

**AVON AND SOMERSET POLICE AND CRIME PANEL  
REPORT OF THE AVON & SOMERSET POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER  
24th OCTOBER 2013**

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE IN AVON AND SOMERSET**

**Purpose**

This report provides a brief overview of the landscape with regard to domestic violence and abuse, as requested by the Police and Crime Panel.

**Context**

The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse (DVA) is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. DVA can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse.

The PCC stood for election with a manifesto commitment to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). After consulting on the Police and Crime Plan this was expanded to – tackling domestic and sexual violence, particularly against women and children (VAWC).

The main focus for this priority is increasing the confidence of victims to come forward and report to the Police. The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) goes some way to understanding the issue of under-reporting, and in 2008/09 it was estimated that 16% of domestic violence victims report their experiences to the police.

In 2012/13 there were 17,461 recorded DV crimes and incidents recorded in Avon and Somerset.

**Police and Crime Plan**

As part of the VAWC priority, the Constabulary have developed an action plan to drive delivery and improve the service for victims. This action plan relates broadly to:

- **Victim Confidence** – focusing on victim care, quality of service and rolling out best practice
- **Offender Management** – identifying and tackling repeat offenders
- **Quality Investigation** – implementing Force DV champions to ensure highest quality of service
- **Training** – enhanced training for key staff and partners
- **Comms and PR** – internal comms to ensure high quality service as well external comms for public messages
- **Ensuring crimes are appropriately recorded**

The current focus for the VAWC priority is DVA given the decrease in reporting nationally, and in Avon and Somerset. A problem profile is being developed to better understand the issue.

A refreshed version of the VAWC page will be prepared ahead of consultation on the Police and Crime Plan early in 2014.

It should be noted that ACC Rolfe is the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) lead for DVA.

### **VAWC Strategy Group**

The VAWC Strategy Group is a multi-agency group chaired by the Head of CID which reports to the 6 monthly Local Authority Chief Executives meeting. The PCC is represented on this group. The Terms of Reference mirror the objectives in the Police and Crime Plan. The aim of the VAWC Strategy Group is to provide strategic overarching governance of partner activity in relation to the vision and objectives set out in the Terms of Reference. The group aims to:

- ✓ Reduce duplication of effort, and provide greater efficiency and consistency across the force area
- ✓ Improve accountability and ensure quality assurance
- ✓ Improve communication and transparency
- ✓ Enable the sharing of good practice and lessons learnt, ensuring a sound evidence base for activities
- ✓ Identify and resolve area wide issues
- ✓ Undertake tangible actions with clear progression / resolution of business

Tasks planned for the group relating to DVA include reviewing:

- Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA) provision and establishing a vision for Avon and Somerset
- Perpetrator support programmes and options across Avon and Somerset
- Avon and Somerset Domestic Abuse Free Fone Service (DAFFS)

### **PCC's Role**

The PCC's role in tackling DVA is wide-ranging, and includes:

- Oversight of force performance
- Commissioning of services
- Victims Service commissioning including mapping of landscape
- Raising issues with partners e.g. Safeguarding Boards, HWB, VAWC Group
- Profile and awareness raising
- Stable funding – working with partners and via VAWC Group
- Engagement across Community Safety and Criminal Justice System
- Listening to victims

## **National response**

The Government's response to DVA falls under its vision 'A Call to End Violence against Women and Girls'<sup>1</sup> which is supported by an Action Plan.<sup>2</sup> Actions include piloting Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs), disclosure scheme ("Clare's Law") and grants for VAWG services such as IDVAs.

The Home Secretary has tasked Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies (HMIC) to review the Police response to DVA in light of the decrease in reporting. HMIC will be visiting Avon and Somerset the winter of 2013.

## **Local Authorities**

Support services for all victims of domestic violence and abuse including refuge provision, floating support, freedom programmes, group work, helplines, Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) and IDVAs are crucial in supporting victims of DVA to recover.

Each local authority area has a VAWG group as a sub-group of its Community Safety Partnership which co-ordinates this work and commissioning.

Health and Wellbeing Boards and Safeguarding Boards have remits which include DVA.

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/118150/vawg-paper.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118150/vawg-paper.pdf) [Accessed 07-10-13]

<sup>2</sup> First published in 2011, refreshed in 2013  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/181088/vawg-action-plan-2013.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/181088/vawg-action-plan-2013.pdf) [Accessed 07-10-13]