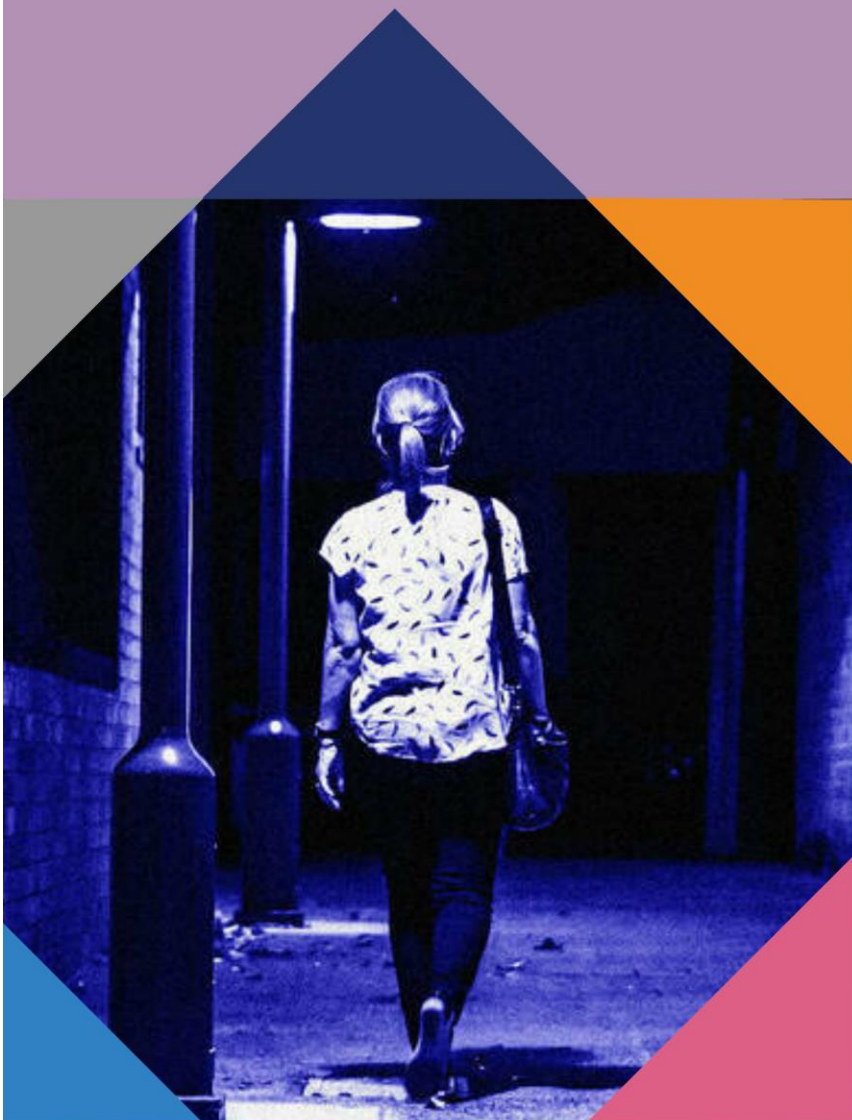


Improving the safety of women and girls in the Thames Valley



November 2022

Introduction

Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) has been brought into sharp focus by recent tragic and high profile cases, however these are neither isolated incidents nor is it a new challenge. VAWG is estimated to affect at least one in three women and girls at some point in their lifetime and can have a devastating impact on victims, their families, and wider communities. Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) are driving positive change through the delivery of high-quality commissioned services to protect women and girls. This includes prevention work, for example early interventions for children and young people, through to perpetrator programmes to tackle offending behaviour, and the delivery of vital services to support victims. To truly improve the safety of women and girls living in the Thames Valley it is crucial VAWG and the individual and societal issues which influence male violence against women are recognised and addressed at every level by organisations across the area. This strategy sets out the role we can all play in ending VAWG as part of a coordinated partnership response in the Thames Valley.

The National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) has developed a national strategy which recognises the critical role the police play in preventing harm and bringing offenders to justice. As such, domestic abuse, stalking and harassment, rape and sexual offending shall remain priorities for Thames Valley

Police and the Office of the PCC. VAWG often remains hidden and under-reported and the Office of the PCC for Thames Valley wants to see an end to all violence against women and girls in both public and private spaces. To achieve this a whole system approach is needed which draws together partners from across the board to affect this change.

This strategy is accompanied by an action ownership plan outlining which organisation or board will be involved in delivery. Relevant organisations or partnership boards will contain these actions within their organisational delivery plans, where appropriate. Our approach will utilise partnership work between the Office of the PCC, Thames Valley Police, our Community Safety Partnerships, BAME Communities Partnership Group, the VAWG Partnership Board, Local Criminal Justice Board, specialist delivery services and grass root organisations to tackle VAWG and support victims of VAWG.

This work links into the:

- APCC Strategic Plan (from April 2022)
- APCC VAWG Strategy Delivery Plan
- PCC Police and Criminal Justice Plan for Thames Valley
- Government's VAWG and Tackling Domestic Abuse strategies
- NPCC VAWG National Framework and Performance Framework.
- Thames Valley Police Domestic Abuse and VAWG Strategies
- Serious Violence Duty (TBC)
- HMICFRS Reports

Foreword

All of us deserve to live our lives without the fear of violence. Whilst statistically men are more likely to become victims of violent crime than women are, there is a significant difference. The majority of violence experienced by women and girls takes place whilst they go about their everyday lives. Forming relationships, attending school, exercising, or most notably simply in their own homes.

This is why the focus on the safety of women and girls is so important and runs through the priorities set out in my Police & Criminal Justice Plan.

In the Thames Valley, I am supporting a range of initiatives to make our streets safer, to pursue offenders and to support victims. This includes better street lighting and CCTV, the development of schools-based programmes to focus on the safety of women and girls, and additional activity focused on street harassment, stalking, sexual assault, rape and predatory behaviour.

I recently launched the 'Do the Right Thing' campaign in the Thames Valley, which



encourages men to call out abusive behaviour and violence by their peers.

The risks that women can face take many different forms, from domestic abuse to public place harassment, stalking to sexual violence, and therefore it is important that a variety of responses are in place to make Thames Valley a safer place for all women and girls.

A handwritten signature in green ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Barber', with a stylized, flowing script.

Matthew Barber
Police & Crime Commissioner

What is Violence Against Women and Girls?

VAWG is the umbrella term used to describe a range of violent and abusive acts and behaviours, which are predominantly, but not exclusively, directed against women and girls.

The United Nations Declaration (1993) on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, Article 1 defines Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) as:

“Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life”

Certain crimes disproportionately affect women and girls. Crimes such as rape, stalking, domestic abuse, female genital mutilation, harassment, ‘up skirting’, and digital crimes such as cyber-flashing and ‘revenge porn’ are taking place every day in society. There are multiple forms of VAWG, whether physical, sexual, psychological, or economic. This can include violence in public places, such as sexual harassment, or in private spaces such as intimate partner violence and other forms of domestic abuse, which can at the extreme lead to homicide or suicide. Some forms of violence are technology based, such as internet stalking, or driven by economic factors such as international trafficking of women and girls.

Executive Summary

What are the key objectives?

- **Deliver a system wide approach to improve the safety of women and girls** by working effectively with partners at a local and national level.
- **Prevent VAWG from happening in the first place** by developing a public health prevention approach to addressing the issues that impact on the safety of women and girls and underpin VAWG.
- **Commission quality victims' services** to ensure victims get the support they need.
- **Commission effective interventions** such as diversionary and rehabilitative programmes for perpetrators to create lasting behavioural change and/or disrupt abusive behaviour.
- **Hold police and criminal justice agencies to account** for delivering an

effective, supportive and timely criminal justice service for victims and offenders, driving improvements where needed.

- **Build public confidence in policing**, supporting women and girls to feel able to report VAWG, and putting women, girls and victims at the centre of decision-making.
- **Ensure that the voices of women and girls are heard** and incorporated into decision making across criminal justice agencies and partners.
- **Create clear pathways of support** to decrease barriers to access and allow services to work together to offer the most appropriate range of support without over-complicating the process for the victim i.e. no wrong front door.



What are the key priorities?

Domestic abuse

Focus on:

- Addressing the attitudes and behaviours that underpin domestic abuse
 - Working with children, young people and families
 - Using the cycle of abuse to create evidence-based interventions
 - Increasing understanding of domestic abuse
 - The experience of women and girls
 - The unique needs of minority groups
 - Improving victim experience and outcomes in the criminal justice system
- The unique needs of minority groups
 - Improving victim experience and outcomes in the criminal justice system
 - Commissioning women-centred services

Safer Public Spaces

Focus on:

- Addressing the attitudes and behaviours that underpin misogyny
- The experience of women and girls
- Creating safer public spaces

Stalking

Focus on

- Addressing the attitudes and behaviours that underpin sexual violence
 - Increasing understanding of sexual violence
 - The experience of women and girls
- Increasing understanding of stalking
 - The experience of women and girls
 - Tackling stalking offending
 - Improving victim experience and outcomes in the criminal justice system
 - Support for victims

Domestic Abuse

What is Domestic Abuse?

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines Domestic Abuse as:

Any single incident or pattern of conduct where someone's behaviour towards another is abusive, and where the people involved are personally connected and aged 16 or over.

Behaviour is abusive if it consists of any of the following

- physical or sexual abuse
- violent or threatening behaviour
- controlling or coercive behaviour
- economic abuse i.e. any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on someone's ability to acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or obtain goods or services.
- Psychological, emotional or other abuse.

Two people are personally connected if:

- they are, or have been, married to each other;
- they are, or have been, civil partners of each other;

- they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
- they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
- they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other;
- they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child
- they are relatives.

The Act also recognises that children who see, hear or experience the effects of the abuse are also victims of domestic abuse in their own right.

Domestic abuse also comprises harmful traditional practices that include, but are not limited to, 'honour-based' abuse and homicide, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

What do we know?

The police recorded a total of 1,459,663 domestic abuse-related incidents¹ and crimes in England and Wales in the year ending March 2021. Of these, 845,734 were

¹
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/>

crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabuseprevalenceandtrendsenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2021

recorded as domestic abuse-related crimes, an increase of 6% from the previous year. This represents 18% of all offences recorded by the police in the year ending March 2021. Taking into account unreported abuse there were an estimated 2.3 million victims of Domestic Abuse in the year ending March 2020, 1.6 million of whom were female.

In the year ending March 2021, the number of people supported by the National Domestic Abuse Helpline, run by the charity Refuge, in England increased by 22% to 49,756 compared with 40,859 in the year ending March 2020. Available data sources show that during the coronavirus pandemic there was an increase in demand for domestic abuse support services, including a 65% increase in calls and contacts logged by the National Domestic Abuse Helpline between April and June 2020, compared with the first three months of the year.

Between 2017 and 2019, there were 357 domestic homicides. Men committed 86% of all domestic homicides and the victim was female in 77% of domestic homicides cases. The suspect was male in 96% of female homicides and 53% of male homicides. Between 2009 and 2019 one woman on average was killed by a man every

three days in the UK. A history of abuse was known in 59% of the 1,042 females.

Although men are also victims, the data shows that in the majority of cases domestic abuse is experienced by women and perpetrated by men. Data over time has shown one in three women will be a victim of domestic abuse over their lifetime.

Domestic Abuse can also have a severe detrimental impact on mental wellbeing and can result in suicide or suicide attempts. Recent studies on the prevalence of suicide due to domestic abuse are limited but statistics on deaths in 2020/21² found that in 38 suicides there was a known history of domestic abuse (90% were female) and Refuge have reported that a quarter of their clients have felt suicidal³. A study in 2004⁴ estimated that as many as 13% of female suicides and suicide attempts may be attributed to domestic abuse. In 2020 this would have equated to over three women dying in England and Wales per week and potentially as many as 10,000 suicide attempts a year or nearly 30 a day due to domestic abuse. This was supported by recent research by Kent and Medway partnership (STP) which found that almost one in five (19%) of the people who died by

² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1013128/Domestic_homicides_and_suspected_victim_suicides_during_the_Covid-19_Pandemic_2020-2021.pdf

³ <https://nspa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/New-Suicide-Report2c-Refuge-and-University-of-Warwick.pdf>

⁴ https://eprints.lancs.ac.uk/id/eprint/55255/1/cost_of_domestic_abuse_report_sept04.pdf

suicide in the county in 2020 had been impacted by domestic abuse.

What will good look like?

- Communities and agencies are supported to better identify and respond to domestic abuse.
- Partnerships come together to challenge harmful attitudes.
- Everyone understands their role in responding and ending domestic abuse.
- Evidence based interventions are utilised to disrupt/ divert abusive behaviour.
- Victims are provided the most appropriate support to assist with the impact of the abuse.
- Processes are in place to ensure a positive initial response and referral to appropriate specialist support if needed.
- Professionals are well trained and feel competent and confident to respond.

How will we achieve this?

Focus on:	How:
Addressing the attitudes and behaviour that underpin domestic abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote campaigns, such as 'Do the Right Thing', which aims to tackle overt and covert misogyny.• Encourage the roll out of bystander training.• Work with organisations to increase understanding of patterns of abuse and how services may be used by perpetrators to further abuse victims.• Work with employers to improve policies for supporting their employees who are victims of DA and address unconscious bias within their organisation.• Look at the projects and programmes we commission to ensure that any agency funded is capable of supporting men to be strong in their commitment to equality and healthy relationships, making this a part of their tendering process.
Working with children, young people and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Roll out educational programmes for children and young people to understand what healthy relationships and behaviour look like.

Focus on:	How:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure appropriate support is available to children and young people who witness domestic abuse or who have been in abusive relationships. • Work with services to reduce wait times into support. • Provide support to family members bereaved by domestic homicide and suicide due to domestic abuse.
Using the cycle of abuse to create evidence-based interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to ensure that Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) provision is adequately offered across the Thames Valley. • Continue to commission specialist domestic abuse provision to support minority groups including BAME, LGBT+ and those with mental health needs. • Work with police and partners to determine the most appropriate time to offer different specialist support to victims. • Create specialist support for elderly victims. • Continue to work with police and partners to establish an effective diversionary intervention programme for perpetrators. • Explore specialist therapeutic provision to help victims move forward, including psycho-educational provision. • Work in partnership to seize opportunities to access further funding to support this area of work. • Continue to review and respond appropriately to changing needs and demand. • Increase access to appropriate legal support. • Review needs assessment and referral processes within the Victims First Hub to ensure victims are referred to the most appropriate specialist service. • Work with partner agencies to improve pathways between support services.

Focus on:	How:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure our commissioning recognises that domestic abuse and sexual violence can be interlinked. • Explore the use of evidence from domestic abuse homicide/suicide timeline research to train staff, recognise escalating risk and provide appropriate interventions to victims and perpetrators. • Work with partners to recognise and respond to the risk of suicide. • Work in partnership with mental health services to support victims in crisis. • Work with partners in drug and alcohol services to explore further joint working and ensure appropriate pathways between services are in place to support victims of domestic abuse.
Increasing understanding of domestic abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to roll out Victims First Connect to community-based organisations and provide training on domestic abuse. • Promote awareness of domestic abuse and the services available. • Ensure voices of women are gathered to change services for the better by using co-production and co-design. • Increase awareness of Clare's Law (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme) and how to request information under the scheme. • Explore data and research to understand the prevalence of suicide due to domestic abuse in the Thames Valley.
The experience of women and girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up mechanisms to ensure voices of women and girls are heard and acted on, ensuring the input of those both inside and outside of the criminal justice

Focus on:	How:
	<p>system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with a variety of services to ensure service user's experiences are captured and shared to improve service delivery across the Thames Valley. • Set up mechanisms for minority and under-represented communities and victims to have their voices heard to help inform services.
The unique needs of minority groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with grass roots organisations to understand and listen to the needs of minority groups. • Utilise evidence to inform commissioning and provide tailored support to meet the needs of minority groups. • Continue the Thames Valley BAME Communities Partnership Board. • Support capacity and capability building within by and for services. • Ensure pathways into support are easily accessible to under-represented groups including BAME, LGBT+, disabled, elderly, homeless and women from gypsy, Roma and traveller communities.
Improving victim experience and outcomes in the criminal justice system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the police to improve victim satisfaction and experience of the criminal justice system. • Work with criminal justice agencies to improve performance/ outcomes in tackling domestic abuse. • Ensure that Victims' Code requirements are met by criminal justice agencies. • Work with the police to improve use and enforcement of Domestic Violence Protection Orders and Domestic Violence Protection Notices.

Sexual Violence

What is Sexual Violence?

Rape Crisis define Sexual Violence as a general term used to describe any kind of unwanted sexual act or activity, including:

- Rape
- Sexual assault
- Sexual abuse
- Sexual harassment
- Trafficking

What do we know?

More than one in five women have experienced rape or sexual assault as adults. This means there are nearly five million women in England and Wales who have experienced at least one of these offences in adulthood alone⁵. Furthermore, research by the NSPCC suggest that 1 in 20 children in the UK have been sexually abused.

Sexual offences recorded by the police across England and Wales were at the highest level recorded within a 12-month period (183,587 offences) for the period ending December 2021. This is a 22% increase from the same period in 2020. Rape accounted for 37% of these offences (67,125), which is the highest on record. However, Office of National Statistics (ONS) figures show less than one in six women report rape and sexual assault. In the years ending March 2017 and March 2020

combined 1.6 million adults had been victims of rape or sexual assault and 98% had reported that the perpetrator(s) were male. Only 1.6% of rapes reported to the police resulted in someone being charged. That means less than one in every 100 rapes lead to a criminal justice outcome for the victim.

Many victims report a long term impact from the rape or sexual assault with 63% of women experiencing mental or emotional problems as a consequence and one in ten women stating they had attempted suicide as a result.

Thames Valley Police

For the year 2021/22 Thames Valley Police recorded 6,723 sexual offences (31.7% increase), including 2,424 rapes (30.4% increase). Sexual crimes against the elderly have seen a particularly high increase of around 80%. Just over 7% of reported sexual offences in 2021/22 have had a positive criminal justice outcome. Thames Valley Police has set up a new Rape and Sexual Offences Team to assist with investigations, improve outcomes and support victims.

What will good look like?

- Communities and agencies are supported to better respond to sexual violence.

⁵ <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-informed/about-sexual-violence/statistics-sexual-violence/>

- Partnerships come together to challenge harmful attitudes and behaviours.
- Everyone understands their role in responding and ending sexual violence.
- Women have protected places to go for support.
- Increase in prosecutions of rape and sexual assault and decrease in wait times for court cases.
- Processes are in place to ensure a positive initial response and referral to appropriate specialist support if needed.

How will we achieve this?

Focus On	How:
Addressing the attitudes and behaviour that underpin sexual violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with employers to improve policies on sexual harassment at work and ensure women get access to the support they need. • Promote campaigns, such as 'Do the Right Thing', which aims to tackle overt and covert misogyny. • Look at the projects and programmes we commission to ensure that any agency funded is capable of supporting men to be strong in their commitment to equality and healthy relationships, making this a part of their tendering process. • Work with partners to actively address and debunk sexual violence myths. • Explore awareness raising and training opportunities to prevent sexual violence e.g. consent workshops.
Working with children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure appropriate support is available to children and young people who have been victims of sexual violence and child sexual exploitation/abuse. • Roll out educational programmes for children and young people to understand consent and what healthy relationships and behaviour look like. • Work with educational settings to create a safe environment for women and girls.

Focus On	How:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the criminal justice response for adolescents is appropriately managed and there are clear lines of responsibility for investigation within the police. • Work with services to reduce wait times into support. • Work with partners to ensure support is available for the families of children and young people who have been victims of sexual violence.
The experience of women and girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up mechanisms to ensure the voices of women and girls are heard and acted on, ensuring the input of those both inside and outside the criminal justice system. • Work with a variety of services to ensure their service user's experiences are captured and shared to improve service delivery across the Thames Valley. • Ensure the voices of women change services for the better by using co-production and co-design. • Set up mechanisms for minority and under-represented communities and victims to have their voices heard to help inform services.
The unique needs of minority groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with grass roots organisations to understand and listen to the needs of minority groups. • Utilise existing evidence to inform commissioning and provide tailored support. • Support capacity and capability building within by and for services. • Ensure pathways into support are easily accessible to under-represented groups/ individuals including BAME, LGBT, elderly, homeless and sex workers.
Improving victim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with criminal justice agencies to ensure

Focus On	How:
experience and outcomes in the criminal justice system	<p>evidence gathering from victims, such as mobile phone data, is proportionate and efficient.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the criminal justice agencies, including courts to reduce delays and expedite court proceedings. • Work with the police to increase the number of perpetrators charged. • Work with the police to improve victim satisfaction and experience of the criminal justice system. • Work with other criminal justice agencies to improve performance and outcomes in tackling sexual violence. • Ensure that Victims' Code requirements are met by Criminal Justice agencies. • Encourage the use of anonymous reporting and the use of this data for intelligence and disruption activity. • Support Thames Valley Police to deliver the National Joint Rape Action Plan with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to improve outcomes for victims. • Work with the newly created Rape and Sexual Offences Team within Thames Valley Police to ensure victims receive the most appropriate support.
Commissioning women centred services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to commission trauma-informed, women-centred services and ensure availability of holistic support. • Protect specialist functions including women's only spaces and Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) provision • Explore specialist therapeutic provision to help victims move forward, including psycho-educational provision. • Ensure effective pathways are set up between Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) and specialist

Focus On	How:
	<p>victim services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the police to ensure any victim of sexual violence going through the criminal justice system is offered appropriate specialist support. • Ensure our commissioning recognises domestic abuse and sexual violence can be interlinked. • Work with partners to promote sexual violence services and ensure those not going through the criminal justice system have access to support. • Create specialist support for elderly victims. • Work in partnership to seize opportunities to access further funding to support this area of work. • Work with services to reduce wait times into support. • Continue to review and respond appropriately to changing needs and demand. • Review needs assessment and referral processes within the Victims First Hub to ensure victims are referred to the most appropriate specialist service. • Work with partners agencies to improve pathways. • Work with police and partners to determine the most appropriate time to offer different specialist support to victims. • Work in partnership with mental health services to support victims in crisis.

Safer Public Spaces

What is a Safer Public Space?

Women and girls in the Thames Valley must be free to behave and express themselves as they wish without fear of attack, judgement or intimidation. A safe space is an environment where women and girls feel physically and emotionally secure. It is a place where they are protected from emotional and bodily harm, including harassment, sexual and domestic abuse and assault.

What do we know?

For the years ending March 2017 and March 2020 combined, 9% of reported rape and sexual assault took place in a park, other open public space, car park or on the street. 71% of women of all ages in the UK⁶ say that they have experienced some sort of sexual harassment in a public space - with young women in particular reporting high incidence.

The two main reasons women of all ages cited for not reporting incidents are: "I didn't

think the incident was serious enough to report" (55%) and "I didn't think reporting it would help" (45%). Trust in the ability of the criminal justice system to deal with the issue continue to be a problem with 44% of women indicating that having more confidence that reporting the incident would prevent it from happening again would encourage them to report.

What will good look like?

- Organisations working together to increase understanding of their role in providing safe spaces and putting that learning into action.
- Evaluating and expanding the lessons learned from Safer Streets funded projects
- Increase in safe spaces
- A multi-agency approach where data and concerns are shared with specialist services and agencies.
- Decrease in VAWG in public spaces

How do we achieve this?

Focus on:	How
Addressing the attitudes and behaviour that underpin misogyny	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote campaigns, such as 'Do the Right Thing', which aims to tackle overt and covert misogyny and prevent harassment and encourage reporting.• Encourage the roll out of bystander training.

⁶ <https://www.unwomenuk.org/appg-unwomen>

Focus on:	How
The experience of women and girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up mechanisms to ensure that the voices of women and girls are heard and acted on, ensuring the input of those outside of the CJS. • Working with a variety of services to ensure service user's experiences are captured and shared to improve service delivery across the Thames Valley. • Ensure the voices of women change services for the better by using co-production and co-design. • Use community feedback to identify unsafe places (either real or perceived) and work in partnership to make the necessary improvements.
Creating safer public spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to ensure licensed premises industries have appropriately trained staff who are proactive and vigilant around women's safety at night. Including a duty to capture information data and to support women. • Encourage anonymous reporting, including Street Safe, to improve intelligence picture of where offences happen to ensure a more targeted response. • Support the evaluation and expansion of Project Vigilant to target predatory behavior, aim to prevent sexual abuse and reduce violence against women and girls. • Work with partners to tackle sexual harassment on transport systems and ensure safe routes home, including taxis. • Work with partners to ensure the availability of street angel type interventions in our town/city centres. • Ensure we utilise opportunities to apply for additional funding to improve the safety of women in public spaces. • Work with partners to ensure that planning applications prioritise developments that create environments which focus on the safety of women and girls. • Use police and partner crime and disorder data to target preventative and disruption work within public spaces.

Stalking

What is Stalking?

Stalking is when someone repeatedly behaves in a way that makes you feel scared, distressed or threatened.

Suzy Lamplugh Trust defines stalking as:

'A pattern of fixated and obsessive behaviour which is repeated, persistent, intrusive and causes fear of violence or engenders alarm and distress in the victim.'

Stalking could consist of a variety of behaviours including following someone, going to their home uninvited, tracking someone's online activity, criminal damage and sending unwanted gifts. It is stalking if the unwanted behaviour has happened more than once. The four warning signs of stalking are if the behaviour is:

Fixated, Obsessive, Unwanted and Repeated.

Stalking can happen with or without a fear of violence and can consist of receiving persistent unwanted contact that is causing someone distress even if the person has never threatened the victim.

What do we know?

Office of National Statistics Figures shown that 1.5 million people in England and Wales were a victim of stalking and harassment in the year ending March 2020. A large

proportion of stalking offences are not reported to the police and of those reported to the police, only 12.7% result in a conviction at court (and many of these are not prosecuted at the appropriate severity level). A report by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust found that 43.4% of people who have reported stalking to the police did not find the police response helpful. In addition, feedback from clients using the national stalking helpline informed the Suzy Lamplugh Trust that legal sanctions in and of themselves do not address the fixation and obsession of the perpetrator. Stalking is a complex crime with many facets to consider when responding and front line officers simply cannot respond to these complexities alone.

Anyone can be a victim of stalking but like other VAWG crimes there is a gendered element involved with one in five women experiencing stalking in their lifetime compared to one in ten men. About 45% of people who contact the Suzy Lamplugh Helpline are being stalked by ex-intimate partners and a further third have had a prior acquaintance with their stalker, for example friend, colleague or client. A large proportion of the victims (38%) were professionals.

New technology and use of online facilities has also resulted in an increase in online stalking methods, alongside in person/ offline methods. Domestic abuse related stalking cases make up the highest proportion of

homicides in terms of risk but a large proportion of domestic abuse victims are incorrectly risk assessed as low risk due to a limited understanding of stalking.

Thames Valley Picture

In 2021/22 there were 3,801 stalking crimes reported to Thames Valley Police, an increase of 33% on the previous year. Of those reported, 2687 were domestic related (71%), which is an increase of 32% compared to the previous year.

What will good look like?

- Processes are in place to ensure a positive initial response and, if needed, a referral to appropriate specialist support.
- Professionals, including the police and other criminal justice partners, are well trained and feel competent and confident to respond to stalking.
- An appropriate multi-agency stalking intervention programme is set up to provide advice on stalking, reduce risk to victims and disrupt and divert offending behaviour.
- Tailored specialist support is available across the Thames Valley for stalking victims and the mental health impact is recognised and responded to.
- Risks associated with stalking are recognised and acted upon at the earliest opportunity across agencies.

How do we achieve this?

Focus on:	How
Increasing understanding of stalking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase understanding across sectors of the patterns of behaviour that amount to stalking, the impact on victims and how to recognise and respond to risk. • Raise awareness of how digital stalking behaviours are also stalking and carry harm to victims. • Utilise Victims First Connect to deliver stalking training to voluntary and community groups. • Raise awareness to the general public about stalking and how to get support. • Work with employers of professionals to increase understanding of stalking and how to respond appropriately to the risk.

Focus on:	How
The experience of women and girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up mechanisms to ensure the voices of women and girls are heard and acted on, ensuring the input of those outside of the criminal justice system • Working with a variety of services to ensure service user's experiences are captured and shared to improve service delivery across the Thames Valley. • Ensure the voices of women change services for the better by using co-production and co-design. • Set up mechanisms for minority and under-represented communities and victims to have their voices heard to help inform services.
Tackling stalking offending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a holistic multi-agency stalking intervention programme to tackle stalking and reduce harm to women and girls.
Improving victim experience and outcomes in the criminal justice system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the use of Stalking Protection Orders. • Increase knowledge of stalking and the harm it causes to the victims within policing, the Crown Prosecution Service and the courts. • Increase understanding of the process of risk escalation in stalking behaviours and the potential for serious harm. • Work with other criminal justice agencies to improve performance and outcomes in dealing with stalking. • Work with the police to improve victim satisfaction and experience of the criminal justice sector. • Work with criminal justice agencies to recognise how digital stalking behaviours impact victims, risk and harm. • Lobby for a change in law to ensure that stalking perpetrators cannot cross-examine their victims in court. • Lobby for change to ensure stalking perpetrators cannot contact/stalk their victims from prison.

Focus on:	How
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with criminal justice agencies, including courts, to ensure stalking court cases are not unnecessarily delayed and reduce wait times. • Ensure that Victims' Code requirements are met by criminal justice agencies.
Support for victims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that support workers and Independent Domestic Violence Advisors understand stalking, the associated risk and harm and can provide appropriate interventions. • Increase access to appropriate legal support. • Increase digital skills of support workers and Independent Domestic Violence Advisors to be able to provide advice on cyber security. • Explore specialist therapeutic provision to help victims move forward, including psycho-educational provision to help victims cope with the impact of stalking. • Raise awareness of how to access support. • Work with partners to ensure victims have access to physical security support such as locksmiths. • Set up a Thames Valley Stalking Advocacy service to provide tailored and specialist support to victims of stalking. • Continue to review and respond appropriately to changing needs and demand. • Review needs assessment and referral processes within the Victims First Hub to ensure victims are referred to the most appropriate specialist service. • Work with partners agencies to improve pathways between support services. • Work with delivery partners and commissioners in mental health services to ensure victims receive appropriate support to manage the long term mental health impact of stalking. • Work in partnership with mental health services to

Focus on:	How
	support victims in crisis.

Delivery

This Strategy is delivered through the action plan below. The responsible organisation and/or partnership board for delivery of each action is outlined. Each activity is aligned to one of the key priority areas and will have an identified operational named lead and timescales for delivery. Organisations should reflect the agreed priorities and integrate them within their local action plans to guide strategic activities over a three year period.

The Police and Crime Commissioner will take a cross-functional approach to ensure this Strategy is delivered by the actions below. This includes oversight of all activity to support decision making and identification of any additional resource and expertise required. There will be a focus on results and a commitment to address any barriers which may arise.

Monitoring of progress of the action plan will be through the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. Activities are reliant upon a culture of collaboration and working across different partnerships sharing good practice and information. The PCC will monitor progress, and make adjustments as needed using information provided by responsible leads.

We know this plan is ambitious. Its delivery will take time and commitment. We may discover new challenges along the way which require us to revise our approach. By working together, and aligning to this strategy, we can deliver our respective part of the action plan.

Domestic Abuse

Action	Delivery Owner/s
Promote campaigns, such as 'Do the Right Thing', which aims to tackle overt and covert misogyny.	All Partners
Encourage the roll out of bystander training.	Office of the PCC
Work with organisations to increase understanding of patterns of abuse and how services may be used by perpetrators to further abuse victims.	Office of the PCC VAWG Partnership Board Local Authorities Thames Valley Police Local Criminal Justice Board Family Courts

Action	Delivery Owner/s
Work with employers to improve policies for supporting their employees who are victims of DA and address unconscious bias within their organisation.	Office of the PCC VAWG Partnership Board
Look at the projects and programmes we commission to ensure that any agency funded is capable of supporting men to be strong in their commitment to equality and healthy relationships, making this a part of their tendering process.	Office of the PCC
Roll out educational programmes for children and young people to understand what healthy relationships and behaviour look like.	Office of the PCC working with Local Authorities
Ensure appropriate support is available to children and young people who witness domestic abuse or who have been in abusive relationships.	Office of the PCC Thames Valley Domestic Abuse Commissioners Board
Work with services to reduce wait times into support.	Office of the PCC Thames Valley Domestic Abuse Commissioners Board
Provide support to family members bereaved by domestic homicide and suicide due to domestic abuse.	Office of the PCC
Work with partners to ensure that Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) provision is adequately offered across the Thames Valley.	Office of the PCC Thames Valley Domestic Abuse Commissioners Board
Continue to commission specialist domestic abuse provision to support minority groups including BAME, LGBT+ and those with mental health needs.	Office of the PCC Thames Valley Domestic Abuse Commissioners Board
Work with police and partners to determine the most appropriate time to offer different specialist support to victims.	Office of the PCC working with Thames Valley Police

Action	Delivery Owner/s
Create specialist support for elderly victims.	Office of the PCC
Continue to work with police and partners to establish an effective diversionary intervention programme for perpetrators.	Office of the PCC Thames Valley Police Local Authorities
Explore specialist therapeutic provision to help victims move forward, including psycho-educational provision.	Office of the PCC
Work in partnership to seize opportunities to access further funding to support this area of work.	Office of the PCC VAWG Partnership Board
Continue to review and respond appropriately to changing needs and demand.	All Partners
Increase access to appropriate legal support.	Office of the PCC
Review needs assessment and referral processes within the Victims First Hub to ensure victims are referred to the most appropriate specialist service.	Office of the PCC
Work with partners agencies to improve pathways between support services.	Office of the PCC Thames Valley Domestic Abuse Commissioners Board Delivery Partners
Ensure our commissioning recognises domestic abuse and sexual violence can be interlinked.	Office of the PCC Thames Valley Domestic Abuse Commissioners Board
Explore the use of evidence from domestic abuse homicide/ suicide timeline research to train staff, recognise escalating risk and provide appropriate interventions to victims and	Office of the PCC Thames Valley Domestic Abuse Commissioners Board

Action	Delivery Owner/s
perpetrators.	
Work with partners to recognise and respond to the risk of suicide.	Office of the PCC Thames Valley Domestic Abuse Commissioners Board Delivery Partners
Work in partnership with mental health services to support victims in crisis.	Office of the PCC Thames Valley Domestic Abuse Commissioners Board Delivery Partners Health
Work with partners in drug and alcohol services to explore further joint working and ensure appropriate pathways between services are in place to support victims of domestic abuse.	Office of the PCC Local Authorities Thames Valley Domestic Abuse Commissioners Board Delivery Partners
Continue to roll out Victims First Connect to community based organisations and provide training on domestic abuse.	Office of the PCC
Promote awareness of domestic abuse and the services available.	All Partners
Ensure voices of women are gathered to change services for the better by using co-production and co-design.	Office of the PCC
Increase awareness of Clare's Law (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme) and how to request information under the scheme.	Thames Valley Police
Explore data and research to understand the prevalence of suicide due to domestic abuse in the Thames Valley	Office of the PCC

Action	Delivery Owner/s
Set up mechanisms to ensure voices of women and girls are heard and acted on, ensuring the input of those both inside and outside of the criminal justice system.	Office of the PCC VAWG Partnership Board
Work with a variety of services to ensure service user's experiences are captured and shared to improve service delivery across the Thames Valley.	Office of the PCC
Set up mechanisms for minority and under-represented communities and victims to have their voices heard to help inform services.	Office of the PCC BAME Communities Partnership Group
Work with grass roots organisations to understand and listen to the needs of minority groups.	Office of the PCC BAME Communities Partnership Group VAWG Partnership Board
Utilise evidence to inform commissioning and provide tailored support to meet the needs of minority groups.	Office of the PCC
Continue the Thames Valley BAME Communities Partnership Board.	Office of the PCC BAME Communities Partnership Group
Support capacity and capability building within by and for services.	Office of the PCC
Ensure pathways into support are easily accessible to under-represented groups including BAME, LGBT+, disable, elderly, homeless and women from gypsy, Roma and traveller communities.	Office of the PCC BAME Communities Partnership Group Thames Valley Domestic Abuse Commissioners Board Delivery Partners

Action	Delivery Owner/s
Work with the police to improve victim satisfaction and experience of the criminal justice system.	Local Criminal Justice Board
Work with criminal justice agencies to improve performance/outcomes in tackling domestic abuse.	Local Criminal Justice Board
Ensure that Victims' Code requirements are met by criminal justice agencies.	Local Criminal Justice Board
Work with the police to improve use and enforcement of Domestic Violence Protection Orders and Domestic Violence Protection Notices.	Thames Valley Police

Sexual Violence

Action	Delivery Owner/s
Explore awareness raising and training opportunities to prevent sexual violence e.g. consent workshops.	Office of the PCC
Promote campaigns, such as 'Do the Right Thing', which aims to tackle overt and covert misogyny.	All Partners
Look at the projects and programmes we commission to ensure that any agency funded is capable of supporting men to be strong in their commitment to equality and healthy relationships, making this a part of their tendering process.	Office of the PCC
Work with partners to actively address and debunk sexual violence myths.	Office of the PCC VAWG Partnership Board RASSO Partnership Group
Work with employers to improve policies on sexual	Office of the PCC

Action	Delivery Owner/s
harassment at work and ensure women get access to the support they need.	
Ensure appropriate support is available to children and young people who have been victims of sexual violence and child sexual exploitation/abuse.	Office of the PCC Local Authorities
Roll out educational programmes for children and young people to understand consent and what healthy relationships and behaviour look like.	Office of the PCC Local Authorities
Work with educational settings to create a safe environment for women and girls.	Office of the PCC Local Authorities Education organisations
Ensure the criminal justice response for adolescents is appropriately managed and there are clear lines of responsibility for investigation within the police.	Local Criminal Justice Board Thames Valley Police
Work with services to reduce wait times into support.	Office of the PCC Delivery Partners
Work with partners to ensure support is available for the families of children and young people who have been victims of sexual violence.	Office of the PCC Delivery Partners Local Authorities
Set up mechanisms to ensure the voices of women and girls are heard and acted on, ensuring the input of those both inside and outside the criminal justice system.	Office of the PCC VAWG Partnership Board
Work with a variety of services to ensure their service user's experiences are captured and shared to improve service delivery across the Thames Valley.	Office of the PCC Delivery Partners

Action	Delivery Owner/s
Ensure the voices of women change services for the better by using co-production and co-design.	Office of the PCC Delivery Partners
Set up mechanisms for minority and under-represented communities and victims to have their voices heard to help inform services.	Office of the PCC Delivery Partners BAME Communities Partnership Group
Work with grass roots organisations to understand and listen to the needs of minority groups.	Office of the PCC Delivery Partners
Utilise existing evidence to inform commissioning and provide tailored support.	Office of the PCC
Support capacity and capability building within by and for services.	Office of the PCC
Ensure pathways into support are easily accessible to under-represented groups/ individuals including BAME, LGBT, elderly, homeless and sex workers.	Office of the PCC Thames Valley Police
Work with criminal justice agencies to ensure evidence gathering from victims, such as mobile phone data, is proportionate and efficient.	Thames Valley Police Local Criminal Justice Board
Work with the criminal justice agencies, including courts to reduce delays and expedite court proceedings.	Local Criminal Justice Board
Work with the police to increase the number of perpetrators charged.	Thames Valley Police
Work with the police to improve victim satisfaction and experience of the criminal justice system.	Thames Valley Police

Action	Delivery Owner/s
Work with other criminal justice agencies to improve performance and outcomes in tackling sexual violence.	Local Criminal Justice Board
Ensure that Victims' Code requirements are met by Criminal Justice agencies.	Local Criminal Justice Board
Encourage the use of anonymous reporting and the use of this data for intelligence and disruption activity.	Thames Valley Police
Support Thames Valley Police to deliver the National Joint Rape Action Plan with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to improve outcomes for victims.	Office of the PCC Thames Valley Police Crown Prosecution Service Local Criminal Justice Board
Work with the newly created Rape and Sexual Offences Team within Thames Valley Police to ensure victims receive the most appropriate support.	Office of the PCC Thames Valley Police
Work with partners to commission trauma-informed, women-centred services and ensure availability of holistic support.	Office of the PCC
Protect specialist functions including women's only spaces and Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) provision.	Office of the PCC
Explore specialist therapeutic provision to help victims move forward, including psycho-educational provision.	Office of the PC
Ensure effective pathways are set up between Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) and specialist victim services.	Sexual Assault Referral Centres NHS England Thames Valley Police Office of the PCC
Work with the police to ensure any victim of sexual violence going through the criminal justice system is offered	Office of the PCC Thames Valley Police

Action	Delivery Owner/s
appropriate specialist support.	
Ensure our commissioning recognises domestic abuse and sexual violence can be interlinked.	Office of the PCC Thames Valley Domestic Abuse Commissioners Board
Work with partners to promote sexual violence services and ensure those not going through the criminal justice system have access to support.	Office of the PCC Thames Valley Police Delivery Partners
Create specialist support for elderly victims.	Office of the PCC
Work in partnership to seize opportunities to access further funding to support this area of work.	Office of the PCC VAWG Partnership Board
Work with services to reduce wait times into support.	Office of the PCC Delivery Partners
Continue to review and respond appropriately to changing needs and demand.	All Partners
Review needs assessment and referral processes within the Victims First Hub to ensure victims are referred to the most appropriate specialist service.	Office of the PCC
Work with partners agencies to improve pathways.	Office of the PCC Delivery Partners
Work with police and partners to determine the most appropriate time to offer different specialist support to victims.	Office of the PCC Thames Valley Police
Work in partnership with mental health services to support victims in crisis.	Office of the PCC Delivery Partners Health

Safer Streets

Action	Delivery Owner/s
Promote campaigns, such as 'Do the Right Thing', which aims to tackle overt and covert misogyny and prevent harassment and encourage reporting.	All Partners
Encourage the roll out of bystander training.	Office of the PCC
Set up mechanisms to ensure that the voices of women and girls are heard and acted on, ensuring the input of those outside of the CJS.	Office of the PCC VAWG Partnership Board
Working with a variety of services to ensure service user's experiences are captured and shared to improve service delivery across the Thames Valley.	Office of the PCC Delivery Partners
Ensure the voices of women change services for the better by using co-production and co-design.	Office of the PCC Delivery Partners
Use community feedback to identify unsafe places (either real or perceived) and work in partnership to make the necessary improvements.	Community Safety Partnerships Office of the PCC
Work with partners to ensure licensed premises industries have appropriately trained staff who are proactive and vigilant around women's safety at night. Including a duty to capture information data and to support women.	Community Safety Partnerships Office of the PCC
Encourage anonymous reporting, including Street Safe, to improve intelligence picture of where offences happen to ensure a more targeted response.	Thames Valley Police
Support the evaluation and expansion of Project Vigilant to target predatory behavior, aim to prevent sexual abuse and reduce violence against women and girls.	Thames Valley Police Office of the PCC

Action	Delivery Owner/s
Work with partners to tackle sexual harassment on transport systems and ensure safe routes home, including taxis.	Community Safety Partnerships Office of the PCC
Work with partners to ensure the availability of street angel type interventions in our town/city centres.	Office of the PCC Thames Valley Police Community Safety Partnerships
Ensure we utilise opportunities to apply for additional funding to improve the safety of women in public spaces.	Office of the PCC
Work with partners to ensure that planning applications prioritise developments that create environments which focus on the safety of women and girls.	Local Authorities
Use police and partner crime and disorder data to target preventative and disruption work within public spaces.	Community Safety Partnerships Office of the PCC

Stalking

Action	Delivery Owner/s
Increase understanding across sectors of the patterns of behaviour that amount to stalking, the impact on victims and how to recognise and respond to risk.	Office of the PCC VAWG Partnership Board
Raise awareness of how digital stalking behaviours are also stalking and carry harm to victims.	Office of the PCC
Utilise Victims First Connect to deliver stalking training to voluntary and community groups.	Office of the PCC
Raise awareness to the general public about stalking and how to get support.	Office of the PCC

Action	Delivery Owner/s
Work with employers of professionals to increase understanding of stalking and how to respond appropriately to the risk.	Office of the PCC
Set up mechanisms to ensure the voices of women and girls are heard and acted on, ensuring the input of those outside of the criminal justice system.	Office of the PCC VAWG Partnership Board
Working with a variety of services to ensure service user's experiences are captured and shared to improve service delivery across the Thames Valley.	Office of the PCC Delivery Partners
Ensure the voices of women change services for the better by using co-production and co-design.	Office of the PCC Delivery Partners
Set up mechanisms for minority and under-represented communities and victims to have their voices heard to help inform services.	Office of the PCC Delivery Partners BAME Communities Partnership Group
Implement a holistic multi-agency stalking intervention programme to tackle stalking and reduce harm to women and girls.	Office of the PCC Probation Thames Valley Police
Increase the use of Stalking Protection Orders.	Thames Valley Police
Increase knowledge of stalking and the harm it causes to the victims within policing, the Crown Prosecution Service and the courts	Local Criminal Justice Board Delivery Partners Office of the PCC
Increase understanding of the process of risk escalation in stalking behaviours and the potential for serious harm.	Office of the PCC Delivery Partners Thames Valley Police

Action	Delivery Owner/s
Work with other criminal justice agencies to improve performance and outcomes in dealing with stalking.	Local Criminal Justice Board
Work with the police to improve victim satisfaction and experience of the criminal justice sector.	Thames Valley Police Office of the PCC
Work with criminal justice agencies to recognise how digital stalking behaviours impact victims, risk and harm.	Local Criminal Justice Board Office of the PCC Delivery Partners
Lobby for a change in law to ensure that stalking perpetrators cannot cross-examine their victims in court.	Office of the PCC
Lobby for change to ensure stalking perpetrators cannot contact/stalk their victims from prison.	Office of the PCC
Work with criminal justice agencies, including courts, to ensure stalking court cases are not unnecessarily delayed and reduce wait times.	Local Criminal Justice Board
Ensure that Victims' Code requirements are met by criminal justice agencies.	Local Criminal Justice Board
Ensure that support workers and Independent Domestic Violence Advisors understand stalking, the associated risk and harm and can provide appropriate interventions.	Office of the PCC Thames Valley Domestic Abuse Commissioners Board Delivery Partners
Increase access to appropriate legal support.	Office of the PCC
Increase digital skills of support workers and Independent Domestic Violence Advisors to be able to provide advice on cyber security.	Office of the PCC Thames Valley Domestic Abuse Commissioners Board Delivery Partners

Action	Delivery Owner/s
Explore specialist therapeutic provision to help victims move forward, including psycho-educational provision to help victims cope with the impact of stalking	Office of the PCC
Raise awareness of how to access support.	Office of the PCC Delivery Partners
Work with partners to ensure victims have access to physical security support such as locksmiths.	Local Authorities Community Safety Partnerships Office of the PCC Thames Valley Police
Set up a Thames Valley Stalking Advocacy service to provide tailored and specialist support to victims of stalking.	Office of the PCC
Continue to review and respond appropriately to changing needs and demand.	All Partners
Review needs assessment and referral processes within the Victims First Hub to ensure victims are referred to the most appropriate specialist service.	Office of the PCC
Work with partners agencies to improve pathways between support services.	Office of the PCC VAWG Partnership Board Thames Valley Domestic Abuse Commissioners Board Delivery Partners
Work with delivery partners and commissioners in mental health services to ensure victims receive appropriate support to manage the long term mental health impact of stalking.	Office of the PCC Thames Valley Domestic Abuse Commissioners Board Health
Work in partnership with mental health services to support victims in crisis.	Office of the PCC Health

Action	Delivery Owner/s
	Delivery Partners