and more; developing smart strategic communications on preventing abuse in teenage relationships, among much other work over almost a decade. Data on prevalence and the drivers of abuse, and information on ‘what works’, is therefore readily available to all those in different statutory services who may need it. The VAWG Strategy notably includes a statement and commitment to male victims of gender-based violence, while recognising the very disproportionate victimisation of women and girls and the need for a gendered approach in response.

Increasingly localised commissioning across public services since around 2010 encouraged the Home Office to consult victims’ groups and to develop the Violence Against Women and Girls: National Statement of Expectations (NSE) in 2016 as a reminder or guide to local authorities, PCCs and health commissioners in particular that they should take the local prevalence and

impact of VAWG into account when commissioning victims’ services¹⁶.

‘The NSE sets out what local areas need to put in place to ensure their response to VAWG issues is as collaborative, robust and effective as it can be so that all victims and survivors can get the help they need. The VAWG strategy is clear about the outcomes we want to achieve by 2020; a reduction in the prevalence of all forms of VAWG, matched by increases in reporting, police referrals, prosecution and convictions for what can still be hidden crimes.’

This non-statutory guidance had to be produced because it was clear that the increasingly fragmented and complex commissioning environment was tending to leave local ‘by and for’ women’s support services, among other user-led victim groups, at a severe disadvantage. It remains however an “expectation” only and it is clear that many PCCs are not commissioning according to this model.

Both publications recognise that a range of agencies, including the police, should be involved in addressing the issues raised by violence against women and girls (VAWG) and that ‘these crimes are disproportionately gendered’.

The Government also takes the view that local people and organisations are best placed to understand and provide for local conditions. The VAWG Strategy says that the National Statement of Expectations will provide ‘a blueprint for all local areas to follow, setting out core expectations, but giving them the freedom to respond to meet local needs.’ This approach plays through into both the structures for the democratic control of policing, which were introduced in 2012, and the strategies and plans of individual police forces, as well as the commissioning of victims’ services.

Police Structures

Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) are directly elected officials in 38 areas of England and 4 of Wales. The first PCC elections were held in 2012, and the current incumbents were elected (or re-elected) in 2016. They are elected for a four-year term of office

PCCs replaced the previous structure of Police Authorities made up of local councillors, magistrates and community representatives. In London and Greater Manchester the elected Mayors act as the PCC, and are elected on the same cycle.

PCCs' main responsibilities are:

- establishing a formal plan for policing in the area;
- producing an annual report;
- appointing the Force's chief executive, chief finance officer and chief constable;
- appointing a deputy and any other staff they deem necessary.

PCCs do not have responsibility for day to day policing, which is vested in the Chief Constable.

The same legislation which introduced PCCs also set up Police and Crime Panels (PCP) to scrutinise the activities of the PCC. PCPs replaced the former Police Authorities and consist of a small number of local councillors plus two community representatives.

In London, the PCP's functions are undertaken by the London Assembly's Police and Crime Committee, whilst in Manchester they are the responsibility of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority's Police & Crime Panel.

In addition to the scrutiny function PCPs are also required to:

- review the level of funding for police taken from council tax;
- agree the appointment of a chief constable.

In both of these cases the PCP has a power of veto on a two-thirds majority.

In 2012, when the first elections for PCCs were held, just six (14%) of those elected were female. In 2016 this rose to seven (18%). Current female

incumbents are in Avon & Somerset, Bedfordshire, Devon & Cornwall, Merseyside, North Yorkshire, Northumbria, and Sussex. Four are Conservative, two (Merseyside and Northumbria) Labour and one (Avon & Somerset) Independent (Appendix 1). Not all PCCs appoint deputies, but 57% of those who have been appointed are female. Overall, 28% of members of Police and Crime Panels are female. However, the representation of women on them varies substantially on a case-by-case basis, ranging from one member out of 14 (7%) in Dyfed-Powys to Northumbria and Merseyside, where the PCPs are 54% and 58% female respectively. 20% of PCP Chairs are women. Chief Constables are not elected but are appointed by the PCC with the approval of the PCP. 12% of Chief Constables are women.

Each Police and Crime Commissioner must produce a Plan which forms the basis of policing in the area for their term of office. This is a publicly available document which should reflect local need as well as national priorities.

Police and Crime Commissioners have the power to award grants and commission services to groups and organisations to deliver specific services. In October 2014 the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) devolved funding for the commissioning of victims' services to PCCs. PCCs are expected to include information on their grant-making and commissioning in their reports.

This report considers the 42 Police and Crime Plans and looks at the extent to which they identify violence against women and girls and make strategic commitments towards protecting victims and to preventing abuse. It looks at whether PCCs recognise the centrality of gender inequality to these crimes and whether this then impacts their service delivery in these areas, as national government expects. It also looks briefly at PCCs' commissioning and grant-making with a view to examining what resources are being allocated to Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) services and how easy it is to identify this information. Finally, it draws conclusions and makes recommendations for change.

POLICE & CRIME PLANS

Every Police & Crime Commissioner is required to publish a Police & Crime Plan to cover the 4-year period of office. This should include:

- the Commissioner's police and crime objectives for the area;
- the policing of the police area which the chief officer of police is to provide;
- the financial and other resources which the Commissioner is to provide to the chief officer of police;
- the means by which the chief officer of police will report to the Commissioner on the chief officer's provision of policing;
- the means by which the chief officer of police's performance in providing policing will be measured; and
- the crime and disorder reduction grants which the Commissioner is to make, and the conditions (if any) of those grants.¹⁷

The Plan must be drawn up in consultation with the Chief Constable and the Police & Crime Panel, which has the right to comment, report and make recommendations. The PCC has a statutory duty to consider the PCP's response.

Key findings from reviewing the 42 Police and Crime Plans

The 42 Police and Crime Plans in England and Wales vary substantially in terms of length, presentation and content. The shortest are Cleveland (11 pages), Suffolk (12) and Northamptonshire (13), whilst at the other end of the spectrum the London Plan is 148 pages long, followed by Greater Manchester (76) and Hertfordshire (68). However, the number of pages can be deceptive; some Plans contain large numbers of photographs and very little text whilst in others the reverse is true.

For purposes of this report we looked at eight specific offences: domestic violence/abuse, sexual assault and rape, stalking, FGM, forced marriage, 'honour-based violence', child sexual abuse, and modern slavery/trafficking. In particular, we considered whether or not these offences are included in each of the 42 Police and Crime Plans (and, if so, how they are described or categorized), and whether or not a perspective is taken that these crimes are largely gendered in terms of both victims/survivors and perpetrators, in line with the National VAWG Strategy.

All but one Police & Crime Plan specifically include reference to one or more of the forms of violence against women and girls. The exception is Humberside, which names none¹⁸. It is extremely concerning that less than half mention forced marriage, so-called 'honour-based violence' and FGM, as these are relevant in every police force area.

The haphazard categorisation of gender-based violence

Provided that they cover the required areas, PCCs are entirely free to decide on how they present and categorise information in their plans and how they define various aspects of their work. It is therefore sometimes difficult to make direct comparisons in terms of how particular offences or groups of offences are treated. For example, the PCCs in Thames Valley and Avon & Somerset view Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) as child abuse, those in Derbyshire and Leicestershire regard it as a form of domestic violence, and the Cheshire and London Plans simply describe it as a ‘harmful practice’. So-called ‘honour- violence’ might be listed under sexual offences, harmful practices, hidden harm, domestic abuse or even (in Dyfed-Powys), serious organized crime. Child sexual abuse can appear in lists of emerging threats (e.g., Durham, North Yorkshire and Kent) as well as in sections on cyber-crime and social issues.

OFFENCE	No. Plans which refer to offences	% of Plans which refer to offences
Domestic violence	41	97.6
Rape/sexual assault	41	97.6
Stalking	10	23.8
FGM	21	50.0
Forced marriage	17	40.5
‘Honour’-based abuse	22	52.4
Child sexual abuse	39	92.8
Modern slavery	35	83.3

Similarly, there are differing views as to how domestic violence should be categorized. Many (e.g. Cheshire, Northamptonshire, Thames Valley, Bedfordshire, and Cambridgeshire) include it as a sexual offence together with a range of other crimes. The Bedfordshire Plan, for instance, promises to:

‘Develop a countywide partnership response to reduce the harm, risks and costs of domestic abuse, child abuse and exploitation (including child sexual exploitation), serious sexual offences,

trafficking and modern day slavery and ‘Violence Against Women and Girls’ which keeps victims safe from future victimisation.’¹⁹

The determination to frame abuse as 'gender neutral'

This lack of clarity or consistency about how to approach offences against women and girls stems at least in part from a widespread failure to acknowledge the gendered nature of both victims and perpetrators.

In cases where domestic violence prosecutions took place in 2017, 92% of defendants were male, and (excluding those where sex was not known), 83% of victims were female and 17% male.²⁰



Between March 2016 and March 2017 over half a million women (3.1% of the female population) and 138,000 men (0.8% of the male population) were the victims of sexual assault, which is defined as including rape, unwanted touching and indecent exposure. 20% of women and 4% of men reported experiencing sexual assault at some point in their lives after the age of 16; this is equivalent to nearly 3.5 million women and just over 600,000 men. In 99% of cases the assailant was male.²¹

In cases of forced marriage responded to by the Forced Marriage Unit, around 80% of victims are female and 20% male.²²

These and other statistics are well-known and easily available and it should not be necessary to continuously rehearse them. But despite this many Police and Crime Commissioners appear to view domestic and sexual violence as non-gendered crimes which may happen equally to either women or men, and for which the sex of the perpetrator needs no reflection. Thus very few make a direct reference to the sex of either the victim or the perpetrator, although they sometimes may do so indirectly by allocating resources to, or commissioning services for victims from, women's organisations.

24 of the Plans (57%) do not include the words 'woman', 'women' or 'female' at all, and only 13 (31%) use the word 'gender'. There is, throughout many Plans, an unspoken determination to present crime in all its forms as gender neutral. This approach hardly bears close inspection, but must inevitably affect the setting of policing priorities and the efficacy of victim service provision. The reluctance even to name women as victims is very meaningful and deeply troubling, as it is the at the core of understanding this abuse.

This is not universal and the London Plan is a stand-out example of how it is possible to acknowledge and respond to male victims of these crimes without giving up on the recognition of enormous disproportionality:

*'Our specific focus on women and girls is a reflection of the disproportionate impact of these crimes on this group. While a new picture of abuse aimed at men is emerging, we know that the majority of victims of rape, sexual assault and domestic abuse are women, and that we need specific services to support them. This does not mean that we diminish or ignore the suffering experienced by men and boys. The services we commission will support victims and survivors whatever their gender, and we will also offer specific support for men and boys.'*²³

The Nottinghamshire Plan states that ‘Domestic violence accounts for 40% of the reported violence against a person; a significant proportion is repeat victimisation’²⁴ and later talks about giving ‘extra priority and resources to domestic violence and crimes against girls and women’, but there is nothing in between connecting these two points, and no indication of the most likely gender of the ‘repeat victimisers’.

One Plan (Gloucestershire) explicitly states that the approach to domestic abuse must be ‘gender neutral’.²⁵ This is probably the single worst example, from all of the Police and Crime Plans, of a stand out PCC rejection of the evidence on these crimes and the actual victimisation of women and girls living in his region, in favour of a false ‘neutrality’ which is very likely to lead to policing priorities and victim services which are not as targeted and effective as they could be.



‘The Constabulary must demonstrate that:.... They take a gender neutral approach to domestic abuse.’

‘We have seen a significant increase in the reporting of such violent sexual crimes including Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Sexual Abuse, where most victims

are adult survivors. This increase has occurred following the Jimmy Savile case and others which has resulted in the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse being established. More than 90% of victims of rape, sexual assault / abuse know who their perpetrator is e.g. a work colleague, a friend or family member and it usually happens within their home or a place of safety’ .

For some PCCs, national and international work done to date on domestic abuse and how it should be addressed seem entirely unknown; the Norfolk Plan, for instance, promises to:

‘Hold a domestic abuse symposium to develop a shared understanding of the root causes of domestic abuse that should be prioritised through future action.’²⁶

This widespread failure to recognise the role of gender as the key driver from both victim and offender point of view has implications for policy and practice, and, from initial policing response, training and performance management, to victims’ services and programmes which aim to prevent abuse before it happens. The failure to grasp what motivates some men – their sense of entitlement to control and dominate, related to deeply gendered scripts and expectations of relationships – makes it very difficult deal with serial offenders and then often tends towards blaming women for not taking action to avoid abuse.

VAWG Plans

Some PCCs have produced a separate Violence Against Women and Girls Plan, often as a 'sub-plan' to their Police and Crime Plan, and these are largely very commendable. They are not analysed in detail in this report. However, these VAWG Plans by definition recognise the significance of gender in victimisation and offending and are in some cases excellent. In the North East of England, for example, six PCCs (Northumbria, Durham, Cleveland, North Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and Humberside) have come together to produce a VAWG regional strategy following consultation with local groups and stakeholders²⁷. This includes 'multi-agency victim support and strong and innovative perpetrator management,' and in 2017 was awarded £7 million from the Home Office's Police Transformation Fund.



In other areas, police forces may have specific plans and strategies around issues such as domestic abuse which do not recognise the gendered nature of either victims or perpetrators. For instance, in West Yorkshire the Domestic Abuse Delivery Plan 2018/19 mentions women only in the context of having received funding from the Violence Against Women and Girls Transformation Fund.

Commissioning and Grants: what money is dedicated to VAWG victims?

In 2014 the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) devolved funding for the commissioning of victims' services to PCCs. The MoJ framework for this says that these funds should be used to assist victims to cope with the immediate impacts of crime and to recover from the harm experienced. Other funds, including those for support services for the victims of trafficking and rape, and for some domestic and sexual violence survivors, are still administered by the MoJ itself, although elements of this regime are changing.

In 2017/18 the MoJ devolved a total of £67.9 million to PCCs in England and Wales for local commissioning of victims' services and local support services, including those addressing VAWG.²⁸ However, the MoJ does not publish details of how these funds were spent, so that there is no national figure for, for example, what proportion of devolved funds were spent on services for victims of domestic violence as opposed to victims of anti-social behaviour.

Because the MoJ believes that local people are in the best position to know what services are needed locally and how they should be delivered, each PCC is able to make their own arrangements for allocating the funds. PCCs are encouraged to work in partnership with one another and with other public bodies on this. The MoJ issues guidelines to PCCs on how to conduct the commissioning process, and it is clear that in many cases PCCs run extensive commissioning procedures. However, these are entirely at PCCs' discretion; the MoJ Framework document explicitly states: 'Although this document does not act as mandatory guidance, it gives advice to commissioners on issues to consider when commissioning services for victims of crime.'²⁹

As a consequence, spending on services for the victims of VAWG is inconsistent, fractured, and lacks transparency. Individual PCCs all record and report their expenditure differently and in some cases detailed information is hard to find. Some produce very detailed breakdowns whilst others simply publish global sums. Some include the information on their websites, whilst others bury it in annual reports, often as a global sum rather than broken down by category or organization. In addition, the tendency to categorise VAWG crimes

differently (as discussed earlier), which runs through the Plans, also runs through commissioning. For instance, funding for services for children in households where domestic violence has occurred may be included either as services for young people or for the victims of domestic violence.

Specialist BME women's support services are rarely recognised in Police and Crime Plans and funding for their life-saving services has not been adequate or protected by many PCCs. These services have been developed by and for women over decades, to meet the specific needs of women in communities which are badly served by statutory or generic services. PCCs should know and value these local beacons of hope, but they are too often ignored by the current commissioning landscape.

Funding for support services for survivors of sexual violence is a particularly egregious example of where individual PCCs' perspective on sexual violence is critical, but is not guaranteed to be based on an appreciation of the scale and harm of sexual violence nor the needs of local victims. PCCs approach the needs of their constituents who have experienced rape and other forms of sexual abuse in wide ranging ways across England and Wales, and as a result local Rape Crisis services and other sexual violence support services receive vastly differing levels of recognition and funding. For example, in the last set of grants made, one Rape Crisis Centre in England received only £3,000 in the financial year 2017/18 from their PCC, compared to another in a similar setting which received over £166,000 from their PCC. This example is stark and directly reflects the arbitrary judgement local women's support services face. Neither of these two centres are funded enough to allow them to meet the demand in their areas.

There does appear to be recognition by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) that the approach of PCCs and their funding commitments are inconsistent and inadequate, as demonstrated by the MOJ's ongoing 'Rape Support Fund' – a small centralised fund of £8,000,000 per year allocated to specialist rape support services (guaranteed only till 2021). However modest the sums allocated by this fund are, they can still be seen as an important way for centres to not be wholly reliant on the PCC. Worryingly however there is a push for the Rape Support Fund to be devolved to PCCs, and for the MOJ to no longer administer the fund. There is a pilot programme to this effect currently ongoing in five areas. This continued surge towards PCC dominance of funding

rape support services, with no apparent oversight of the decision making, is extremely concerning. There is potential as a result for the defunding of life-saving and life-changing support services for survivors where the value and importance of specialist rape support services is not recognised by the PCC.

Women offenders

A small number of Police and Crime Plans make reference to the need to reduce female offending. The Manchester Plan, for instance, refers to:

*'Criminal justice agencies have adopted a problem-solving approach in dealing with female offenders. This approach is a collaboration between magistrates, local women's centres, domestic abuse services, health and housing. This family-centred approach has kept more families together and addresses offending behaviour. It has reduced reoffending and benefited the wider families.'*³⁰

The lack of attention to women offenders across the Plans overall however is a serious omission and is likely linked to the general failure to adopt an approach which acknowledges women's inequality as key to violence against women and girls. Women offenders are among the most multiply abused groups of women in the country. Their offending is commonly linked to abusive relationships and histories of abuse, and their children suffer terribly when they are imprisoned. Their needs should feature more prominently in all the Police and Crime Plans.

LOCAL EXPERIENCES: WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS WORKING WITH PCCS

In the course of preparing this report we looked at the experience of local women's support services in different parts of the country. These include those who run refuges and domestic violence outreach services, sexual violence counselling helplines and centres, BME women's centres which may provide crisis and long-term support for multiple forms of violence against women and girls. Many of these services are run 'by and for' women with deep experience and knowledge of the dynamics of abuse. Many have faced enormous difficulties staying open over the last decade due especially to competitive tendering and cuts, but research has shown they always have higher rates of self-referral than any other kind of provider (due to being known and trusted by the women who may seek them out) and users always say they prefer these services to generic and statutory alternatives and want them to be available.

The women's organisations we spoke to had varying views on their PCC and local policing structures, according to their relationship with the PCC, the structures and procedures within which commissioning is carried out, and the level and nature of local need. However, some common themes did emerge.

The absence of a gendered approach to domestic violence and sexual offences means that in some areas there is a reluctance to commission services specifically for women. This has an impact on male as well as female victims, since their needs may be different. In Gloucestershire the PCC explicitly takes the view that 'The Constabulary must demonstrate that ... they take a gender neutral approach to domestic abuse', but in fact this view is not uncommon across the country, even in London.

In some places, commissioning procedures are elaborate and require a considerable input of time and effort from small and often poorly-funded organisations. These processes may, in some cases, be competitive, resulting in organisations failing to include full costs in bids. In some cases PCCs are prepared to fund salary costs but not office or equipment costs. As a result cumulative funding problems are likely to develop which may impact upon service delivery.



In Wales the situation is complicated by the fact that, whilst PCCs are answerable to the Ministry of Justice, the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act (Wales) 2015 gives responsibility to the Welsh government to work with partners to develop 'joined-up services.' Some national schemes may coincide with PCC areas, but also may not.



As a result, and given the multiplicity of agencies involved, it is extremely difficult to get an overview of what is being spent and where it is going.

In London, despite the existence of a VAWG Strategy and Action Plan for many years now, the actual commissioning of VAWG support services by the Mayor's office is mostly treated as part of the much broader Integrated Victims and Witnesses Service. Women's organisations therefore commonly find themselves having to work with other providers to make submissions. There has been a very serious impact on BME women's specialist support services, in the very city where demand for them is extremely high (see Imkaan's report 'From Survival to Sustainability'³¹⁷). Again, as well as the practical implications, this makes precision about resourcing difficult to establish.

Even where PCCs have good funding models and understand the gendered nature of domestic and sexual violence, there is usually still little appreciation of how 'intersecting inequalities' are related to victimisation and create additional barriers to getting support and justice, particularly in regard to BME women. This is an area not covered in depth this report, but urgently requires attention from PCCs.

Many local service providers have good relationships with their PCC, meeting them regularly and working well with them. This is true even where the PCC's Plan might suggest otherwise. It is possible that PCCs have a better story to tell than their Plans reflect, and more courage in terms of identifying the gendered nature of domestic and sexual violence, and recognising the different needs of women and men, would go some way towards achieving that.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The majority of Police & Crime Plans in England and Wales recognise the need to address domestic abuse, sexual violence, and child sexual abuse, and there is no doubt that, with some exceptions, there is real commitment to addressing these issues.

However, the common failure to recognise the reality and connections between the different forms of violence against women and girls, despite this being the established national framework, and the determination to count gender and other inequalities out of the analysis and response to enormous levels of abuse, are critical failings. These failings are bound to affect everyday policing practice and the provision of the right kind of victims' services.

PCCs were created with the intention of increasing accountability in policing and are close to two full terms of delivery. Their Plans, their spending practices and the lack of clear aims and targets around ending violence against women and girls however make it very difficult to judge whether they are contributing meaningfully to national aims on ending and preventing abuse, or simply whether they can each be said to be increasing safety and equality for women in their area.

The Police & Crime Plans are a snapshot of the PCC's thinking at the time when they are agreed (usually within a year of election), and it is accepted that practice on the ground may well take account of some of the factors which the Plans ignore.

Our recommendations

To the Secretaries of State for Home and for Justice: instruct PCCs to recognise the seriousness and connectedness of crimes of violence against women and girls, and to rewrite their Plans, and policing and victims strategies, accordingly. There should also be central collation and publication of standardised

information on all spending on services for VAWG victims.

To PCCs: if you have not yet done so, make a specific assessment of the scale and nature of all forms of violence against women and girls in your area, and then review your policing priorities and spending plans accordingly. You should involve local communities and especially local women's organisations while doing this. PCCs who are not taking a strategic approach to ending violence against women and girls should meet with and learn from PCC colleagues who do take such an approach.

To chief constables, other police leaders, and CPS leaders: make representations to your PCC about their operational reality of responding to these crimes, and then support the development of a more joined up and strategic local approach.

To MPs: make representations to and meet with your PCCs and enquire directly about their specific aims on ending violence against women and girls, and their commitments to sustainable support services for survivors of abuse.

To local media organisations: we urge you to commission investigations into the prevalence and impact of violence against women and girls locally, and to encourage local debate on how it needs to be tackled. The invisibility of much of this abuse compared to other crime types has arguably reduced the pressure on PCCs, police and courts to make it a priority. The PCC elections in 2020 must be better informed about the particular scale and harms of these crimes.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Police & Crime Commissioners, Deputies and Chief Constables in England and Wales

Appendix 2 : Analysis of Police & Crime Plans by Issue.

Appendix 1: Police & Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables

Area	PCC	Gender	Party	Deputy	Chief Constable
Avon & Somerset	Sue Mountstevens	f	ind		m
Bedfordshire	Kathryn Holloway	f	c	f	m
Cambridgeshire	Jason Ablewhite	m	c	m	m
Cheshire	David Keane	m	l	f	m
Cleveland	Barry Coppinger	m	l		m
Cumbria	Peter McCall	m	c		f
Derbyshire	Hardyal Dhindsa	m	l	m	m
Devon & Cornwall	Alison Hernandez	f	c		m
Dorset	Martyn Underhill	m	ind		f
Durham	Ron Hogg	m	l		m
Dyfed-Powys	Dafydd Llywelyn	m	pc		m
Essex	Roger Hirst	m	c	f	m
Gloucestershire	Martin Surl	m	ind	m	m
Greater Manchester	Andy Burnham (Mayor)	m	l	f	m
Gwent	Jeffrey Cuthbert	m	l	f	m
Hampshire	Michael Lane	m	c		f
Hertfordshire	David Lloyd	m	c		m
Humberside	Keith Hunter	m	l		m

Area	PCC	Gender	Party	Deputy	Chief Constable
Kent	Matthew Scott	m	c		m
Lancashire	Clive Grunshaw	m	l		m
Leicestershire	Willy Bach	m	l	m	m
Lincolnshire	Marc Jones	m	c	m	m
London	Sadiq Khan (Mayor)	m	l	f	f
Merseyside	Jane Kennedy	f	l	f	m
Norfolk	Lorne Green	m	c		m
North Wales	Arfon Jones	m	pc	f	m
North Yorkshire	Julia Mulligan	f	c	m	m
Northamptonshire	Stephen Mold	m	c		m
Northumbria	Vera Baird	f	l		m
Nottinghamshire	Paddy Tipping	m	l	f	m
South Wales	Alun Michael	m	l		m
South Yorkshire	Alan Billings	m	l		m
Staffordshire	Matthew Ellis	m	c	f	m
Suffolk	Tim Passmore	m	c		m
Surrey	David Munro	m	c	f	m
Sussex	Katy Bourne	f	c		m
Thames Valley	Anthony Stansfield	m	c	m	m
Warwickshire	Philip Seccombe	m	c	m	m
West Mercia	John Champion	m	c	f	m
West Midlands	David Jamieson	m	l		m
West Yorkshire	Mark Burns-Williamson	m	l	f	f
Wiltshire	Angus Macpherson	m	c		m

Appendix 2: Issues included in Police & Crime Plans in England and Wales

Plan	PCC Party	No. pages	DV	Rape	Stalking
Avon & Somerset	ind	44	y	y	n
Bedfordshire	c	15	y	y	y
Cambridgeshire	c	24	y	n	n
Cheshire	l	18	y	y	n
Cleveland	l	11	y	y	y
Cumbria	c	16	y	n	n
Derbyshire	l	15	y	y	n
Devon & Cornwall	c	38	y	n	n
Dorset	ind	20	y	n	n
Durham	l	26	y	y	n
Dyfed-Powys	pc	28	y	n	n
Essex	c	26	y	y	n
Gloucestershire	ind	28	y	y	y
Greater Manchester	l	76	y	y	y
Gwent	l	24	y	y	n
Hampshire	c	32	y	n	n
Hertfordshire	c	68	y	y	n
Humberside	l	36	n	n	n
Kent	c	19	y	y	n
Lancashire	l	36	y	y	n
Leicestershire	l	20	y	y	n
Lincolnshire	c	17	y	n	n
London	l	148	y	y	y
Merseyside	l	40	y	y	n
Norfolk	c	44	y	y	y
North Wales	pc	22	y	y	n

Plan	PCC Party	No. pages	DV	Rape	Stalking
North Yorkshire	c	20	y	n	n
Northamptonshire	c	13	y	y	n
Northumbria	l	17	y	y	y
Nottinghamshire	l	50	y	n	y
South Wales	l	54	y	y	n
South Yorkshire	l	25	y	y	n
Staffordshire	c	40	y	n	n
Suffolk	c	12	y	n	n
Surrey	c	16	y	y	n
Sussex	c	15	y	n	y
Thames Valley	c	21	y	y	y
Warwickshire	c	32	y	y	n
West Mercia	c	61	y	y	n
West Midlands	l	46	y	y	n
West Yorkshire	l	32	y	n	n
Wiltshire	c	24	y	n	n

The term 'rape' does not necessarily include all forms of sexual assault, which may feature in those Plans which are shown here with a negative.

Plan	FGM	Forced Marriage	'Honour-based' abuse	Child sexual exploitation	Modern Slavery
Avon & Somerset	y	n	y	y	y
Bedfordshire	y	y	y	y	y
Cambridgeshire	n	n	n	y	y
Cheshire	y	n	y	y	y
Cleveland	y	y	y	y	y
Cumbria	n	n	n	y	n
Derbyshire	y	y	y	y	y
Devon & Cornwall	n	n	n	n	y
Dorset	n	n	n	y	y
Durham	n	n	n	y	n
Dyfed-Powys	y	y	y	y	y
Essex	y	y	y	y	y
Gloucestershire	y	y	y	y	y
Greater Manchester	y	y	y	y	y
Gwent	n	n	n	y	n
Hampshire	n	n	n	y	y
Hertfordshire	n	n	y	y	y
Humberside	n	n	n	n	n
Kent	n	n	n	y	y
Lancashire	n	n	n	y	y
Leicestershire	y	n	y	y	y
Lincolnshire	n	n	n	y	y
London	y	y	y	y	y
Merseyside	n	n	n	y	y
Norfolk	y	y	y	y	y
North Wales	n	n	n	n	n

Plan	FGM	Forced Marriage	'Honour'-based abuse	Child sexual exploitation	Modern Slavery
North Yorkshire	n	n	y	y	y
Northamptonshire	y	n	n	y	y
Northumbria	n	n	n	y	y
Nottinghamshire	y	y	y	y	y
South Wales	y	y	y	y	y
South Yorkshire	y	y	y	y	y
Staffordshire	n	n	n	y	y
Suffolk	y	n	n	y	n
Surrey	n	n	n	y	y
Sussex	n	y	y	y	y
Thames Valley	y	y	y	y	y
Warwickshire	y	n	n	y	y
West Mercia	n	y	y	y	y
West Midlands	y	y	y	y	y
West Yorkshire	y	y	y	y	y
Wiltshire	n	n	n	y	n

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