



POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

**Has anything really
changed since the 2020
super-complaint?**

Funded by the Human Rights Fund



Contents

Foreword	3
Introduction	6
Glossary of terms	14

PART 1

The ongoing issues faced by victim/survivors of PPDA	15
Repeat allegations	16
Missed safeguarding opportunities	18
Loss of victim/survivor confidence and lack of independence	20
Minimisation of offending and poor understanding of Controlling or Coercive Behaviour	23
Counter-allegations and the criminalisation of victim/survivors	26
Poor support for police victim/survivors of PPDA	29
The Police Federation	31
Problems in family law proceedings	32

PART 2

Summary of the official response to the supercomplaint and subsequent policing initiatives and reports	34
The response to the super-complaint	35
Recommendations from the response to the super-complaint	38
Public events that have brought police perpetrated VAWG and misogyny into the spotlight since March 2020	40
Police and Government VAWG initiatives since March 2020	43

PART 3

What needs to change?	69
1. Improved data collection	70
2. Better monitoring	72
3. Legislative reform	74
4. National guidance	75
5. Further research	78
Conclusion	79

Foreword

In February 2023, David Carrick, a then recently dismissed Metropolitan Police officer who had been serving in their elite armed Parliamentary and Diplomatic Protection unit, was handed down 36 life sentences for multiple counts of rape and other offences of violence against 12 women, many of whom he had formed relationships with. Centre for Women’s Justice act for eight of these women in civil proceedings against the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). The women have provided us with accounts of how Carrick used his status as a police officer to lure them, entrap them and subject them to extreme brutalisation. Aside from the abhorrent accounts of sadistic violence and degradation of the women, one of the worst aspects of this appalling story is that before and then during the 22 year period Carrick was a serving officer he had been reported to the police by multiple women for offences involving violence and domestic abuse and had also been complained about several times by members of the public, including for allegations regarding the excessive use of force. Yet, despite such reports, he was accepted to train as a police officer, passed his probation passed later vetting, and was approved to carry a firearm.

I established the Centre for Women’s Justice in 2016 as a legal charity with the aim of holding the state accountable around violence against women and girls. Nowhere does the apparatus of the state have more responsibility for tackling violence against women than through the activities of the police. Given they are at the frontline of the state’s role in tackling violence against women, police accountability is unsurprisingly a primary focus of our legal work. The police should be there to protect women at risk of male violence, arrest perpetrators, investigate allegations and assist with the prosecution of such crimes. Our work has focused around tackling police failures as well as challenging the unlawful use of force and other police powers. From the outset of our engagement across England and Wales with frontline organisations supporting victims and survivors of male violence, we have received an increasing number of accounts of police perpetrated domestic abuse and the huge problems victims face if they attempt to report such crimes.

In 2018, CWJ became one of eighteen organisations designated the status of being able to make a police super-complaint – a new mechanism introduced to identify and address systemic issues in policing. It soon became clear to us that the issue of police perpetrated domestic abuse was ripe for tackling by way of a super-complaint – given the range of problems we were seeing across police forces from report to investigation to criminal and misconduct processes. In March 2020, we submitted a super-complaint which, at the time, included nineteen case studies and which highlighted a series of problems and recommendations for reform. Publicity about the super complaint led to many women, unsolicited, coming forward to CWJ to report similar experiences and sometimes to seek legal advice. Then, one year later, the horrific revelation that Sarah Everard, a woman walking home from an evening out through the streets of



OVER 200
WOMEN

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

South London, was abducted, raped and murdered by a serving Metropolitan Police officer brought the issue of police perpetrators to headline national news. The subject remained there on and off over the following eighteen months as further revelations of misogyny, particularly within the MPS, continued to be reported. Given CWJ's super-complaint and our legal expertise around police perpetrated abuse, we were approached frequently by the media for comment. This profile led to many more unsolicited reports from women of their experiences, the number of such reports now exceeds 200 and complaints have been made in relation to police forces across the country. We decided that it was important to try to capture this further evidence, exploring whether there were additional issues arising we had not identified previously, whilst at the same time assisting the women, where possible. We were interested to explore whether there were some police forces where problems were more endemic. Unsurprisingly, a significant number of complaints came from the MPS area, as well as other urban centres, but there were other areas from where we received a disproportionate number of reports, including around 15 cases from the largely rural force area of Devon and Cornwall. In addition, we wanted to monitor to what extent, if any, the police response to the problem had improved since the response to the super-complaint and since the many further inspections, inquiries and reports that have followed.

This report has been written by Ruth Brander, a barrister with many years' experience in the field of police misconduct. She and I worked together in relation to the scandal exposed in relation to undercover policing and in particular the shocking discovery that so many undercover police officers had deceived women from the movements they were spying on into long term intimate sexual relations. The issues raised, which are currently still subject to an ongoing public inquiry, raise many similar issues, as set out in the report, around abuse of power and failures in policing oversight. Her meticulous work, as described in the introduction to this report, has documented some of the key themes we have identified from women reporting to us and she has tracked most of the responses, new initiatives and policies, in order to determine to what extent the problems we identified in our 2020 super-complaint have been addressed, as well as to what extent, if any, survivors' experiences on the ground, have improved. Although the report was initially completed many months ago, we delayed publication because of further and ongoing developments, including the publication of Part 1 of the Angiolini Inquiry back in February of this year. In fact, there continue to be further developments and we recently met with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), and College of Policing who are shortly to publish the outcome of some further work they have undertaken in this area. They have decided to delay this until the publication of our report, in order that they can fully respond.

It is of course welcome that a number of national organisations responsible for policing policy, initiatives, training and accountability have taken the issues we have raised in our super-complaint very seriously and are developing policies, guidance and some resources into addressing the systemic problems identified. Some individual police forces have even contacted CWJ to tell us about initiatives they have



POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

introduced. However, it is also clear that bringing about change within policing is a giant enterprise; like steering a tanker, it moves very slowly and the change of direction takes time to come. There are 43 different police forces within England and Wales, with about 150,000 police officers. Whilst all are subject to the same legal framework, the Chief Constables for each force have considerable discretion as to if and how they should direct their resources and implement recommendations made by such overarching bodies such as Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire & Rescue Services, the NPCC and the College of Policing. We are thus, yet, to see much evidence on the ground of change. We are also concerned that there is little evidence that the overarching bodies or some of the Inquiries and investigations recently conducted around this issue are engaging directly with victim/survivors to assess what, if any, impact the changes are having on their experiences of reporting PPDA. Given that victim/survivor trust and confidence is now widely recognised as being central to successfully policing VAWG, it is disappointing that the experiences of victim/survivors are not given a more prominent place to inform what changes are needed, which reforms are working, and where issues remain.

Further, policing by its very nature will inevitably attract some men drawn by the opportunity of exercising power and the use of force against others. It is traditionally a very male job (particularly in some roles, such as firearms) and perhaps values loyalty to one another, over other principles such as compassion, humility or even integrity. That, in turn, means that there are entrenched cultures within policing that are resistant to change and without energetic intervention will continue to harbour misogyny and cover up wrongdoing. It may be that something more radical needs to happen to the institution of policing to tackle the scale of problems we have seen from the ground. Could a different governance structure help? Does the role of police officer need to be professionalised and subject to external regulation? Does the very function of policing need to be revised? These are some wider and more fundamental questions that should be considered, although they fall beyond the remit of this report, which addresses the system as it exists today.

We now have a new Labour government who have committed to the extremely ambitious aim of halving violence against women and girls in a decade and rebuilding confidence in policing. We have proposed some legislative changes we believe need urgently addressing and we are determined to also hold this new government to account in respect of their mission in this area, should they fall short.



H. Wistrich

Harriet Wistrich,
Solicitor and Director
Centre for Women's Justice

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?



Introduction

On International Women's Day, 8 March 2020, the Centre for Women's Justice, working with the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, submitted a super-complaint¹ about police perpetrated domestic abuse ('PPDA'). At the time, little attention had been paid to this issue in the UK, although it had been the subject of significant research elsewhere, predominantly in the USA and Canada. Since then, and in the wake of several very high-profile cases, there has been increasing public concern about PPDA, violence against women and girls ('VAWG') and misogyny within the police more generally.

At the same time, there have been numerous responses and initiatives from policing bodies and government. In February 2023, VAWG was added to the Strategic Policing Requirement for the first time² and now sits alongside terrorism, serious and organised crime, a national cyber incident, child sexual abuse, public order and civil emergencies, as a national priority for policing.

In September 2021, the National Police Chiefs' Council ('NPCC') appointed Deputy Chief Constable Maggie Blyth as the first ever National Police Lead for VAWG. In December 2021, the NPCC and the College of Policing published its first national police VAWG Framework.

- 1 A super-complaint is a special type of police complaint which can be made by a designated body (of which CWJ is one) where "a feature, or combination of features, of policing in England and Wales by one or more than one police force is, or appears to be, significantly harming the interests of the public". They are provided for under s.29A of the Police Reform Act 2002.
- 2 The Strategic Policing Requirement is set by the Home Secretary and identifies the key national threats, as defined in s.37A of the Police Act 1996. That is "a threat to national security, public safety, public order or public confidence that is of such gravity as to be of national importance, or a threat which can be countered effectively or efficiently only by national policing capabilities to counter the threat."

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

This expressly acknowledges that

“ Policing cannot claim to take VAWG seriously if it does not respond immediately and robustly to VAWG-related allegations against its own workforce.”

The very first commitment of the VAWG Framework under the goal of building trust and confidence is to *“respond unequivocally to allegations of police-perpetrated abuse, learning from mistakes and best practice”*.

The purpose of this report is to look at the plethora of public statements and commitments, to scrutinise whether they are resulting in any real change, and to consider what still needs to change. We draw on the experiences of the 200+ women who have come forward to CWJ since the original super-complaint was published, to share their accounts of domestic abuse at the hands of police officers and police staff. We identify key themes that continue to resurface in PPDA cases and the steps that need to be taken to address them.

As the Casey review into the standards of behaviour and internal culture in the Metropolitan Police³ identified, there is a tendency in policing to “initiative-itis”, where issues attain a high profile, often as a result of a public scandal or series of scandals, leading to new initiatives being introduced, but without resulting in any meaningful change. In our view, there is a critical need for evidence-led, sustained scrutiny, over time, if there is to be any genuinely meaningful improvement in the way that PPDA is tackled. Prior to the change in Government, we were deeply concerned by reports within the sector that the focus within Government and the Home Office was already shifting and that, despite having recently made VAWG a Strategic Policing Requirement, funding for the work required to make that a reality was already facing cuts. We sincerely hope that the new Government will make good on its commitment to halve the level of VAWG within a decade. Tackling misogyny and VAWG within policing is a vital step in achieving that.

We draw on the experiences of the 200+ women who have come forward to CWJ since the original super-complaint was published, to share their accounts of domestic abuse at the hands of police officers and police staff.

3 <https://www.met.police.uk/police-forces/metropolitan-police/areas/about-us/about-the-met/bcr/baroness-casey-review/>

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

There is a long way to go. Despite all of the new announcements and commitments on PPDA, CWJ is still being approached by victim/survivors – and professionals working in the field – who continue to experience the same issues identified in the original super-complaint.

CWJ is keen to ensure that the voices of those who are the victim/survivors of PPDA – and of ongoing failures in the policing of PPDA – continue to be heard and are taken seriously. Their experiences are a reality check on what is actually happening on the ground.

At the time we published the super-complaint, we had been contacted by 46 victim/survivors of PPDA, of whom 19 had given detailed accounts featured in our report. By the time of writing this report, we have been contacted by more than 200 victim/survivors, of whom 67 have given detailed accounts. Many of these women are experiencing ongoing problems with the investigation of their cases and a lack of understanding on the part of investigating officers of the issues that arise where the abuser is a police officer. This is happening even in forces which have supposedly set up specialist units, and/or introduced other overt measures to address their response to police perpetrated VAWG.

Context: the original super-complaint

A number of factors led to CWJ identifying the need for a super-complaint about PPDA back in 2019/2020. We had been approached by victim/survivors who were highlighting common issues. At the same time, the Bureau of Investigative Journalism had been investigating PPDA through a series of Freedom of Information Act requests. We were also approached by frontline domestic abuse support workers, who began speaking out about concerns they were seeing from the women they were working with.

It became apparent that there were significant systemic issues at all stages: from the prevalence of PPDA itself and what that said about police culture, to problems with reporting PPDA, victim/survivors not being believed and cases not being investigated properly, or at all, or when cases were investigated, they were being closed with no criminal charges or disciplinary outcomes. It appeared that frequently no steps were being taken to ensure that intelligence was retained about alleged perpetrators, meaning that they were often kept in, or even promoted into, roles which involved them working with victim/survivors of domestic abuse and other vulnerable people. Victim/survivors reported counter-allegations being made against them and appearing to be investigated more vigorously than the primary allegations of abuse.

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

Victim/survivors who were themselves police officers or police staff were reporting significant impacts on their careers and working lives as a result of reporting PPDA.

The original super-complaint was founded on the experiences of 19 women who had been subjected to PPDA, together with accounts from six domestic abuse professionals. The 19 cases spanned 15 forces across England and Wales. None of the women knew each other, apart from two pairs of women, where each pair had suffered abuse by the same man.

The super-complaint identified 11 themes from the original data: difficulties in initial reporting; failures in investigation; improper manipulation of police processes; improper responses to complaints/concerns; accused officers' personal links with others in the force; accused officers using their police knowledge, status and powers; improper decisions on criminal charges; incorrect approach to misconduct investigations and decisions; abused women arrested; employment difficulties for women who are police officers; and workplace victimisation of women who are police officers.

The qualitative data from women who had given accounts to CWJ was supported by data obtained through FOI requests made to all police forces in England and Wales by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism. The first issue revealed by the responses was that data collection by forces relating to PPDA was inconsistent and incomplete. Such data as was available suggested a conviction rate in PPDA cases which was even lower than that for domestic abuse generally (which is already concerningly low). Data in respect of misconduct outcomes was even more patchy. However, where misconduct outcomes were given, there was a finding of no case to answer or no sanction in 76.3% of cases.

Victim/survivors who were themselves police officers or police staff were reporting significant impacts on their careers and working lives as a result of reporting PPDA.



POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

CWJ made a number of proposals for systemic change:

1. The introduction of a bespoke reporting channel for PPDA in order to secure the trust of victim/survivors;
2. Investigation of PPDA cases by an external force;
3. External disciplinary procedures and Independent Office for Police Conduct ('IOPC') oversight. All cases involving PPDA should be treated as falling within the mandatory criteria for referral to the IOPC as behaviour aggravated by discrimination on grounds of sex, given that domestic abuse is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men against women and results from social norms whereby men exercise power and control over women;
4. Better structures for updating victim/survivors about misconduct procedures;
5. Restricting roles of officers facing allegations to prevent them working with victim/survivors of domestic and sexual abuse, both during and following investigations. Information concerning PPDA allegations should be retained on a national database and should be taken into account in employment decisions as it would be for civilians under an enhanced DBS check;
6. Better policies: in particular College of Policing Guidance and local force guidance should address the risk of lack of integrity and manipulation of police procedures; they should make clear that covering up or improperly assisting a colleague suspected of domestic abuse is itself a breach of the Standards of Professional Behaviour; and that PPDA discredits the police service and undermines public confidence in policing and is, therefore, contrary to the Standards of Professional Behaviour, *whether it is committed on or off-duty*; and for civilian police staff, it is contrary to the duties owed to their employer⁴. Policies should also make clear that findings that officers have misled, manipulated or disregarded judicial systems, such as family courts, or other public bodies in the context of disputes with their partners, discredit the police service and undermine public confidence, thereby amounting to a breach of the Standards of Professional Behaviour;
7. Improved learning and training in respect of PPDA, including awareness raising, integrity and clear procedures;
8. Leadership on the ethical and cultural dimension: a proactive approach needs to be taken by police leaders, publicly recognising the problems around PPDA and pledging to set standards and root out improper behaviour;
9. Standardised data collection and monitoring;
10. Oversight bodies should make PPDA a focus for future thematic work and inspections.

4 Civilian police employees are not subject to the police Standards of Professional Behaviour. However, they can be disciplined for off-duty behaviour where this renders them unsuitable for their role, for example if they deal with victim/survivors of abuse, or where this causes reputational damage to the employer: *Eg Abiaefo v Enfield Community Care NHS Trust EAT 152/96 and Pay v Lancashire Probation Service (2004) ICR 187, principle established in Singh v London County Bus Services Ltd [1976] IRLR 176; Leach v Office of Communications (2012) ICR 1269*

The structure of this report

PART 1 of this report draws on the ongoing experiences of the victim/survivors of PPDA, and professionals working in the field, and identifies the following themes, which continue to resurface in the cases of the women who have spoken to us:

- ▶ Failure of forces to identify and address multiple allegations against the same officer;
- ▶ Missed safeguarding opportunities, including ineffective or non-existent vetting;
- ▶ Loss of victim/survivor confidence;
- ▶ Minimisation of offending and poor understanding of controlling or coercive behaviour;
- ▶ Criminalisation of the victim/survivor;
- ▶ Poor support for victim/survivors who are themselves police officers or civilian police staff, including problems with the Police Federation;
- ▶ Improper influence in family proceedings.

PART 2 provides a summary of the response from the super-complaint bodies to our original super-complaint, together with an overview of the raft of policing initiatives that have been announced since the super-complaint was submitted.

PART 3 breaks down our continued concerns under the following headings and our proposals for change:

- ▶ **Data:** gaps in what is currently being collected and in the measures to ensure that the necessary data is being comprehensively and accurately captured;
- ▶ **Monitoring:** there is more that can and should be done to test and inspect what forces are actually doing to improve their response to PPDA;
- ▶ **Legislative reform:** including amendment of Schedule 3 of the Police Reform Act 2002 and of the Police (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2020 to ensure that all allegations of PPDA are treated as recordable complaints or conduct matters; that they are investigated and referred to the IOPC. And, amendment of s.29(4) of the Police Reform Act 2002 to ensure that police officers and members of police staff have the same right to make a formal police complaint of PPDA as do members of the public.

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

- ▶ **National guidance:** there is an urgent need for clear and unambiguous national guidance:
 1. Making explicit that PPDA discredits the police and undermines public confidence in policing, whether it occurs on or off duty, and whether it involves physical, psychological or other forms of domestic abuse;
 2. Requiring that all allegations of PPDA be treated as recordable complaints or recordable conduct matters under schedule 3 of the Police Reform Act 2002;
 3. Requiring that all complaints and conduct matters involving PPDA be investigated and referred to the IOPC;
 4. Addressing when cases should be referred to an external force for criminal and/or misconduct investigation and the practicalities for doing so;
 5. Addressing vetting and, in particular, introducing an express requirement that evidence of misogyny, domestic abuse, and/or controlling or coercive behaviour on the part of a police officer must trigger a review of vetting and will give rise to a presumption against vetting being achieved/maintained;
 6. Setting out the criteria to be applied when determining whether an officer accused of PPDA should be suspended, placed on restricted duties, or if other mitigation strategies should be put in place to protect the public and the victim/survivor. This should cover the position both during the investigation and afterwards;
 7. Addressing the rights of victim/survivors of PPDA. The requirements should be the same whether the victim/survivor is formally classed as having made a police complaint or is to be treated as an "interested person" in the context of a recordable conduct matter;
 8. Setting out model best practice for PPDA investigations.

- ▶ **Further assessment/research needed:** the responses to the super-complaint recommendations have been different across different forces and it is not clear how rigorously the impact of these disparate responses is being assessed. This urgently needs to be addressed, so that there can be effective monitoring of what, if anything, is actually being achieved. The underlying issue of police culture is also key to achieving meaningful change in the police response to PPDA. Domestic academic research in this area is slowly beginning to develop and consideration of police culture is due to be a key aspect of Part 2 of the Angiolini Inquiry

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

The Part 1 of the Angiolini report recommended that:

“ with immediate effect, every police force should commit publicly to being an anti-sexist, anti-misogynistic, anti-racist organisation in order to address, understand and eradicate sexism, racism and misogyny, contributing to a wider positive culture to remove all forms of discrimination from the profession. This includes properly addressing – and taking steps to root out – so-called ‘banter’ that often veils or excuses malign or toxic behaviour in police ranks.”

This recommendation is welcome and has been formally accepted by the National Police Chiefs Council.⁵ However, it remains to be seen how, and to what extent, it will be implemented in practice. It is concerning that the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Mark Rowley, refused to accept the conclusion of the Casey review in March 2023 that the MPS is institutionally racist, misogynistic and homophobic. Any meaningful commitment to being an anti-sexist, anti-misogynistic and anti-racist organisation must include an understanding and acknowledgement of the current depth of the problem. It also requires a practical roadmap for improved understanding and zero tolerance of PPDA.

From the women we have spoken to, further areas that require research include the impact of PPDA in family court proceedings and the sharing of relevant findings from such proceedings for the purposes of police vetting; consideration of how victim/survivors, including victim/survivors who are themselves police officers, can be better supported; and the development of investigative best practice in PPDA cases.

5 <https://news.npcc.police.uk/releases/angiolini-inquiry-is-an-urgent-call-to-action>

Glossary and explanation of terms

A police complaint: “any expression of dissatisfaction with a police force which is expressed (whether in writing or otherwise) by or on behalf of a member of the public” – s.12(1) Police Reform Act 2002.

Police conduct matter: any alleged behaviour by a police officer which, if proved could amount to misconduct or gross misconduct.

Under s.29 Police Reform Act police officers and staff are precluded from making a complaint against a member of their own force, allegations of domestic abuse made by police officers/staff have to be treated as conduct matters rather than complaints. This means they are not entitled to be kept informed of the progress or outcome of any conduct matter, nor do they have a right to appeal. The official response to the supercomplaint recommended that police victims of domestic abuse should be kept informed about the progress of conduct matters as “interested persons”.

Interested Persons: someone who is not the complainant but has a right to be kept informed of a conduct matter – an example is a family member of someone who has died or been seriously disabled by police conduct, but should (but doesn't always) include police officers or staff who are victims of police officer abuse.

Police super-complaint: a new system of police complaints introduced in 2018 enabling organisations to become a designated body enabling them to raise issues on behalf of the public about harmful patterns or trends in policing.

The three organisations that receive and consider super-complaints include:

- 1. HMICFRS – His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services** independently assesses the effectiveness and efficiency of police forces and fire & rescue services – in the public interest.
- 2. IOPC – Independent Office of Police Complaints** oversees the police complaints system in England and Wales and sets and monitors the standards by which the police should handle complaints.
- 3. COP – College of Policing** – a professional body for everyone working across policing. It is an operationally independent non-departmental public body.

NPCC: National Police Chiefs' Council brings UK police leaders together to set direction in policing and drive progress for the public.

PCC: Police and Crime Commissioner.

NFA: No Further Action. When a decision is made by the police or the CPS not to charge a case.

VRR: Victims Right of Review – where an NFA decision is made in relation to criminal charges, a victim can instigate a victims' right of review requesting reconsideration. VRRs can be submitted both in relation to decisions by the police and by the CPS although the processes are slightly different for each.

Centurion: the police database system for logging and managing data relating to police professional standards.



POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?



PART 1

The ongoing issues faced by victim/survivors of PPDA

The women who have come forward to speak to CWJ since the original super-complaint come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities and geographical locations throughout England and Wales. A significant proportion –45% –of those who gave detailed accounts are, or were, themselves police officers or civilian police employees. The themes identified in the original super-complaint have re-emerged again and again in these accounts. Here we identify eight themes that, in our view, require urgent further consideration.

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

Repeat allegations

The Couzens and Carrick cases have demonstrated the terrible consequences of failures on the part of policing to collate and act on previous allegations against officers. The HMICFRS review of Vetting, Misconduct and Misogyny in the Police Service,⁶ published in November 2022, found that in many cases where female staff or officers had alleged sexual assault by male colleagues it was also reported that the perpetrator had previously been reported for similar behaviour, which either hadn't been taken seriously or wasn't thoroughly investigated. Baroness Casey's review of culture and standards in the Metropolitan Police found that, for the period she surveyed, most of the officers or staff under investigation had been involved in two or more separate misconduct cases. 28% were involved in three to five different misconduct cases and 2% were involved in six or more separate misconduct cases.

This ties in with our findings from the women who contacted us and suggests that the problems identified by Baroness Casey are not limited to the MPS. The women we spoke to come from all over England and Wales. Amongst the survivors of PPDA who contacted us, a concerning number reported that, after making complaints of abuse themselves, they had learnt that other women had made similar complaints against their abuser, either prior to or after their experience of abuse. To protect their identities, their real names have not been used.

6 <https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/publication-html/an-inspection-of-vetting-misconduct-and-misogyny-in-the-police-service/>



London, UK – March 13 2021.
Thousands of people attended the vigil
for Sarah Everard in Clapham Common.

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

'Suzanne', who is herself a serving police officer, told us that both she and her ex-husband's subsequent wife had made allegations of domestic abuse against the same man. Both sets of allegations were NFA'd and the man continues to work in a frontline role which brings him into contact with vulnerable victim/survivors.

'Niamh', who is a police employee, told us that, after making a complaint of rape and controlling and coercive behaviour against her police partner, she learnt that his previous partner had also made a complaint of rape against him. That man had retired as a police officer with the force, but was rehired by the same force just a few weeks later as a civilian investigator in its Professional Standards Department.

In **'Lorraine's'** case, her abuser has been promoted to the rank of Chief Inspector, despite having two entirely separate rape allegations against him from two people who had no prior knowledge of one another.

The Bureau of Investigative Journalism has conducted Freedom of Information Act requests in respect of the number of officers on each force in England and Wales who faced multiple allegations of sexual offences in the seven year period from 2017 to the end of 2022. The FOI responses show that:

- ▶ twenty seven forces had at least one officer with more than one such allegation against them
- ▶ four forces had at least one officer who faced more than *five* sexual offence allegations
- ▶ one force had an officer who faced more than *ten* sexual offence allegations; and
- ▶ two forces each had an officer who faced more than *fifteen* sexual offence allegations.

A report by the IOPC from February 2024, based on "dip sampling" of police complaint and conduct cases involving VAWG markers in eight police forces, found that in 65% of cases, investigators had not enquired whether other relevant complaints had been made against the same officer⁷. The IOPC acknowledged that this is especially problematic in VAWG cases, because of the possibility that a pattern of predatory behaviour might be emerging that is currently going undetected.

7 <https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/publications/violence-against-women-and-girls-case-handling-review-february-2024>

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

The Part 1 report of the Angiolini Inquiry identifies how poor investigations into the early allegations made against Wayne Couzen's and either ignorance, or unquestioning acceptance, of the conclusions of those investigations led to Couzens repeatedly achieving vetting status.

As discussed in Parts 2 & 3 below, current measures to address data collection and vetting do not go far enough to ensure that VAWG/PPDA intelligence about police officers is being collected and considered to enable effective vetting and deployment decisions. There is an urgent need for improved data collection, more frequent and effective vetting, better misconduct procedures, and better and more consistent decision-making around safeguarding measures when officers face repeat allegations, even where these have not resulted in criminal convictions or findings of misconduct. It is imperative that when an allegation is made, the criminal and misconduct investigations should also consider any previous allegations to consider whether there arises any "similar fact evidence" which ought to be relied on. Better data collection and scrutiny of the data is key.

" ... poor investigations into the early allegations made against Wayne Couzen's and either ignorance, or unquestioning acceptance, of the conclusions of those investigations led to Couzens repeatedly achieving vetting status."

Missed safeguarding opportunities

Even where officers are not known to be the subject of multiple allegations, several of the cases that were brought to us highlight missed opportunities for safeguarding information to be recorded.

'Rose', who is a police officer herself, made reports of controlling and coercive behaviour against her police officer ex-husband. She also raised concerns about his excessive drinking and emotional abuse of their children. Her police employer was aware that, on at least one occasion, she had had to leave work early to collect her children from her ex-husband, because he was too intoxicated to look after them. She requested that a "protecting vulnerable people" ('PVP') log should be recorded, but was told by her Inspector that no record should be made because the force couldn't be seen to be "taking sides". The woman was certain that if her ex-husband had been a member of the public and not a police officer, a PVP would have been logged.

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

Other women told us that their ex-partners had been promoted into senior roles working directly with victim/survivors of domestic and/or sexual abuse, despite having been the recipients of such allegations themselves. The refrain from forces of not being seen to “take sides” or of it being a case of “he said, she said” appears to be common. However, by not taking action, forces are in fact taking the side of the perpetrator. It is not at all clear that such allegations are currently being (i) recorded or (ii) considered for the purposes of vetting. This fits with the findings of the Angiolini Inquiry in its Part 1 report, where it identified a “lack of professional curiosity about potentially adverse information” about a fellow police officer and “lethargic and inadequate investigations” which suggested that investigating officers found reasons not to pursue an investigation.

Even where victim/survivors have obtained court orders against their police ex-partners, this information is often not being recorded and considered by the perpetrator’s force. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism sought data on the number of non-molestation orders recorded against police officers and employees. The responses indicated that this information is not routinely collected or recorded by forces, notwithstanding that the threshold for obtaining such an order is that the court must have found

1. that there was evidence of molestation;
2. that the applicant or a child is in need of protection and
3. that an order is needed to control the respondent’s behaviour.

We consider that when a court has found that such an order is needed to control the conduct of a police officer or employee, that is relevant information, which should be recorded and taken into consideration for the purposes of vetting and deployment.

Indeed, mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure that whenever a finding of fact is made in the civil or family courts that a police officer or employee has committed VAWG, including acts of domestic abuse, that information is automatically sent to the relevant force and a review of vetting is triggered.

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

Loss of victim/survivor confidence and lack of independence

It is now widely recognised that victim/survivor trust and confidence plays a key role in the success of investigations into domestic abuse and VAWG more generally. The NPCC and College of Policing insights report, published in March 2023, based on data it had collected relating to police perpetrated VAWG concludes that *"it is likely that consistent and meaningful application of the Code of Practice for Victim/survivors of Crime in England and Wales, supported by suspect-focused investigations across all VAWG crime types, will have the greatest impact on the relentless pursuit of perpetrators."*⁸ However, the women we spoke to had frequently experienced poor communication from investigating officers, minimisation of the offending they were reporting, failures to speak to witnesses and significant delays, all leading to loss of confidence in the police response.

'Sarah' had successfully challenged an 'NFA' decision, exercising her Victim's Right of Review, only to be told that all records from the original investigation had been lost and that the investigation would need to start from scratch. She was sceptical that the original investigating officer had in fact carried out any investigation at all;

'Suzanne', a police sergeant, told us that she had been in two abusive relationships with police officers. Her experience of reporting the abuse the first time was so bad that she didn't want to report the second time.

'Lorraine', who reported sexual, physical, and emotional abuse by her police officer husband told us that her force had recently set up a special unit for officers to speak out about their experiences of VAWG. However, in view of her experiences, she described it as a "façade".

8 <https://www.npcc.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/our-work/vawg/tackling-vawg-policing-insights-report--policing-insights-report.pdf>

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

The over-arching concern of almost all of those we spoke to was lack of independence when forces investigate their own officers. We are concerned that even though the response to the super-complaint noted that case files should include formal 'declaration of conflicts of interest' records, the February 2024 IOPC report, based on their dip sample of police perpetrated VAWG cases found that most of the police forces they reviewed still don't have clear declarations around conflicts of interest.⁹

The super-complaint response also identified circumstances in which it would be appropriate for a force to refer a PPDA investigation to an external force, including where victim/survivor trust and confidence cannot be secured another way. However, there is still no national guidance as to how that test is to be applied in practice. Further, there is no consistent, nationwide system for securing an investigation by an external force. Instead, there appear to be ad hoc arrangements between some forces. This is a significant issue in practice. CWJ is aware of cases where a force has tried to refer a matter to another force, including in one case, following a recommendation that they do so by the IOPC. However, no other force has agreed to conduct the investigation and thus the cases have been returned to the original force. Even in a case where external investigation is recommended by the IOPC, it has no power to enforce such a recommendation.

We are concerned that this is leading to misunderstanding and/or reluctance to refer cases for external investigation.

'Beth' had asked for her complaint of rape and controlling and coercive behaviour against her police officer ex-husband to be investigated by the force local to where she now lives, rather than the force for which he works. She was told by her ex-husband's force that, having checked with their Legal Services Department, there was no mechanism in place for an alternative force to investigate. This was despite the woman having lost all confidence in her husband's force.

Other women have reported officers dealing with their cases with open links to the officer accused of PPDA.

'Mary' told us that when she reported her abuse to the force for which both she and her ex-partner worked, she was informed by the senior officer who interviewed her that she (the senior officer) was the ex-partner's mentor. In those circumstances, 'Mary' did not feel able to talk about the abuse.

9 <https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/publications/violence-against-women-and-girls-case-handling-review-february-2024> p.23

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

Professionals working in the domestic abuse sector have also raised concerns that the risk of influence or bias in investigations is far more complex and pervasive than the current policing responses acknowledge. It is not solely a question of ensuring that investigating officers don't have personal knowledge of those under investigation. Future working relationships are also relevant, because investigating officers will know that they may well have to work with friends and colleagues of the officer under investigation in the future, and potentially also the officer themselves.

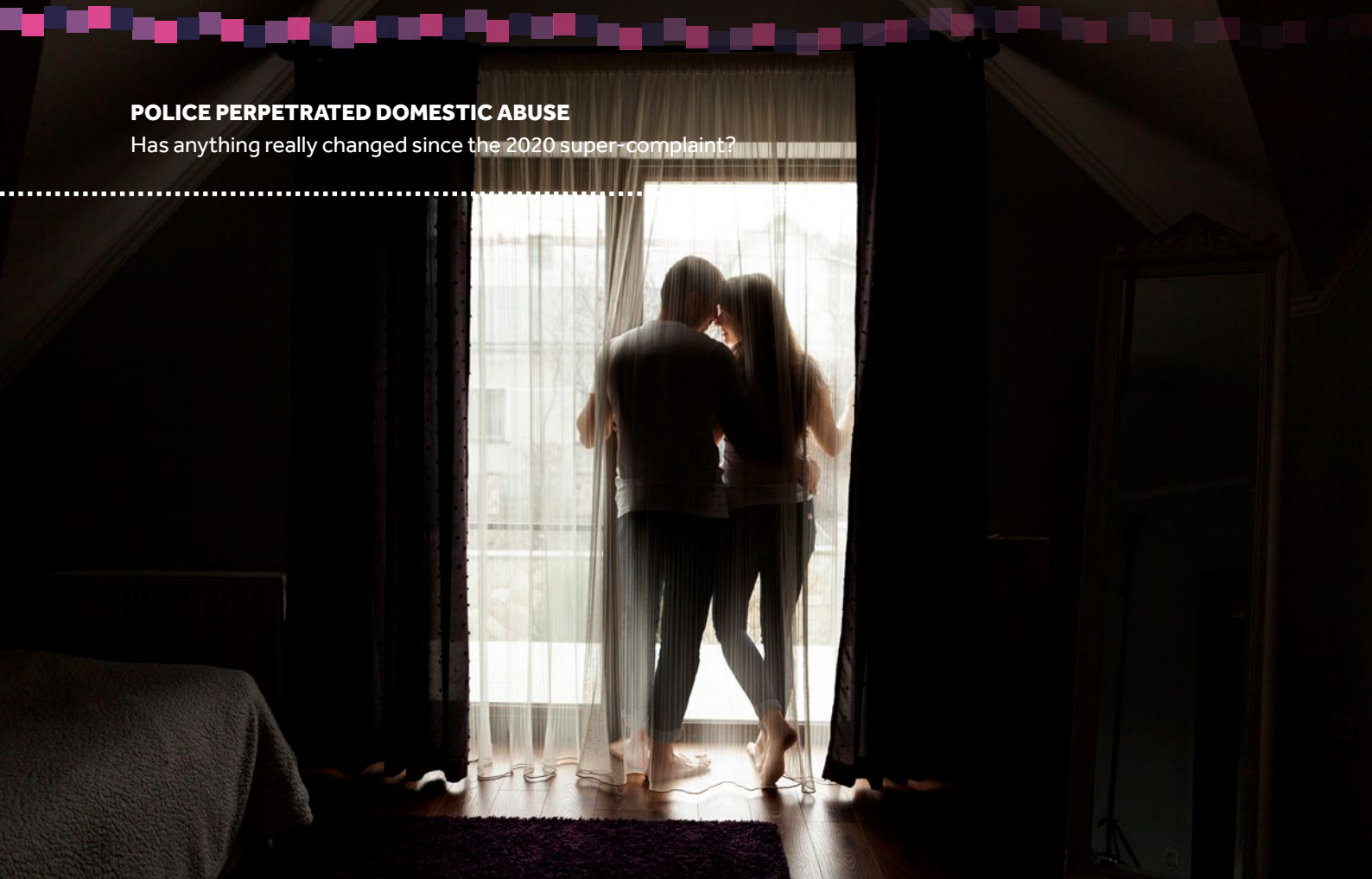
- ▶ We were told about the experience of an officer who had been tasked with investigating allegations of PPDA against two officers on her own force. Although the investigating officer had not known the officers under investigation at the time, a year later, one of them had been seconded to her team. She found that this placed her in a very difficult position.
- ▶ Another woman, who had been the victim/survivor of PPDA, told us that she had been refused an independent investigation by an external force on the basis that the officer appointed to her case had only recently joined from another force and so did not have any connection with the officer under investigation. The woman was concerned that the new officer would be keen to build allies in her new force and would be under pressure not to "rock the boat".

Concerns like this have a material impact on victim/survivor confidence in the integrity of the investigation. Our view is that there needs to be a clear national system for external investigation of PPDA cases, so that investigations are properly independent and are seen to be so. This would help to improve victim/survivor confidence, which in turn is likely to improve reporting rates, leading to an increased ability for forces to identify and, where appropriate, take action. Improving victim/survivor confidence creates a virtuous circle: when forces are seen to be taking PPDA seriously, other victim/survivors feel able to come forward. By contrast, where investigations are "in-house", cursory, delayed and result in "no further action", not only victim/survivor confidence, but also wider public confidence, in the police is damaged.

We consider that this is an area that has not received sufficient attention from the College of Policing and the NPCC. Forces appear to have been left to take their own steps to address the independence of investigations and it is not clear what, if any, assessment is being carried out at a national level of the efficacy of those steps. Certainly, there does not appear to have been any material improvement in securing victim/survivor trust and confidence.

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?



Minimisation of offending and poor understanding of Controlling or Coercive Behaviour

Psychological abuse, including controlling and coercive behaviour, is a common theme in PPDA cases. As we noted in the super-complaint, police officers are in a very particular position: they are trained in asserting authority, they have a knowledge of the law, and those to whom their victim/survivors have to report are often friends and colleagues of the accused officer. This places victim/survivors of PPDA in an especially vulnerable position. We have seen no evidence that this special power dynamic is being considered by investigators. In fact, to the contrary, the cases that have been brought to us suggest an ongoing misunderstanding and minimisation of this type of offending by police officers.

'Sarah' reported a course of conduct by her police officer husband over a number of years, whereby he had verbally abused and belittled her, used tactics to intimidate her, such as taking away her keys and preventing her friends from gaining entry to the house, and driving erratically in order to frighten her. She described occasions when she had been too scared to leave the house and there had been a significant impact on her mental health. The investigating officer in NFA'ing her case described the officer's conduct as "unpleasant", but not criminal.

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

'Sally', herself a police officer, who had reported frequent abusive messages from her ex-partner – an officer with the same force – was incorrectly told “that’s not harassment, we don’t need to record this as a crime.” She was not provided with a crime reference number and no further enquiries were carried out.

Many women report being told that controlling and coercive behaviour is “*very hard to prove because it is one person’s word against another’s*”. One case we saw was formally NFA’d on the basis that there was “*no corroboration*” of the woman’s account. The imposition of a *de facto* requirement for corroboration is unlawful. The need for corroboration in relation to sexual offences was abolished in 1994.¹⁰ In respect of other types of offending, there has never been such a requirement. However, the women who have spoken to us repeatedly report being told that their case won’t be pursued, because it’s “*one person’s word against another’s*”.

'Frances', whose case did make it to charge and prosecution, was told by the CPS at trial that they couldn’t proceed with the controlling and coercive behaviour charge, due to lack of evidence that her ex-husband’s behaviour had had a serious effect on her. ‘Frances’ had sought treatment from her GP, had received counselling as part of her workplace occupational health scheme, and had also been referred for external counselling, all as a result of the abuse; and, she had given the police permission to access her medical records. There would have been ample evidence of “serious effect” if the police had taken proper steps to obtain the available evidence.

The failings in these cases were completely contrary to the applicable guidance, which makes clear that controlling and coercive behaviour “*often appears routine and so-called low-level but, taken as a whole over time, it can cause the build-up of constant anxiety and fear*”.¹¹ The guidance imposes a clear duty on the police to treat such cases seriously and to follow relevant lines of enquiry in order to build an effective case.¹² However, from the victim/survivors of PPDA who have spoken to us, it appears that the guidance is still not being followed on the ground.

10 S.32 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994

11 College of Policing APP on Domestic Abuse.

12 Home Office Statutory Guidance on Controlling and Coercive Behaviour in an Intimate or Family Relationship & CPS Legal Guidance on Domestic Abuse.

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

Interestingly, recent academic research into *victim/survivors* who are themselves police officers found that police victim/survivors also have difficulty in identifying controlling and coercive abuse as such. Respondents to the research survey reported only appreciating that the behaviour had been abusive after the relationship had ended, or when they had observed a family member going through a similar experience, or had attended domestic abuse training.¹³

We consider that there is a parallel with the learning from the Soteria Bluestone research into sexual offending. The Soteria Bluestone Year 1 report identifies that a lack of understanding on the part of investigators of the contexts within which sexual offences take place is undermining the effectiveness of investigations into such offences. The PPDA cases we have seen suggest that the same is happening in PPDA investigations.

The Soteria Bluestone research suggests that disproportionate investigative effort is currently being put into testing the credibility of the victim/survivor's account and that greater focus should be placed on understanding and investigating

“grooming, manipulation and coercion tactics employed by the suspect directly relevant to the alleged offence, informed by an evidence-based knowledge of sexual offending behaviour and its impacts on victim/survivors.”

This should include the ways in which offenders use soft influence with investigators as well as the ways in which they manipulate their victim/survivors as part of the offending.

We consider that an informed understanding of the psychology of PPDA is critical to effective investigation and safeguarding. At present, too many cases are being dismissed as “*one person's word against another*” or “*unpleasant, but not criminal*”.

There are similarities between the way that PPDA, particularly controlling and coercive behaviour, is being minimised by front line officers and the dismissive approach to indecent exposure identified in the Angiolini Part 1 report.

13 Police victim/survivors of domestic abuse: barriers to reporting victim/survivorisation, Leticia Couto, Nicola O'Leary & Iain Brennan. Policing and Society 24 August 2023

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?



Counter-allegations and the criminalisation of victim/survivors

The approach to counter-allegations against victim/survivors of PPDA is a further area where there are significant gaps in expertise. The criminalisation of victim/survivors of domestic abuse in general, not just in PPDA cases, is a wider problem, about which CWJ has produced a separate report¹⁴ and a film.¹⁵ The issue is especially acute in cases where the primary accused is a police officer.

A number of the women who spoke to us were subject to counter-allegations from their police partners. On the face of their accounts, it appears that their partners' allegations were treated more seriously and investigated more rigorously than their own allegations of abuse.

14 Double Standard: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5aa98420f2e6b1ba0c874e42/t/6241a370051da468f5ba42d3/1648468856173/DS+FINAL+REPORT.pdf>

15 <https://www.centreforwomensjustice.org.uk/stop-criminalising-survivors>

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

'Farah' had reported physical assault by her police officer partner and her account was supported by photographs of her injuries. The case was investigated by officers from the same station where her partner worked and he continued to work on full un-restricted duties throughout the investigation. As in the cases identified above, 'Farah' was ultimately told by the investigating officer that *"these things are really hard to prove", "it's one word against another", "your partner is going to say it was self-defence"*. In the end she lost confidence in the investigation and withdrew her complaint. Three days after doing so, she was arrested on counter-allegations of harassment. She was 20 weeks pregnant at the time (with her ex-partner's child) and was detained in a police cell for an entire day. She was subsequently released on bail, but was required to return for questioning on three separate occasions. The third occasion was just three days after she had given birth, having been told that she would be arrested if she did not attend voluntarily. The allegation on that occasion was that she had breached her bail conditions not to contact her ex-partner. She had dialled 101 in order to tell him that their baby had been born. The case against her was only discontinued when the CPS became involved.

'Paula', who is in a professional role, told us that she had been subject to controlling and coercive behaviour and physical assault from her police officer husband. Unbeknownst to her, he had been covertly filming her and their young child in the family home over a period of many months. He then used edited excerpts from the covert footage to support an allegation against her of assault and child cruelty. She was arrested and detained in police custody overnight. When she was released on police bail, she was prohibited from having contact with their child until this was reinstated by Children's Services. Following support from a domestic abuse charity, 'Paula' disclosed to police the history of controlling and coercive behaviour and assault from her husband. 'Paula's' brother also reported the abuse he had witnessed his sister suffering at the hands of her husband. In contrast to the treatment of her, the police officer husband was never arrested, he was not subject to any bail conditions and the complete footage was never obtained. The officer investigating the case against 'Paula' made representations to the magistrates in the criminal case and to the family court about the seriousness of the contents of the video, despite subsequently admitting that she had not viewed it. Ultimately, both cases were discontinued by the CPS, but only after Paula had been subjected to intrusive investigation, time in a police cell, and a significant period separated from her young daughter.

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?



'Lily', who had herself been a police officer, reported assault and controlling and coercive behaviour by her ex-husband, who had previously been a police officer and who continued to work with the local force in a civilian capacity. The ex-husband made counter-allegations against 'Lily' and she was told by police that they would not investigate her allegations until her ex-husband's allegations against her had been dealt with. Although the ex-husband's allegations were eventually shown to be false and no charges were brought against 'Lily', she had to make a formal police complaint about the way the matter had been handled before her original complaints of abuse were investigated. By this time nearly four years had passed. At the request of the CPS, 'Lily' was assessed by a clinical psychologist, who found her to be suffering from PTSD as a result of the abuse. Despite this, no prosecution was brought. CWJ has little doubt that the serious delays in the police investigation played a significant part in the decision not to pursue a prosecution.

It appears from the accounts we have taken that the issue of counter-allegations against victim/survivors of PPDA and how they are handled requires urgent further attention. Home Office Statutory Guidance on Domestic Abuse recognises that perpetrators of domestic abuse may make counter-allegations against their victim/survivors and that care should be taken to assess evidence and correctly identify victim/survivors and perpetrators.¹⁶ CPS Guidance also states that where counter allegations are made "a thorough investigation should be conducted into the background of the relationship between the victim/survivor and alleged suspect to ensure the full context of the incident is understood." However, it does not appear to us that this is consistently being done in cases involving PPDA.

One of the domestic abuse professionals we spoke to told us how her local force is holding anonymised case strategy meetings with domestic abuse support organisations to draw on their expertise in analysing case dynamics, such as identifying the primary perpetrator in cases where there are counter-allegations. She was positive about the impact this was having on the quality of domestic abuse investigations. However, we are not aware of any research into the effectiveness of this approach and, as far as we are aware, only two forces are currently doing this.

16 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1089015/Domestic_Abuse_Act_2021_Statutory_Guidance.pdf

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

Poor support for police victim/survivors of PPDA

Approximately 45% of the women who have come forward to CWJ to provide detailed accounts of PPDA since the super-complaint are themselves police officers or police staff. Anecdotally, this is broadly in line with the breakdown between police and non-police victim/survivors of PPDA reporting to academics working in this field.

Recent research by academics from the University of Hull,¹⁷ based on survey responses from the workforce of an unnamed English police force, found that overall, police officers and police employees are as likely to be victim/survivors of domestic abuse as members of the general population. However, we consider that when looking specifically at *police perpetrated* domestic abuse it is likely that a higher proportion of victim/survivors will also be police officers or police staff, given the prevalence of intra-force relationships. The University of Hull survey found that in more than a quarter of their cases, the perpetrator was employed by the same police force as the victim/survivor.

Many of the police women who spoke to us found their experience of reporting PPDA to their force so bad that they ultimately chose to leave policing altogether, or sought secondment to policing bodies outside of their force.

'Gwen' resigned from her force after more than 15 years in policing as a result of their failure to take seriously her allegations of PPDA against her ex-husband. She told us that after the most recent incident, it had taken her force six weeks to even contact her following her report. Her report had been incorrectly recorded as a civil matter, with no domestic abuse flag. She had had to complain to the head of domestic abuse before her report was actioned and, even then, she was never visited in person to obtain her account. This followed a similar pattern to the previous four occasions on which she had reported PPDA by her ex-husband. She tried to request information in respect of any misconduct investigation, but was refused on the basis that, as a police officer herself, she *"has no rights as a complainant"*. She was never contacted by the force's professional standards department to obtain her account.

'Rose' told us that her experience of reporting PPDA to her force: *"was one of the worst feelings I have ever had –complete desperation and feeling like I had nowhere to turn for help."* Her experience was so bad that she said she would not report again even if she was physically assaulted.

17 Prevalence and patterns of domestic abuse victim/survivorisation in an English police workforce, Iain Brennan, Leticia Couto & Nicola O'Leary. Policing and Society, Vol 23, 2023 –issue 6 13 March 2023

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

The consequences of negative experiences when reporting PPDA extend beyond the impact on the individual victim/survivor. The University of Hull research found that witnessing negative reactions from colleagues and senior officers when others have reported similar experiences plays a significant role in deterring other officers from reporting PPDA. This also accords with the findings of the NPCC and College of Policing insights report published in March 2023:

"it is a realistic possibility that challenges with police workplace culture identified in the Operation Soteria Bluestone Year 1 Report and the response to the PPDA super-complaint act as a barrier to victim/survivor engagement and to pursuing perpetrators across all VAWG crime types."

A professional working in the field of domestic abuse and policing told us that no matter how many positive policies or pledges forces put in place, the reality is that if police victim/survivors of PPDA see negative comments or consequences when a colleague discloses abuse, they will be deterred from reporting their own experience.

The professionals we spoke to were of the view that there needs to be a bespoke IDVA service for police victim/survivors, that is wholly independent of the victim/survivor's force. One professional raised concerns about supposedly anonymous reporting routes that certain forces have set up for their officers. She considered that such routes were not truly anonymous and that there is a conflict of interest when reports of PPDA are made to police officers, because they are under a professional duty to pass on reports of misconduct by a fellow officer, whether the victim/survivor wishes to report or not.

As highlighted in the PPDA super-complaint, police victim/survivors of PPDA often suffer significant detriment to their careers when they seek to report their abuse. Numerous further examples of this emerged in the more recent accounts. For example,

'Mary' had enjoyed an exemplary career with her force prior to reporting domestic abuse by her husband, who was an officer on the same force. She was initially placed on "compassionate leave", while her partner continued to work. When she sought to return, she was side-tracked into an alternative role and told that she had received an unfavourable performance review. She challenged this on the basis that prior to reporting the abuse, she had been graded as "exceptional". Her grievance was upheld in full. However, her career with the force continued to be side-tracked, whilst her ex-husband was twice promoted. He now holds a senior role with responsibility for the force's response to VAWG. She has had to transfer out of the force.

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

The Police Federation

A specific issue raised by a number of the police victim/survivors of PPDA, and also by professionals, is the lack of support provided to police victim/survivors by the Police Federation. A recurring theme has been that the Police Federation is entirely focused on supporting police officers who are accused of misconduct and is not at all attuned to providing support for police officers who are the victim/survivors of abuse by other officers. Although the Federation is not, technically, a trade union, it provides a similar service. Trade unions would usually provide support to both sides where there is an internal grievance.

'Gwen' told us "the issue is with what the police federation was initially set up for –to defend officers against accusations. They are so entrenched and institutionalised.... The Fed's role is to resolve matters at the lowest level possible and this means that poor behaviour is swept aside... they just want to make the problem go away." She said that her own Fed rep was so entrenched in the mindset of defending officers against allegations that he had told her it wouldn't be fair on her ex-husband for her to be told about any misconduct investigation into her allegations. She also pointed to the fact that her force had a manual of guidance for police officers accused of misconduct, but nothing for officers who report misconduct. She was also concerned about confidentiality within the Police Federation, describing the culture as "very gossipy": "it would be very difficult for the Fed to represent both parties, because in my experience everyone knows everything." She also told us that the Federation representatives lack independence from the force. Representatives are employed by the force and promoted by officers who they might have to challenge: "it is known that it is best to see a Fed rep who isn't going for a promotion, as they will likely represent you better".



POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

'Sally' told us that her Federation representative had refused to help her with a work issue unrelated to her complaint of PPDA on the basis that he was friends with her husband.

Victim/survivors have also reported being told that they can't access legal assistance provided via the Federation, because legal assistance has already been provided to their (ex)-partner and there is a conflict of interest. Again, this isn't limited to legal assistance in respect of the PPDA allegation itself. **'Gwen'** told us that she had tried to access a free family law clinic offered through the Police Federation, but was told that they couldn't help her, because they had already provided advice to her husband. The Police Federation told her that it had no provision for alternative legal advice and was not able to signpost her elsewhere.

We are aware that the Federation is now looking into ways to address this issue.



Problems in family law proceedings

Many victim/survivors of PPDA reported problems arising in family law proceedings connected with their partner's status as a police officer. In the original super-complaint, we highlighted cases where police perpetrators had used the threat of family proceedings as a means of control, asserting that their status as a police officer would make them more likely to be believed by the professionals involved. We also highlighted cases where forces had refused to take into account findings of fact made in family proceedings against an officer when assessing his credibility for the purposes of a criminal or misconduct investigation. In other cases, forces had refused to conduct criminal or misconduct investigations, even where there had been findings of fact in the Family Court which supported the victim/survivor's allegation, or where there had been repeated breaches of family court orders by a police officer.

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

In the cohort of women who have come forward since the super-complaint, issues concerning family proceedings have again loomed large. We were told of several cases in which police colleagues of the officer accused of PPDA had intervened in family court proceedings in ways which were misleading and unfair. Given the current statutory and rule-based restrictions on disclosure of information relating to family court proceedings, there are limits on what can be relayed about these cases. However, on the basis of the information reported to us, we consider that this is an area that requires further consideration by forces and by the College of Policing and the National Police Chiefs Council. Whilst there are formal mechanisms whereby the family court can direct disclosure from the police and, vice versa, there appears to be little consistency or oversight as to how those processes are being managed by forces. A number of women have reported to us that their ex-partner's police colleagues have *volunteered* (i.e. not at the request of the court) inaccurate and misleading evidence in support of the officer, for example to assist him in resisting a non-molestation order being made, or in support of his application under the Children Act 1989.

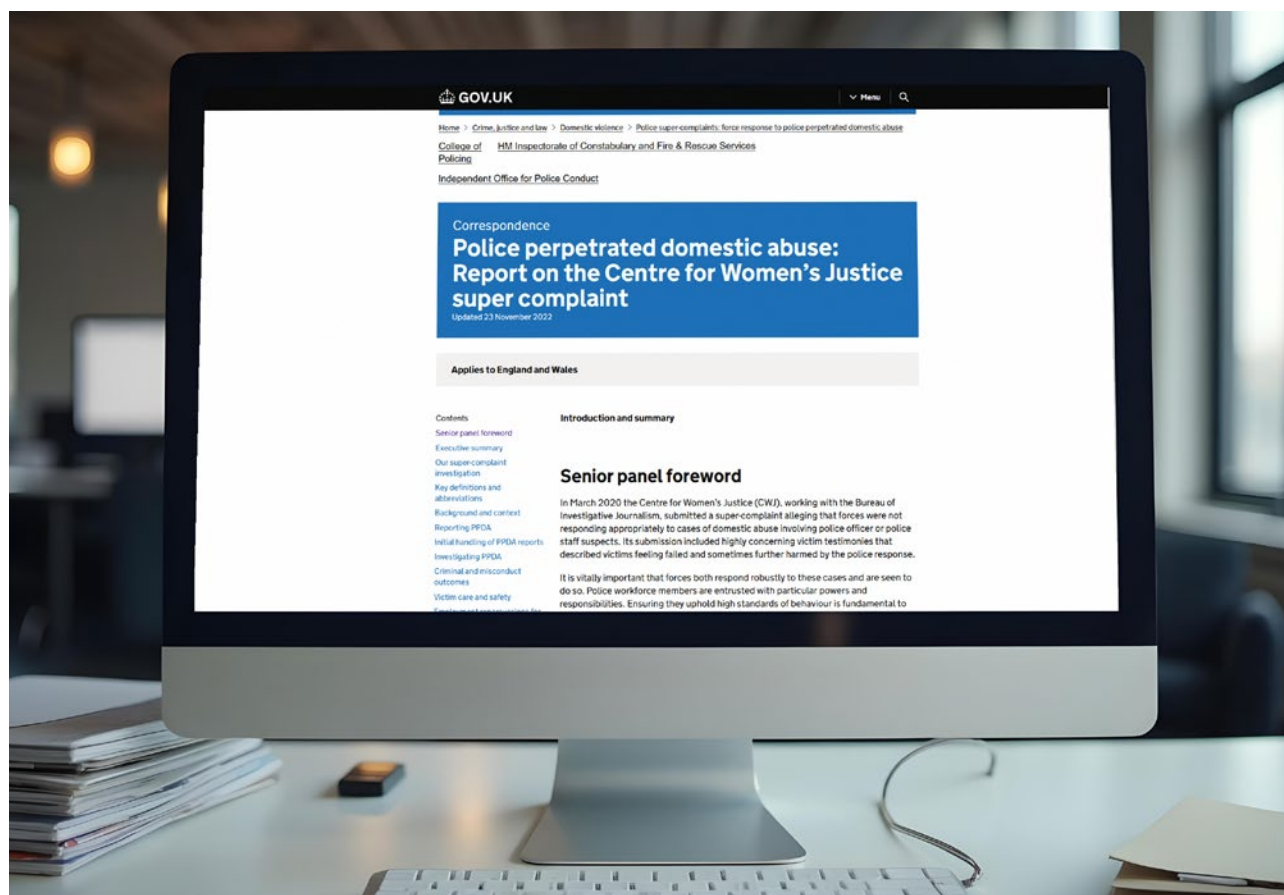
Given the significance of the issues being decided in the family courts, it is plainly important that the current problems within policing relating to how PPDA is dealt with do not leech across into family proceedings. It is equally important that where findings of fact adverse to a police officer are made in family proceedings, such findings are recorded on police systems and are taken into account in the context of vetting and deployment. Both findings of domestic abuse and findings adverse to an officer's credibility are relevant and should be recorded. This point was made starkly by Jess Phillips MP in a debate in Parliament on the Criminal Justice Bill on 25 January 2024. Ms Phillips had asked the Chief Constable of West Midlands Police whether he knew how many of the officers on his force had been found in the family courts to have raped someone and he had had to acknowledge that that information was not available to him.¹⁸

The proposed new Vetting APP, which was published for consultation in January 2024, clarifies that the obligation on police officers and staff to disclose any "*change in circumstances*" relevant to vetting includes being the subject of civil proceedings or protective measures. The list specified in the proposed APP includes domestic violence protection notices and orders, non-molestation orders, restraining orders, occupation orders, harassment warnings, sexual harm prevention orders, sexual risk orders and stalking protection orders. However, the onus remains on *self-disclosure* by the individual against whom the order has been made, rather than proposing a mechanism for information to be shared automatically for the purposes of vetting; and the proposal does not include reference to adverse judicial findings of fact, for example, findings of domestic or sexual abuse, or dishonesty, in the family courts.

the onus remains on self-disclosure by the individual against whom the order has been made, rather than proposing a mechanism for information to be shared automatically...

We set out in [PART 3](#) below the changes that are needed to address these issues.

¹⁸ [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2024-01-25/debates/5fc5e55a-4150-474d-ab20-c36be3e63690/CriminalJusticeBill\(FourteenthSitting\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2024-01-25/debates/5fc5e55a-4150-474d-ab20-c36be3e63690/CriminalJusticeBill(FourteenthSitting))



PART 2

Summary of the official response to the super-complaint and subsequent policing initiatives and reports

This part of the report provides an overview of the police response to the PPDA super-complaint. It then identifies the high-profile public events that have brought police perpetrated VAWG and misogyny into the spotlight since the super-complaint was submitted. The final section summarises the numerous policing initiatives that have been announced since March 2020 that are relevant to PPDA and police-perpetrated VAWG more generally. Part 3 of the report identifies the ongoing gaps.

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?



The response to the super-complaint

The response to the super-complaint by the super-complaint bodies (the College of Policing, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services ('HMICFRS') and the Independent Office for Police Conduct ('IOPC')) was published on 30 June 2022.¹⁹ The response was based on case file reviews in eight forces, discussions with victim/survivors of PPDA, police practitioners and professionals working in domestic abuse support agencies, surveys and focus groups with police staff and victim/survivors of PPDA, and reviews of force policies, research literature and police data. The response agreed with almost all aspects of the super-complaint and its over-arching finding was that *"the way forces are responding to PPDA cases is a feature of policing that is significantly harming the public interest"*.

The response identifies weaknesses in the recording and collection by forces of data relating to PPDA, meaning that the obtainable picture was necessarily incomplete. In respect of data relating to cases of PPDA being treated as a police complaint or conduct matter, data collection was so poor that the response bodies were not able to provide even an estimate of the number of PPDA allegations that result in misconduct outcomes.

¹⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/police-super-complaints-force-response-to-police-perpetrated-domestic-abuse/police-perpetrated-domestic-abuse-report-on-the-centre-for-womens-justice-super-complaint#senior-panel-foreword>

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

The response acknowledges that ensuring that police officers and civilian staff uphold high standards of behaviour is fundamental to public trust and confidence in the police service and also that forces need to protect against the risk of having domestic abuse perpetrators in police roles.

The response found that *"forces are not fully recognising and responding to the risks and responsibilities associated with [PPDA] cases. There are systemic deficiencies in the police response to cases of police perpetrated domestic abuse in England and Wales and this is causing significant harm to the public interest."* This includes failure properly to consider the unique risks for victim/survivors and the public of having a member of the police as a perpetrator. Weaknesses were identified in vetting, as well as in relation to suspension or restriction of duties. The response acknowledges that victim/survivors who are themselves police officers or staff face particular problems. They are often not treated properly as victim/survivors when they report PPDA and can face repercussions in the workplace, both in terms of career prospects and the way in which they are treated by their colleagues.

The response identified significant failings when it came to treating allegations of PPDA as reports of police misconduct. It found that forces were frequently failing to open misconduct investigations to run alongside criminal investigations, or were wrongly delaying misconduct investigations until after the conclusion of the criminal case, or wrongly closing misconduct investigations based on the outcome of the criminal case.

The response found evidence of undue weight being placed on the fact that the conduct alleged occurred whilst the officer was off-duty. These issues were found to have contributed to flawed decisions during and at the conclusion of misconduct investigations. There was also significant evidence of forces failing to refer cases to the IOPC even when the mandatory criteria for referral were met. The response also notes that in cases where PPDA came to police notice through informal disclosures, for example, when a victim/survivor was herself a police officer or member of staff, there was a greater risk of that disclosure not being recorded and responded to appropriately as a crime or as a conduct matter.

"The response found evidence of undue weight being placed on the fact that the conduct alleged occurred whilst the officer was off-duty."

In respect of the standard of criminal investigations into PPDA, this was found to *"share common weaknesses with other domestic abuse investigations"* and the response records *"a mixed picture in terms of thoroughness and victim/survivor engagement in the investigation."* The available data did not point to PPDA allegations being less likely to result in criminal charges than in domestic abuse cases where the suspect is not a police officer or employee. However, the response acknowledged that the charge rate in domestic abuse cases generally is very low and that the inconsistent data collection in relation to PPDA meant that the findings were, at best, indicative.

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

The response did not find substantiated examples of corruption or collusion in the course of the investigation, but acknowledged that “*connections between colleagues in forces do have the potential to undermine the response to PPDA*” and that the nature of its investigation had been such as to limit its potential to uncover such practice. The investigation did find that not enough was being done by forces to ensure that safeguards against corruption and collusion were working as they should. For example, declarations of conflicts of interest were frequently missing from case files and the investigation uncovered examples of cases where officers were investigated by those who knew them as colleagues.

We consider that the response downplays the evidence of corruption and collusion provided in the super-complaint case studies. For example, in one case, a domestic abuse worker told CWJ that she had been instructed by a senior officer not to send two cases to MARAC (multi-agency panel for high-risk cases) where the abusers were senior officers. In another case, an officer had used his police vehicle to stalk his ex-wife. This had been reported by a colleague who was with the officer at the time and so was able to give direct evidence of what had happened, but nothing was done. In another case, the victim/survivor had disclosed a violent attack, but instead of the police perpetrator being arrested, he had been taken to a friend’s house and the responding officer had attempted to close the case straight away. We consider that the active “down playing” of the police response in each of these cases is difficult to explain as anything other than collusion.

We consider that the response downplays the evidence of corruption and collusion provided in the super-complaint case studies.

Despite falling short of finding positive collusion, the response to the super-complaint did conclude that the current police approach to PPDA is significantly harming the public interest and made seven over-arching recommendations and identified five actions for the super-complaint bodies themselves.

The recommendations and actions are detailed and can be viewed in full here www.gov.uk/government/publications/police-super-complaints-force-response-to-police-perpetrated-domestic-abuse/police-perpetrated-domestic-abuse-report-on-the-centre-for-womens-justice-super-complaint#senior-panel-foreword.



However, in summary:

Recommendations from the response to the super-complaint

- 1. Chief constables** were to conduct an audit of live PPDA cases and those closed within the last 12 months and take appropriate action where it is found that cases had not been treated appropriately as a complaint or conduct matter. They were also to write to the super-complaint bodies within six months, explaining how their force has or will improve its response to PPDA.
- 2. Chief constables** were to put plans in place to ensure that both criminal and misconduct PPDA investigations are conducted by someone with no prior connection to anyone involved. The recommendation notes that it may be appropriate to refer a case to an external force for investigation when:
 - ▶ there are concerns that truly independent investigators cannot be found in the force. For example, in smaller forces or in cases involving a suspect who, due to seniority or length of service, is well known in the force; or
 - ▶ victim/survivor trust and confidence cannot be secured another way.
- 3. Police and Crime Commissioners, the Ministry of Justice and Chief Constables** were to make sure their provision of domestic abuse support services and guidance is capable of meeting the specific needs of all non-police and police victim/survivors of PPDA.
- 4. The Home Office** was to consider whether to amend legislation to give police victim/survivors of PPDA the same rights as non-police victim/survivors.
- 5. The Home Office** was to provide guidance on when police officers under investigation for PPDA should be placed on restricted duties.
- 6. The Home Office** was to amend the Annual Data Requirement so as to require police forces to report the number of misconduct cases and criminal investigations involving PPDA and the associated outcomes. This data should then be published.
- 7. All those subject to recommendations** were to advise the super-complaint bodies within 56 days whether the recommendations were accepted.

Actions for the super-complaint bodies themselves

1. **The IOPC** was to carry out a targeted programme of oversight work in relation to police handling of PPDA including:
 - ▶ Proactive reviews of local police handling of PPDA allegations
 - ▶ Issuing guidance concerning: (i) recording PPDA allegations as complaints and conduct matters; (ii) identifying when PPDA allegations meet the mandatory referral criteria; (iii) understanding when off-duty conduct should be recorded as a complaint or conduct matter and the weight to be given to the fact that conduct was off-duty when deciding whether there is a case to answer; keeping complainants and interested persons, including police victim/survivors, informed
 - ▶ Considering whether additional guidance or information is required for victim/survivors and complainants on their rights
 - ▶ Monitoring referral rates and taking oversight action when required
 - ▶ Assessing how accessible it is for PPDA victim/survivors to raise complaints
2. **College of Policing** was to:
 - ▶ Update the domestic abuse Authorised Professional Practice to better address PPDA
 - ▶ Incorporate the learning and findings from the super-complaint into its review of vetting guidelines, Code of Ethics and guidance on outcomes in misconduct proceedings that is being undertaken as part of the national VAWG Framework.
 - ▶ Review its curricula and training to improve content relating to PPDA.
3. **IOPC** were to consider how it could report data on police complaints involving PPDA as part of its annual statistical release.
4. **College of Policing and the IOPC** were to work together with the NPCC to review different approaches to improving victim/survivor trust and confidence in the police response to PPDA.
5. **College of Policing and the IOPC** were to help forces share learning and identify best practice.

It is of note that, whilst the other state bodies to whom recommendations were directed were required to report back on their actions after six months, there was no comparable obligation on the super-complaint bodies themselves. CWJ has had to chase the IOPC for an update on their progress and it was apparent that, even a year after publication of the recommendations, some of the actions had still not been addressed.

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?



London, UK – March 13 2021.
Thousands of people attended the vigil
for Sarah Everard in Clapham Common.

Public events that have brought police perpetrated VAWG and misogyny into the spotlight since March 2020

In **March 2021**, Sarah Everard was kidnapped, raped, and murdered by serving Metropolitan police officer, Wayne Couzens. He used his police powers and warrant card as an officer to falsely arrest her and get her into his car. The policing of the vigils that took place in the wake of her death was subsequently found to be unlawful. It is now known that Couzens had been the subject of previous allegations of indecent exposure, which had been poorly investigated, and relevant information, which ought to have led to him failing police vetting, had been ignored or downplayed.

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?



In **September 2021**, the Investigatory Powers Tribunal ('IPT') ruled that the Metropolitan Police Service and the National Police Chiefs Council had breached the fundamental rights of a female protestor, Kate Wilson, by allowing an undercover police officer to deceive her into a sexual relationship during the course of his deployment. The IPT found "*disturbing and lamentable failings at the most fundamental levels*", amounting to inhuman and degrading treatment, discrimination on grounds of Ms Wilson's sex and breaches of her right to private and family life and to freedom of expression.

In **November 2021**, Gwent police issued a public apology to two former officers, for failing to investigate their reports of PPDA by another member of the force.

In **December 2021**, PC Deniz Jaffer and PC Jamie Lewis were convicted of misconduct in a public office, having taken and shared photographs of themselves with the bodies of murder victims Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman.

In **December 2022**, Metropolitan police officer, David Carrick, pleaded guilty to 49 charges of violence towards women, including 24 counts of rape. He admitted a further six charges in January 2023. Further women have since come forward.

In the same month, the then head of the IOPC, Michael Lockwood resigned amidst allegations of historical sexual offences. He was subsequently charged in **June 2023** with nine offences under the Sexual Offences Act 1956. In **July 2024**, he was acquitted by a jury of all charges.

In **July 2023**, two officers from West Midlands Police were convicted of misconduct in public office, having had sex with victim/survivors of domestic abuse whom they had met whilst on duty.²⁰

20 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-66232714>

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

In the **same month**, the then Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall Police, Will Kerr, was suspended due to an ongoing criminal investigation into serious allegations of sexual offences.²¹

In **November 2023**, Rebecca Kalam, a female former firearms officer with West Midlands Police was awarded substantial damages after successfully suing her force for harassment, sex discrimination and victimisation. Ms Kalam had been subjected to a litany of sexist and derogatory conduct and abuse by other officers on her unit, including removing her clothes during a training exercise and failing to provide her with suitable PPE.²²

In **July 2024**, counsel for the police, Peter Skelton, stated at the opening of Tranche 2 of the Undercover Policing Inquiry, of the undercover officers who engaged in deceitful sexual relationships whilst they were deployed. *"This was completely unacceptable. So too was the failure of their managers to identify and prevent those relationships from happening. The MPS apologises to the women affected, and to the public, for these failings and for the wider culture of sexism and misogyny which allowed them to happen. As set out below, it is committed to eradicating all forms of discrimination and to ensuring that undercover policing, like all other policing, is conducted and held to the highest professional standards."*

H  **OW ?**
M  **any**
B **ad Apples**

21 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-66317717>

22 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-67309864>

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

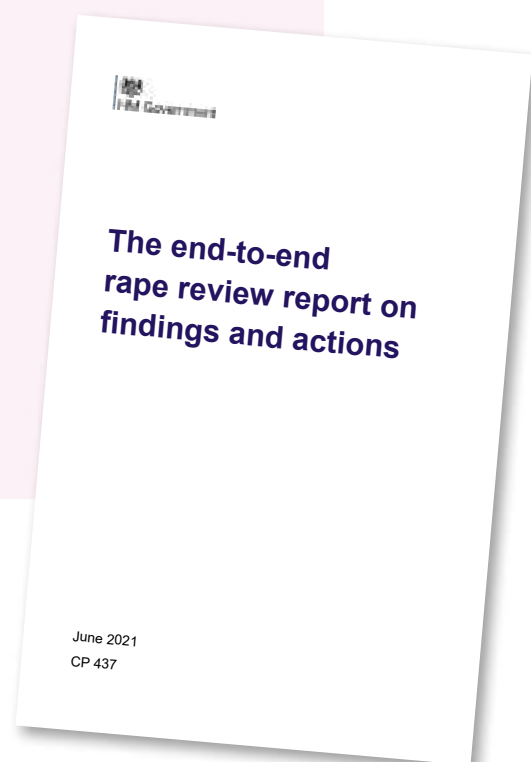
Police and Government VAWG initiatives since March 2020

There have been a significant number of relevant Government and police initiatives since March 2020, some focused on VAWG more generally and others addressed specifically at police perpetrated abuse.

On **26 March 2021**, three weeks after Sarah Everard's murder, the then Home Secretary, Priti Patel, commissioned HMICFRS to conduct an inspection into the effectiveness of police engagement with women and girls. An interim report was published in July 2021 and the final report in September 2021 – see further below.

In **April 2021**, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 was passed into law. This provides a statutory definition of domestic abuse, which makes clear that such abuse includes emotional, controlling or coercive and economic abuse and is not limited to physical violence. The Act also creates the office of Domestic Abuse Commissioner and provides for new Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders. It creates a new offence of non-fatal strangulation and extends the offences of controlling or coercive behaviour and disclosing private sexual images with intent to cause distress.

In **June 2021**, the Ministry of Justice published its "*End-to-End Rape Review on Findings and Actions*",²³ setting out the Government's action plan for improving the Criminal Justice System's response to rape in England and Wales. A core part of the plan was the launch of Operation Soteria, a collaboration between police forces, academics and policy makers to use evidence led research to transform the response to rape and serious sexual offences. This builds on the findings from Project Bluestone, a Home Office and Police Science, Technology, Analysis and Research (STAR) funded pilot with Avon and Somerset Police that ran from January to March 2021.



23 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/end-to-end-rape-review-report-on-findings-and-actions>

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

In **July 2021**, HMICFRS produced its interim report on the police response to VAWG.²⁴ This identified significant failings in the way that VAWG is being investigated and policed and in the treatment of victim/survivors. HMICFRS recommended an *"immediate and unequivocal commitment"* to making the response to VAWG an *"absolute priority for government, policing, the criminal justice system, and public sector partnerships"*. It identified significant inconsistencies across England and Wales and recommended the appointment of a National Policing Lead for tackling VAWG, aimed at bringing greater consistency and higher standards.

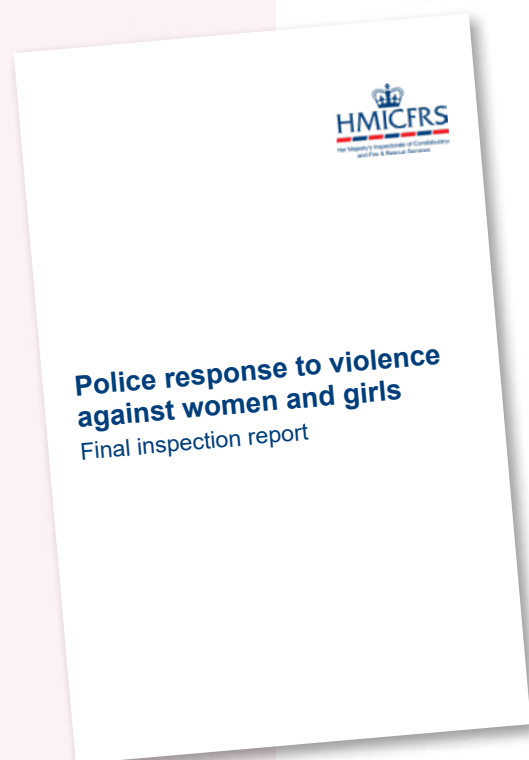
In the **same month**, the Government published a new *"Strategy to tackle violence against women and girls"*.²⁵ This included a commitment to improving the number of perpetrators being brought to justice.

The final HMICFRS report on the police response to VAWG was published in **September 2021**.²⁶ The report notes that HMICFRS was working with the College of Policing and the IOPC to investigate the police response to PPDA in light of CWJ's super-complaint.

In the **same month**, the National Police Chiefs Council announced the appointment of Deputy Chief Constable, Maggie Blyth as the first National Police Lead for VAWG, to coordinate police action across England and Wales.

On **30 Sept 2021** the CHIS (Criminal Conduct) Act was passed into law. The Act enables authorisation of criminal acts by CHIS (covert human intelligence sources, including undercover police officers), with no limit on the type of offending that can be authorised. This is of particular concern given the history of undercover officers deceiving women into intimate relationships whilst deployed in their covert identity.²⁷

In **November 2021**, the then Home Secretary announced the establishment of a non-statutory inquiry into the actions of Wayne Couzens and the police handling of his case. Dame Elish Angiolini KC was appointed as Chair. Part 2 of the Inquiry is to look at *"broader issues raised by this case for policing and the protection of women."*



²⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-the-controlling-or-coercive-behaviour-offence>

²⁵ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1033934/Tackling_Violence_Against_Women_and_Girls_Strategy_-_July_2021.pdf

²⁶ <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/police-response-to-violence-against-women-and-girls/>

²⁷ <https://policespiesoutoflives.org.uk/campaigns/chis-bill/>

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

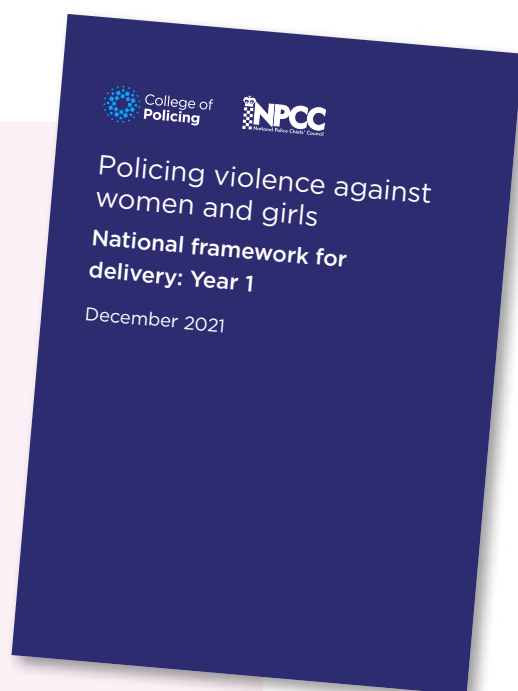
Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

In **December 2021**, the NPCC and College of Policing published a new police VAWG Framework,²⁸ with the stated aim to “coordinate and standardise the policing of VAWG”, with an “overarching focus on building trust and confidence between women and girls and the police”. The Framework states that “VAWG must be a strategic priority for all forces” and commits to monitoring and assessing its effectiveness. The central importance of addressing PPDA as a means of building trust and confidence is acknowledged. The very first commitment under the goal of building trust and confidence is to “respond unequivocally to allegations of police-perpetrated abuse, learning from mistakes and best practice.” The Framework explicitly states that “Policing cannot claim to take VAWG seriously if it does not respond immediately and robustly to VAWG-related allegations against its own workforce.” The immediate action points underpinning this commitment were, by 30 June 2022, to:

- ▶ review all current allegations of sexual misconduct, domestic abuse and other VAWG-related offences against officers and staff, ensuring that they are being investigated fully and quickly; and
- ▶ share learning on themes, problems and good practice.

The Framework commits to identifying and publishing data that will serve as a benchmark for policing’s performance in relation to VAWG and “to track progress, to highlight good practice, to facilitate sharing of learning between forces and to identify national trends and themes.” The data to be collected includes that relating to police conduct and complaints as well as that relating to key stages in the policing of VAWG. There is also acknowledgment that “VAWG investigations conducted by specialist investigators are judged to be more effective.” At the same time, the College of Policing published a VAWG Toolkit, which aims to point police officers to existing laws and protective notices and orders that might be appropriate when responding to reports of VAWG²⁹.

In **January 2022**, the Metropolitan Police Service established a new domestic abuse and sexual offences unit (‘DASO’) to provide a specialist response to PPDA and sexual offence and misconduct allegations against MPS officers and staff. The October 2022 VAWG report from the NPCC and the College of Policing states that the DASO unit has a specific remit to undertake criminal investigations for on-duty conduct and will “keep in close liaison with those investigating off-duty criminal conduct”. This suggests that it might not investigate allegations of PPDA, since the vast majority of such conduct occurs off-duty.



28 <https://www.npcc.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/our-work/vawg/policing-vawg-national-framework-for-delivery-year-1.pdf>

29 <https://www.college.police.uk/guidance/violence-against-women-and-girls-toolkit/introduction>

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

In **February 2022**, the IOPC published its report into Operation Hotton,³⁰ a series of nine linked investigations concerning serving Metropolitan police officers, mostly based at Charing Cross Police Station. The report identified bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment and racist, homophobic, ableist and misogynistic attitudes, which had gone unchecked due to a lack of confidence that it would be dealt with effectively by the force, and highly offensive, discriminatory and sexualised and/or violent communications being dismissed as 'banter'.

In **March 2022**, the Government published its "*Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan*".³¹ This is not limited to policing, but does contain commitments relating to policing, for example, working with the NPCC to identify and audit police forces which record the highest rates of domestic homicide and serious domestic abuse crimes and to work with them to achieve improvements. There is also focus on seeking to understand and address the falling number of charges for domestic abuse flagged crimes.

In **April 2022**, the NPCC followed up on its VAWG Framework with a VAWG Outcomes and Performance Framework.³² This acknowledges the need for data collection and transparency in ensuring that progress in tackling VAWG is measurable and accountable. The Framework acknowledges that the process it sets out is the first time that policing has collected data nationally on VAWG in order to assess and report on performance. It sets out "*Key Performance Questions*", "*Key Performance Indicators*" and "*Indicative Data*" in respect of the commitments made in the December 2021 VAWG Framework. In respect of the commitment to "*respond unequivocally to allegations of police-perpetrated abuse, learning from mistakes and best practice*", the KPIs identified are:

- ▶ What is the extent and nature of complaints and misconduct allegations?
- ▶ What are the formal outcomes (decisions and sanctions) of complaints and misconduct allegations?
- ▶ How timely are investigations following complaint and misconduct allegations?



30 <https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/publications/operation-hotton-learning-report-january-2022>

31 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1064427/E02735263_Tackling_Domestic_Abuse_CP_639_Accessible.pdf

32 <https://www.npcc.police.uk/our-work/violence-against-women-and-girls/vawg-outcomes-and-performance-framework/>

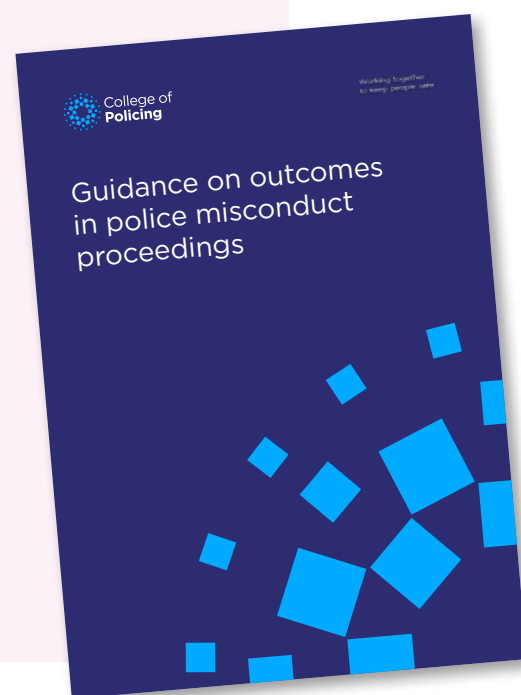
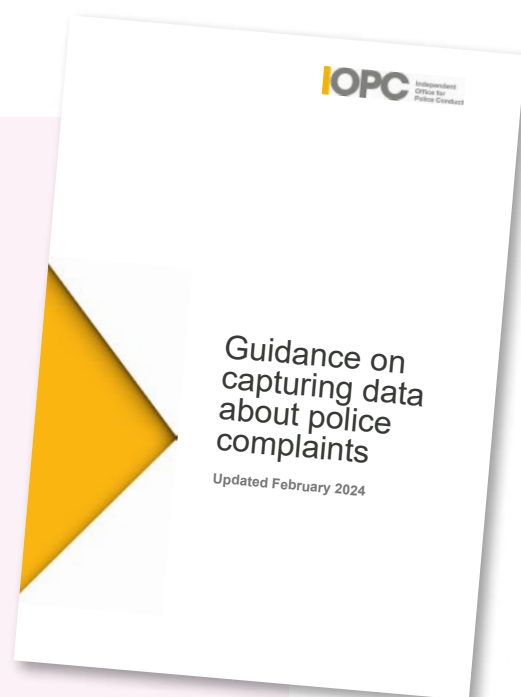
POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

In **May 2022**, the IOPC published Guidance on capturing data about police complaints.³³ This was then updated in September 2023. The Guidance refers to complaints only and does not appear to cover data capture in respect of conduct matters.

In **June 2022**, the College of Policing, HMICFRS and the IOPC published their response to CWJ's PPDA super-complaint.³⁴ This is considered in more detail above.

In **August 2022**, the College of Policing updated its Guidance on Outcomes in Police Misconduct Proceedings³⁵ to include additional guidance in relation to misconduct cases involving police perpetrated VAWG. The new guidance records that policing has come under national scrutiny through high-profile cases where there has been a failing to prevent or protect women and girls from abuse and violence, and/or violence has been perpetrated by those serving the police. It states that *"It is imperative that policing makes it clear that misconduct of this nature is wholly unacceptable, setting a clear expectation as to the seriousness to which these matters treated [sic]"*. It goes on to state that *"Violence against women and girls perpetrated by a police officer, whether on-duty or off-duty, will always have a high degree of culpability, with the likely outcome being severe."* The updated Guidance also states that *"violence against women and girls perpetrated by a police officer, whether on-duty or off-duty, will always harm public confidence in policing, since this is inimical to the values of modern-policing and the Standards of Professional Behaviour."*



33 <https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/publications/guidance-capturing-data-about-police-complaints>

34 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/police-super-complaints-force-response-to-police-perpetrated-domestic-abuse/police-perpetrated-domestic-abuse-report-on-the-centre-for-womens-justice-super-complaint#executive-summary>

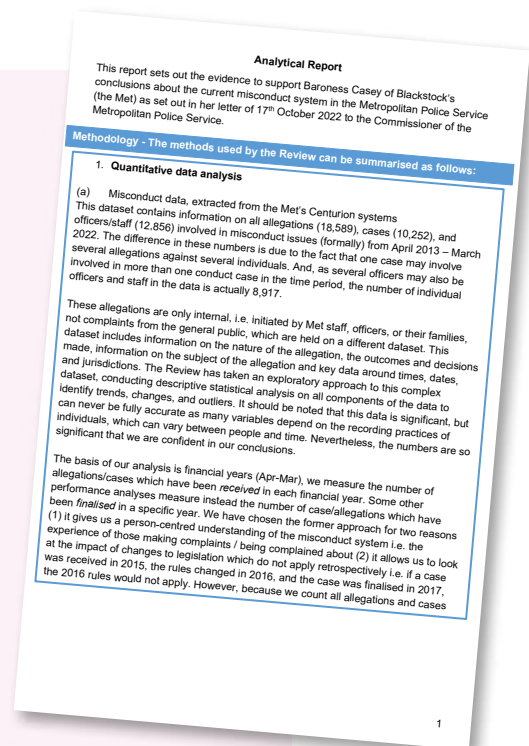
35 <https://assets.college.police.uk/s3fs-public/2022-08/Guidance-on-outcomes-in-police-misconduct-proceedings.pdf>

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

In **September 2022**, Baroness Louise Casey published an interim report into the misconduct system of the Metropolitan Police Service.³⁶ This focused solely on internal reports of wrongdoing –i.e. those initiated by members of MPS staff, officers, or their families; not complaints from the general public. The report found that such cases were taking an average of 400 days to reach conclusion. Cases involving allegations of sexual assault, harassment, or other sexual or emotional misconduct were less likely than other cases to result in a finding of a case to answer, and cases involving allegations of PPDA were around half as likely to receive a case to answer decision when compared to other types of case. Further, misconduct allegations were being considered in isolation, even where the suspect had had multiple previous allegations against them. The report concluded that the experience of the misconduct process is dissuading officers and staff from reporting misconduct and institutionalising mistrust in the system.

In **October 2022**, the NPCC and the College of Policing published a report entitled "*Themes, learning and next steps following police forces' reviews of police-perpetrated violence against women and girls.*"³⁷ This report followed on from the urgent review of all current allegations of sexual misconduct, domestic abuse and other VAWG-related offences against officers and police staff that had been mandated in the VAWG national framework published by the NPCC and the College of Policing in December 2021. The October 2022 report identifies six "*key learning points*" and sets out "*next steps*" to address them. These are:



36 <https://www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/met/about-us/baroness-casey-review/baroness-casey-review-interim-report-on-misconduct.pdf>

37 <https://cdn.prgloo.com/media/07786b4ff5d848f88a22366aa7205b2f.pdf>

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

SUPPORTING VICTIM/SURVIVORS OF POLICE PERPETRATED VAWG

Key learning:

Victim/survivors of police perpetrated VAWG need bespoke support services. These are not consistently provided.

Next steps:

Chief constables should immediately act to ensure that there are effective support services to support police victim/survivors of VAWG.

RAISING AWARENESS AND ENCOURAGING REPORTING

Key learning:

On-going need to encourage reporting by police officers, staff, members of the public and partners.

Next steps:

NPCC to work with Crimestoppers and partners to expand the police integrity line to the public **by Spring 2023**.

Chief constables should promote the existing Crimestoppers national police integrity line which provides an anonymous reporting route for those who work in policing.

UPSKILLING INVESTIGATORS

Key learning:

Investigators working on parallel criminal and misconduct investigations need to work together and share information effectively. All investigators require a good level of knowledge of current good practice. This is not happening consistently across England and Wales.

Next steps:

Chief constables should immediately act to ensure that their Professional Standards Department (PSD) investigators maintain a working knowledge of current criminal investigation practice, as well as the impact of police-perpetrated VAWG, through using specially trained rape and sexual assault investigators. They should also ensure effective joint working between PSD and criminal investigation teams.

AVOIDING UNNECESSARY DELAYS IN CASES BEING CRIMINALLY INVESTIGATED

Key learning:

Some misconduct proceedings are being wrongly delayed due to inaccurate assessment of potential to prejudice criminal proceedings.

Next steps:

Chief constables will **immediately** start reviewing live cases regularly to ensure that statutory guidance is followed when it is necessary to delay any investigation or proceedings, balancing the safety of criminal proceedings and public confidence.

DATA QUALITY

Key learning:

Data collected locally about police misconduct is not recorded in a detailed and consistent manner, making it more difficult to provide accurate and timely insight into police-perpetrated VAWG.

Next steps:

The NPCC and the College will work in collaboration with the software providers of the case management system used by all 43 forces and its national user group, so that a user guide and specific training are available to ensure that officers and staff have the necessary skills to input and analyse police complaint and misconduct data. **Spring 2023**.

INVITING EXTERNAL SCRUTINY OF CASE HANDLING

Key learning:

Inviting external scrutiny of case handling may improve trust and confidence, support a learning culture and ensure appropriate decision making.

Next steps:

The College and the IOPC, together with the NPCC, will review a variety of force approaches to raising trust and confidence in the police response to VAWG allegations involving police suspects. This work will include a review of the effectiveness of external scrutiny panels. **Spring 2023**.

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

The **October 2022** report also states that the College of Policing has conducted a literature review and focus group activity with officers and staff to identify sexist and misogynistic behaviours that are pervasive in policing. The aim is that this work will inform the development of initiatives to change such behaviours. The report notes that many forces have conducted local surveys of their workforce's experience of sexism and misogyny and commits to the NPCC and the College of Policing publishing the combined analysis of those local surveys in its December 2022 performance report. However, it does not appear that this data has been published. The interim Casey report, recorded that surveys conducted in two Borough Command Units within the Metropolitan Police found that, in one BCU, 47% of female respondents reported having experienced sexism and misogyny in the previous six months. Many also reported not feeling confident to report to their line managers and supervisors, who, in some cases, had joined in.

In **November 2022**, HMICFRS published its review of Vetting, Misconduct and Misogyny in the Police Service.³⁸ The review identified significant failings in vetting, both at the point of recruitment and on an on-going basis. As part of its research, HMICFRS conducted an online survey of police officers, staff and volunteers. There were 11,277 responses, which the HMICFRS records is the highest ever response to one of its surveys. The survey and follow-up interviews revealed that *"a culture of misogyny, sexism and predatory behaviour towards members of the public and female police officers and staff still exists."* HMICFRS also noted that in many cases where female staff or officers had alleged sexual assault by male colleagues it was also reported that the perpetrator had previously been reported for similar behaviour, which either hadn't been taken seriously or wasn't thoroughly investigated.

Also in **November 2022**, then Home Office minister, Chris Philip published the Home Office's formal response to the super-complaint recommendations. Recommendation four –that the Home Office should consider making changes to legislation to ensure that police victim/survivors of PPDA do not have weaker rights than non-police victim/survivors –was agreed in principle. However, it was stated that further work would be needed to consider how this could be achieved. Chris Philip repeated the Home Office's acceptance of the need for legislative change on this issue in a Parliamentary debate on 25 January 2024.³⁹ It remains to be seen whether the new Government will take action to address this recommendation.

38 <https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/publication-html/an-inspection-of-vetting-misconduct-and-misogyny-in-the-police-service/>

39 [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2024-01-25/debates/5fc5e55a-4150-474d-ab20-c36be3e63690/CriminalJusticeBill\(FourteenthSitting\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2024-01-25/debates/5fc5e55a-4150-474d-ab20-c36be3e63690/CriminalJusticeBill(FourteenthSitting))

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

Recommendation five –that the Home Office should provide guidance on the types of considerations to take into account when deciding to restrict an officer’s duties during an ongoing investigation –was rejected on the basis that “*decisions on both suspension and where and how to redeploy police officers is an operational one for Chief Constables.*” However, Mr Philip also stated that he would “*expect Chief Constables to give careful consideration to the impact on victims and witnesses and ensure that their safety and welfare are paramount... [and] would also expect consideration to be given to the wider impact on the public, so that forces are not putting members of the public at any risk by re-deploying officers into inappropriate roles.*”

Recommendation six was that the Home Office should amend the Annual Data Requirement connected to misconduct cases and criminal investigations so that police forces are required to report the number of misconduct cases and criminal investigations involving PPDA and the associated outcomes. It was also recommended that these statistics should be published so that they can support internal and external scrutiny of the police response to PPDA.

The Home Office response states that the Annual Data Requirement was amended the previous year and that in **June 2022**, the Home Office published its first ever standalone misconduct statistics publication.⁴⁰ It was further stated that the IT system (Centurion) used by all forces to manage complaints and misconduct had been updated to require forces, where appropriate, to select that a case includes “VAWG –police perpetrated” or “VAWG –police injured party”. Forces were also required to select any case of domestic abuse, thereby enabling the extraction of data on PPDA. The letter also noted that the IOPC had committed to reviewing its data capture guidance to forces.

Despite this response from the Home Office, it is clear from subsequent IOPC publications, including the **February 2024** “*Violence against women and girls: End-to-end case handling review*”, that Centurion still, as at February 2024, did not contain a specific case marker for PPDA, so forces were not able to report accurately the number of misconduct cases and criminal investigations involving PPDA and the associated outcomes.

Further, it is of note that the misconduct statistics published in **June 2022** do not include data showing any breakdown by categories indicating VAWG –police perpetrated, VAWG –police injured party, or domestic abuse.

⁴⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-misconduct-england-and-wales-year-ending-31-march-2021/police-misconduct-england-and-wales-year-ending-31-march-2021>

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

The subsequent statistical bulletins on police misconduct published on 12 January 2023⁴¹ and 30 January 2024,⁴² have a little more detail in that complaints and conduct matters are broken down by IOPC type and sub-type, as set out in Appendix A of the IOPC's Guidance on capturing data about police complaints.⁴³ This includes "sexual conduct" and "discreditable conduct". These appear to be the most likely categories to be applied to PPDA allegations. However, this still did not enable identification of the number of complaints or conduct matters which involve allegations of PPDA and nor did it enable identification of complaints or conduct matters relating to failures in the investigation of PPDA. CWJ understands that it was not until mid-2024 that specific PPDA markers were finally included in the Centurion database.

The IOPC also published statistics on police complaints in **November 2022**.⁴⁴ As with the Home Office data, the IOPC data does not identify complaints by VAWG or domestic abuse categories. It is important to note that the Home Office statistics cover complaints, conduct matters and recordable conduct matters, whereas the IOPC published statistics only cover police complaints. There is further discussion of the current gaps in effective data collection and reporting in Part 3 below.

In **December 2022**, the Home Office published the Soteria Bluestone Year One Report.⁴⁵ This reported on in-depth research into the ways in which four police forces were handling rape and other sexual offences. The research highlighted a need for evidence-informed specialist investigative practice and specialist knowledge at many levels within policing, not just amongst RASSO (rape and serious sexual offences) investigators and supervisors, but amongst all those who interact with victim/survivors and amongst data and intelligence analysts, who are often civilian police staff. The research emphasises the need for strategic analysis in order to inform investigation strategies and to monitor performance. The research found that *"none of the pathfinder forces had sufficient data systems, analysts or analytic capability to support good strategic analysis to improve rape and other sexual offences investigations, contribute to any focused local crime prevention activity or any forward planning to improve the demands on the investigative workforce."*



41 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-misconduct-england-and-wales-year-ending-31-march-2022/police-misconduct-england-and-wales-year-ending-31-march-2022>

42 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-misconduct-england-and-wales-year-ending-31-march-2023/police-misconduct-england-and-wales-year-ending-31-march-2023>

43 <https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/publications/guidance-capturing-data-about-police-complaints>

44 <https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/publications/police-complaints-statistics-england-and-wales-report-202122>

45 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/operation-soteria-year-one-report/operation-soteria-bluestone-year-one-report-accessible-version>

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

It also concluded that:

”

It is important that policing moves away from its history of ‘training’ and toward an iterative, more open, research-informed learning culture. Specialist knowledge on sexual offending is critical to investigative strategies, not only to understand the crime but to understand how offenders groom investigators.”

Soteria Bluestone Year 1 report

Also in **December 2022**, the NPCC published its second update on action that is being taken in response to the PPDA super-complaint recommendations.⁴⁶ This comprised a summary of responses received from all 43 geographical police forces, plus the British Transport Police, the Civil Nuclear Constabulary, and the Police Service of Northern Ireland. Unfortunately, the amalgamated response does not indicate which forces have taken which steps. This is frustrating. The VAWG National Framework acknowledges the central importance of tackling PPDA if progress is to be made in building trust and confidence in the police’s ability and commitment to tackling VAWG more generally. Trust and confidence require transparency as to which forces are taking what steps. CWJ wrote to the NPCC asking it to publish the individual responses from police forces, but it refused to do so.

The amalgamated response summarised findings from the audit of cases mandated by the VAWG National Framework and the response to the super-complaint. It confirmed the findings set out in the response to the super-complaint and in the NPCC/ College of Policing October 2022 “*Themes, learning and next steps*” report concerning failings in recording of allegations of PPDA as conduct matters and incomplete records in respect of the independence of investigators. Likewise, there were deficiencies noted in recording decisions as to whether an officer should be suspended from duties whilst investigations were ongoing. There were instances of non-compliance with obligations under the Victims’ Code and preventative orders were not always being considered. There was also an indication that some forces were erroneously suspending misconduct investigations due to an incorrect belief that they might prejudice the outcome of a criminal investigation.

In respect of decisions whether officers accused of PPDA should be suspended or placed on restricted duties whilst investigations were ongoing, the response summarises the mechanisms by which such decisions are taken (e.g. at what level in the force), but does not provide any indication of the criteria that are being applied other than the high-level criteria set out in Regulation 11 of the Police Conduct Regulations 2020. As noted above, the Home Office has declined to issue formal guidance on this issue.

⁴⁶ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1131048/NPCC-Response-to-CWJ-Super-Complaint-Police-Perpetrated-Domestic-Abuse-PPDA-FINAL.pdf

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

The NPCC response states that “Almost all forces confirmed that they have in place strong arrangements for closely monitoring, overseeing and scrutinising the standards and progress of PPDA cases.”

Some examples are given. However, there is no indication as to whether, and if so how, the efficacy of the various oversight mechanisms is to be monitored and assessed. CWJ considers that the College of Policing should produce a model best practice for this and HMICFRS should inspect regularly for compliance.

The response refers to some forces making reciprocal arrangements with neighbouring forces to investigate PPDA cases. However, it does not state how many forces have entered into such agreements, nor how many cases have actually been referred to external forces for investigation. CWJ remains of the view that there should be an external investigation in **all** cases in order not only to ensure that investigations are independent, but also to secure victim/survivor and public confidence in the independence of the investigation. However, at the very least, there should be monitoring and reporting on the number of cases that are referred for external investigation. The NPCC response suggests that a centrally held list should be compiled of external forces willing to accept investigations in circumstances where they cannot realistically be conducted internally. CWJ would question whether such a list would be effective, given the current lack of forces willing to take on external investigations. Reciprocal arrangements may be more practical, because there is a quid pro quo for forces agreeing to take on an investigation.

The NPCC response suggests that even the existing safeguards to ensure a measure of independence are not being adhered to. The response says that “many forces mandate signing of forms on their systems by investigators allocated to a case to confirm and record their independence and non-involvement with any parties, re-designating to others where a conflict of interest exists.” This is something that *all* forces should be doing, in compliance with Regulation 12 of the Police (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2020 and Regulation 15 of the Police Conduct Regulations 2020. This was flagged up as an issue in the response to the super-complaint. It is concerning that six months on, it was still only being complied with by “many” rather than *all* forces. It was a fundamental concern of almost all of the women we have spoken to that investigations are compromised because of links between investigators and perpetrators. It is hard to see how victim/survivor trust and confidence can be achieved until such a basic issue is properly addressed. This same issue was again flagged up in the February 2024 IOPC “Violence against women and girls: End-to-end case handling review”.

CWJ remains of the view that there should be an external investigation in **all cases in order not only to ensure that investigations are independent, but also to secure victim/survivor and public confidence in the independence of the investigation.**

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

On **20 January 2023**, the NPCC announced that all police staff are to be checked on the Police National Database for allegations and intelligence that need further investigation⁴⁷. There was also a commitment made to build capability to automate checks of intelligence on a continuous basis.

In **February 2023**, VAWG was added to the Strategic Policing Requirement for the first time.⁴⁸

In the **same month**, the terms of reference of the Angiolini Inquiry were expanded to include the David Carrick case, including investigating his vetting and re-vetting; the extent to which his misconduct was known and raised by colleagues and whether it was investigated; any abuse of police powers and the impact of police treatment of victims on the above factors.

In **March 2023**, the NPCC and College of Policing published baseline data on police perpetrated VAWG gathered between October 2021 and March 2022.⁴⁹ This was accompanied by an insights report, drawing conclusions from the statistical data. The data shows that within the five-month reference period, there were 653 conduct cases against 672 individuals flagged as relating to VAWG by police forces in England and Wales (including the British Transport Police). In addition, during the same period, there were 524 complaint cases against 867 individuals. These figures equate to VAWG complaints or conduct matters being logged in respect of 0.7% of the police workforce. The NPCC report acknowledges that these figures are unlikely to represent the true scale of all improper or prejudicial behaviours towards women and girls from police officers and staff and notes that HMICFRS found that forces' understanding of the scale of misogynistic and improper behaviour towards female officers and staff is an area for improvement.

The report also notes that data obtained for the NPCC performance framework showed that only 2% of allegations were referred to formal proceedings, with just 1% of allegations resulting in dismissal. 720 allegations had not been finalised. The report states: "*It is almost certain that current misconduct recording processes across forces provides a significant barrier to articulating a more accurate picture of police-perpetrated VAWG, leading to a reduced understanding of the risks it presents and limiting the opportunities to tackle it.*"⁵⁰

47 <https://news.npcc.police.uk/releases/all-police-staff-records-to-be-checked-for-allegations-and-intelligence-by-march>

48 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1165007/Strategic_Policing_Requirement_V1.3.pdf

49 <https://www.npcc.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/our-work/vawg/tackling-vawg-statistical-bulletin.pdf>

50 <https://www.npcc.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/our-work/vawg/tackling-vawg-policing-insights-report---policing-insights-report.pdf> [11]

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

The report also finds that

”

it is a realistic possibility that challenges with police workplace culture identified in the Operation Soteria Bluestone Year 1 Report and the response to the PPDA super-complaint act as a barrier to victim engagement and to pursuing perpetrators across all VAWG crime types.”

The report reaches a number of **KEY JUDGMENTS:**

1. It is almost certain that inappropriate sexual conduct presents the greatest volume and the highest risk of police-perpetrated VAWG. It is highly likely that the use of discreditable conduct as a category to capture inappropriate sexual behaviour or domestic abuse means that the proportion of allegations relating to these threats are higher than identified. This judgment is expressed with **high confidence**.
2. It is a realistic possibility that the deficiencies identified within the PPDA super-complaint response are replicated across police perpetrated VAWG investigations. Given the extent to which this is referenced in different sources and over different timeframes, it is a reasonable possibility that these deficiencies are systemic. This judgment is expressed with **moderate confidence**.
3. It is likely that consistent and meaningful application of the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales, supported by suspect-focused investigations across all VAWG crime types, will have the greatest impact on the relentless pursuit of perpetrators. This judgment is expressed with **moderate confidence**.
4. It is a realistic possibility that the greater volume of VAWG offences occur –or are enabled –in a public or online space. However, it is highly likely that more threat and risk exists in VAWG offences occurring in private spaces. This judgment is expressed with **low confidence**.
5. It is almost certain that the poor and inconsistent collection, quality and management of data mean that the true scale of risks, harms and opportunities for policing across all VAWG threats are not fully understood. It is almost certain that this presents a barrier to effective service delivery, design of crime prevention tactics and practice improvement. This judgment is expressed with **high confidence**.

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?



Also in **March 2023**, Baroness Louise Casey published the findings of her review into the standards of behaviour and internal culture of the Metropolitan Police Service. She found institutional racism, misogyny and homophobia and a culture of "*initiative-itis*", which she described as "*activity rather than action*":

”

This was about showing some action was being taken, but failed to deliver enduring change... The sense of initiative-itis felt even more pronounced in relation to activities designed to bring about culture change.”

Baroness Casey

Baroness Casey was highly critical of recruitment and vetting systems and of the failure of the MPS to take seriously the risk that policing may be an attractive profession for those who seek power in order to abuse it.

In **May 2023**, the NPCC published a VAWG Strategic Threat and Risk Assessment aimed at improving understanding of the factors that contribute to VAWG.⁵¹ The focus is on prevalence, impacts and causative factors relating to VAWG generally and does not address specific issues arising out of police perpetrated VAWG.

51 <https://www.npcc.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/our-work/vawg/violence-against-women-and-girls---strategic-threat-risk-assessment-2023.pdf>

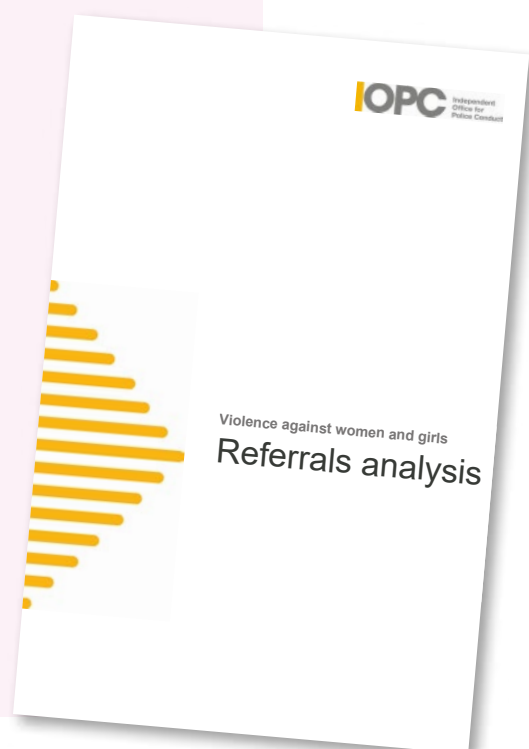
POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

On **11 May 2023**, Matt Parr, then His Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary, wrote to the then Home Secretary providing a review of progress in response to HMICFRS' recommendations around police vetting.⁵² The letter identified that many of the recommendations were being implemented. However, it also stated that the quality of responses from forces varied, with some forces apparently either downplaying or overstating their progress. Out of 300 file reviews, the Inspectorate had identified 13 cases in which it disagreed with the force's vetting decision. This included at least two cases in which relevant information pertaining to PPDA had not been acted upon. Concerningly, HMIC estimated that *"most forces won't meet the recommendation relating to management vetting in time. Almost half reported having people in designated posts without the correct vetting clearance. Many cited a lack of resources and IT limitations as reasons"*.⁵³ No force had successfully managed to link their vetting and human resources IT systems, despite this having been identified by HMICFRS as an "Area for Improvement". HMIC's letter also noted systemic concerns raised by the College of Policing, that compliance with HMICFRS' recommendation for increased frequency of vetting would require significant additional resources: estimating that 1.2 million hours and an additional 800 vetting staff would be needed.

Also in **May 2023**, the terms of reference for Part 2 of the Angiolini Inquiry were published.⁵⁴ The overarching aim of Part 2 is to establish whether there is a risk of recurrence of the circumstances which arose in the cases of Wayne Couzens and David Carrick, to investigate police culture, and to address the broader concerns surrounding women's safety in public spaces that were highlighted by Sarah Everard's death. The terms of reference make specific reference to PPDA in the context of the mandate to investigate the *"adequacy of counter-corruption measures to identify and manage the risk of Violence Against Women and Girls-related misconduct (including police-perpetrated domestic abuse) including an exploration of perpetrator profiles to identify any common trends or similarities that might help with prevention."*

On **24 May 2023**, the IOPC published an analysis of referrals made to them in respect of complaints and conduct matters relating to VAWG.⁵⁵



52 <https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/publication-html/vetting-misconduct-and-misogyny-in-the-police-service-review-of-progress-letter/>

53 <https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/publication-html/annex-to-home-secretarys-letter-vetting-misconduct-and-misogyny-in-the-police-service-review-of-progress/>

54 <https://www.angiolini.independent-inquiry.uk/angiolini-inquiry-terms-of-reference-for-part-2/>

55 <https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/publications/referrals-analysis-violence-against-women-and-girls-may-2023>

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

In **July 2023**, the Home Office published a new Vetting Code of Practice.⁵⁶ This includes the requirement for vetting to be reviewed if "*adverse information comes to light relating to the individual, or if there is a material change in an individual's personal circumstances.*" The Code of Practice also specifies that where vetting clearance is granted following consideration of adverse information, risk mitigation strategies must be considered. The Code specifies that vetting clearance will be reviewed following the conclusion of misconduct proceedings that result in a sanction other than dismissal. It expressly states that "*this does not preclude a decision to review a vetting clearance, even where no sanction is given.*" In our view this is confusing. Paragraph 5.7 of the Code of Practice makes review of vetting mandatory if adverse information comes to light. It is difficult to conceive of circumstances in which misconduct proceedings have taken place without adverse information coming to light. It must follow that there should be a review of vetting whenever an individual is subject to misconduct proceedings, irrespective of the outcome.

The new Code of Practice also specifies that if a person working in policing is unable to hold the required vetting clearance to perform their role, then an alternative suitable role with a lower level of vetting clearance will be considered. However, if such a role is not available or clearance cannot be granted even at the lowest level, then dismissal proceedings will follow.

The Code of Practice sets out a rebuttable presumption, subject to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, that a person will not achieve vetting clearance if they have a conviction or caution for a criminal offence, especially if it relates to dishonest or corrupt practices, relates to violence or demonstrates a targeting of persons due to their vulnerabilities or protected characteristics. Surprisingly, the new Code of Practice does not include domestic abuse within the types of offence to which the presumption against vetting clearance applies. This contrasts with the APP on Vetting, which states that offences of domestic abuse should result in rejection.⁵⁷ It is disappointing that the new Code of Practice does not expressly include offences of domestic abuse as a basis for vetting rejection. However, it is encouraging that the new proposed Vetting APP that was published for consultation in January 2024 (see further below) proposes that, in most cases, the presence of evidence of any one of a list of factors, including intimidation and harassment, "*will probably lead to vetting being declined or withdrawn.*" In our view, the list of factors should expressly also include domestic abuse, including coercive and controlling behaviour, and misogyny. Other forms of discrimination, including racism, homophobia and disablism are expressly included in the list of "*factors requiring particular scrutiny*" in the proposed new Vetting APP. We can see no good reason for misogyny to be omitted. The inclusion of these additional factors would be in line with the International Association of Chiefs of Police model policy and with the inclusion of VAWG within the 2023 Strategic Policing Requirement.

56 <https://www.college.police.uk/guidance/vetting-code-practice>

57 See [8.3.3] of the College of Policing APP on Vetting <https://assets.college.police.uk/s3fs-public/Vetting-APP-2021.pdf>

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

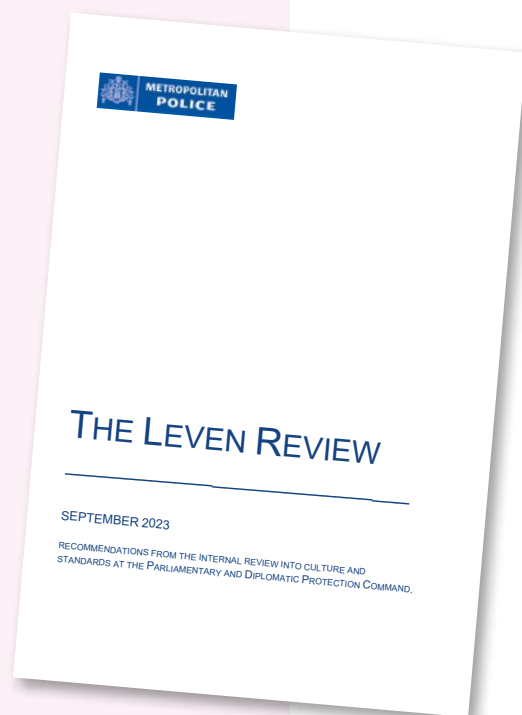
Given how important victim/survivor trust and confidence is to the successful policing of VAWG, it is imperative to be clear that perpetrators of domestic abuse have no place in policing.

In **August 2023**, the Home Office announced its intention to make changes to police misconduct proceedings, vetting and performance processes.⁵⁸ The announced changes include:

- ▶ altering the make-up of misconduct panels so that they are chaired by Chief Constables rather than independent legal members. There will continue to be a legally qualified person on the panel, but they will no longer chair proceedings;
- ▶ amending regulations so that a finding of gross misconduct will automatically result in dismissal unless exceptional circumstances apply;
- ▶ ensuring that all officers must be vetted and re-vetted at specified intervals and that failing to pass vetting will lead to dismissal.

In **September 2023**, the Metropolitan Police published the report of the Leven Review into the Parliamentary and Diplomatic Protection command.⁵⁹ This confirmed the findings from the Casey Review about the toxic misogynistic culture within the PaDP command and the need for a complete overhaul of management, vetting and standards of behaviour.

On **7 December 2023**, the College of Policing published a new statutory Code of Practice for Ethical Policing under s.39A(5) of the Police Act 1996.⁶⁰ The Code of Practice is directed at Chief Constables and the actions they need to take to ensure an ethical culture within their force and to proactively identify and respond to misconduct and corruption when it occurs. The obligations set out are at a high-level, for example, "*demonstrating and implementing the ethical policing principles*"; "*ensuring that their organisation meets its public sector equality duties*"; "*developing a culture where staff feel empowered and encouraged to challenge or report behaviour, performance or service provision that falls below expectations.*" The Code of Practice does not identify specific actions relating to PPDA.



58 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-make-it-easier-to-sack-rogue-police-officers>

59 <https://www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/met/news/the-leven-review.pdf>

60 <https://www.college.policing.uk/ethics/code-of-practice>

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

However, it does specify that Chief Officers should ensure that their force is monitoring information that gives an indication of the threats to trust, confidence and legitimacy posed by corruption and misconduct. There is also an obligation to ensure that the force treats all reports of misconduct appropriately and proportionately, whether from internal complaints or from members of the public. CWJ would argue that these obligations highlight the imperative to ensure that the logging and handling of PPDA reports is more robust than it has been to date.

On **10 January 2024**, the College of Policing launched a public consultation on the Approved Professional Practice [‘APP’] on police vetting.⁶¹ The proposed APP sets out specified time frames for full re-vetting, as well as an on-going process of annual “*integrity and vetting reviews*”. It makes clear that if an officer or member of police staff fails to obtain, or loses, recruitment vetting status (the lowest level of vetting), then dismissal proceedings will follow on the basis that without vetting the individual will not be authorised to have unsupervised access to police premises, information systems or other assets; and an officer who is in that position will have a serious inability to fulfil the basic duties of a constable and will therefore meet the criteria for gross incompetence under the Police (Performance) Regulations 2020.

The proposed APP provides for more detailed and specific obligations to self-report any “*change in circumstances*” of relevance to vetting and requires forces to have a “*robust system in place to record engagement and completion*” of vetting reviews. It acknowledges that

“ all vetting decisions must consider factors relating to protecting the public and an assessment of the vetting applicant’s available history should consider their suitability to work with vulnerable individuals.”

College of Policing, proposed vetting APP

It goes on to list “*Factors requiring particular scrutiny*”, which, “*will probably lead to vetting being declined or withdrawn*”. The list includes evidence of racism, homophobia and disablism, but not sexism or misogyny. We consider that these forms of discrimination should be added, as should evidence of domestic abuse, including controlling or coercive behaviour.

61 <https://www.college.police.uk/article/police-vetting-guidance-have-your-say>

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

On **23 January 2024**, the NPCC published the results of the national “data wash”, that had been announced in January 2023. This involved all 307,452 police officers, staff and volunteers being checked against the Police National Database [‘PND’] for any intelligence relating to criminal, child protection or domestic abuse investigations. According to the NPCC, this resulted in 461 individuals being referred for further action: 9 are to be the subject of further criminal investigation; 88 are to be subject to disciplinary investigation; there will be vetting reviews in 139 cases; management intervention in 128 cases; and no further action in 97 cases.⁶² Although the PND contains copies of locally held police records covering intelligence, crime, custody, child protection and domestic abuse investigations, it is not comprehensive. This is acknowledged in the police vetting consultation document, which states that “*while the PND provides national police intelligence, local systems may provide further details relevant to local threats and risks. Local police intelligence records should be checked... Due to the variety of local systems nationally, it is not possible to provide definitive direction*”.⁶³

On **25 January 2024**, the College of Policing launched a new police Code of Ethics,⁶⁴ including Ethical Policing Principles and Guidance for Ethical and Professional Behaviour in Policing. The Code of Ethics does not have statutory force and the standards against which police conduct is assessed for the purposes of misconduct proceedings remain those set by the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020, in the case of police officers, and the Police Staff Council handbook and/or the terms and conditions of the contract of employment, in the case of police staff. The Code of Ethics does not make any reference to PPDA. Neither does the Guidance, despite containing a section specifically addressing “*Relationships*”. The Guidance emphasises the “*need to ensure that any professional relationship [police] have with the public or colleagues maintains acceptable boundaries*”. It refers expressly to the existence of a power imbalance and to the prohibitions on police officers and staff using their professional position to pursue a sexual or improper emotional relationship with a member of the public and on engaging in sexual conduct or improper behaviour when on duty. However, the focus remains on those specific contexts. The Guidance does not address the implications of a police officer / member of staff perpetrating domestic abuse within their intimate and familial relationships outside of those specific contexts.

62 <https://news.npcc.police.uk/releases/results-published-in-policings-largest-integrity-screening-project>

63 Vetting consultation [6.5.3.b & c].

64 <https://www.college.police.uk/ethics/code-of-ethics#:~:text=The%20Code%20of%20Ethics%20is%20supported%20by%20the%20Code%20of,professional%20behaviour%20within%20their%20forces.>

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

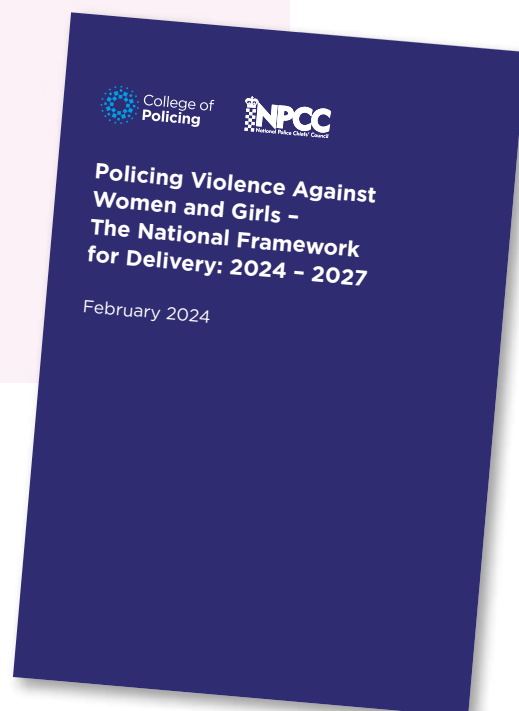
On the positive side, the Guidance expressly includes non-molestation orders and occupation orders within the specified list of measures which police officers/members of staff are required to report under the Standards of Professional Behaviour and which

“ could bring discredit on [the] police service, may affect [...] vetting status and may result in action being taken for misconduct, depending on the circumstances of the particular matter.”

It is of note that the Vetting APP currently being consulted on goes further and lists many other forms of civil order and protective measures as being required to be disclosed for the purposes of vetting, including domestic violence protection notices and orders; female genital mutilation protection orders; forced marriage protection orders; restraining orders; harassment warnings; sexual harm prevention orders; sexual risk orders; and stalking protections orders.

The Guidance also refers to the positive obligation to challenge and report behaviour that is “unprofessional”. Unfortunately, however, because the Guidance fails to make clear that “unprofessional” behaviour includes domestic abuse, even when perpetrated off-duty, the same issues are likely to arise as do currently: namely that such conduct will continue to be treated as discrediting the perpetrator personally, but not professionally.

In **February 2024**, the College of Policing and the NPCC “refreshed” the “Framework for Delivery” on tackling VAWG.⁶⁵ The Framework commits to “meaningful and consistent data collection, management and analysis”, to “victim-centred, context-led and suspect focused” investigations and to ensuring that policing has the right capacity and capability, including training and resources, to tackle VAWG.



65 <https://www.npcc.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/our-work/vawg/vawg-framework-for-delivery.pdf>

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

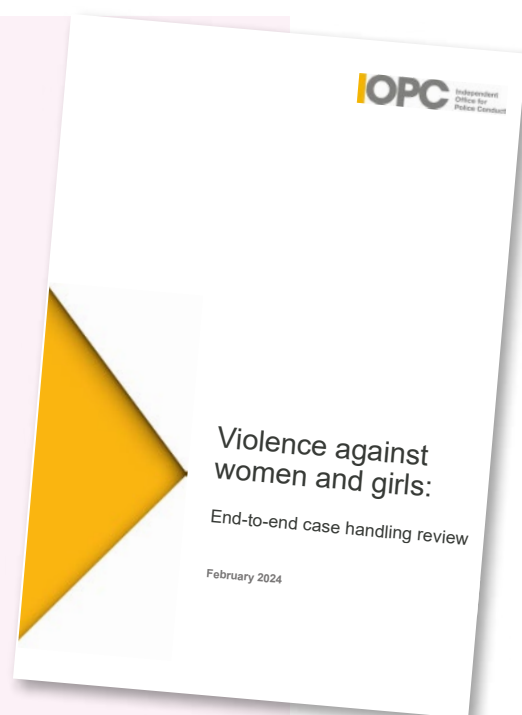
Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

On **20 February 2024**, the IOPC published a report on its “*End-to-end case handling review*”, based on a dip-sample of complaint and conduct cases involving police perpetrated VAWG in eight police forces.⁶⁶ The intention had been that around 30% of the sample of cases reviewed would be complaints or conduct matters concerning allegations of PPDA. However, the IOPC found that there were insufficient cases from the eight forces with PPDA markers to enable them to do that. The IOPC (rightly) did not conclude from the absence of cases that PPDA is not occurring. Rather it raised concerns about the current lack of PPDA specific markers that would enable such cases to be accurately captured and identified as such. The IOPC acknowledged that the PPDA super-complaint had identified poor initial handling of PPDA complaints as allegations of police misconduct and expressed concern that “*it would seem that things have not improved enough*” since then. It noted that ensuring that forces refer PPDA reports to professional standards departments and record them on Centurion is necessary for accurate data reporting. The report records that a new PPDA Centurion national factor will soon be introduced, which will allow PPDA cases to be identified and extracted more easily. However, it also acknowledges that this will not fully solve the problem if PPDA cases are not referred to Professional Standards Departments in the first place, or if they are not treated and recorded as a complaint or conduct matter from the outset.

The IOPC recognised that it will need to conduct a separate investigation, focusing on how police forces respond to PPDA reports, including how such reports are identified and recorded, as well as how they are handled thereafter.

Other concerning findings from the February 2024 IOPC report, which fit entirely with our findings from the cases of the women who have spoken to us since the super-complaint, include:

- ▶ that in only 35% of cases are investigating officers enquiring whether the allegation is part of a wider pattern of behaviour.
- ▶ declarations of conflicts of interest, for example, where the investigating officer has links to the accused, are still not being recorded, despite this having been identified as a requirement in the response to the PPDA super-complaint.
- ▶ police victim/survivors are still not routinely being treated as “*interested persons*” in conduct investigations.
- ▶ in most cases there is still no clear responsibility for victim/survivor care.



66 <https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/publications/violence-against-women-and-girls-case-handling-review-february-2024>

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

These concerns were again reflected in the Part 1 report of the Angiolini Inquiry, published on **29 February 2024**. The report made 16 recommendations aimed at addressing the systemic issues that had enabled Wayne Couzens, the police officer who abducted, raped and murdered Sarah Everard, to be recruited into and remain in the police, as well as the sexist and misogynistic aspects of police culture which had potentially encouraged, or at least failed to identify and put a stop to, Couzen's abhorrent attitudes towards women. Although the focus of the Part 1 report is necessarily on sexual violence, because that was the nature of Couzen's offending, we consider that many of the findings apply equally to the way that PPDA is treated by the police and that the report's recommendations should be extended to cover all forms of VAWG, including PPDA.

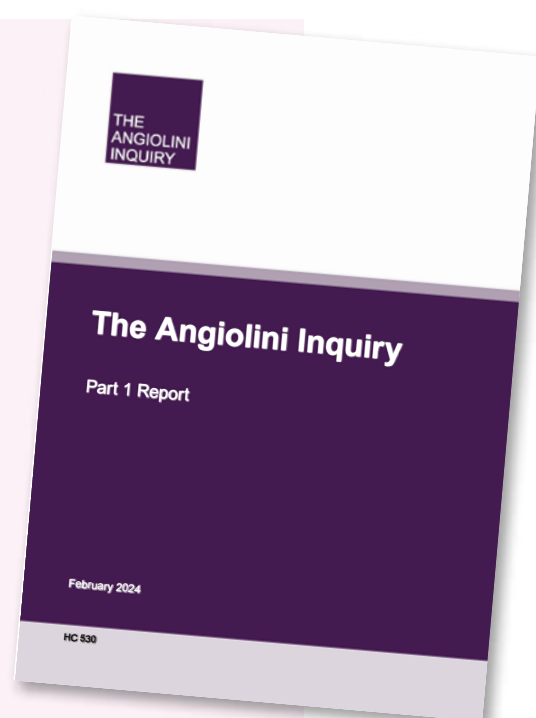
The report found significant issues with the way that complaints of indecent exposure by Couzens, earlier in his career, had not been taken seriously. These mirror many of the complaints made by the women we have spoken to about their experiences of trying to report PPDA. The report describes the investigations as "lethargic and inadequate", "lacking in professional curiosity" and "destined to fail from the start", with too much weight placed on "untested and subjective opinions about the informant's reliability" and little, or no, emphasis on positive case-building. All of these failings are recurring themes in the PPDA cases reported to us.

The report recommends that there be greater "professional rigour and curiosity when investigating lines of enquiry" and found that

" police forces need to be prepared to challenge their own perceptions of individuals in their workforce and avoid complacent assumptions."

The Angiolini Part 1 report

Again, our research identifies similar issues with the investigation of PPDA complaints.



POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

The Angiolini Part 1 report found that victims and colleagues of Couzens had been deterred from reporting inappropriate or criminal conduct due to the lack of a confidential and supportive route for reporting, the fear of being disbelieved and the potential to be ostracised by colleagues and side-lined in their own careers. The report noted instances where female officers who had reported abuse by colleagues had found the experience so traumatic that they would advise other female officers not to do it. The report highlighted that underreporting is particularly detrimental where it concerns a serving police officer, because it leads to a “lack of intelligence, information and investigative opportunity, allowing such individuals to continue to operate in plain sight with often unfettered access to some of society’s most vulnerable individuals.” Further, when such behaviour goes unreported and/or uninvestigated, it strengthens the perpetrator’s sense of impunity, encouraging his offending to escalate. The report recommends that all police forces should take immediate action to understand and confront the barriers that police officers and staff face when reporting sexual offences, in order to encourage victims to come forward. We suggest that this should be extended to all forms of police perpetrated VAWG, including domestic abuse.

The report recommends that police forces should ensure that they have a specialist policy on investigating all sexual offences, including so-called ‘non-contact’ offences, such as indecent exposure. We contend that this should also be extended to domestic abuse.

The report is critical of current vetting procedures, noting that they place over-reliance on self-reporting by the vetting subject. It identifies a lack of information-sharing between departments and cultural barriers to improving and professionalising the police service. The Inquiry noted that some senior police leaders cited data privacy laws as a barrier to information sharing, but that reliance was debunked by the Information Commissioner, who made clear that data protection law recognises that there are legitimate reasons for information sharing for the purposes of police vetting.

The report recommends that the College of Policing, in collaboration with force vetting and recruitment units, should ensure that information-sharing practices are strengthened. The recommendation is specifically directed to sexually motivated crimes against women, but we contend that it should apply to all forms of VAWG, including PPDA.

The report noted instances where female officers who had reported abuse by colleagues had found the experience so traumatic that they would advise other female officers not to do it.

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

The report recommends improvements to recruitment and vetting policy, processes and practices more generally, including that any individual identified as having a conviction or caution for a sexual offence should be rejected during police vetting. We contend that this should apply to those with any conviction or caution for a VAWG-related offence, including domestic abuse, and should be extended beyond convictions and cautions to any proven allegation, so as to include findings in civil and family proceedings. Allegations that have not resulted in a formal finding should also be considered in the vetting process so that patterns of offending can be considered. The Inquiry was particularly concerned by the Metropolitan Police's willingness to accept, even on review, that an uninvestigated allegation of indecent exposure did not warrant further exploration during the vetting of Couzens.

The report found evidence of sexist, misogynistic and racist attitudes and recommended that

“

with immediate effect, every police force should commit publicly to being an anti-sexist, anti-misogynistic, anti-racist organisation.”

The Angiolini Part 1 report

The report also recommended, with immediate effect, that police forces should convey to all existing and prospective officers and staff that they must be held to a higher standard of behaviour and accountability than members of the public, and that therefore their right to privacy can be fettered in certain circumstances, including in relation to recruitment, vetting, aftercare, transfer, promotion, role change, returning to police and maintaining standards. This recommendation is important in the context of PPDA, because, as noted in Part 1 above, the victim/survivors we have spoken to repeatedly report that domestic abuse is not being taken seriously by forces, because it is seen as part of the officer's private life and not of direct relevance to his professional role.

In **July 2024**, His Majesty's Chief Inspectorate of Constabulary, Andy Cooke, published his state of policing annual assessment⁶⁷ in which he stated “The police are still struggling to get the basics right.” He highlighted in particular failures relating to violence against women.

The National Police Chief's Council and the College of Policing also published their annual policing statement⁶⁸ in which they outline the scale of violence against women and girls (VAWG), deeming it a 'national emergency' and setting out plans to address it.

67 <https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/publication-html/state-of-policing-the-annual-assessment-of-policing-in-england-and-wales-2023/>

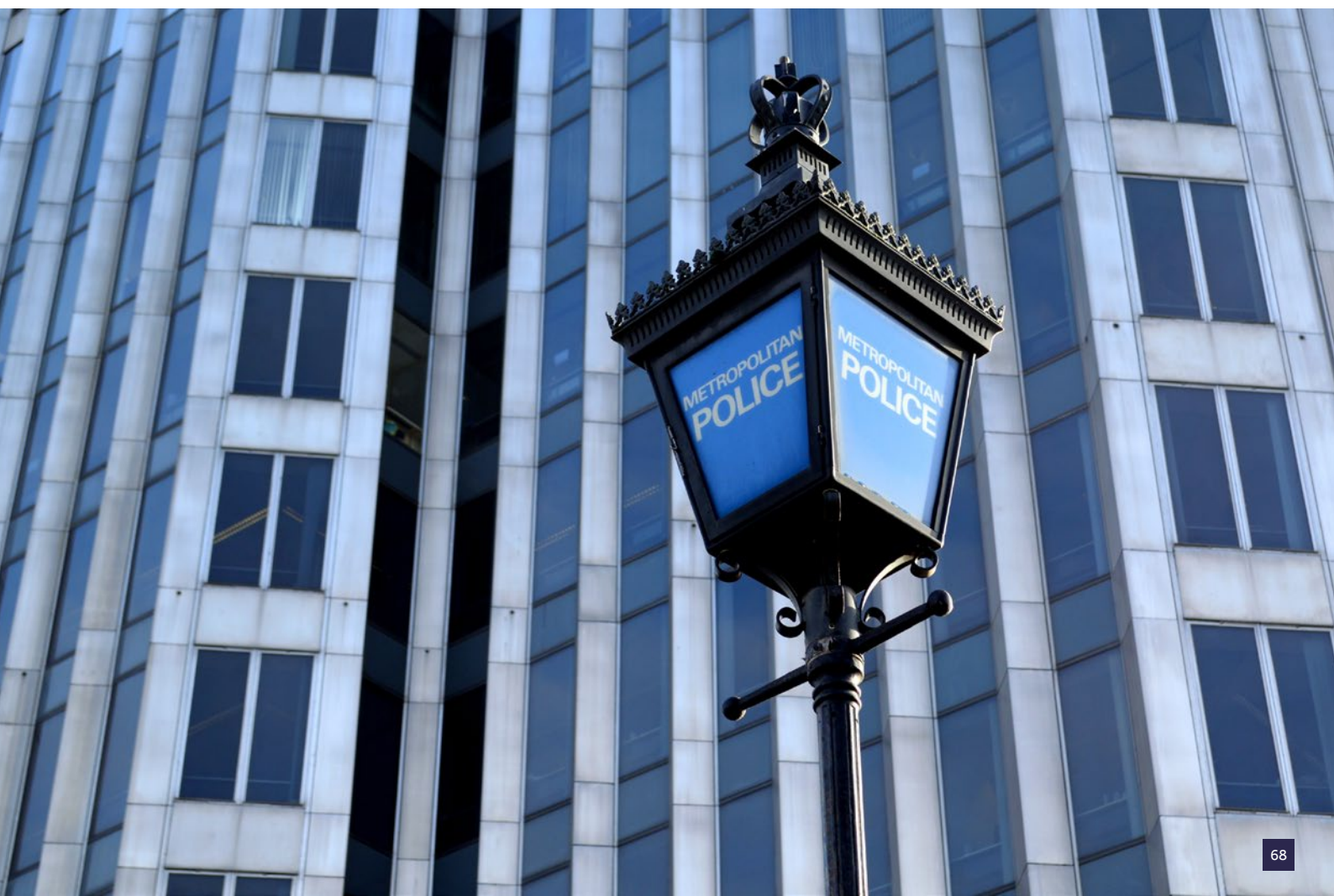
68 <https://news.npcc.police.uk/releases/call-to-action-as-violence-against-women-and-girls-epidemic-deepens-1#:~:text=The%20National%20Policing%20Statement%20for,37%25%20between%202018%2F23.>

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

Conclusion to PART 2

There is now a significant body of recent reports, reviews and police and Government initiatives highlighting the serious impact that PPDA and police perpetrated VAWG more generally is having on public confidence in policing. However, there is still very little evaluation of the effectiveness of the various measures that have been announced, and the ongoing gaps in data collection mean that there is only a partial picture of prevalence. At the same time, we continue to be approached by women, and those working in the domestic abuse support sector, reporting the same issues with the police response to PPDA that were highlighted in our PPDA super-complaint back in March 2020. This calls into question whether the new initiatives really represent a commitment to effective change, or are just examples of police “initiative-itis”. Prior to the change of Government, there were reports of potential cuts in funding for VAWG related work within policing. If that were to be proceeded with by the current Government, it would be a significant step backwards, would undermine the inclusion of VAWG within the Strategic Policing Requirement, and be contrary to the manifesto commitments to halve violence against women and girls, to combat misogyny, to strengthen vetting and to ensure that anyone with a history of VAWG is barred from the police service.

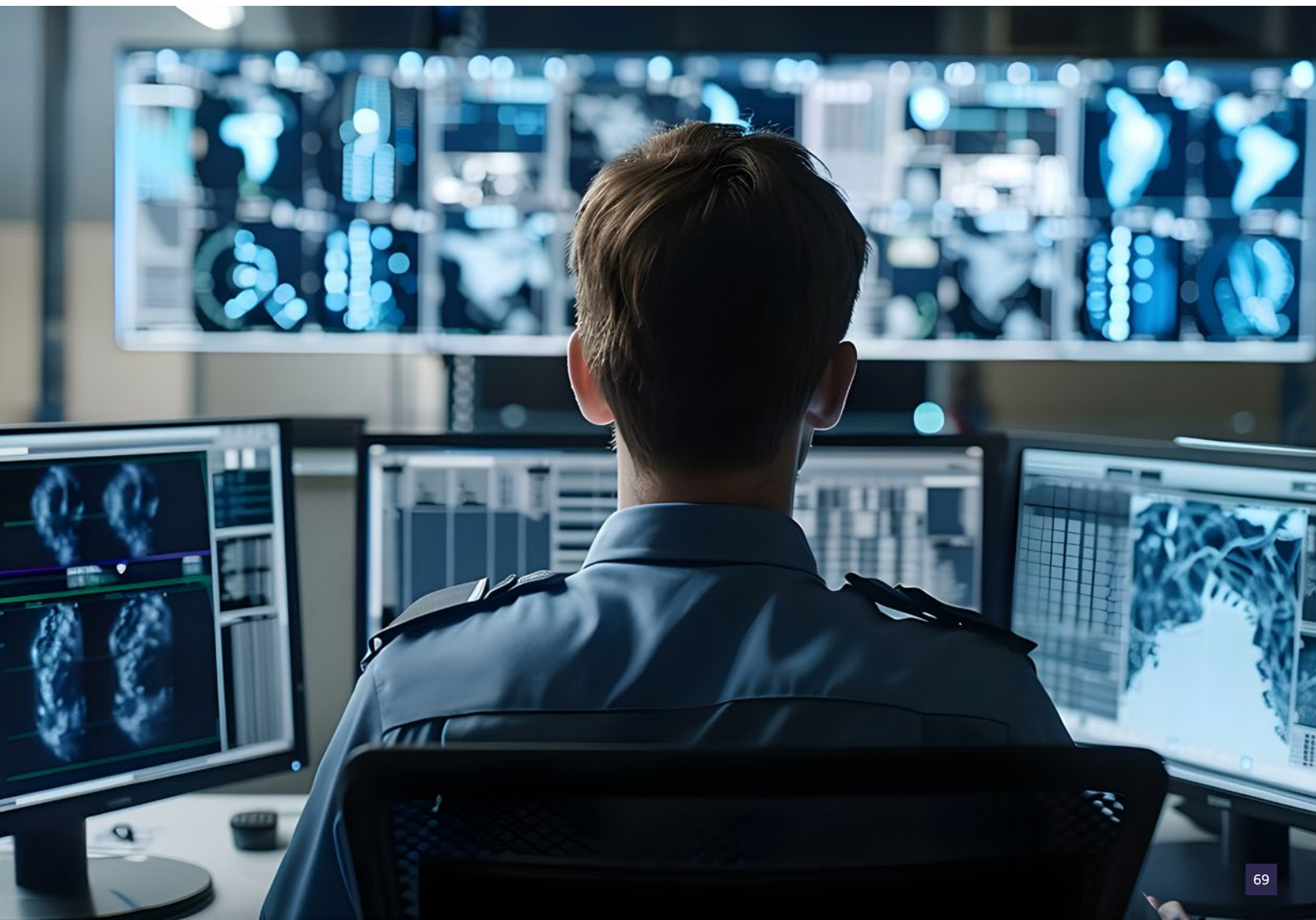


PART 3

What needs to change?

We have divided our ongoing concerns into five areas where we consider further work is needed:

- 1. Improved data collection**
- 2. Better monitoring**
- 3. Legislative reform**
- 4. National guidance**
- 5. Further research**



1. Improved data collection

The NPCC, the College of Policing, and the IOPC all acknowledge the urgent need to improve the capture and recording of data relating to PPDA and wider police perpetrated VAWG. This is important for understanding the extent of the problem, designing and monitoring strategies for improvement and, crucially, for effective vetting and safeguarding. It is clear from all of the evidence that there are currently significant gaps in data capture, accurate recording and effective use of relevant risk information.

Despite the changes to the Home Office annual data requirements in 2022 and the IOPC updating its Guidance on capturing data about police complaints in September 2023, until mid-2024, there was no effective means of isolating data relating to complaints and conduct matters relating to PPDA. It is alarming that it has taken over four years since the publication of the PPDA super-complaint for a specific PPDA marker to be added to the Centurion database.

There is an urgent need for a data capture system, which:

1. enables PPDA complaints and conduct matters to be tagged as such;
2. allows the distinction to be recorded between complaints and conduct matters pertaining to the *investigation* of PPDA and those relating to the *underlying abuse*; and
3. enables such cases to be tagged so as to record, at a minimum
 - a. whether the victim/survivor is also a police officer or member of staff;
 - b. the gender of the victim/survivor and perpetrator;
 - c. the race of the victim/survivor and perpetrator;
 - d. the immigration status of the victim/survivor; and
 - e. any other vulnerability of the victim/survivor.

These factors are important, because the evidence suggests that police officers are exploiting knowledge of victim/survivors' vulnerability, whether through immigration status or other factors, to further the abuse and/or to prevent reporting.

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

The capacity of the IT system to allow capture of the relevant data is one issue, but of equal importance is that those tasked with inputting the data are adequately trained in identifying the relevant case factors. At present, the IOPC Guidance on capturing data only relates to police complaints, i.e. it does not include conduct matters. It is clear from the response to the super-complaint that there is a need for further guidance, because the problems with the recording of PPDA allegations as conduct matters (e.g. in cases where the victim/survivor is a police officer or employee of the same force and so is not able to make a police complaint) are even greater than in relation to complaints.

The third aspect of effective data capture relevant to PPDA is ensuring that collateral information relevant to safeguarding and vetting is recorded and used to inform vetting and deployment decisions. This should include adverse findings against police officers or police employees in civil and family court proceedings (whether these are findings of abuse or misleading the court), non-molestation orders, domestic violence protection orders and notices, restraining orders, harassment warning notices etc. The current vetting APP and the new vetting Code of Practice impose obligations on police personnel to disclose changes in their individual circumstances that may have an impact on their vetting clearance, but the examples given do not include disclosure of any of the factors listed above. It is anticipated that the proposed new vetting APP that was consulted upon earlier this year will contain improvements. However, in our view, even an expanded obligation to self-report is inadequate. There must be a system in place for capturing collateral information of this type that does not rely on a police officer or employee self-reporting. It is very concerning that there is no effective system for obtaining such information even when, for example, a civil or family court has made an order against an officer.

There must be a system in place for capturing collateral information of this type that does not rely on a police officer or employee self-reporting.

The fourth aspect of effective data capture is addressing the current level of under-reporting of PPDA. That is a systemic issue which requires institutional change, so that victim/survivors feel confident about reporting. Each of the measures raised in this part of the report has a role to play in improving victim/survivor trust and confidence.

2. Better monitoring

The VAWG Outcomes and Performance Framework, published by the NPCC in April 2022, acknowledges the importance of monitoring progress against identified key performance indicators. It also commits to involving VAWG organisations, including charities supporting Black and minoritized women and girls, as well as individual women and girls with lived experience. We agree that this is critical to achieving meaningful improvement. The cases referred to in PART 1 above show how victim/survivors of PPDA continue to have poor experiences despite the recent swathe of new measures. It is vital that policing bodies don't simply review forces' progress against their own measures, but listen to the lived experiences of victim/survivors, to ascertain whether any real change is being achieved and what further changes are needed.

We consider there needs to be a formal commitment to monitoring the following aspects of the victim/survivors' experience and that this should include victim/survivors who are themselves police officers or employees as well as those who are not:

- ▶ the experience of reporting PPDA;
- ▶ communication with the victim/survivor about misconduct, criminal investigations and about available support;
- ▶ the quality of support provided;
- ▶ the victim/survivor's perception of the effectiveness of the investigation;
- ▶ the outcome –of both misconduct and criminal proceedings.

In addition, we consider that there is a need for monitoring, at a national level, of forces' progress on the following:

- 1. Achieving independent investigations in PPDA cases.** It is concerning that the February 2024 IOPC report "*Violence against women and girls: End-to end case handling review*" found that forces are still not even taking the basic step of recording that investigators are independent of the parties. Lack of independence is a fundamental concern for almost all of the victim/survivors of PPDA we have spoken to. We remain of the view that such investigations should be conducted by an external force, or the IOPC. If that approach is not to be adopted then, at the very least, there should be regular independent scrutiny, to check for risk of bias and to ensure that external referrals are being made where that is necessary to secure the trust and confidence of the victim/survivor. There should also be monitoring of the number of PPDA cases that are being investigated independently by the IOPC. At present, the number of such cases appears to be vanishingly small, despite the IOPC publicly stating that police perpetrated VAWG is a priority area;

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?



- 2. Ensuring that all complaints of PPDA are recorded and investigated either as police complaints or, if the complainant is an officer or employee of the same force as the accused, as a conduct matter,** in addition to any criminal investigation. We consider that all complaints of PPDA meet the threshold for being a recordable complaint or conduct matter under Schedule 3 of the Police Reform Act 2002. In the case of complaints, these must be recorded if the complainant indicates a wish for it to be recorded, but in any event, allegations of PPDA will frequently constitute, if proved, the commission of a criminal offence and will justify the bringing of disciplinary proceedings. They will also frequently involve the infringement of Article 3 rights, given that domestic abuse, even in the absence of physical assault is characterised as degrading treatment within the meaning of Article 3.⁶⁹ This is especially the case where the perpetrator is a police officer.⁷⁰ Further, in respect of conduct matters, PPDA falls within regulation 7 of the Police (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2020, because it involves a criminal offence or behaviour which is liable to lead to disciplinary proceedings and is aggravated by discriminatory behaviour on the grounds of sex⁷¹ and/or it is conduct whose gravity or other exceptional circumstances make it appropriate to record the matter. As such, it is our view that both police complaints and conduct matters involving PPDA meet the criteria for being recorded under Schedule 3 of the 2002 Act. However, given the ongoing failure on the part of forces to treat all cases of PPDA as recordable complaints or conduct matters, we consider that the position should be put beyond doubt by amendment of the Regulations as set out below;

69 Volodina v Russia [2019] ECHR 539 [73] & [81]

70 A and B v Georgia Application 73975/16, 10 February 2022

71 Volodina v Russia [110]: "Having regard to the terms of specialised legal instruments – primarily the CEDAW Convention, and the work of the CEDAW Committee – the Court has recognised that violence against women, including domestic violence, is a form of discrimination against women."

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

3. **Appropriate referral of PPDA complaint and conduct matters to the IOPC.**

We consider that all cases involving PPDA should be treated as falling within the mandatory criteria for referral to the IOPC under Schedule 3 of the Police Reform Act 2002 on the basis that such conduct is liable to lead to disciplinary proceedings and domestic abuse is behaviour aggravated by discrimination on the grounds of sex. However, the analysis of VAWG referrals published by the IOPC in May 2023 suggests that only a small proportion of PPDA police complaints are being referred to the IOPC and even fewer PPDA conduct matters.⁷² As set out below, we consider that the Police (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2020 should be amended to make clear that all PPDA complaint and conduct matters should be referred to the IOPC;

4. **Suspension and deployment decisions**, to ensure that these are being carried out appropriately and that safeguarding is being managed effectively;
5. **Outcomes, in respect of both criminal and misconduct investigations**, to ensure that appropriate outcomes are being achieved.

As noted in Part 2 above, the NPCC responses to the super-complaint recommendations suggest that forces' responses are currently disparate and ad hoc. We consider that national guidance is needed to ensure consistency and minimum standards on the key issues identified below. There also needs to be national monitoring of the approaches taken by individual forces, so that progress can be measured and the effectiveness of the different approaches can be assessed.

3. Legislative reform

Schedule 3 of the Police Reform Act 2002 and the Police (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2020 should be amended to ensure that:

1. all allegations of PPDA must be handled in accordance with that schedule. This would make clear that all such allegations are required to be treated as either a recordable complaint or a recordable conduct matter;
2. all allegations of PPDA must be investigated and are required to be referred to the IOPC.

Section 29(4)(a) of the Police Reform Act 2002 should be amended to ensure that police officers and members of police staff have the same right to make a complaint of domestic abuse against a member of their force as do members of the public.

72 https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Referrals_analysis_Headlines_report_May_2023.pdf

4. National guidance

The experiences of the PPDA victim/survivors who spoke to us highlight a number of key areas where there is a need for (further, or clearer) national guidance:

There needs to be a clear and unequivocal statement in national guidance that PPDA discredits the police and undermines public confidence in policing, whether it occurs on or off duty, and whether it involves physical, psychological or other forms of domestic abuse. Further, that such abuse constitutes a breach of the Standards of Professional Behaviour, and that this is relevant to (i) the criteria for recording such conduct under Schedule 3 of the Police Reform Act 2002; (ii) deciding whether there is a case to answer for misconduct proceedings; and (iii) the criteria for referral to the IOPC.

The amendment to the College of Policing Guidance on Outcomes in Police Misconduct Proceedings referred to above is welcome, but still requires further clarification:

1. It is apparent from the cases brought to us that there is still a problem with investigating officers failing to recognise that psychological abuse and controlling or coercive behaviour perpetrated by a police officer will harm public confidence in policing and is contrary to the Standards of Professional Behaviour, whether it is carried out on or off-duty. It should be made clearer in the Guidance that all forms of domestic abuse perpetrated by a police officer discredit the police and undermine public confidence in policing;
2. The College of Policing guidance relates to *outcomes* in police misconduct proceedings. It is not at all clear that investigating officers are having regard to it at the earlier stages of the process, namely when deciding whether allegations of PPDA should be recorded and investigated in the first place.

In our view, the IOPC “guidance” is at best buried in a report that frontline investigators are unlikely to read and at worst is dangerously wrong about the approach to be taken to off-duty domestic abuse not involving physical violence.

The February 2024 IOPC report on its “*End-to-end case handling review*” found that, in the dip sample of cases reviewed, off-duty conduct was being treated with the same level of seriousness as on-duty conduct. However, as the report itself acknowledges, the cases in the dip sample were, by definition, cases that had been referred to the forces’ professional standards department. In other words, the dip sample cases were drawn from an already narrowed pool. If, as our case studies suggest, there is a problem with forces dismissing complaints about PPDA as an “*unpleasant*” aspect of the accused officer’s private life, but not of relevance to his professional role, then such complaints are not being recorded as complaint or conduct matters at all and, consequently, are not making it into the pool from which the dip sample cases are being drawn. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the “*off-duty*” conduct that made it into the dip sample was being taken seriously, because it had already cleared the hurdle of being treated as a matter requiring referral to PSD. One of the issues that the IOPC will need to investigate as part of its separate PPDA project is what is happening to the reports of PPDA that are being dismissed as not referable to PSD, because they relate to the officer’s off-duty conduct.

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

Guidance on the recording of complaints and conduct matters concerning PPDA and when such cases should be referred to the IOPC.

As set out above, we consider that allegations of PPDA will always meet the criteria for recording under Schedule 3 of the Police Reform Act 2002 and should be treated as meeting the mandatory criteria for referral to the IOPC under Schedule 3 of the Police Reform Act 2002 on the basis that such conduct is liable to lead to disciplinary proceedings and domestic abuse is behaviour aggravated by discrimination on grounds of sex. The response to the super-complaint recommended that the IOPC should publish guidance on these issues, but to date it has not done so. The low level of PPDA referrals to the IOPC underscores the need for such guidance.

Guidance on when PPDA investigations should be referred to an external force.

The response to the super-complaint states that it may be appropriate to refer a PPDA case for external force investigation when (i) there are concerns that truly independent investigators cannot be found in the force, or (ii) victim/survivor trust and confidence cannot be secured another way. The current approach to external force investigations is ad hoc and varies significantly between forces. Given the ongoing loss of victim/survivor trust and confidence in PPDA investigations, we consider that there should be a nationwide framework to enable external force investigations to take place more consistently and national guidance on when cases should be referred out of force for investigation.

Vetting. The Vetting Code of Practice published in July 2023 is disappointing in that it doesn't contain more explicit guidance in relation to allegations of PPDA. The proposed Vetting APP that was open for consultation in early 2024 is more robust. However, as noted above, we consider that there should be express inclusion of evidence of misogyny, domestic abuse and controlling or coercive behaviour within the list of "*factors requiring particular scrutiny*" for the purposes of vetting and which engage the presumption against vetting being granted. Further, there need to be formal mechanisms for ensuring that all relevant information pertaining to those factors is obtained, including findings and orders from the civil and family courts, without relying on self-reporting by the officer / member of staff subject to vetting. Where reports of PPDA are made to the police, or otherwise come to the attention of the police, there should be an obligation on the receiving officer to trigger a review of vetting and to pass the information obtained to the reviewing officer.

Guidance on suspension, deployment and mitigation measures. We consider that there remains a need for such guidance, in order to ensure consistent practice and appropriate safeguarding. One of the professionals we spoke to expressed a concern that some forces have such a shortage of officers of a particular rank (for example detective sergeants) that this is having an impact on decisions concerning suspension or restriction of duties of those officers, even where serious allegations have been made. We have also noted above, the impact on confidence in a force's willingness or ability to address VAWG related issues when officers who have themselves been the subject of VAWG allegations are deployed into roles which put them into contact with victim/survivors of domestic and/or sexual abuse. We consider that the College of Policing should provide guidance on this issue if the Home Office will not do so.

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE

Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint?

Guidance on the rights of victim/survivors of PPDA, including police victim/survivors. The response to the super-complaint recommends that the IOPC should consider whether additional guidance or information is required for victims and complainants on their rights. Given the ongoing negative experiences of so many victim/survivors, especially those who are themselves police officers or employees, we consider that such guidance is needed. The NPCC and College of Policing “*Themes, learning and next steps*” report published in October 2022 identified the need for bespoke support services for victim/survivors of PPDA and the ongoing need to encourage reporting. For victim/survivors who are police officers or employees, there is a particular need to ensure appropriate support and better understanding of their rights in the context of misconduct investigations.

Model best practice for PPDA investigations. We consider that the College of Policing should develop model best practice for PPDA investigations, given the particular challenges to which such investigations give rise and the variation in their quality between forces. HMICFRS should then inspect regularly for compliance.



5. Further research

The Soteria Bluestone research has highlighted the importance of understanding the context and psychology of perpetrators in the investigation of sexual offending. We consider there to be an immediate need for similar research in the context of PPDA. It appears from the responses to the super-complaint recommendations that there are disparate measures being taken by different forces across the country to address how PPDA is handled. The College of Policing and the NPCC are encouraging the sharing of “*best practice*”, but it is not clear what, if any, independent assessment is being made of the efficacy of these measures.

There were a number of issues raised in the super-complaint, in particular abuse of police powers and the way in which counter-allegations are handled, which the response acknowledged it did not have the scope to investigate. Those issues continue to arise in the cases reported to us and there needs to be further research to identify the scale of the problem and to evaluate how to address them. We are aware, for example, that some forces are drawing on expertise from local domestic abuse support organisations to understand abuse dynamics and to inform the approach to cases involving counter-allegations. However, we are not aware of any formal research into the impact of this approach on case outcomes or on victim/survivor confidence and consider that this would benefit from research. Likewise in respect of the use of data analysis by Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire to manage PPDA cases.

The prevalence of PPDA issues in the family courts may also be a useful source of data, if it is possible to obtain it. We are concerned that there does not appear to be any mechanism at present for tracking even basic data, such as the number of non-molestation orders that are granted against police officers.

The University of Hull research, referred to in Part 1 above, identifies the need for further research into the experiences of police victim/survivors of PPDA and how they can better be supported. We agree, and remain of the view that changes are required to ensure that police victim/survivors of PPDA are afforded the same rights as non-police victim/survivors in the context of misconduct investigations and review by the IOPC.

Conclusion

Concerns about police perpetrated domestic abuse and police perpetrated violence against women and girls more broadly have risen significantly in recent years. The appointment of a National Police Lead for VAWG, the adoption of a VAWG Framework and the addition of VAWG to the Strategic Policing Requirement are welcome developments. However, the accounts given to CWJ by women who are victim/survivors of PPDA show that they are still having to battle against a lack of independence in investigations, minimisation of offending behaviour by investigating officers, a disproportionate response to counter-allegations, failures to pursue misconduct investigations and poor data collection, so connections are not made, even where there are multiple allegations. Victim/survivors who are themselves police officers experience negative consequences for their own careers and struggle to obtain support from their force and from the Police Federation. If policing is serious about addressing PPDA, it needs to listen to and learn from the experiences of the victim/survivors and put in place a more effective system of support.

It is encouraging that academic research in England and Wales is beginning to develop in this field. However, significant further research is needed, especially in the areas of improving investigations and supporting victim/survivors, including police victim/survivors. In addition, there is a need to scrutinise how police perpetrators are able to use their status to corrupt the criminal justice and family justice systems.

Since the super-complaint was submitted in March 2020, there have been a huge number of new initiatives addressing PPDA and police perpetrated VAWG. It is promising that the VAWG Framework has expressed a commitment to monitoring and evaluating progress, but it is concerning that the collection of data necessary to enable effective monitoring is still so woefully inadequate. Four and a half years since the super-complaint was submitted, there continue to be significant gaps in the collection and recording of data relevant to PPDA. Without effective data collection it is impossible to understand the scale of the problem, or to assess whether steps that forces are taking are making a difference. It also means that vetting and safeguarding are undermined or are just more “initiative-itis”.

Without effective data collection it is impossible to understand the scale of the problem, or to assess whether steps that forces are taking are making a difference. It also means that vetting and safeguarding are undermined or are just more “initiative-itis”.



London, UK – 16 March 2021.
Flowers and tributes at Clapham Common
Bandstand, in memory of Sarah Everard.

We would like to thank all the survivors and whistle-blowers who came forward to tell their stories and the women's services that support them. Thank you also to others we spoke to whose work and perspective assisted us in the research and preparation of this report including, Sarah Haque, Bridie Anderson, Debbie Ashthorpe, Fay Sweeting and Louise Williams

This report has been researched and written by Ruth Brander with input from members of the CWJ team including, Harriet Wistrich, Charlotte Coleman, Tamsin Hope, Debaleena Dasgupta, Mahnoor Rashid, Rebecca Dare and Nogah Ofer (who drafted the original police super-complaint).

Designed by Berie Stott

Huge thanks to all our funders, and to the Human Rights Fund who supported the work enabling research and publication of this report. And to Doughty Street Chambers for hosting the launch event.