



Devon and Cornwall Police

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Platinum

Meeting held on Thursday 23 April 2026

Via Teams, and commenced at 09.31am

Attendance

James Vaughan (Chief Constable) (Chair)
Nikki Leaper (Assistant Chief Constable, Contact and Specialist Operations)
Nicky Seager (Detective Superintendent, Strategic Safeguarding)
Alexis Poole (Assistant Chief Officer, People)
Tanya Croft (Head of Corporate Communications and Engagement)
Belinda Dunmell (Unison Representative)

Jim Colwell (Deputy Chief Constable)
Matt Longman (T/Assistant Chief Constable, Crime, Justice and Vulnerability)
Mike Stamp (Director of Legal, Reputation and Risk)
Dinah Cox (Non-Executive Director)
Zoe Parnell (Devon and Cornwall Chief Officer)
Jane Makewell (Specialist Support Coordinator)

Apologies

Fran Hughes (OPCC Chief Executive)

Emma Butler-Jones (Superintendents' Association)
Paul O'Dwyer (Unison Representative)

Glen Mayhew (Assistant Chief Constable Local Policing)
Alex Doughty (Superintendent, Alliance Professional Standards)

Guests

Sheon Sturland (Commander, Protecting Vulnerable People) (for minute references 01/26/10 and 01/26/11)
Natalie Booth (Chief Officer Group, Support Officer Sergeant) (observer)

Victoria Lewanowski (Detective Inspector, Professional Standards Investigations) (Representative for Alex Doughty)

01/26/01 Opening and Declaration of Interests [FOIA Open]

James Vaughan opened the meeting, welcomed members and noted apologies. No declarations of interest, health and safety or equality concerns were raised. Members noted the timeliness of this Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) meeting given the additional emphasis from the Home Office (HO) to address stalking.

01/26/02 Minutes from the previous meeting 18 December 2025 [FOIA Open]

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 December 2026 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

Nikki Leaper joined the meeting.

01/26/03 Action Log [FOIA Open unless exemptions specified below]

- a. **Action 28 VAWG Strategic Risk Management (previous minute reference 04/25/43)**
82% of Moonstone officers had started or completed the Homicide Timeline Training. All officers would be provided with one training day upon joining Moonstone to ensure this training is completed. An update regarding training compliance would be brought to the next meeting.
Action to remain open.
- b. **Action 28 Angiolini Inquiry Recommendation 14 (previous minute reference 04/25/48)**
[FOIA Closed S.31]
This section has been redacted under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 s.31.

01/26/04 Strategic Risk Update [FOIA Open]

Mike Stamp presented the Strategic Risk Update paper which outlined identified key VAWG risks and sought to provide assurance that appropriate mitigations were in place. There were three Force Management Risk Register (FMRR) headings associated with Violence Against Women and Girls, which were 6a Protecting the Vulnerable – Domestic Abuse (DA), 6b Protecting the Vulnerable – Rape & Serious Sexual Offences (RaSSO) and 6c Protecting the Vulnerable – Stalking and Harassment. As of 7 April 2026, 6a and 6b were High (amber) risks and 6c was an Elevated (yellow) risk and the risk causes for each area were a result of the Force's response to DA crimes.

Members noted the additional scrutiny that was placed on DA risks, which included the inconsistent quality of Public Protection Notices (PPNs) and the management of secondary risk assessments, and queried whether this should be reassessed as a red risk. It was acknowledged that significant mitigation had been put in place; however, it would need time to embed. Progress would be monitored via DCC Governance Board and the Crime Investigation Improvement work group before an update was brought to the Chief Constables Quarterly Review in June 2026.

The Board noted that there were an insufficient number of Sexual Offence Liaison Officers (SOLOs) for timely response to rape victims and that there was no additional funding for the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) in Plymouth, leading to victims being transported to either Exeter or Truro for forensic medicals. A decision on increasing resources would be made subsequent to the completion of the second phase of Priority Based Budgeting (PBB).

During discussions the following actions were created:

1. Matt Longman would raise the lack of PPN consistency with the Crime Investigation Improvement work group to establish whether it should be escalated to a Red risk and make the final determination as Executive Risk Owner for this risk.

For action by: Matt Longman

2. Nicky Seager would provide a paragraph on the mitigations that had been put in place regarding the provision of Rape and Serious Sexual Offences Unit (RaSSO) services in Plymouth to Matt Longman as Executive Risk Owner for inclusion on the FMRR.

For action by: Nicky Seager

The Board:

1. Was assured that the Force had identified the current key risks and threats to the Force associated with Violence Against Women and Girls and that the appropriate assessment, assurance, processes, and mitigating actions were in place to address those risks.

01/26/05 Operation Leaf [FOIA Open unless exemptions specified below]

Nikki Leaper and Vicky Lewandowski provided members with a verbal update regarding Operation Leaf and Police Perpetrated Domestic Abuse (PPDA). A meeting was held with victims and survivors of DA and Sexual Abuse (SA) in collaboration with the Centre for Women's Justice on 5 March 2026. Devon and Cornwall Police (DCP) shared their learning about PPDA and the policy and process changes that had taken place.

Members discussed how Operation Leaf was moving more towards a more generalised PPDA agenda and that this should be reflected on the forward planner for the VAWG meeting moving forward.

The Board noted the potential conflict between ongoing allegations against officers and their progression through the promotion process. Candidates for promotion would need to ensure that they made their Line Manager aware of any intelligence that may be flagged in the vetting process and counter corruption check.

Vicky Lewandowski joined the meeting.

This section has been redacted under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 s.31.

Members recognised the complexity and sensitivity of PPDA investigations, particularly where confidence and public trust were concerned. The Board challenged how the model would be perceived from a community confidence perspective and noted the importance of demonstrating fairness and avoiding a perception of bias due to officers investigating their colleagues.

During discussion the following actions were created:

1. The Strategic Support Hub (SSH) would adjust the Terms of Reference and the forward planner to reflect the change of the standing item from Operation Leaf to PPDA.
For action by: **SSH**
Discharged.
2. SSH would ask the Detective Chief Inspector Alliance Professional Standards to bring a report to the VAWG meeting on 23 July 2026 regarding the progress of the pilot in Plymouth to ensure scrutiny and oversight.
For action by: **SSH**
3. Dinah Cox would take the subject of the handling of off duty PPDA in the Plymouth pilot and the potential for using Proceeds of Crime Act (PoCA) funding to the VAWG Reference Group for discussion.
For action by: **Dinah Cox**

Vicky Lewandowski left the meeting.

01/26/06 VAWG Update [FOIA Open]

Matt Longman provided a verbal update on VAWG across the Force, progress on Operation Soteria and the following salient points were noted:

- Progress had been made against Operation Soteria's six framework pillars. Plans had been made to separate the ownership of the pillars and allocate to Detective Chief Inspectors dependent on individual skills and knowledge.
- A national update on Soteria and sign off was expected at the end of April 2026.
- PPN quality, investigation standards and outcomes remained high priorities and action plans needed to reflect this.
- The Protecting Vulnerable People app had launched. It contained all relevant policies, procedures and guidance from Sharepoint and was accessible to frontline officers and investigative teams at any time of day.
- The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDs) escalation plan had been signed off at the Force Performance Board on 26 March 2026

Members welcomed the progress made and highlighted the importance of promoting positive outcomes and achievements.

01/26/07 Internal Culture Update [FOIA Open]

Alexis Poole shared a brief verbal update as to Internal Culture and provided an overview of ongoing activity. Jim Colwell had taken ownership of the Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harm (SASH) audit and Nicky Seager would be looking at ways to ensure that the audit provided longevity and moved beyond a traditional survey approach. HeForShe and the Women's Network were active in the cultural and wellbeing space within the Force.

Human Resources and Professional Standards Department had met with Matt Longman to review misconduct cases. The Criminal Justice Unit (CJU) had seen improvements in system flow. However, excessive timelines led to negative impacts on sustaining victim support and contact, organisational confidence and individuals subject to prolonged suspension.

The Board discussed the value of using reviews of misconduct cases to better understand trends across complaints, grievances and conduct matters.

Matt Longman left the meeting.

The Board broke at 10.43am and reconvened at 10.52 am.

01/26/08 Communications Update [FOIA Open unless exemptions specified below]

Tanya Croft provided a brief verbal update on communications activity supporting VAWG and associated safeguarding work. Members noted the following salient points:

- Third year students at Falmouth University had been commissioned to create proposals for behaviour change campaigns aimed at young males and parents. Some of their ideas would be used to support Force activity.
- Stalking Awareness Week had been supported using various channels. Social media posts had drawn mixed reactions from the public, as expected. The team had worked closely with ITV for a series of projects, including interviews.

Matt Longman rejoined the meeting.

- **This section has been redacted under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 s.30.**
- In June and July 2026 there would likely be a focus on DA to coincide with the World Cup. This would include posters, social media and press releases.
- A partnership with Exeter College had led to students developing TikTok videos on intimate abuse.

The Board welcomed efforts to use targeted communications and innovative approaches, including the work with colleges and universities, to reach intended audiences without inadvertently raising concern.

Members commended the breadth of activity underway and encouraged continued focus on audience targeting, community insight and positive messaging to support prevention and public confidence.

01/26/09 Staff Association Update [FOIA Open]

Members received and noted brief updates from the present Staff Associations. Members noted that a survey had been published regarding evidence-based perception from Force female members around nepotism and misogyny. A meeting would take place with Jim Colwell once the results had been finalised.

Sheon Sturland joined the meeting.

01/26/10 Angiolini Inquiry and Casey Report Recommendations [FOIA Open]

Sheon Sturland shared an update on the Angiolini Inquiry and Casey Report recommendations and wider issues of how to combat offending in public spaces. Since the publication of the Angiolini Inquiry report in December 2025, the Force had been waiting for clarity and guidance from the Home Office. Work on Operations Soteria and Vigilant had been progressed, the latter of which included significant training delivery.

Designing Out Crime Officers (DOCO) were waiting for the Home Office to provide additional powers and recommendations to take necessary actions regarding the overlap between Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and VAWG in public places.

An update was provided on the developing response to recommendation two of the Casey Report, renamed Operation Beaconport, which reviewed group-based child sexual abuse (CSE) and exploitation cases where no further action had been taken. Members noted the potential scale and resourcing implications, including likely case reviews and links with serious organised crime (SOC). The necessity of preserving material was discussed, and Matt Longman would devise a Force-wide communication to ensure that there was an embargo on disposing of any electronic or physical records.

For action by: Matt Longman

Members discussed standards relating to recruitment, vetting and workforce integrity and reaffirmed the importance of maintaining robust standards whilst supporting confidence in recruitment decisions. The Board supported maintaining a clear position on suitability and safeguarding within the organisation.

01/26/11 Emerging Areas for Improvement (AFIs) for Secondary Risk re Public Protection Notices (PPNs) [FOIA Closed s.31 Law Enforcement]

This section has been redacted under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 s.31.

01/26/12 Community Reference Group Update [FOIA Open]

Dinah Cox gave a brief verbal update as to the Community Reference Group meeting on 23 March 2026. The attendees had been offered Homicide Timeline training and had discussed the cost of Upstander-Bystander and Unconscious Bias training. The group debated the use of banter and how it could be helpful in a high stress environment, if it wasn't used as a cloak for discrimination or harassment.

Jim Colwell rejoined and Zoe Parnell left the meeting.

The reference group reflected on the importance of providing safe spaces for victims within the organisation, alongside opportunities for male colleagues to better understand behavioural boundaries, including initiatives such as HeForShe. Vetting was highlighted as a key preventative measure to ensure unsuitable individuals were not recruited, and the role of communications in reinforcing expectations and promoting good practice was emphasised. It was acknowledged that issues such as racism, sexism and misogyny were wider societal challenges and not limited to policing.

An update was provided on the National Vulnerability and Public Protection Strategy. Some concern was raised that violence against women and girls could be diluted within the broader strategy, particularly given existing funding pressures. Simplification of messaging was considered beneficial, alongside training to support understanding of vulnerability, toxic stress and the complex ways in which victims may present, to reduce the risk of misjudgement, where individuals did not present as expected.

Zoe Parnell rejoined the meeting.

During discussions the following actions were created:

1. The usefulness of upstander-bystander and unconscious bias training and how the effectiveness can be measured was queried, and Dinah Cox would take this back to the VAWG reference group for their comments.
For action by: Dinah Cox
2. Dinah Cox would adjust the Terms of Reference for the VAWG reference group to include Operation Leaf members, who would be invited to attend future reference group meetings.
For action by: Dinah Cox

01/26/13 Evaluation of Implementation of Recommendations from Operation Hibiscus [FOIA Closed s.22 Information Intended for Future Publication]

This section has been redacted under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 s.22.

01/26/14 Terms of Reference [FOIA Open]

James Vaughan presented the Terms of Reference for discussion, which had been amended for 2026. The following changes were requested:

- Operation Leaf would be removed as a standing item and PPDA would be added. HeForShe updates would be provided.
- A single Equality, Diversity and Inclusion representative was sufficient, pending the development of a more robust Culture and Inclusion Strategy.
- The VAWG tactical lead role would be referenced as a member, with the Strategic Safeguarding Superintendent confirmed as the appropriate lead.
- Job titles would be updated where required, including Assistant Chief Constable, Contact and Specialist Operations.
- Meeting frequency was reviewed and agreement was reached to move to a four-monthly cycle to streamline governance and increase leadership capacity for delivery. The meeting length would remain unchanged.
- The Head of Protecting Vulnerable People Command would be added as a member.

Violence against women and girls was reaffirmed as a high Force priority. Available funding streams, including Tate and PoCA funding, were discussed. It was noted that funding should be allocated proportionately and used to support VAWG initiatives and innovation, including potential direct grants to relevant charities, subject to equitable processes. A bid for a second Independent Stalking Advisor was noted for resubmission, seeking three-year funding with a view to incorporation into the core budget.

Date, Time, and Location of Next Meeting

There being no other business the meeting closed at 12.39pm. The next VAWG Platinum Board meeting will be held on Thursday 23 July 2026 commencing at 9.30am in the Executive Conference Room, HQ, Middlemoor.