
Report to: Police Authority
Date: 8 December 2021
Subject: VAWG Delivery Plan – Summary of Activity
Sponsor: Chief Constable
For: Information

1. Purpose of report

1.1 To provide a high-level overview of the activity presently being delivered under BTP's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Delivery Plan.

2. Performance

2.1 Whilst we welcome the overall rise in the number of sexual offences and incidents involving sexual harassment being recorded by us (1,412 YTD) this is 9.8% less than pre-pandemic figures, and is an indication that we need to continue to work hard to reach and reassure victims of these offences.

2.2 There are also a number of other challenging statistics which we need to address. Although we have made 318 arrests YTD for sexual offences our detection rate presently stands at 11%. This must increase if we are to build confidence and produce results for our victims. For me, this will mean bold choices will need to be made surrounding our priority crimes and where our resources are directed to ensure that we're tackling those crimes which pose the most harm.

3. Officer Identification & Public Legitimacy

3.1 **Warrant Cards** - The Force is exploring a number of options to aid officer identification in recognition of the present public anxiety particularly for lone male officers. A primary focus has been upon issuing modern warrant cards as there are concerns around the quality and security features of those being issued. A proof of concept is currently being developed with suppliers with potential features including verification chips, holographic coding and brail augmentations with an aim to commence introduction during spring next year.

3.2 **Officer Verification** – Providing reassurance to the public is key to rebuilding trust amongst our communities which is why a new process for officer identification and verification was introduced in October. The process enables a 'verification' check to be undertaken and monitored through the Force control room should a member of public have concerns around an officer's identity or the legitimacy of their actions. Whilst providing a reassuring safety net (the process has been used once to date), our position remains that it is incumbent upon each officer to reassure a member of public through their personal communication skills and only introduce this process as a last resort.

4. Communications & Management Information

4.1 **Internal Communication** - An internal communications campaign aimed at tackling sexualised behavior within the work place has been drafted. The launch is planned to coincide with the rebranding of our confidential reporting system to 'Speak Up' in the New Year. The campaign centres upon building the confidence to report any incidents, robustly challenging perceptions around inappropriate behavior and encouraging our staff to take action against any instances which they encounter. This messaging reinforces the position which I have clearly and consistently set out through extensive engagement both internally and externally – there is no place for VAWG in BTP and

we need to continuously challenge ourselves to deliver the best service to victims whilst robustly tackling offenders.

- 4.2 **External Communications and Engagement** - A joint BTP, RDG and Crime Stoppers campaign was launched in August promoting a 'zero tolerance' approach to sexual harassment and VAWG. The objective is to raise awareness of, and challenge, perceptions that trivialise and normalise all forms of unwanted sexual behavior, promote reporting methodologies and making the railway a hostile environment for offenders. This form of campaign is fundamental in resetting behaviors, building trust and confidence and reflects the reality that VAWG will be overcome by police, industry and passengers working as a community, which is why we need to maximise the reach of this campaign across all of our industry partners.

5. Initiatives & Projects

- 5.1 **Anonymous Reporting System** – In an effort to overcome barriers to reporting, on the 30th of November, together with three other Forces, BTP launched a 4-week pilot for a new anonymous reporting system for sexual offences. Although no victim details will be recorded, each report will be crimed and assessed for investigative viability. Although investigations without a named/known victim will not meet the evidential requirements for prosecution, we will allocate crimes for investigation and explore other offences (capable of prosecution) and gather key intelligence.
- 5.2 **White Ribbon Accreditation** - Following joint work with the White Ribbon charity, the Force has successfully attained White Ribbon accreditation by demonstrating an ongoing commitment to tackling VAWG. The Force formally announced the accreditation on 'International Day to End Violence Against Women' (25/11/21) and is being followed by 16 days of action.
- 5.3 **Reporting App** – The Force continues to work with government partners and the Authority on the production of a safer/safe travel application which will also deliver another means of reporting incidents. The tender process has been completed and a supplier selected. Unfortunately, the Cabinet Office have declined to support the progression of development at this stage and we await a decision from the BTPA on how to proceed.

6. Culture & Professional Standards

- 6.1 **Review of PSD Cases** - A full review of all existing instances of suspension / restriction decisions made relating to live investigations of violence / excessive force and sexual offences / misconduct against women has been completed leading to further officers being suspended. I have already taken direct action to dismiss one officer via the fast track process and secured a judicial review on another case. There are presently 30 officers on suspension or being investigated for sexual offences and/or sexual misconduct.
- 6.2 **Improving Victim Support** - To enable further support to victims and witnesses involved in internal incidents, our Professional Standards Department (PSD) have produced a draft PSD Pledge which outlines the process and support that victims and witnesses can expect. It is believed that BTP are the first Force to take such an approach and are now working with partner Forces to spread best practice. PSD are also in the process of training all their investigators alongside the Survivors Trust who

provide specialist training in responding and supporting victims. This will aid the monthly inputs delivered by PSD during Divisional visits.

- 6.3 **Vetting Review** – In order to increase the confidence of the communities we serve we're taking a robust approach to vetting our staff and officers. I have therefore authorised an increase in the resources within the Force's vetting department. The immediate priorities are to alleviate any congestion within vetting queues, reintroduce the annual declaration process and ensure compliance with professional practices.

7. Finance

- 7.1 The MTFP includes an additional investment of £1.4m per annum, augmenting both our internal and external service delivery. Internal capacity has been expanded across Professional Standards Department (PSD) and Protecting the Public and Vulnerable (PPV) team as we put more focus on our professionalism agenda, continue to develop our organisational culture and increase our front-line response to vulnerability caseloads, particularly across those who are high / repeat presenters. We will be able to apply for more ancillary management orders such as Sexual Harm Prevention Orders (SHPOs) and Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBOs), making the network a hostile place for those offenders and enables more effective management of their behavior.

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