

SUFFOLK VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS STRATEGY 2022-2025

“Unless you have been in this predicament, I don’t think you can fully comprehend how necessary and life changing the whole experience and support system is”



“I spent two years waiting, only to be told there wasn’t enough evidence for a conviction. I would like services to be honest”

Contents

1. Background
2. Our Approach
3. What is Violence Against Women & Girls?
4. Data & Insight
5. Domestic Homicide Reviews
6. Victims Voice
7. Achieving Our Vision
8. Governance
9. Relevant Strategies, Policies and Legislation
10. Achievements
11. Commitments
12. Action Plan 2022-25

Forward



Violence Against Woman & Girls (VAWG) has a devastating impact on its victims. Crimes such as domestic abuse, sexual violence, stalking, revenge porn and others occur on a daily basis, across the whole country - including Suffolk.

Whilst Suffolk remains a safe place to live, work and visit, crimes against women and girls are all too prevalent, underpinned by appalling and often outdated attitudes and prejudice. The gendered nature of these crimes disproportionately affect women and girls, but we recognise that men and boys are also victims and welcome the Home Office's commitment to publish further work in this area.

Suffolk launched its first VAWG strategy in 2018 and good progress has been made in tackling the issue, but we also recognise there is much, much more to do. The ambitions in the strategy are big, bold, enduring and importantly, cannot be achieved by any single organisation alone.

We are fortunate to have strong partnership and collaboration through the Safer Stronger Communities Board (SSCB) with representatives from all the District and Borough Councils, Community Safety Partnerships, County Council, Police, Police & Crime Commissioner, Probation, Health, Safeguarding and Criminal Justice.

Together we are united in our commitment to drive forward change through prevention, support and pursuing perpetrators.

Cllr Andrew Reid
Chair of the Safer Stronger Communities Board

**“People should feel
secure, protected
and listened to”**

Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Survivor 

1. Background

In 2018 Suffolk launched a three-year Violence Against Women & Girls, Men & Boys Strategy. The addition of 'Men and boys' in the title reflected the partnership's recognition that both males and females can be victims/perpetrators. In this refreshed strategy, we have mirrored the title of the National VAWG Strategy and whilst our focus will continue to be on women and girls because of the gendered nature of the crime, we will also include work/projects to support men and boys as well as those that are transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming.

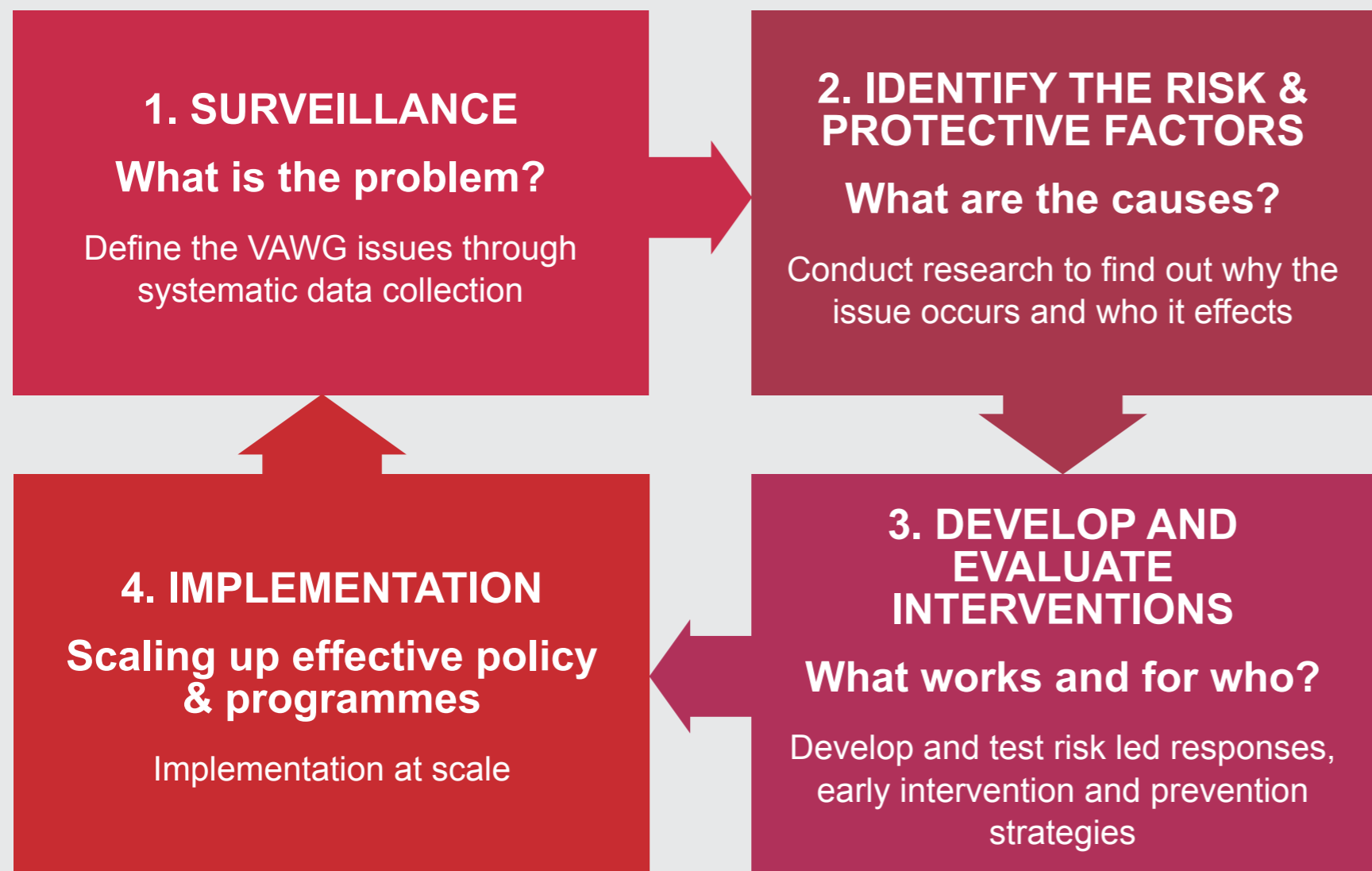
This strategy complements the vision set out in the Governments national strategy and other relevant strategies, (please see Appendix A) and will be updated in light of any new government policies or legislation including a new national Domestic Abuse Strategy, a refreshed National Statement of Expectations, a Men and Boys Position paper and the Police, Crime and Sentencing Courts Bill.

It sets out the key high-level ambitions for Suffolk from 2022-25, co-produced with victims, practitioners and decision makers. It reflects on our success during the lifetime of the last strategy, outlines new, robust governance arrangements, is cognisant of other key strategies and documents that are aligned/connected to VAWG and most importantly, provides a strategic direction for the next phase of this strategy which is to develop an action plan that will drive forward change through effective partnership working.

2. Our Approach

Suffolk has previously adopted a 'Public Health approach' to tackling other community safety priorities. This aims to treat the issue like an infectious disease that requires a data and evidence led approach to understand what causes it, find interventions to prevent it and ultimately to find a cure.

The diagram below sets out the Public Health model - a genuine multi-agency approach, underpinned by an ambition to better understand the issues and understand what works, for who, where and through robust evaluation, what success looks like. In the lifetime of the last strategy, Suffolk has tested and created new approaches to data sharing, research, awareness raising and our work with perpetrators. For the future we will continue to build on that learning and welcome new opportunities to improve our understanding of the root causes of VAWG and be ambitious in our approach to prevention.



“We need to get up stream of the problem and stop it happening in the first place. In the event that it does, we need the right support in place but prevention is better than cure”

Professional 

“Offer a space where survivors who feel passionate about reform have a trauma informed space to share their perspectives, not necessarily experiences”

Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Survivor 

3. What is Violence Against Women and Girls?

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

Is a pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse. In extreme cases this includes murder.

STALKING

Is repeated (that is on at least two occasions) harassment causing fear, alarm or distress. It can include threatening phone calls, texts or letters, damaging property, spying on and following the victim.

FORCED MARRIAGE

Is a marriage conducted without valid consent of one or both parties, where duress is a factor.

FAITH BASED ABUSE

Is linked to faith or belief. This includes a belief in concepts of witchcraft and spirit possession, demons or the devil, the evil eye or djinns and dakini acting through children or leading them astray.

UP-SKIRTING

Is the action of placing equipment such as a camera or mobile phone beneath a person's clothing to take a voyeuristic photograph without their permission.

COERCIVE AND CONTROLLING BEHAVIOUR

Is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour. Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

PROSTITUTION & TRAFFICKING

Is when women and girls are forced (often involving violence), coerced or deceived to enter into prostitution and/or to keep them there. Trafficking involves the recruitment, transportation and exploitation of women and children for the purposes of prostitution and domestic servitude across international borders and within countries ('internal trafficking').

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION RELATING TO MODERN SLAVERY

Is when victims may be forced into prostitution, pornography or lap dancing for little or no pay. They may be deprived of their freedom of movement and subjected to threats and violence.

REVENGE PORN

Is the sharing of private, sexual materials, either photos or videos, of another person without their consent and with the purpose of causing embarrassment or distress. Sharing of these materials is usually carried out online.

CYBER FLASHING

Is the unsolicited sending of images or video recordings of one's genitals.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Is unwanted verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. It can take place anywhere, including the workplace, schools, streets, public transport and social situations. It includes flashing, obscene and threatening calls, and online harassment.

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM)

Is the complete or partial removal or alteration of external genitalia for non-medical reasons. It is mostly carried out on young girls at some time between infancy and the age of 15. Unlike male circumcision, which is legal in many countries, it is now illegal across much of the globe, and its extensive harmful health consequences are widely recognised.

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Is exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where someone receives 'something' (e.g. food, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, protection money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Is sexual contact without consent, including rape. Perpetrators range from total strangers to relatives and intimate partners, but most are known in some way.

4. Data & Insight

National Picture



Recording of Sexual Offences and Domestic Abuse has increased nationally over the last three years. However, it is also recognised that the majority of cases do not come to the attention of the police and those that do often do not result in conviction for the perpetrator of abuse.

2.3M

There were an estimated 2.3 million victims of Domestic Abuse in the year ending March 2020, 1.6 million of whom were female.

773k

The Crime Survey for England and Wales estimates that in the year ending March 2020, 618,000 women and 155,000 men between the ages of 16 and 74 experienced sexual assault (including attempts).

82%

Data on police recorded crime from 36 forces for the year to March 2021, shows that 82% of sexual grooming offences are against women and girls; 81% of sexual activity with children younger than 16 is against girls; and 80% of victims of stalking, voyeurism and exposure are female.

2/3

In one recent survey, two out of three 16 to 34 year-old women and girls reported that they had been sexually harassed in the past year.

59%

Between 2009 and 2019, on average, one woman was killed by a man every three days in the UK. A history of abuse was known in 59 percent of the 1,042 female homicides committed by current or former partners or other male relatives.

80%

Although the Crown Prosecution Service stated that the number of domestic abuse prosecutions fell, this decrease isn't reflected in the number of victims using support services. For example, the National Domestic Abuse Helpline saw an 80 percent increase in calls during the first lockdown in comparison with the same period the year before.

53%

In the year ending March 2020, 53 percent of Domestic Abuse crimes nationally were closed with the outcome of 'the victim does not support further action'.

X3

A total of 162,936 sexual offences were recorded by the police in England and Wales in the year ending March 2020, a decrease of 0.7% compared with the previous year. Prior to this decrease, the number of sexual offences recorded by police had almost tripled in recent years.

77K

Changes in police recording practices and victims' willingness to report are likely to result in annual variations; however, police recorded crimes remain well below the number of victims estimated by the Crime Survey for England and Wales where 773,000 adults aged 16 to 74 years were victims of sexual assault (including attempts) in the last year

Local Picture



Nationally reports of Sexual Violence and Domestic Abuse have increased. This however has not been reflected locally where we have seen rises in Sexual Violence reports but not in overall Domestic Abuse reports. It is our ambition through this strategy, to better understand why: More people are coming forward to report? Is there an actual increase in the levels of offences taking place? Or is this down to the way crimes are recorded?

61%

There were 12,299 Domestic Abuse related crimes and incidents recorded in Suffolk for the year ending March 2021. This is the equivalent of 20 crimes and incidents per 1000 people in the population. 9,371 of these were recorded as crimes, equaling 12 crimes for 1000 people in the population, 61% compared to 58% for England and Wales.

19%

In Suffolk 19% of all recorded crime is related to Domestic Abuse for the year ending March 2021. This is fractionally higher than the 18% recorded for both England and Wales for the same time period.

66%

There were a total of 666 domestic abuse related legal decisions made by the Crown Prosecution Service in the year ending March 2021. Of these legal decisions made there were 438 domestic abuse related charges for the same period which related to a charge rate of 66%. Within this period there were also 959 domestic abuse prosecutions, 12% of all prosecutions in Suffolk.



84%

In Suffolk there were 499 Domestic Abuse related prosecutions in the year ending March 2021. This means that 84% of Domestic Abuse related prosecutions resulted in a conviction. In 46% of cases an outcome of 'Evidential Difficulties - Victim does not support action' is recorded.

483

In the year ending March 2021 there were 28 arrests per 100 Domestic Abuse related crimes in Suffolk compared to 32 arrests per 100 crimes for England and Wales. For the same period there were 483 'right to know' applications under Clare's Law.

90%

In Suffolk, 90% of all Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) were referred to by Suffolk Constabulary, 32% were repeat cases and 7% of all Domestic Abuse cases recorded were discussed at MARAC

5.2%

There were 2006 Serious Sexual Offences reported to Suffolk Police for the 12 months ending September 2021. An increase of 5.2% when looking at a three year average.

45%

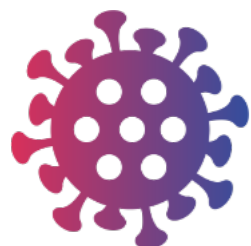
In 45% of Serious Sexual Offences cases the victim was not ready to support a criminal investigation.

3.1

When comparing volumes of all sexual offences in Suffolk (not limited to serious sexual offences) with forces in its most similar group (MSG), Suffolk recorded the highest number of sexual offences per 1,000 households in 12 months ending August 2021, with a rate of 3.1 crimes per 1,000 households.

5.7%

Suffolk recorded the lowest solved rate (5.7%) compared to other forces in its MSG in the 12 months ending August 2021 and this solved rate is also a decrease from the 12 months ending August 2020 (7.7%).



We know the pandemic has affected these crime types in terms of increased risk of harm and isolation during the lockdown periods and both nationally and locally we saw a sharp increase in the number of people seeking support once restrictions were lifted. Service providers report that cases are becoming more complex and serious with higher levels of physical violence and coercive control (Home Affairs Committee 2020).

“The more that we choose not to talk about domestic abuse & sexual violence, the more we shy away from the issue, the more we lose.”

Domestic Abuse Survivor

5. Domestic Homicide Reviews

A Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) is a review of the circumstances in which the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by:

- (a) a person to whom they were related or with whom they were or had been in an intimate personal relationship, or
- (b) a member of the same household

Recent changes to the DHR guidance include where a victim took their own life (suicide) and the circumstances give rise to concern, for example if it emerges that there was coercive controlling behaviour in the relationship, a Review should be undertaken, even if a suspect is not charged with an offence or they are tried and acquitted. Reviews are not about who is culpable.

Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) are held with a view to identifying the lessons to be learnt from the death. Suffolk County Council commission independent chairs and authors to undertake DHRs on behalf of the Suffolk Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs). Once a review is undertaken, recommendations based on the learning from each DHR are produced, actioned and monitored.

Since 2011 when DHRs were introduced, Suffolk has sadly undertaken 7 DHRs (2 underway) and 3 informal learning reviews (where the threshold for a DHR was not met but locally the CSPs felt some learning could be achieved). Suffolk's learning broadly mirrors national and regional recommendation themes including:



Communications/Awareness raising

We have identified a need to raise awareness and knowledge across the whole system so family and friends know what to look for and how to support, where to go for help and awareness raising around coercive and controlling behaviour which has been present in many of the Suffolk DHR's but it not always recognised.



Training

We have identified a need for more targeted, formal training for practitioners in partner organisations to help them perform their role effectively and spot the signs of domestic abuse, what to do when someone discloses abuse, appropriate sign posting to support agencies and the need for robust risk assessment processes.



Data and Information

We have identified the need to improve data sharing and recording across all agencies that come into contact with a victim/perpetrator so that we can better understand the early warning signs and offer support at the earliest opportunity.

“Since we wrote the last VAWG strategy for Suffolk, tragically 4 women have been murdered by their partner. It is a stark reminder of the devastating, and lasting effects Domestic Abuse on individuals, families, friends and our communities. It has no place in our society and we must do all we can to stop it”

Professional



Number of DHRs in Suffolk Since 2011

7

Number of Informal Reviews in Suffolk

3

East Suffolk CSP: 2

East Suffolk CSP: 1

Ipswich CSP: 0

Ipswich CSP: 1

Western Suffolk CSP: 5

Western Suffolk CSP: 1

Number of DHRs Currently Underway in Suffolk

2

6. Victims Voice

This Strategy has been developed with victim-survivors and incorporates the voice and views of people who have lived experience of VAWG. The responses from “experts by experience” in Suffolk echoed recurring themes around lack of awareness among “trusted professionals”, poor experiences of the criminal justice system and civil/family courts, the importance of suitable/safe accommodation and the need for the right ongoing support for victims and their children.

Additionally, and as highlighted in the [National Call for Evidence](#), there was an overwhelming desire for victims wanting greater confidence that they will be believed and supported and to achieve this there needs to be much greater understanding amongst everyone that VAWG is an issue.

We know that the right support at the right time can make the world of difference and be life changing or saving for victim-survivors. Victim voice tells us we are getting it right a lot of the time but not all, and therefore we must strive to improve. We are committed to engaging, listening and acting on victim-survivor voice and through the action plan will develop our approach to ensure this informs, challenges and ultimately improves the experiences of victims and survivors.

We will ensure the involvement of victim and survivors to facilitate changes that help us to realise the vision of reducing the prevalence of VAWG in Suffolk.

“Thank you to the victim-survivors who gave their time and their voices to this Strategy. It was a privilege to meet you all, hear your experiences and talk about your vision for the VAWG agenda in Suffolk.”

The victims-survivors and service users who contributed are:

- Residents of Lighthouse Women’s Aid Refuge
- Residents of Bury Women’s Aid Refuge
- Suffolk Rape Crisis service users
- Anglia Care Trust service users

“Victims need to trust the system more than they fear the consequences of leaving”

Professor Jane Monckton-Smith, 2020



“Victim voice must not be a token gesture to inform the strategy and action plan, it must be meaningful and embedded as business as usual”

Professional



“My perpetrator told me that no one would ever believe me, and I don’t feel that police, social services or the courts ever did.”

Domestic Violence Survivor



7. Achieving our vision

Vision

For everyone in Suffolk to play their part in preventing and identifying Violence Against Women & Girls, creating the safety we all deserve.

Objectives



Prevention

By getting ahead of the issues and intervening earlier. We will address attitudes and societal norms to ensure everyone knows what healthy relationships look like and to recognise the signs of abuse.



Supporting Victims

We will endeavour to meet the needs of all our communities across the spectrum of protected characteristics and help break the cycle of abuse.



Pursuing Perpetrators

Working in collaboration to change behaviours and influence the criminal justice system to ensure justice is done.



Strengthening the System

Continue to collaborate, innovate and work in partnership to create a whole system approach to tackling VAWG.

Performance Management and Evaluation

Coordination and Communication

Data & Insight

8. Governance

We are fortunate to have strong partnerships across Suffolk that work together to address a number of key community safety issues which cause the greatest risk, threat and harm. Specifically, our priority to tackle VAWG is underpinned by robust governance that brings together the voice of victims and survivors, practitioners, service providers, decision makers and elected members.

- **Safer & Stronger Communities Board (SSCB)**

is responsible for providing strategic direction and leadership on wider issues and determinants arising from agreed priorities. Members include Chief Officers and Elected members from Suffolk County Council, District & Borough Councils, Police, Police & Crime Commissioner, Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership, Community Safety Partnerships, Health, Probation, Criminal Justice Board.

- **Violence Against Women & Girls Steering Group**

is responsible for co-ordinating and developing quality services to effectively meet the needs of Suffolk residents. This includes direct service provision for victims-survivors, perpetrators, and their children, holding abusers to account and reducing the prevalence of VAWG. Membership includes strategic managers from Adult and Children Safeguarding, Community Safety & Public Health Police, Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner, Probation, Health, Voluntary & Community Sector.

- **Suffolk Violence & Abuse Partnership (SVAP)**

is an information sharing network established to strengthen collaboration and encourage innovation across the Suffolk system. Membership includes 180+ interested individuals with a personal or organisational interest in Violence Against Women and Girls, including; victim/survivors; voluntary and community sector providers; academics; military; volunteers; By and For services; and elected members.

- **Domestic Abuse Partnership Board**

functions are undertaken by both the VAWG Steering Group and SVAP as above and are responsible for assessing the scale and nature of need, preparing and publishing a domestic abuse accommodation strategy, commissioning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting on progress.

For more information on the community safety governance structure in Suffolk please see

[Appendix B.](#)

“Awareness and education is paramount”



Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Survivor

SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES BOARD (SSCB)



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS STEERING GROUP

(PART OF THE LOCAL DOMESTIC ABUSE PARTNERSHIP BOARD)

SUFFOLK VIOLENCE AND ABUSE PARTNERSHIP (SVAP)

(PART OF THE LOCAL DOMESTIC ABUSE PARTNERSHIP BOARD)

9. Relevant Strategies, Policies & Legislation

In 2021 there were a number of significant strategies, policies, recommendations and legislation from central government to help tackle Violence Against Women and Girls. It ranges from new legislation to include new crime types, new statutory responsibilities for Local Authorities, plans to cut crime and recommendations resulting from specific reviews and inspections.

This section summarises three key national documents that have helped to inform and shape this strategy and are of particular significance to organisations across the partnership. Please see [Appendix D](#) for connected publications.

A. Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy

was published by the Government in July 2021, and sets out the Government's plan to:

- prevent these types of crimes
- improve the experiences of victims and survivors
- ensure perpetrators are brought to justice
- and improve the way organisations work together

The strategy is shaped by a Call for Evidence, which heard views directly from the public on tackling Violence Against Women and Girls. The strategy sets out intended actions across four key themes, and looks at each of these areas in depth based the evidence and data gathered from the Call for Evidence, what's already being done in that area, and what more the Government plans to do in addressing them:

Prioritising

The Call for Evidence highlighted that more needs to be done around education, to raise awareness and understanding of these types of crimes across the public and among professionals, and to make sure young people understand what healthy relationships look like. The Government aims to address the often unconscious and habitual attitudes and behaviours that can underpin these crimes, to deal with the root causes of the problem and ultimately reduce the prevalence of violence against women and girls.



Supporting

Respondents to the Call for Evidence agreed that support services are vital for victims of violence against women and girls. However, it is stressed that more needs to be done to ensure that victims receive the right support at the right time, and that they are easily accessible and available for all, regardless of someone's protected characteristic or where they live. The Government wants to increase support for victims and survivors, through ensuring they have access to support which is appropriate for their needs.



Pursuing Perpetrators

The Call for Evidence emphasised the view that if perpetrators are not punished quickly and ruthlessly, then women and girls may never feel safe or have confidence in the criminal justice system supporting them. To tackle this, Government wants to increase the number of perpetrators detained, and see them pursued and brought to justice in the same way as any other crime.



Strengthening the System

The strategy states how to take steps to achieve real, sustainable progress, everyone must play a role - national and local government, charities, schools, colleges, universities, businesses and the private sector, local communities and others must all work together in a coordinated approach. The strategy sets out to improve the way these different organisations work together and tackle violence against women and girls.



“There has never been a better time to seize the moment and use the plethora of strategies and legislation to make a step change in our approach to VAWG - this is a once in a generation opportunity”

Professional



B. DOMESTIC ABUSE ACT 2021

The Domestic Abuse Act received Royal Assent in April 2021. It aims to raise awareness and understanding about the impact of domestic abuse on victims and their families, improve the effectiveness of the justice system in providing protection of victims and bringing perpetrators to justice, and to strengthen the support for victims of abuse by statutory agencies.

The Act aims to do this by the introduction of:

A LEGAL DEFINITION OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

emphasising that domestic abuse is not just physical violence, but can also be emotional, coercive or controlling, and economic abuse. As part of this definition, children will be recognised as victims in their own right, if they see, hear, or experience the effects of abuse.

A DOMESTIC ABUSE COMMISSIONER

to stand up for victims and survivors, raise public awareness, monitor the response of local authorities, the justice system and other statutory agencies and hold them to account.

NEW CRIMINAL OFFENCES

including for non-fatal strangulation, extending the controlling or coercive behaviour offence to cover post-separation abuse, and extending the 'revenge porn' offence to cover the threat to disclose intimate images with the intention to cause distress.

A BAN ON GP'S CHARGING VICTIMS

for medical evidence of domestic abuse, including for legal aid.

DATA SHARING

A duty on the government to issue a code of practice on how data is shared.

PRIORITY NEED FOR HOUSING ASSISTANCE

A guarantee that all eligible homeless victims and survivors will automatically have 'priority need' for housing assistance.

A LEGAL DUTY ON LOCAL AUTHORITIES

To fund support for victims and survivors and their children in 'safe accommodation'. Suffolk's Safe Accommodation Strategy is available [here](#).

A BAN ON ABUSERS

Using a defence of 'rough sex'.

NEW PROTECTIONS

In the criminal, family and civil courts for victims and survivors.

“Both Clare's Law & Sarah's law need to be more publicly promoted. I had no idea they existed”

Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Survivor 

“I didn't know where to go for support”

Sexual Violence Survivor 

C. POLICE RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

A full review of the policing response to violence against women and girls was carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) - the [final report](#) was published in September 2021.

Evidence was gathered from inspections of police forces, from national data, from policing and Government policies and strategy, as well as individual accounts of victims and survivors. The report found that a fundamental cross-system change is urgently needed to tackle an epidemic of violence against women and girls. It emphasised that vast improvements made in recent years, but the report also found several areas where the police need to improve, including concerns about the amount of violence against women and girls cases closed without charge, and major gaps in the data recorded on those offences. Several recommendations have been made for immediate improvements to police practices:



Recommendation 1

There should be an immediate and unequivocal commitment that the response to violence against women and girls offences is an absolute priority for government, policing, criminal justice system and public sector partnerships. This needs to be supported at a minimum by a relentless focus on these crimes: mandated responsibilities; and sufficient funding so that all partner agencies can work effectively as part of a whole-system approach to reduce and prevent the harms these offences are causing.



Recommendation 2

The relentless pursuit and disruption of adult perpetrators should be a national priority for the police, and their capability and capacity to do this should be enhanced.



Recommendation 3

Structures and funding should be put in place to make sure victims receive tailored and consistent support.



Recommendation 4

All police Chief Constables should immediately review and ensure that there are consistently high standards in their forces' responses to violence against women and girls and should be supported in doing so by national standards and data.



Recommendation 5

Immediate review of use of police outcome code 15 (evidential difficulties) and outcome code 16 (victim does not support further action) in violence against women and girls.

The police have unique powers, responsibilities and opportunities to reduce the harm caused by violence against women and girls, they can prevent crimes, investigate offences, pursue perpetrators and bring them to justice, protect women and girls, manage offenders and help make our streets safer. Suffolk constabulary recognise this and will develop and implement actions which reflect current national policing strategy, based on three overarching 'pillars'.



PILLAR 1: BUILD TRUST AND CONFIDENCE

1. Respond unequivocally to allegations of police-perpetrated abuse, learning from mistakes and best practice.
2. Challenge and address sexism and misogyny within policing.
3. Involve VAWG organisations, including charities supporting Black and minoritised women and girls, as well as individual women and girls with lived experience.
4. Collect consistent local and national information on the availability of specialist VAWG investigators to build the right capability and capacity.

PILLAR 2: RELENTLESS PURSUIT OF PERPETRATORS

5. Relentlessly pursue and actively manage and target the most dangerous and prolific perpetrators.
6. Better use of police powers to protect women and girls, and to manage and disrupt perpetrators.
7. Adopt a trauma-aware approach at all levels, to better support victims through the criminal justice process, and focus on evidence-led prosecutions where appropriate
8. Enhanced supervision of VAWG investigations.

PILLAR 3: SAFER SPACES

9. Immediate and unequivocal prioritisation of VAWG.
10. Focus prevention work on the most dangerous online, private and public spaces

10. Achievements

In our 2018-21 Strategy our ambition was to 'Reduce the likelihood of becoming, and impact of, being a victim of VAWG in Suffolk'. We aimed to achieve this by improving the way we commission services, by having a better understanding and insight into data and what it is telling us, by getting upstream with prevention and education, to strengthen the way we connect, co-ordinate and communicate across Suffolk and to advocate and influence the criminal justice response.

Suffolk has made good progress tackling VAWG across both organisational and geographical boundaries. The commitment, resources and collaboration across the public, voluntary and private sector has enabled us to ensure some of what we do is now business as usual, has enabled us to be innovative and test new ways of working, and has enabled us to invest and commission valuable services to support those in need.

We are proud of what has been achieved but are not complacent in our approach and seek to build on this success and momentum of societal change to ensure the safety of women and girls is a priority for all.

INSIGHT

- Freedom Programme provision mapped to help understand geographical spread of domestic violence in Suffolk.
- Safe Accommodation Evaluation and Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment published, which will inform future work on domestic abuse accommodation and support.
- Worked with national charity SafeLives to review the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and implement its recommendations for improvements.
- Routinely share Domestic Abuse Homicide Reviews and Safeguarding Adult Reviews to share learning with partners.
- Regional Domestic Abuse Research Network (DARNet) launched with University of Suffolk to foster and support knowledge exchange events, and to enable practitioners and academics to connect with current issues and research.

COMMISSIONING

- Suffolk County Council & The Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner (OPCC) aligned the commissioning cycles of two major domestic abuse contracts which now includes joint contract and performance management.
- Secured funding for additional ISVAs and IDVAs to create capacity and better services for minority groups.
- Secured and additional 360k to support domestic and sexual violence services during the Covid-19 pandemic.

PREVENTION & EDUCATION

- 24/7 Domestic Abuse helpline. The helpline offers support, advice and action for anyone experience domestic abuse, and for those worried about someone they know.
- Targeted campaigns, such as during the Euro football tournament, support for the annual sexual violence awareness week, and the annual countywide promotion of White Ribbon, of which it's media campaign in 2021 reached over 87,000 people.
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) awareness bitesize sessions delivered to 700+ people.
- Roll-out of a translation of Domestic Abuse Outreach Service information, to make it accessible to all.
- We funded a Schools Engagement Coordinator to develop Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) portal for use by Suffolk schools.
- Developed quality support services for victim-survivors and perpetrators which have received accreditation: IDVA Leading Lights; Icení Venta programme "Respect" accreditation.

PROTECTION & JUSTICE

- Established a Police Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Unit working alongside community based Venta programme for those who cause harm.
- Developed a new forum to focus on the needs of communities in which people tend not to either report or seek support for domestic abuse, or who may face additional barriers in doing so, and developed projects to support them.
- Supported roll-out of Body Worn Cameras to capture early evidence.
- Supported the Caring Dads programme for men who have abused, neglected, or exposed their children to domestic violence.
- Continued to train police through 'DA Matters' training, aiming to change and challenge the attitudes, culture and behaviour of the police when responding to domestic abuse.
- 2020 saw the creation of a Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Unit (DAPU) consisting of police and behaviour change caseworkers working one-to-one with domestic abuse offenders to address and alter their behaviour, protect victims and reduce demand on the force.

It's good that the 'system' is engaging with us. We would love to get more involved, have our say and co-create on a regular basis"




COORDINATION & COMMUNICATION

- Secured funding for 24 self-contained satellite units and associated support for victims of domestic abuse.
- Secured funds for Project Safety Net Norfolk/Suffolk to provide support and accommodation for those with no resource to public funds.
- Commissioned the national charity SafeLives to explore opportunities for single front door approach in Suffolk, to ensure victims get the right help first time.
- A local Modern Slavery referral mechanism was developed and published.
- Schools Engagement Coordinator funded to develop Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) portal.
- Set up and funded a Target Hardening project to make the homes of high-risk domestic abuse victims safe within 24hrs of an incident.
- Developed and secured funding for a Domestic Abuse Champions project that now has over 700 champions across the county. Champions offer consistent information, advice, and support for victims, which is rooted in the community.
- Suffolk County Council refreshed its Domestic Abuse Strategy for staff and launched a toolkit for managers, to ensure staff who experience and disclose any form of domestic abuse receive an effective and reliable response, and feel safe and supported in the workplace.
- All Suffolk libraries launched as 'safe spaces' for victims of domestic abuse, and libraries staff to know how to respond if someone who is suffering from abuse asks for help.
- Set up Peer Domestic Abuse Scrutiny Panels, to bring victim voice through providers to challenge and improve police practice.
- Funded Domestic Abuse Link Officers in Housing departments of every District & Borough Council in Suffolk, to ensure victims needs are assessed and appropriate support provided.
- Domestic Homicide Review Conference held to share learning, and developed a new countywide protocol, to ensure a consistent process is followed by practitioners across Suffolk.
- Domestic Abuse Nurses established in acute hospitals to raise awareness of abuse and support victim-survivors.

11. Commitments from the Suffolk System


“We want women and girls to have the confidence to report any incident or concerns they have to us, knowing that we will respond sensitively and with a determination to provide the very best service we can. We will do everything possible to support and protect victims. We will treat all allegations of crimes seriously and undertake to complete consistently thorough investigations to enhance the effective prosecution of offenders.”

 Head of Crime, Safeguarding and Incident Management
Suffolk Constabulary strategic lead for Violence Against Women and Girls


“Preventing Violence Against Women & Girls and bringing the perpetrators to justice has and remains a top priority for me as PCC. It is an appalling crime which is totally unacceptable. We can only tackle this very serious issue and reduce its prevalence in Suffolk by working together across all agencies and sectors in society. That’s why I completely support this improved approach. In respect of the role of the Police and Crime Commissioner, there is a continued commitment to ensuring services are available to all victims of violence and abuse.”

 Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk

“We will take every opportunity to make changes in the system to prevent Violence Against Women & Girls and provide the best support possible for victims.”

 Community Safety Manager
Suffolk County Council, Public Health and Communities


“To work together so women and girls are at the heart of the strategy, actively listening to their voices to shape what we do.”

 Adult Safeguarding Operational Manager


“Suffolk County Council resolves to support and accelerate the initiative to refresh the VAWG Strategy and will seek the support of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board at its meeting in mid-December. Immediately after the new strategy has been approved, Suffolk County Council will promote and support it widely on all levels in Suffolk.”

 Suffolk County Council, Full Council

“Violence comes in many forms; it can be both physical, verbal and implied through actions. Whatever form it presents itself in it is not acceptable. We need to work together to change the pattern of violence we have seen where the predominant victims are women and girls. Prevention needs to start early to counter harmful attitudes and behaviours. We need to ensure that we engender the qualities of Respect and Empathy through the work we undertake with children and in our own organisational training.”

 Area Commander, Suffolk Constabulary

“All Local Authorities in Suffolk are fully committed and will be taking steps to support changes to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls in their work to prevent and relieve homelessness.”

 Housing teams
Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council, East Suffolk Council, Ipswich Borough Council, and West Suffolk Council

“Ipswich Borough Council through the Ipswich CSP will continue to support the Suffolk Violence Against Women & Girls Strategy , it will remain a high priority of the CSP and we will continue to work with other partners to make Ipswich a safe place for women.”

 Councillor Alasdair Ross, Ipswich Rushmere Ward

“We are fully committed to supporting the end of violence against women and girls and will actively support the strategy”

 Bury St Edmunds Womens Aid

“Committed to providing Domestic Abuse Outreach Service”

 Anglia Care Trust

“We are committed to providing high quality holistic services to victims of domestic abuse to improve outcomes”

 Leeway

“We will stay committed to be victim lead, to work around other issues such as mental health and learning difficulties”

 Norfolk and Suffolk Victim Care

“Orwell will continue to educate and raise awareness amongst our teams to recognise and support people experiencing Domestic Abuse and sexual violence ”

 Orwell Housing

“Restitute will continue to support families and carers who are dealing with the devastation of sexual and violent crime”

 Restitute

“We are committed to providing the DAOS Outreach Service and 24/7 Helpline”

 Anglia Care Trust


“We are committed to supporting all male and female survivors of sexual abuse from throughout Suffolk ”

 Survivors In Transition

“We will provide independent, specialist support to women and girls in Suffolk who have experienced any form of sexual violence or abuse at any time in their lives”

 Suffolk Rape Crisis

“We are committed to producing high quality research, evaluation and training to end violence against women and girls ”

 The Institute for Social Justice and Crime at the University of Suffolk

“Further roll out of training for frontline staff, to increase skills and knowledge to ensure a system change”

 Suffolk County Council Workforce Development

“Citizens Advice in Suffolk are committed to working with partners to support victim-survivors of violence against women and children to find a way forward”

 Operations Manager, Citizens Advice Mid Suffolk

“We will ensure services are developed for child victims of witnessed domestic abuse to support them to make sense of their experiences ”

 Suffolk County Council, Head of Safeguarding and Reviewing Officer Service

“Suffolk Law Centre is working towards increasing the Legal Advice and support offer available to victims of domestic abuse”

 Suffolk Law Centre

“Further roll out of training for frontline staff, to increase skills and knowledge to ensure a system change”

 Suffolk County Council Workforce Development

“We will ensure that children and vulnerable adults who are direct, or indirect victims of domestic abuse are effectively safeguarding ”

 Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub

“We will commit to share our information, logo, webpages etc. ”

 Bury St Edmunds Womens Aid

There is so much fear and nobody is hearing the voice of young girls. It's taken me 20 years to find out about my local support service and it's on my doorstep”

Domestic Abuse Survivor



12. Action Plan 2022-25

In preparing this Strategy we have reviewed the previous 2018-21 action plan to understand what is complete, where we still need to do more and have discussed opportunities to develop new actions and projects that meet the vision and objectives in this refreshed strategy.

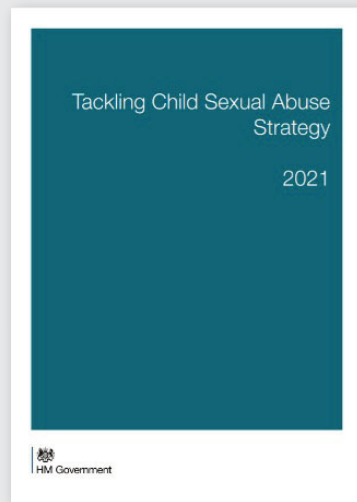
Going forward we will engage with victim-survivors, practitioners, decision makers and the community to co-produce and inform the future direction of Suffolk's approach to tackling VAWG. Funding will be made available to support delivery of the action plan and we already have early indications of what this might include:



There is so much fear and nobody is hearing the voice of young girls. It's taken me 20 years to find out about my local support service and it's on my doorstep"

Domestic Abuse Survivor 

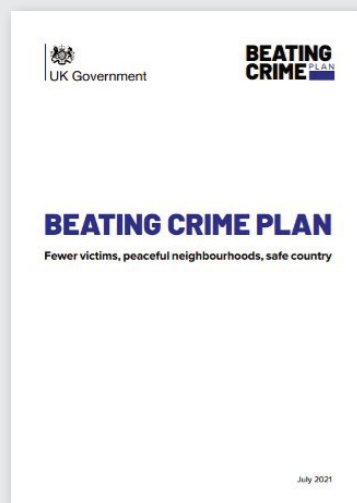
Appendix A - Relevant Strategies



Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy 2021

This ground-breaking Strategy sets out the Government's ambition to prevent, tackle and respond to all forms of child sexual abuse. It focuses on three key objectives which overlap and reinforce one another, recognising the complex, interconnected nature of this crime and the whole-system response it requires

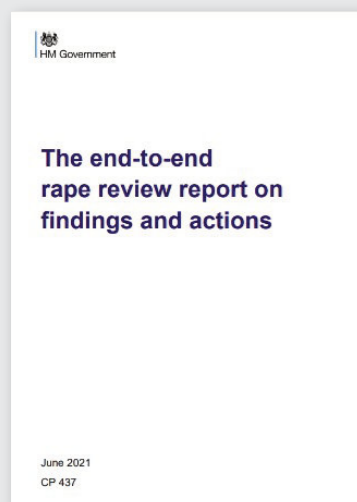
All three are inextricably linked and we will drive all three forward with the same focus to protect children, tackle offending and support all victims and survivors.



Beating Crime Plan

The Beating Crime Plan states that this Government is on the side of the law-abiding majority, and sets out how we will together deliver on our shared vision of fewer victims, peaceful neighbourhoods and a safer country.

While overall crime has been falling for some time, we know that this is not a reality recognised or enjoyed by all. We also know that even where crime does fall, the public rightly expect us to be focused, smart and unrelenting in continuing to drive it down further.

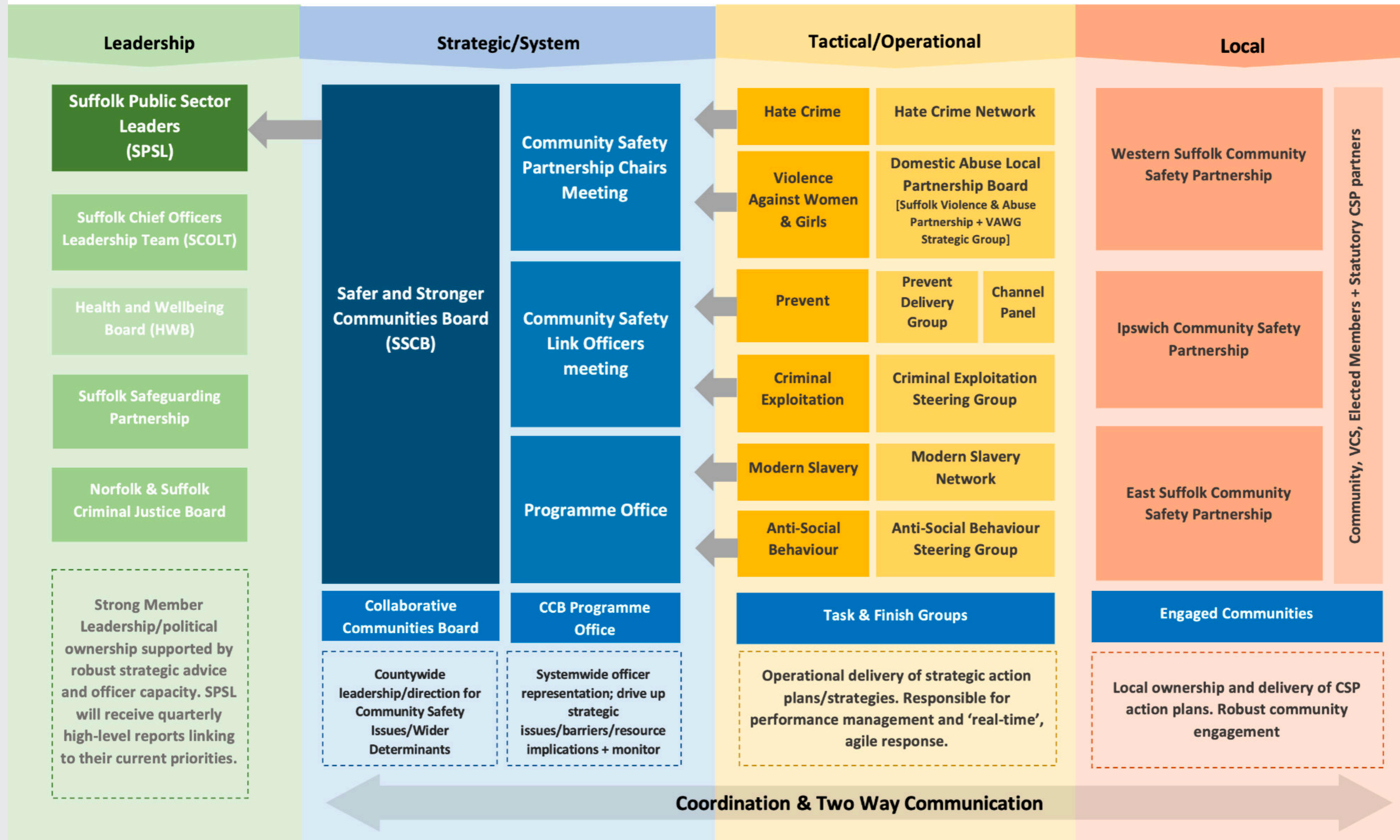


End to End Rape Review Report on Findings and Actions

The Government's End to End Review of the Criminal Justice System Response to Rape ("The Rape Review") commenced in March 2019 and looked at evidence across the system – from reporting to the police to outcomes in court – in order to understand what is happening in cases of adult rape and serious sexual offences being charged, prosecuted and convicted in England and Wales.

Appendix B - Governance Structure

Safer and Stronger Communities Governance



Appendix C - Services Available in Suffolk



ACT are commissioned to provide Domestic Abuse Outreach Service (DAOS) for domestic abuse victims who have been assessed as at medium risk of serious harm. ACT provide “satellite” safe accommodation for victims of domestic abuse.

24 hour helpline 0800 977 5690
Website: suffolkdahelpline.org.uk



The Ferns is the Suffolk Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) which provides support to anyone who has experienced sexual abuse.

Website: theferns-suffolk.org.uk



Fresh Start new beginnings work through Suffolk and Norfolk and was set up to provide a therapeutic service for children and young people up to 18 years who have reported being sexually abused and to offer support for their families.

Website: fsnb.org.uk



Leeway are commissioned to provide the Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) service for domestic abuse victim who have been assessed as at high risk of serious harm.

24 hour helpline 0800 977 5690
Website: leewaysupport.org



Compassion provide support for those who have experience domestic abuse in South Suffolk.

Website: compass-ion.org



PHOEBE offers specialist advice, information, casework, advocacy and support services to black and minority ethnic women and children who are experiencing domestic abuse.

Website: phoebecentre.org.uk



Orwell Housing are commissioned to provide refuge accommodation for women and children fleeing domestic abuse.

Website: orwell-housing.co.uk



Lighthouse are based in Ipswich and are commissioned to provide refuge accommodation for Domestic Abuse victims. They also offer a broad range of services to support victim-survivors from their outreach centre.

Website: lighthousewa.org.uk



Alumah are based in Brandon and offer support for anyone experiencing domestic abuse.

Website: alumah.co.uk



Restitute support third party victims of violent or sexual crime – the parents, carers, partners and loved ones who have survived sexual abuse, exploitation, and violence as well as those caring for those who have survived domestic or other serious violence. In addition, they support parents whose children have committed sexual abuse against a sibling and the former partners of people who have accessed online illegal images.

Website: restitute.org



WDAF provides support for families impacted by domestic abuse.

Website: waveneydvforum.org.uk



BWA are based in Bury St Edmunds and are commissioned to provide refuge accommodation for Domestic Abuse victims. They also offer a broad range of services to support victim-survivors from their outreach centre.

Website: burystedmundswomensaid.org.uk



Suffolk Rape Crisis work with women and girls from the age of 14 who have experienced any form of sexual violence.

Website: srchelp.org.uk



Norfolk & Suffolk Victim Care are commissioned to provide support for Domestic Abuse Victims who have been assessed as at standard risk of serious harm.

Website: nsvictimcare.org



Survivors in Transition provide support for survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

Website: survivorsintransition.co.uk



Iceni work with families across Suffolk who are impacted by domestic abuse and offer community based domestic abuse perpetrator programme.

Website: iceniipswich.org

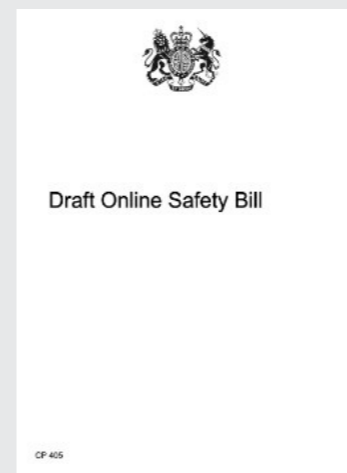
Appendix D - Connected Publications



Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls

The Government's Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy follows the Government's previous 2010, 2016 and 2019 Strategies which set out their approach to tackling crimes which disproportionately affect women and girls.

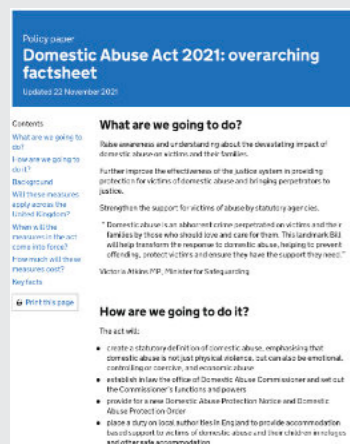
This year (2021), the extent to which violence against women and girls exists has been brought to the forefront of the nation's attention.



Online Safety Bill

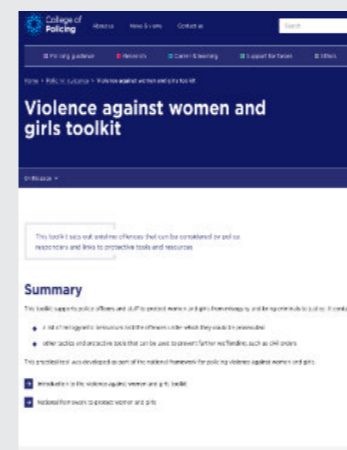
This bill is currently (2021) in draft form and seeks to establish a new regulatory framework to tackle harmful online content.

The aims of the bill are likely to focus on preventing the spread of illegal content, protecting children from harmful material and protecting adults from legal but harmful content. The Bill is likely to have an impact of VAWG, Criminal Exploitation and educational settings.



Domestic Abuse Act

The act aims to ensure that victims have the confidence to come forward and report their experiences, safe in the knowledge that the state will do everything it can, both to support them and their children and pursue the abuser.



Violence Against Women and Girls Toolkit

The college of policing has created a toolkit that supports police officers and staff to protect women and girls from misogyny and bring criminals to justice.

It contains a list of misogynistic behaviours and the offences under which they could be prosecuted. It also contains other tactics and protective tools that can be used to prevent further reoffending, such as civil orders.



Police response to violence against women and girls

This report sets out findings from our inspection of how effectively the police respond to violence against women and girls (VAWG) offences. These are violent and high-harm crimes that disproportionately affect women and girls, such as domestic abuse, sexual violence, stalking and female genital mutilation..

The Home Secretary commissioned this report in March 2021 as part of the response to the horrific murder of Sarah Everard. The names of other women who have been murdered have reached public consciousness since then, including Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman, Gracie Spinks and Julia James.