

POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANEL REPORT

Meeting Date	12 October 2023
Report Title	Strategy to Address Violence Against Women and Girls

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1. Background

- 1.1. The joint Strategy to Address Violence Against Women and Girls was launched in June 2022, and can be found on the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (“OPFCC”) website, together with the initial 6-month Progress Update report published in December 2022.
- 1.2. The six **Strategic Objectives** set out in the Strategy are:

1: Listening to All Women & Girls, including those from under-represented communities, and proactively seek feedback to inform continuous service improvements

2: Prevention & Early Intervention, including awareness campaigns to tackle the root causes of Violence Against Women and Girls at a cultural level, promoting a zero-tolerance approach to these behaviours

3: Increasing Public Confidence & Trust in the Police, including holding the police to account on their handling of reports of Violence Against Women and Girls

4: Strengthening the Multi-Agency Approach to Address Violence Against Women and Girls, including the wider criminal & civil court processes

5: Enhancing Support for Victims, including ensuring all services and agencies that come into contact with victims offer trauma aware, high quality and timely responses

6: Facilitating Behaviour Change by Perpetrators, including expanding the availability / scope of behaviour change interventions / programmes that focus on both enforcement and rehabilitation.

2. Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Delivery Plan

- 2.2. The Delivery Plan outlines how we intend to achieve the six strategic objectives and has been co-produced by the Joint Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy Delivery Group which is made

up of representatives from local statutory partners. The Delivery Plan is underpinned by a detailed Action Tracker which sets out which partner will be responsible for leading different workstreams and by when.

2.3. This report provides an overview of what **Actions** have been taken in the past 6-months since the previous progress update published in December 2022 to achieve our **Aims** and **Outcomes** under each **Objective**, and what we plan to do next.

3. Delivery Plan – Progress to Date

Objective 1: Listening to All Women and Girls, including those from rural and under-represented communities, and proactively seeking feedback to inform continuous service improvements

3.1. Under Objective 1 there are two **Outcomes** which are:

- Proactive engagement with under-represented communities and seldom heard women
- Ensure parity of services across both urban and rural areas, and other isolated communities

3.2. To achieve these Outcomes, we **Aim** to:

- Regularly consult and proactively engage with all women and girls to ensure the voices of victims & survivors are heard & inform practice development
- Expand the gender-specific support offer of York Women’s Centre services into different areas throughout North Yorkshire and City of York, including rural and isolated areas

3.3. **Actions** taken in the past 6-months to support these Aims include:

3.4. A Violence Against Women and Girls Professionals sub-group was established in December 2022 made up of representatives from local organisations and practitioners working with women and girls to discuss key themes and shared experiences impacting the sector. A representative of this Sub-group now attends the Strategic Governance Board to feedback these discussion themes and ensure we continue to adopt a person-centred and trauma-informed approach wherever possible within our delivery activities.

A) The Suzy Lamplugh Trust interviewed victims of stalking who had been supported through the North Yorkshire Police Specialist Stalking Team; these interviews were used to inform the findings and recommendations of the independent victim-focussed review of North Yorkshire Police’s response to stalking conducted by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust.

B) North Yorkshire Council have commissioned Horton Housing to develop and pilot a new Gypsy, Roma & Traveller Domestic Abuse Community Support Officer service which commenced in November 2022 to develop trusted relationships with Gypsy, Roma & Traveller communities at 4x sites across North Yorkshire; to date around 17 women across these sites are regularly accessing support.

C) North Yorkshire Council and the City of York Council commissioned Safe Lives to undertake a Public Health Approach: Wider System Review of Domestic Abuse concluding in a full day event in June 2023; several survivors and pioneers from North Yorkshire and the wider Yorkshire Region shared their personal experiences at this event, and these survivors have been invited to share their experiences as part of training

events - for example a Survivor recently spoke at the North Yorkshire Police student officer training session at the end of June 2023.

- D) The most recent North Yorkshire Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board meeting was attended by members of the IDAS Survivor Advisory Board which is the first time survivors have been directly part of our Domestic Abuse Strategic Governance meetings; representatives from both the North Yorkshire and York Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Boards reciprocally attend IDAS Survivor Advisory Board meetings and work continues with this group to explore other opportunities for survivors to be more involved at a strategic level.
- E) Commissioner Zoë has contributed funding through her Community Fund for St. Giles Trust to purchase a mobile provision 'Liberty Links' to deliver outreach services to women in rural and other isolated communities from August 2023; this mobile provision forms part of the Whole System Approach for Women being developed with partners across the county with the aim of improving the response to women with multiple unmet needs, those who have been victims, or at risk of violence and those who are involved with, or at risk of involvement with the Criminal Justice System.
- F) The Exploitation Risk Assessment Conferences continue to review partner intelligence for women at risk on a county-wide basis to provide an offer of support to all women at risk of sexploitation, including sexual exploitation and women affected by County Lines; with an average of 16 women per month being discussed, which is around three times as many compared to last year.

4. Objective 2: Tackling the root causes of Violence Against Women and Girls through Prevention and Early Intervention

4.1. Under Objective 2 there are two **Outcomes** which are:

- Increase awareness and promote zero tolerance of all forms of gender inequality and Violence Against Women and Girls
- Increase availability of Early Help and Community-led Interventions

4.2. To achieve these Outcomes, we **Aim** to:

- Develop age-appropriate materials to challenge misogyny from an early age
- Develop campaign materials to raise awareness about misogyny, stalking and street harassment
- Develop interventions for women to raise awareness and highlight the impact of Illegal Cultural Harms with the aim of enabling women to abandon harmful cultural practices and beliefs.
- Develop a network of Champions specialising in different Violence Against Women and Girls issues to help raise awareness and ensure victims can more easily access help and advice at the earliest opportunity

4.3. **Actions** taken to date to support these Aims include:

- a) City of York Council are working with Pastoral Leads within secondary schools in York to complete a mapping exercise of what is currently being delivered in relation to Healthy Relationships within schools, and if there is specific reference to misogyny;

this will inform the commissioning of a Healthy Schools Framework aligned to the existing Framework within North Yorkshire.

- b) An All About Respect Network event was held in June 2023 which aimed to take the campaign into the local community, rather than remaining a campus specific initiative to tackle Sexual Violence, Harassment and abuse. The event included inputs from a variety of agencies including the Youth Commission, North Yorkshire Police and Survive.
- c) The OPFCC secured Safer Streets Funding to raise awareness of stalking and harassment through the creation of a bespoke short film series and campaign resource pack aimed at young people aged 16 to 25yrs. The film is currently being finalised and will be officially launched in October 2023.
- d) A Task and Finish Group has been established to map scope of current Professional Champion schemes, including Domestic Abuse Matters Champions within North Yorkshire Police, Stalking Champions and Hate Crime Champions. The group are exploring options to create a network to bring these champions together to support each other and share best practice, including consideration of a virtual forum online.
- e) The Professionals Sub-group are considering options to link in with existing Community Champions Schemes and identify suitable experts on specific Violence Against Women and Girls themes such as the IDAS Community Champions who are located within diverse communities including rural localities and currently deliver inputs on Domestic Abuse to a wide range of audiences in our communities.
- f) A Task and Finish Group has been established between North Yorkshire Police and North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service to progress applications for White Ribbon UK Accreditation for both services.
- g) Research has been completed to identify best practice in relation to 'Safe Spaces' schemes, safety apps and other safety initiatives used in other areas to help identify which approach is most suitable for North Yorkshire; this is being considered alongside an assessment of the scope, membership and utilisation of existing schemes locally, including:
 - i) North Yorkshire Community Transformation Hubs in GP surgeries which could be used as gender specific spaces or for meeting with clients;
 - ii) TSB Plc 'Safe Spaces' in their banks and Boots stores;
 - iii) New York Licensees Code of Conduct and proposals for venues to indicate their support of this work through a logo in the window to become 'Safe Spaces'; and
 - iv) North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service and IDAS' pilot 'Safe Space' initiative at Scarborough fire station.

5. Objective 3: Increasing Public Confidence and Trust in the Police

5.1. Under Objective 3 there are two **Outcomes** which are:

- Increase confidence in reporting Violence Against Women and Girls offences
- Identify learning opportunities and ensure continuous service improvements

5.2. To achieve these Outcomes, we **Aim** to:

- Support police officers to adopt a trauma aware response to ensure the right support is offered when victims do report
- Better identify and respond to Violence Against Women and Girls ‘gateway offences’, Illegal Cultural Harms, and stalking offences at an earlier point.
- Develop the Rape and Domestic Abuse Scrutiny Panels to review cases which have not attained the required evidential level for prosecution or otherwise resulted in a failed prosecution

5.3. **Actions** taken to date to support these Aims include:

- a) Commissioner Zoë has supported a pledge with the Suzy Lamplugh Trust to increase the number of stalking cases reported to North Yorkshire Police. To support this, the OPFCC commissioned the Suzy Lamplugh Trust to conduct an independent victim-focussed review of current practices and responses to reports of stalking, with recommendations where necessary to improve processes. This review is now complete, and the overall assessment by the Trust is encouraging that North Yorkshire Police has already implemented a number of steps to improve its response; the Trust identified a number of positive areas of work but did make recommendations in relation to potential areas for development. The OPFCC and North Yorkshire Police accept these findings which will be published shortly alongside a report which sets out the progress made to date against each recommendation and further planned work to address the remaining areas of improvement.
- b) North Yorkshire Police have now trained a further 13 response officers to be specialist Sexual Offences Liaison Officers (“SOLOs”) bringing the total number of available SOLOs across force to 37 officers to provide an enhanced service to the victims of rape and other sexual offences for both recent and non-recent incidents. North Yorkshire Police’s ambition is to increase this number of trained SOLOs to 50 by the end of 2023, with a further training course planned for October 2023.
- c) North Yorkshire Police launched Op. Pledge in June 2023 to further enhance the Domestic Abuse Pledge launched in February 2022 and better support police officers or staff who are victims of Domestic Abuse.
- d) Following a review of the Domestic Abuse Independent Scrutiny Panel arrangements earlier this year, a new Progress Tracker has been introduced to improve recording of feedback from the panel and the actions taken by North Yorkshire Police to address these to continuously drive improvement in Domestic Abuse investigations.

6. Objective 4: Strengthening the Multi-Agency Approach to Address Violence Against Women and Girls

6.1. Under Objective 4 there are three **Outcomes** which are:

- Improve joint Safeguarding and Risk Management Approaches
- Improve the experiences of those going through Criminal Justice Processes
- Improve the experiences of those going through Civil and Family Court Proceedings

6.2. To achieve these Outcomes, we **Aim** to:

- Promote the use of special measures in court

- Explore options for establishing Court Observers Panels to observe rape and sexual abuse trials and/or domestic abuse cases with a view to highlighting best practice and providing constructive feedback
- Work with the legal professionals, court staff and judges to prevent further victimisation within the family court process

6.3. **Actions** taken to date to support these Aims include:

- a) The MARAC/MATAC Steering Group continues to review current arrangements, including meeting attendance and engagement by all key stakeholders and to ensure learning from meetings is shared at an organisational level to continuously drive improvements.
- b) North Yorkshire Council have recruited an independent chair for Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (“MACE”) meetings, and work is ongoing to try and correlate as far as possible the processes in York and North Yorkshire so that they are more consistent; City of York Council have also introduced a pilot where health records are flagged for children identified as medium and high risk of exploitation with the intention to roll this approach across North Yorkshire as well.
- c) North Yorkshire Police have employed a Special Measures Advisor within the Witness Care System as part of a 12-month pilot which started in February 2023; this Special Measures Advisor is currently taking a proactive approach to reviewing cases pre-charge, and if it is felt that Special Measures are needed then they will reach out to the officer in the case (“OIC”) to advise on an application for the identified required Special Measures, which will in turn raise overall awareness of suitable Special Measures to be applied for in future cases. In the initial 4 months of the pilot, the Special Measures Advisor has referred 51 Victims of Violence Against Women and Girls Offences back to the OIC for a Special Measures Application to be made, with 10 applications subsequently granted by the Courts.
- d) A pilot commenced in April 2023 for IDVAs to be available ‘on call’ to attend York Court should somebody need support in-court, whether or not they are an existing IDAS client; this pilot will be reviewed after 6-months of delivery to consider how it could be rolled out at other courts throughout North Yorkshire.
- e) The Domestic Abuse & Family Court Working Group continues to meet regularly to consider how best to disseminate accurate information about the family court process and improve information sharing between family courts and police; the Chair of the Working Group now also attends the Joint Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy Delivery Group to provide regular updates.

7. Objective 5: Enhancing Support Services for Victims

7.1. Under Objective 5 there is one **Outcome** which is:

- Ensure high quality services are available to everyone at their time of need

7.2. To achieve this Outcome, we **Aim** to:

- Explore options to jointly commission where possible a range of services to offer trauma-aware support for victims of all forms of Violence Against Women and Girls
- Create a new Victims' Centre including dedicated, modern Sexual Assault Referral Centre (“SARC”) and Child Sexual Assault Assessment Service (“CSAAS”) facilities, and Video

Recorded Interview (“VRI”) suites to provide an improved service for all victims of sexual violence or abuse

- Consider the gendered nature of exploitation and implement practice development locally where appropriate

7.3. **Actions** taken to date to support these Aims include:

- a) Additional national funding totalling £931,880 has been allocated by the OPFCC in 2022/23 to maintain increased capacity and availability of specialist domestic abuse and/or sexual violence support services including (but not limited to) Counselling and Talking Therapy services, the Halo Project’s ‘By & For’ Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (“ISVA”) service for women and girls from Black and Minoritised communities and the New Beginnings Peer Support Service for Survivors of Domestic Abuse.
- b) Demand locally continues to grow for these specialist support services for victims and survivors of domestic abuse and/or sexual violence and there was a 12% increase in referrals into these local support services in 2022/23 in comparison to 2021/22, and a 154% increase in those who have accessed these services reporting positive outcomes as a result of the support they received.
- c) The new Regional Adult (16yrs+) Sexual Assault Referral Centre service commenced in April 2023; this service was jointly commissioned with NHS England and Police & Crime Commissioners/Mayor across the Yorkshire & Humber Region to provide additional service resilience through a 24/7 service across four SARC premises, including one located in York.
- d) Building work is shortly due to commence on the new Victim’s Centre following stakeholder input into the plans to ensure it will meet the needs of all victims and survivors who will use the new SARC and CSAAS facilities, and two VRI suites which will be available in the new building.
- e) Changing Lives have secured funding to employ a ‘net reach’ worker and a ‘net reach’ caseworker to identify women who advertise sexual services online and who are at risk of tech abuse to help understand local and national trends and reach out to offer support to these women.

8. Objective 6: Facilitating Behaviour Change by Perpetrators

8.1. Under Objective 6 there are two **Outcomes** which are:

- Increase availability of interventions for perpetrators of Violence Against Women and Girls offences that focus on both enforcement and rehabilitation
- Increase availability of interventions for those with Dual Status and those with Multiple Unmet Need

8.2. To achieve these Outcomes, we **Aim** to:

- Develop a range of services and interventions for perpetrators of Stalking
- Develop an appropriate domestic abuse perpetrator service offer for those who are high risk but don’t meet the criteria for a statutory programme
- Pilot interventions for perpetrators of online sexual offending
- Seek to divert women that offend or are at risk of offending from the criminal justice system (where appropriate) where their offending is linked to any Violence Against Women and Girls they have been subjected to

8.3. **Actions** taken to date to support these Aims include:

- a) A permanent Detective Sergeant post has been included from this year within the Specialist Stalking Team within North Yorkshire Police to provide more robust oversight of investigations, increase applications for Stalking Prevention Orders (where appropriate) and liaise with other forces to identify good practice.
- b) The OPFCC has committed a further £42,240 until March 2024 for the Stalking Project Worker co-located with the police Stalking Team to continue to offer the +Choices Perpetrator Programme to low risk perpetrators who are willing to voluntarily address their stalking behaviours; this specialist Stalking Project Worker received 16 referrals in 2022/23 and has supported 1 perpetrator of stalking to successfully complete the programme to date.
- c) The OPFCC has completed research into perpetrator programmes and interventions available/delivered nationally, including those for High Risk and/or repeat perpetrators of Domestic Abuse and online sexual offending to inform commissioning of pilot programmes / interventions to meet gaps in current service provision from 2023/24.
- d) In the interim, the OPFCC has committed further funding totalling £138,000 until March 2024 to maintain increased frontline capacity to meet increasing need and demand for the +Choices: Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme which received 30% more referrals in 2022/23 in comparison to 2021/22; alongside delivery of Early Intervention & Prevention activities to continue to support agencies to work more effectively together in identifying and managing risk from perpetrators of domestic abuse.

9. Delivery Plan - Next Steps

9.1. **Objective 1:** Listening to All Women and Girls, including those from rural and under-represented communities, and proactively seeking feedback to inform continuous service improvements

- A new Violence Against Women and Girls Public Survey will be launched by the OPFCC on 31st July 2023; the survey will be anonymous and available year-round for anyone affected by Violence Against Women and Girls, including men, boys, transgender and non-binary people to share their experiences and views on what more we should be doing collectively to address these issues.
- The OPFCC are also currently exploring specific consultation opportunities with students and Armed Services Communities, and a questionnaire has been developed to seek the views and experiences of those working in the Night-time Economy who can also be subject to harassment and racial Hate Crime.
- Mindful Photography and Photo Voice sessions will be delivered from 3rd June – 29th July 2023 in partnership with City of York Council, York's Our City Hub and In Her Shoes (Migrant women) group, culminating in an exhibition and presentation by the facilitator at the Our City Festival in September 2023.
- Survivor experiences collated by Safe Lives as part of the Wider System Review will be used to shape our Joint Domestic Abuse Strategy Objectives from 2023/24, and North Yorkshire

Council and City of York Council are exploring options to develop a dedicated survivor voice resource.

- The new mobile provision of the Whole System Approach for Women will help us to collate data around what is needed to ensure parity of service across rural and other isolated communities and uncover any further hidden harms. Longer-term, we plan to establish more permanent support hubs in areas where there is need and demand for support to continue so that the mobile provision can move to other areas and support more women.

9.2. **Objective 2: Tackling the root causes of Violence Against Women and Girls through Prevention and Early Intervention**

- City of York Council will continue to assess the scope and content of existing delivery of packages including misogyny in schools by reviewing the materials shared by schools in York to determine any gaps in existing provision, and then work with schools to ensure domestic abuse and healthy relationships are included within the RE curriculum. Longer-term we aim to gather similar information from schools throughout North Yorkshire to inform the commissioning of a Healthy Schools Framework aligned to the existing Framework within North Yorkshire.
- City of York Council are also developing resources that will aim to increase awareness of domestic abuse, providing practical examples of different forms of abuse such as coercive control to be shared via local partnership boards and local stakeholders with schools, colleges and universities.
- The All About Respect team are now exploring options to create a more consistent online induction programme across all educational institutions and reviewing existing materials to confirm if some modules require updates/re-filming. Furthermore, following the successful All About Respect Network event, opportunities are being explored to develop an awareness raising package to promote a zero-tolerance approach to gender inequality and Violence Against Women and Girls in the wider community setting outside of campus.
- We will link into Further Education Task and Finish Group in North Yorkshire to explore further opportunities for co-production and awareness raising amongst 6th Form/College aged students.
- North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service are developing interventions with a Violence Against Women and Girls related theme for the LIFE course, and exploring the use of positive male role modelling, linking in with the North Yorkshire Youth Commission and Community Safety Hubs around developing early interventions for Young People who have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (“ACEs”).
- We will work with North Yorkshire Police to promote ‘Operation Vigilant’ to prevent sexual offending in the night-time economy and make women and girls feel safer.
- We will commission pilot delivery of the Halo Project’s ‘Talk, Listen, Change’ Illegal Cultural Harms programme from 2023/24 to raise awareness and support women to abandon harmful cultural practices and beliefs.
- The Violence Against Women and Girls Champions Task and Finish Group will explore options to host a virtual forum to bring together Champions online & share best practice.
- The Violence Against Women and Girls Professionals Sub-group will develop training content and supporting materials based on their specialisms across different locations and settings

including workplaces, faith-based and educational settings, with training opportunities mapped as part of the Whole System Approach development.

- We will continue to work with partners and local business to explore other options to expand the membership and availability of 'Safe Spaces' and other safety initiatives including –
 - Working with Morrisons Supermarket to discuss potential 'Safe Spaces' scheme using their stores
 - Explore opportunities to create 'safer' environments through planning and continuous improvements across parks and public spaces, including public transport links
 - Roll-out vulnerability training for night-time economy workers county-wide.

9.3. **Objective 3: Increasing Public Confidence and Trust in the Police**

- The Domestic Abuse Matters Change Programme will be firmly embedded within the North Yorkshire Police Strategic Plan including regular strategic review and consideration of how enhanced practice can be adopted by partner agencies.
- We will regularly review Public Trust & Confidence Survey results to identify Victim Satisfaction Measures for North Yorkshire Police's response to Violence Against Women and Girls.
- We will work with North Yorkshire Police to develop mechanisms to consistently capture victim satisfaction feedback on their response to Violence Against Women and Girls, and specifically in relation to stalking and police perpetrated domestic abuse.
- We will work in partnership with the Halo Project to produce a campaign to raise awareness and encourage reporting of illegal cultural harms.
- We will complete further consultation and engagement with existing victim and survivors forums to establish how they would like to be represented and/or directly involved in scrutiny and engagement opportunities including the Domestic Abuse and Rape Scrutiny Panels.
- We will ensure learning from both panels is shared at an organisational level to continuously drive improvement in domestic abuse and rape and serious sexual offences cases by publishing annual overviews of high-level findings of each panel to ensure transparency and greater accountability.

9.4. **Objective 4: Strengthening the Multi-Agency Approach to Address Violence Against Women and Girls**

- The Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Boards will use the findings and recommendations made by Safe Lives following the Whole System Review to determine how agencies can work more effectively in identifying and safeguarding victims and managing risk from perpetrators of domestic abuse.
- We will work with the Local Criminal Justice Partnership to identify appropriate actions to be undertaken by police, CPS and court staff to improve the experiences of those going through Criminal Justice processes.

- We will undertake consultation with local courts to explore options for establishing Court Observers Panels to observe rape and sexual offences trials and/or domestic abuse cases with a view to highlighting best practice and providing constructive feedback.

9.5. **Objective 5: Enhancing Support Services for Victims**

- The OPFCC will re-commission support services for child exploitation from January 2024, including increasing the upper age range from 18 years to 25 years and including a requirement for potential providers to demonstrate how they will support women and girls in particular who may be affected by exploitation as aligned to our Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.
- The OPFCC, North Yorkshire Council and City of York Council will jointly commission a holistic package of support services from April 2024 for anyone affected by domestic abuse, including victims, survivors, perpetrators and their children.
- Following the regional workshop hosted by NHS England to consult with partners and stakeholders on what an improved Child Sexual Assault Assessment Service might look like, we will continue to work with our local stakeholders and NHS England to re-commission a Child Sexual Assault Assessment Service which meets the needs of children and families in North Yorkshire.
- We will review and develop the Modern Slavery Partnership to ensure it supports effective identification and support for victims by raising awareness and promoting information sharing.
- We will continue to develop the work successfully piloted in York to offer a dedicated offer of support to women involved with sex working, survival sex and at risk of, or a victim of sexual exploitation throughout North Yorkshire.

9.6. **Objective 6: Facilitating Behaviour Change by Perpetrators**

- North Yorkshire Police are completing profiles of known Stalking Perpetrators, both stranger and domestic-related stalking incidents, to enable the OPFCC to commission a pilot programme for perpetrators of all stalking types, including interventions to be delivered as part of a 'Positive Requirement' attached to Stalking Prevention Orders.
- We will explore co-commissioning and funding opportunities to deliver pilot provision for a mandatory referral route for domestic abuse perpetrators.
- We are working with the Probation Service to fund pilot provision of additional Circles programmes for non-probation managed perpetrators of sexual offences.
- We will continue to improve the local evidence base of underlying and contributory factors to offending by monitoring individual outcomes for women supported through the Crossroads Diversion Service, which will inform the development of the Whole System Approach for Women.