

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS STRATEGY

One year on



Message from Vera Baird, Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria

It has been a year since we launched our regional Violence against Women and Girls Strategy and I'd like to tell you about what we've done in Northumbria with a short update on each of our 20 priorities.

As you are aware the delivery of the strategy is, in many areas, based on the ethos of culture change and much of the work has involved raising awareness amongst local communities, Northumbria Police officers and other frontline staff together with our partners in the community and voluntary sectors.

I am very grateful to everyone who has worked to deliver this strategy in Northumbria and look forward to more exciting and innovative work delivering more improvements over the next 12 months.

You can find out more about these priorities and the work we are doing by contacting the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria on enquiries@northumbria-pcc.gov.uk.

Yours, Vera Baird QC



VERA BAIRD QC
POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER



RON HOGG
DURHAM POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER



Domestic and sexual violence and abuse

Domestic and sexual violence and abuse (DSVA) has a devastating impact on the lives of women and girls. We aim to make access to help more readily available and to improve the responses of the authorities when a disclosure is made. We will strengthen the work done by police and the criminal justice system and support work to change the behaviour of perpetrators. We will tackle the culture which makes Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) acceptable.

PRIORITY ONE

Domestic and sexual abuse and the work place

A total of 61 private sector companies attended awareness raising events and many now have a workplace policy providing confidential support for employees suffering from domestic abuse including intu, Home Group and Gordon Brown Law Firm.

PRIORITY TWO

Domestic and sexual abuse Champions network

Across Northumbria over 350 workplace Champions are providing support and guidance to colleagues who are suffering or have suffered from domestic or sexual abuse.

PRIORITY THREE

Educating young people about healthy relationships

Training packages in healthy relationships, sexual health and consent and child exploitation have been presented to head teachers in Sunderland and support will be provided for delivery in schools, and across the other five local authority areas.

PRIORITY FOUR

Raising awareness and culture change

Our Christmas 2014 campaign specifically highlights the impact domestic abuse has on children, an area of concern to us all. Previous campaigns include forced marriage, stalking and the introduction of Clare's Law.

PRIORITY FIVE

DV Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub

We are working with Gateshead Council's MASH for vulnerable adults piloting 'Operation Encompass' meaning that Gateshead school children who have witnessed domestic abuse, will get early intervention and support in their school from trained key adults made aware of an incident by 9am the next day.

PRIORITY SIX

Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse Project

If a report of Domestic Abuse is made to the police at weekends in Newcastle and Sunderland, a skilled Domestic Violence Worker provides immediate intervention and support within the victim's own home following attendance from uniformed officers.

PRIORITY SEVEN

Victimless prosecutions

Under the protocol for evidence led prosecutions a perpetrator, who subjected his partner to over 50 recorded complaints of domestic abuse, was prosecuted. This prosecution used body worn camera footage; cameras are now in use across the Northumbria area.

PRIORITY EIGHT

Early intervention with perpetrators

Serial perpetrators of domestic abuse in Sunderland are being identified and their behaviour challenged through a dynamic perpetrators programme run by the BIG consortium. Advanced GPS tracking technology is also being used to prevent victims becoming prisoners in their own home.

PRIORITY NINE

Alcohol and drug intervention and treatment programmes

Working within MARAC guidelines and our community networks we ensure drug and alcohol services are provided within risk management plans to help reduce risks of serious harm.

PRIORITY TEN

Keeping the night time economy safe

Vulnerability training has been rolled out across the Northumbria Force area to those working in the Night Time economy, including bar and hotel staff, taxi drivers and Nexus employees. A proposal for CCTV to be installed in taxis as part of their licence requirement is being considered.

PRIORITY ELEVEN

Sexual violence strategic forum

A needs assessment will ensure that the forum is aware of the services required by victims of sexual violence across Northumbria.

PRIORITY TWELVE

Rape Scrutiny Panel

Ten volunteers have been trained and will start to scrutinise rape case files that have failed to obtain the requisite level for prosecution to determine if the case could have been investigated differently.

PRIORITY THIRTEEN

Court Observers Panel

Volunteers are now observing rape cases being tried at Newcastle Crown Court. The observers will provide answers to 30 questions relating to proceedings and feedback to the PCC, particularly noting the inappropriate use of myths and stereotypes.

Human trafficking and sex work

Human trafficking is the movement of a person from one place to another into conditions of exploitation, using deception, coercion, the abuse of power or the abuse of someone's vulnerability. Our primary concern in this strategy is with trafficking for sexual exploitation, which includes sex work, escort work and pornography. Regardless of whatever brings women into sex work it is apparent that they are vulnerable victims. We will work to ensure that the appropriate support and guidance is available to help women exit this way of life.

PRIORITY FOURTEEN

Human trafficking and sex work

Awareness has been raised amongst Northumbria Police officers ensuring they direct victims to the right organisations in the community and voluntary sectors for support.

PRIORITY FIFTEEN

Supporting women involved in sex work

Northumbria Police now has a dedicated liaison officer in each area command working with partners, including GAP Project, to promote good practice in relation to exiting sex work.

Forced Marriage and so-called honour crimes

At present Forced Marriage in this country is not a criminal offence but there are civil remedies available to someone who is under threat of becoming a victim and the law is about to change.

So-called honour crimes are where a family or community is punishing the person for conduct which they believe has undermined the 'correct' code of behaviour. Violent criminality has no justification.

PRIORITY SIXTEEN

Providing support for potential victims of Forced Marriage

Front line officers are now all trained in the legislation about Forced Marriage and have the skills to develop bespoke safety plans for potential victims.

PRIORITY SEVENTEEN

Providing support for Honour Based Violence (HBV)

A forcewide domestic abuse problem profile includes analysis of HBV and our Domestic Violence Champions received training from the National Charity 'Karma Nirvana' increasing their knowledge of HBV and Forced Marriage.

PRIORITY EIGHTEEN

Protecting those at risk of Forced Marriage

A marketing campaign in appropriate locations in the force area took place in the summer targeting those at risk. The 'Freedom App' and material for a younger audience is on 'ebeat', Northumbria Police's youth website.

Female genital mutilation

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is illegal in the UK and it is also illegal to take a British national or permanent resident abroad for FGM or to help someone trying to do this. To date there has not been a prosecution in the UK. Babies, children and young girls suspected of going to be cut or presenting with FGM should be considered as potential victims of crime and referred to support services and the police as appropriate.

PRIORITY NINETEEN

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

To ensure Northumbria Police has accurate intelligence and can respond appropriately to FGM, HBV and Forced Marriage by using indicators on policing systems to identify individuals at risk.

Harassment and stalking

The impact of stalking can vary widely depending on the victim's characteristics, past experience, current circumstances and relationship with the stalker. It is important for key agencies to understand that the way they manage the situation or episode can influence the overall impact on the victim.

PRIORITY TWENTY

Encouraging victims of stalking

Training on stalking and awareness was delivered across Northumbria Police with a stalking awareness campaign which took place in Spring 2014.

Monitoring the Strategy

‘ We will continue to develop this strategy working alongside our partners to ensure that our approach to domestic and sexual violence is victim focused and our practice is dynamic. This will mean taking advantage of the opportunities provided by improved technology and changes in legislation and work to keep women and girls safe in Northumbria. ’