



ACCOUNTABILITY AND GOVERNANCE BOARD

25th March 2025

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Presented by: ACC Jennifer MATTINSON

1. Police and Crime Plan

1.1 To provide the Commissioner with a report on progress towards the objectives in the West Midlands Police and Crime Plan 2021-2025 relating to Violence against Women and Girls.

1.2 The Police and Crime Plan 2021-2025 includes the following relevant commitments:

- Improve the training and awareness for new and existing officers on violence against women and girls and domestic abuse, to ensure a consistent high-quality response, incorporating feedback from victims;
- Extend the use of independent advocates such as Independent Domestic Violence Advocates' and Independent Sexual Violence Advisors and increase the number of these advocates with specialist training, for example to support LGBT+ victims;
- Ensure police impose bail conditions on alleged perpetrators of domestic abuse;
- Use all available civil protection orders, ensuring breaches are dealt with proportionately, including use of powers of arrest;
- Support the use of robust domestic abuse perpetrator programmes to challenge and change behaviour;
- Champion a change in legislation to record misogyny as a hate crime as recommended by Citizens UK;
- Ensure good policing plays its part in reducing vulnerability in the night-time economy;
- Increase the proportion of all VAWG crimes where an offender is brought to justice;

- Ensure that officers understand, identify, but never take advantage of vulnerability.
- I will look to commission innovative programmes to support the holistic needs of Domestic Abuse survivors back into work through specialist advocacy and support.

1.3 This paper will look to answer a number of specific questions that have been asked in relation to VAWG.

1.4 An update on the recommendations within the HMICFRS report- “Progress to introduce a national operating model for rape and other serious sexual offences investigations”. Full report available [here](#). Update to include details on how WMP are prioritising tackling RASSO.

1.5 Can WMP identify what proportion of VAWG offences are purely online and what proportion of VAWG offences have both an online and offline element? The following definitions from the APCC may be helpful;

- Online safety: Systems and processes in place designed to protect people from online harm, this could be law enforcement or social media companies.
- Online harms: A threat type made up of multiple definitions of harm inflicted on users online, these definitions of harm can be criminal offences or civil matters.
- Online offending: Specific offences under the Computer Misuse Act and Online Safety Act that require law enforcement to respond. These offences can be classified under the threat of online harms. Offences include:
 - Tech-enabled Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) such as romance fraud and stalking and harassment
 - Cybercrime such as ransomware and blackmail.

1.6 Update on progress towards achieving HMICFRS recommendations on the Police response to Stalking

1.7 Over and above referrals into New Chance an update on how WMP are meeting commitments within their own VAWG strategy for women involved in offending?

1.8 MARAC – progress update on performance to include detail on ensuring effective continuity of MARAC performance following proposed re-structure.

2. Rape and other Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) investigations

2.1 All rape investigations are carried out by the Public Protection Unit (PPU), all adult rape cases are managed by the RASSO teams that operate on geographical bases, Western, Central and Eastern.

2.2 Performance for these teams as per table:

Measure	Metric
Current Recorded Rape Offences (Rape victim over 16 years)	23/24 Crime - 3267 24/25 Crime – 3187 - 2.45%
Positive Outcome Rate (Rape victim over 16 years)	24/25 YTD positive Outcomes 168 - 5.27%
OC15 (rape victim over 16 years)	178 - 5.5%
OC 16 (rape victim over 16 years)	1479 – 46%

2.3 A non-recent RASSO team was created within the PPU structure in 2023. They investigate cases where people who are now adults, are reporting non-recent sexual abuse that occurred when they were children. This includes rape and all other penetrative and non-penetrative sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, as well as offences under historic legislation such as buggery and indecent assault.

2.4 In April 2025 a Cold Case RASSO team will go live, this team will solely review cases where no suspect was charged, but with advances in forensic sciences, in particular DNA profiling, cases will be resubmitted for forensic profiling and further activity.

2.5 Procedural justice metric outcomes such as Victim's Code Compliance, Victim's Right to review and others in the RASSO narrative:

- Adult RASSO has quarterly meetings, developed to listen to and capture RASSO victims' voices:
- Victim's whole journey audits- from initial call for service through to Investigation and CPS submission. Force contact and LPA response

supervisors attend the meeting to own and disseminate feedback and learning. 999 call and body worn video is reviewed.

- NFA Rape Scrutiny panels This is a multi-agency panel (CPS, ISVAs, academics). There is a quarterly thematic to include CPS decision making, ISVA cases and police perpetrated RASSO offences.

2.6 Following the ending of a national rape victim's survey run by Operation Soteria, West Midlands Police are creating one to continue to capture victims' experiences.

2.7 In 2024, 25 Victim Right to Review Requests were received and resulted for cases investigated by Adult RASSO and Non-Recent RASSO. These were reviewed by Detective Chief Inspectors in the department who were not involved in the initial decision making.

Total number of Adult RASSO VRRs concluded in 2024	25
The original no further action decision upheld	17
Reopened for further enquiries	5
Referred to the CPS for a Charging Decision	2
Unsuitable for VRR	1

2.8 All forces are required to complete a National Operating Model (NOM) implementation plan and a transformational tool. These outline how West Midlands Police will embed both the Operation Soteria academic evidence and products in order to transform the approach to rape investigations and outcomes. These are in place and have been reviewed by the Operation Soteria Joint Unit. WMP are one of only a handful of police forces that currently have a dedicated specialist RASSO unit, and therefore are able to embed NOM products and assess the transformation of approach to rape and serious sexual offences effectively.

2.9 Intelligence professionals are completing a RASSO problem profile (due by 31st March), following the NOM guidance and have approached third sector partners for data sets to be included.

- 2.10 A finalised version of the OSJU (Op Soteria Joint Unit) Flight Deck key performance indicators are yet to be agreed. The Pillar lead is a member of the senior leadership team with Strategy Delivery & Assurance and aware of current draft proposals and requirements to design reporting mechanisms within WMP.
- 2.11 The first quarter of 2025 will see mandatory continuous professional development sessions for all RASSO investigators, this has been diarised with wider organisation learning planned for the second quarter of 2025. The project planning is well underway and extensively reviewed by the regional practice advisor from the joint unit.
- 2.12 During a recent Operation Soteria Joint Unit Senior Leadership visit they noted the positive relationship with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) based locally and the impending co-location of the RASSO gatekeeper to further develop the seamless transition of cases to this key stakeholder, in addition to the cementing of early advice in RASSO cases.
- 2.13 They were also impressed with the trajectory of positive outcomes in successive quarterly reporting, and on the improvements and focus on legacy caseload. Legacy caseload are investigations which are over 4 years old, these can include investigations that were closed, and have been re-opened due to further evidence coming to light. It was highlighted that there is effective governance on indicators such as outstanding offenders and a plan for ensuring offenders on bail are effectively managed.
- 2.14 It was also acknowledged that the welfare support offered by WMP has been enhanced and the suite of welfare support offered to the totality of the workforce and its availability was impressive.

3. Online VAWG Offences

- 3.1 In calendar year 2024, there were 56,496 VAWG related crimes, a decrease of 13.7% from the previous year when there were 65,495 recorded VAWG related crimes.
- 3.2 In 2024, 6,231 or 11% of VAWG related crimes had an 'Online Crime' keyword applied to them; a similar percentage to the previous year (10%).

3.3 Only a small number of VAWG related crimes were blackmail - 56 out of 56,496 in 2024. This figure is even smaller when looking at only those with an 'Online Crime' keyword (29).

3.4 21.4% of VAWG related crimes were Stalking or Harassment in 2024 (12,100). 4,292 or 35.5% of these had an 'Online Crime' keyword.

3.5 Of all the VAWG related crimes that had an Online Crime Keyword, 68.9% were Stalking or Harassment.

3.6 Romance Fraud and Ransomware are not listed as such under Home Office offence classifications and so is difficult to obtain data accurate for them.

4. Police Response to Stalking

4.1 West Midlands Police has been successful in having its own Early Stalking Awareness Intervention programme in place for the last 3 years to successful bids from the OPCC into the DA Perpetrator Home Office funds. Under the new government, funding has continued for 2025/26.

4.2 In response to the Super Complaint submitted by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust on behalf of the National Stalking Consortium the force has published the WMP Stalking Action Plan, [WMP Stalking Action Plan](#)

4.3 This shows the positive work that has taken place to date:

- 39 recommendations that require evidence against completion.
- 20 showing as being completed
- 11 showing as 75% in progress
- 6 showing as 50% in progress
- 1 showing as 25% in progress
- 1 showing as in progress

4.4 Progress of the plan is overseen by the DA/Stalking Superintendent within PPU. An updated version, to demonstrate progress will be published by 31st March 2025.

4.5 Stalking training has been rolled out for each year since the EASI team has been in place. This has included training for Contact officers, Response and Neighbourhood officers.

4.6 A further bespoke training package is near completion which has been collaborated on with University of Derby.

4.7 Victims of stalking within WMP are supported by Independent Stalking Advocacy Caseworker (ISAC) via a bespoke team from Black Country Women's Aid (BCWA).

5. *Women Involved in Offending*

5.1 WMP VAWG Strategy 2024-27 focuses on a 4P approach to tackle crimes against women and girls. In line with the national position, the strategy intentional does not include an approach to female offending. There are no commitments within this strategy regards women involved in offending.

5.2 New Chance is the preferred choice for female offenders - referrals to New Chance have been showing an upward trajectory consistently for the last four months. They are now close to the highest performance of 80 referrals in a month which was last seen in June 2024.

5.3 The number of courses being completed in New Chance has also seen a continuous improvement in the last four months.

5.4 Female offenders are still managed and monitored through Integrated Offender managers where thresholds are met, however, this cohort still only account for 5%.

5.5 WMP still support the efforts of the Mariposa Project – a four-week programme to work with offenders from Sandwell, Dudley and Birmingham – this is for those women offenders within probation.

5.6 The WMP VAWG strategy recognises that the factors contributing to women presenting in the criminal justice system is different to that of most males.

5.7 Research support that women are most likely to end up in the CJS due to complex and unrelated reasons, often influenced by social, economic and personal factors such as:

- Socioeconomic disadvantage: poverty, unemployment, low wage or unstable housing such factors lead to offences such as theft, fraud or drug related crimes
- VAWG: significant number will have experienced trauma through domestic abuse, sexual abuse or childhood trauma and some will have committed offences in response to abuse and trauma such as self-medicating with drugs
- Mental health and substance abuse: women in CJS are disproportionately impacted by MH and drugs often symptoms or coping mechanisms for trauma

5.8 Women in CJS are more likely to commit non-violent and low-level offences: shoplifting, drug possession or benefit fraud

5.9 The response in WMP is to have a trauma informed workforce which provided holistic support and rehabilitation for women responding to the causes of the offending behaviour.

5.10 The trauma informed workforce is achieved through:

- Requirement and monitoring compliance of completion of national learning packages
- Delivery in classroom-based learning such as Probation, Child Protection
- Communication Strategy as part of VAWG and Vulnerability

5.11 Holistic support and rehabilitation is achieved through:

- Recognising and assessing need
- Diversionary referrals to services such as New Chance, Women's Aid
- Monitoring referral rates
- Service user feedback

6 Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC)

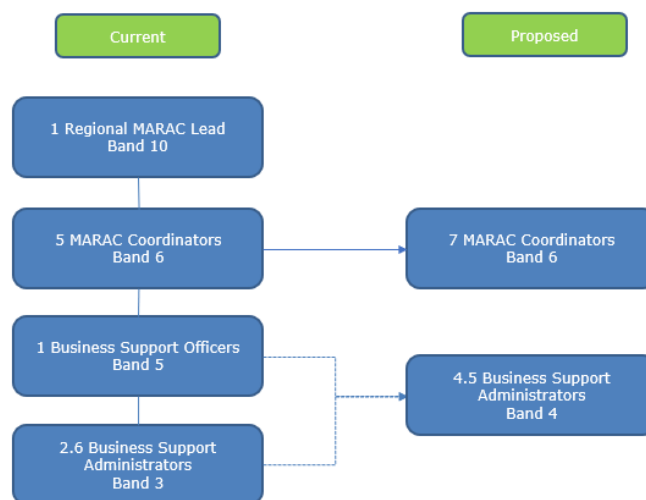
6.1 Op WILLOWBAY was the WMP MARAC Rapid Improvement Plan to deliver improvements following Engage status from the HMICFRS. For this report there are three key points within this plan.

- Develop tolerance measures with trigger plans to address breaches of upper and lower control limits.

- Agree a new pan-West Midlands partnership MARAC Operating Protocol.
- Restructure of the MARAC team

6.2 The WMP Corporate Development team completed modelling work based on 3 years of MARAC data and has prediction modelling up to 2026.

6.3 The MARAC Team structure has been reconfigured and uplifted to provide additional capacity and has changed as follows:



6.4 Recruitment for the uplift is in progress and is on course to be completed in Q4 2024/25. Due to this being a restructure there are four posts to be recruited to. A MARAC Co-ordinator and 3 MARAC support officers – adverts went live on the 14th February for recruitment to be completed by financial year end.

6.5 MARAC governance is executed through a new 3 tier structure.

6.6 The **West Midlands Strategic Safeguarding Forum** provides executive governance through bi-annual reporting. Representation at this meeting includes Chair of 3 ICBs operating across region, the Director of Children Services and Adults Services from each of 7 LPAs and the ACC for Crime.

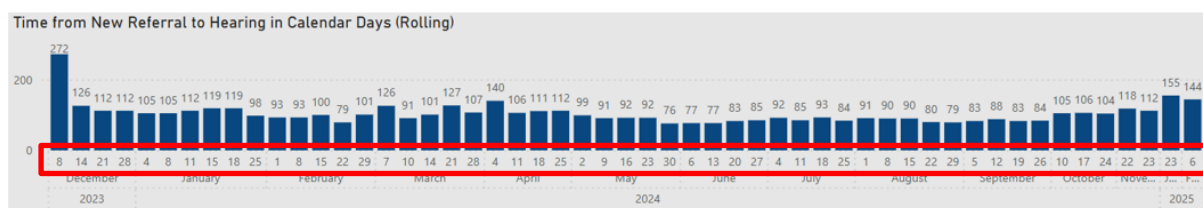
6.7 Strategic governance is executed through the **MARAC Strategic Governance Group**. This meeting occurs quarterly and is chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive of the OPCC and attended by LPA strategic representative, WMP Supt with responsibility for MARAC and Regional MARAC Lead who chairs the Operational

Group. The LPA strategic representative provides the conduit to wider LPA (local) partners through Community Safety Partnerships.

6.8 Operational governance is executed through the **MARAC Operational Group**. This meeting occurs monthly, chaired the MARAC Regional Lead, and will be further chaired by the Domestic Abuse Superintendent within PPU, and attended by LPA MARAC Subject Matter Experts (SMEs). This provides an effective conduit to local multi-agency governance arrangements where the LPA MARAC SME are chairs.

6.9 Sustained performance is evidenced over a 12-month period with live MARAC cases having a maximum of 28 days from referral to hearing in line with SafeLives guidance. This time is to enable multiple agencies to research the victim, perpetrator and children to deliver a robust and coordinate intervention/s. This is in addition to police addressing any immediate safeguarding action required when responding to domestic abuse calls.

6.10 The data below shows the time from referral to holding the MARAC meeting which continues to be within SafeLives guidance of 28 days:



6.12 The MARAC Team and function is scheduled to transition to the PPU Supt with Force Lead for Domestic Abuse early 2025. This will provide a single lead for domestic abuse including review and allocation, investigation, safeguarding, including MARAC, and civil and protection orders.

7 Financial Implications

7.1 There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report.

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