



Devon and Cornwall Police

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Platinum

Meeting held on Tuesday 14 July 2026

Executive Conference Room and Teams commenced at 9.30am

Attendance

James Vaughan (Chief Constable) (Chair)	Jim Colwell (Deputy Chief Constable)
Nikki Leaper (Assistant Chief Constable, Contact and Specialist Operations) (virtual)	Glen Mayhew (Assistant Chief Constable Local Policing) (virtual)
Nicky Seager (Detective Superintendent, Strategic Safeguarding)	Mike Stamp (Director of Legal, Reputation and Risk)
Alexis Poole (Assistant Chief Officer, People)	Dinah Cox (Non-Executive Director)
Emma Butler-Jones (Superintendents' Association) (virtual)	Tanya Croft (Head of Corporate Communications and Engagement) (virtual)
Zoe Parnell (Devon and Cornwall, Chief Officer)	Natalie Booth (Police Federation Representative) (virtual)
Charles Jagger (GMB Representative) (virtual)	Jane Makewell (Specialist Support Coordinator)

Apologies

Fran Hughes (OPCC Chief Executive)	Matt Longman (T/Assistant Chief Constable, Crime, Justice and Vulnerability)
Sheon Sturland (Commander, Protecting Vulnerable People)	Lesley Bulley (Superintendent, Alliance Professional Standards)
Paul O'Dwyer (Unison Representative)	

Guests

Tim Evans (Chief Inspector, Professional Standards) (representative for Lesley Bulley) (virtual)
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02/26/15 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.

02/26/16 Minutes from the previous meeting 23 April 2026 [FOIA Open]

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 April 2026 were agreed as a true and accurate record.



02/26/17 Action Log [FOIA Open]

a. Action 28 VAWG Strategic Risk Management (previous minute reference 04/25/43)

A dedicated day to undertake Homicide Timeline Training was allocated when officers joined Moonstone; however, this was not always applied consistently. The training was embedded and formed part of business-as-usual (BAU). Training completion and consistency varied across teams, with some areas performing better than others and recording and tracking would monitor this area.

Action closed.

b. Action 31 Strategic Risk Update (previous minute reference 01/26/04)

Activity completed.

Action closed.

Emma Butler-Joined joined the meeting.

c. Action 32 Strategic Risk Update (previous minute reference 01/26/04)

Activity completed.

Action closed.

d. Action 34 Operation Leaf (previous minute reference 01/26/05)

Activity completed.

Action closed.

e. Action 35 Operation Leaf (previous minute reference 01/26/05)

Consideration was given to whether the Plymouth pilot, regarding Police Perpetrated Domestic Abuse (PPDA) due to be addressed by the Professional Standards Department (PSD), could be funded through Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA) funds. It was noted that, if the pilot was rolled out across the Force, additional resources would be required within PSD to support delivery.

Action closed.

f. Action 37 Community Reference Group Update (previous minute reference 01/26/12)

There had been no response from members of the VAWG Reference Groups as to how useful the Upstander-Bystander training had been. Members observed that the impact would be difficult to evaluate.

Action closed.

g. Action 38 Community Reference Group Update (previous minute reference 01/26/12)

Activity completed.

Action closed.



02/26/18 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 currently three Force Management Risk Register (FMRR) headings associated with VAWG: 6a) Protecting the Vulnerable – Domestic Abuse (DA), 6b) Protecting the Vulnerable – Rape and Serious Sexual Offences, and 6c) Protecting the Vulnerable – Stalking and Harassment. The DA and Rape and Serious Sexual Offences risks were graded amber (high), and the Stalking and Harassment risk was graded yellow (elevated).

There were 16 linked risks associated with VAWG in the FMRR, which were detailed in the appendix (available from the Specialist Support Hub). The 16 identified risks included three risks relating to Rape and Serious Sexual Offences, seven relating to DA, three relating to Stalking and Harassment, and three overarching VAWG risks.

The VAWG risks were subject to quarterly review. However, due to the demands of Priority Based Budgeting (PBB), the most recent review had been conducted in January 2026. The next Public Protection and Vulnerability risk review was planned for late July 2026 or early August 2026 and formed part of the FMRR review cycle.

A review of Public Protection Notices (PPN) had been undertaken, and changes had been identified and agreed by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). However, the amendments had not yet been implemented due to the review cycle. Implementation was expected to take place in September 2026.

In relation to the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC), developments had taken place. Four options for consolidated sites had been identified, and a representative from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) had taken the proposals away for further consideration. Progress was reported to be moving forward at pace.

The Board:

1. Was reassured that Legal had identified the current key risks and threats to the Force associated with VAWG and that the appropriate assessment, assurance, processes, and mitigating actions were in place to address those risks.

02/26/19 Police Perpetrated Domestic Abuse (PPDA) Update [FOIA Open unless exemptions specified below]

Tim Evans provided members with a verbal update on PPDA and the positive preventative steps that were being taken to identify and address concerns. The following salient points were noted:



- Detective Chief Inspector (DCI) reviews identified that the crime investigation issues relating to Potential Police Perpetrators of Violent Crime (PPVC) were broadly the same as those seen across wider investigative standards.
- **This section has been redacted under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 s.31(1)(c).**
- Following changes to regulations, the majority of existing PPDA cases would have required suspension. The presumption to suspend officers in VAWG cases was expected to have a positive impact on victim confidence, while helping to address the perception that police "close ranks and look after their own," as highlighted in the 2022 Centre for Women's Justice (CWJ) PPDA Super Complaint.
- Trials had been undertaken in Plymouth and Cornwall, during which the management of a number of PPDA cases had been transferred to PSD. This had provided a more expedient method of managing cases and had been viewed positively by investigators. There was a desire to continue and expand this approach.
- A paper would be submitted to Force Delivery Board on 18 August 2026 to make the case to move all PPVC cases to PSD. An Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) service would be requested to aid in the management of PPDA cases.
- Learning and Development training had been identified for PSD staff in relation to PPDA and PPVC. While no bespoke training had been developed, training was already provided to Police Staff Investigators and Detective Constables. A knowledge gap had been recognised, and plans were in place to upskill staff and ensure they were prepared for the forthcoming changes.

Appreciation was expressed for Human Resources' (HR) support in providing training opportunities. SafeLives was highlighted as offering a valuable one or two-day course for officers involved in DA investigations, and the use of external providers was suggested to further enhance training provision. There was an emphasis on ensuring staff, particularly police staff recruited directly into PSD, received appropriate training.

The training requirements were identified as a key lesson from Operation (Op) Movement, where it had not been possible to evidence that staff had received all necessary training to support them in their roles effectively. A training post could be funded through Op Resolve reserves. The primary challenge was expected to be recruiting a Detective Constable (DC) to fill the role. However, recruitment and retention were reported to be in a much stronger position than previously. Consideration was being given to supporting a Professionalising Investigation Programme (PIP) Level 2 qualified investigator, or alternatively, a Police Staff Investigator, into the role.

Members discussed the changes to the Conduct Regulations relating to DA. Under the revised regulations, where a Police Officer was arrested or questioned in relation to DA allegations, a suspension would generally be in the public interest. Any decision not to suspend would require justification by a Chief Officer. This represented a significant shift in organisational expectations and was expected to materially affect the Force's position. It was acknowledged, however, that Chief Officers retained discretion and that common sense should prevail when considering individual circumstances. Reference was also made to the Exceptional Circumstances Clause within the



regulations. Clarification was to be sought regarding the circumstances in which there could be a justified departure from the presumption of suspension.

It was further explained that each case would be reviewed at Deputy Chief Constable level rather than solely within PSD. Concerns were raised that rigid application of the regulations could create difficulties in cases involving counter-allegations, potentially resulting in the suspension of both parties. It was recognised that this might be difficult to avoid in some circumstances and that careful judgement would be required. While a pragmatic approach had previously been taken, the regulatory changes meant that some cases currently managed without suspension might now require suspension unless there was a robust and legally defensible rationale to support an alternative decision. Appropriate legal advice should be sought to ensure that early decisions could withstand scrutiny. It was estimated that approximately 15 individuals currently subject to restrictions could potentially be considered for suspension under the new regulations. It was recognised that this would have a direct impact on performance and management data.

Discussion took place regarding the need for a clear policy on managing counter-allegations in DA cases. It was acknowledged that a sufficiently developed policy was not yet in place. It was recognised that, within the wider DA context, individuals involved in a relationship could both engage in harmful behaviour, although there would generally be one primary victim. Any future approach would need to align with the new legislative framework, while ensuring consistency and fairness.

02/26/20 VAWG Update [FOIA Open]

Nicky Seager provided a verbal update on VAWG across the Force and progress on Op Soteria. The following salient points were noted:

- Safeguarding and supporting staff remained a priority. Concerns were raised about the lack of knowledge and confidence surrounding the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) process.

Tim Evans left the meeting.

- The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) wished to extend the Priority Charging Pilot and roll it out more widely, despite it not yet being formally evaluated. The proposal would streamline DA investigations, with cases progressed within 60 days, improved timeliness and prioritisation within the court process.
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was being considered with the CPS. This would impact investigation teams by requiring DA cases to be treated at a higher priority threshold.
- Existing CPS and Criminal Justice Unit (CJU) performance was within timescales, and the proposal was expected to reduce any delays. It was acknowledged that delay remained one of the biggest barriers to positive victim outcomes.

- While some affected teams raised concerns regarding capacity pressures, there was broad acknowledgement that this was the appropriate course of action for victims.
- Previous engagement with CPS colleagues had explored faster charging arrangements, challenges around appointment availability, officer shifts, and CJU capacity. Some case files could potentially be progressed on the same day rather than entering existing queues.

Concerns were raised about the impact on Moonstone teams, given existing demand across domestic abuse and stalking investigations. Members acknowledged that progressing investigations within 60 days would require a whole-system approach involving operational teams, Custody, and the CJU. There was recognition that cases not concluded within 60 days would enter the standard queue, creating a potential risk of future scrutiny around timeliness.

Members emphasised that the proposal was not about creating additional work but completing investigations more efficiently and consistently. Strong communication and engagement with supervisors and staff would be essential to support implementation, alongside consideration of staff welfare and potential equality impacts.

Discussion highlighted the wider benefits of reducing delays in DA investigations and improving outcomes for victims. While support across leadership teams was not yet consistent, members stressed the importance of clear direction, strong governance, and committed middle leadership to ensure successful delivery.

Members discussed preparations for the introduction of Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPO), recognising both the opportunities to better protect victims and the additional demand this would create. Progress against Op Soteria and the forthcoming His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) activity relating to Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RaSSO) investigations was referenced and concerns were raised regarding the pace of DAPO implementation planning, training requirements, and resource implications. It was agreed that further work was needed to ensure appropriate governance and delivery arrangements against national expectations.

02/26/21 Performance Update VAWG Outcomes [FOIA Open]

Nicky Seager shared a verbal update as to the steps that had been taken to improve outcomes for victims of DA, sexual offences and stalking. It was acknowledged that the issues had been considered at multiple Force Performance Board meetings and that performance was not yet at the required standard. However, it was recognised that capacity pressures continued to present significant challenges and that improvements would take time. A development objective had been established to improve outcomes relating to VAWG, and substantial effort was being made to deliver progress in this area.

Members acknowledged that cases became difficult to progress when victims withdrew their evidence or were no longer willing to support a prosecution. Maintaining victim engagement was,



therefore, considered critical. However, it was acknowledged that, in some cases, there was insufficient evidence to proceed regardless of victim involvement.

Attention was drawn to the positive aspects of performance, with reductions in victim attrition recorded across DA, sexual offences and stalking. Members questioned why these improvements had not yet resulted in improved outcomes and considered what additional factors may be impacting performance. Discussion explored the initiatives that had contributed to stronger victim engagement, with increased victim confidence identified.

The meeting broke at 10.44am and reconvened at 10.59am.

02/26/22 Staff Association Update [FOIA Open]

Members received and noted brief updates from the present Staff Associations. Union support was continuing for a member of Police Staff following a workplace sexual assault, with the case due to proceed to court. It was acknowledged that fewer cases had been reported recently.

It was noted that Natalie Booth had been appointed as the Police Federation representative.

Concerns were raised regarding the treatment of victims within the court process. An example was shared in which a suspect had presented several character references while the victim appeared to receive limited protection or support. It was noted that this issue aligned with ongoing work under Op Soteria, particularly its second phase, which considered the experience of victims within the wider criminal justice process. Members acknowledged that the way victims could be challenged during rape trials was often traumatic and that this feedback would be shared with those leading the work. It was noted that dedicated Victim Support Teams prepared victims for court proceedings. Similar concerns were raised regarding family court processes, where reports of inappropriate comments and a lack of alignment with a victim-centred approach had been identified.

An update was provided on work to develop guidance for police-on-police cases and strengthen support arrangements for victims. There was a need to encourage individuals to come forward and access support from an independent Police Federation representative. Concerns were expressed about the potential disproportionate impact of PPDA processes on certain ranks, and it was considered important that the Police Superintendents' Association remained involved in discussions and decision-making while maintaining a pragmatic and supportive approach.

At a national level, discussion had taken place with the Policing Minister regarding women in senior leadership roles and the absence of a clear national mandate linking leadership and inclusion. Further discussions were expected to be held through the Leadership Review and Leadership Commission. It was noted that the Leadership Review contained a substantial number of recommendations; however, its overall impact remained to be seen. Commitment to the Fast Track programme was reiterated. Female Chief Officers would meet virtually on 21 July 2026 to discuss



the treatment of women in both traditional and social media, with this issue being progressed by the Deputy Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service.

02/26/23 Angiolini Inquiry and Casey Report Recommendations [FOIA Open]

Nicky Seager shared a paper on the Angiolini Inquiry and Casey Report recommendations and the wider issues of how to combat offending in public spaces.

It was noted that the Angiolini recommendations were largely focused on prevention of sexually motivated crimes against women in public spaces. Progress against the first phase of recommendations was considered strong, while the second phase had largely transitioned into BAU activity. Areas of particular significance included the aspiration for nationally coordinated communications campaigns, such as activity linked to Op Synodontid, and the continued cultural shift towards the principles of "listen, believe and support."

Prevention of sexually motivated crimes against women in public spaces was identified as a Force challenge and an area that required continued focus. Reference was made to previous innovative work undertaken in Plymouth to tackle high-harm offending, and members agreed on the importance of continuing to support and embed the implementation of Op Soteria across the organisation.

Devon and Cornwall Police (DCP) had submitted 173 cases to Op Beaconport for review, with potentially very few cases being returned for further investigation. A significant number of additional cases had since been identified for consideration within a second tranche of submissions. Clarification was sought regarding the criteria for inclusion in the second tranche, and further information would be obtained and shared. Nicky Seager would supply the criteria for inclusion to Operation Beaconport to Jim Colwell before the VAWG Platinum meeting on 12 October 2026.

For action by: Nicky Seager

Members noted that the Casey Review had highlighted weaknesses in safeguarding, intelligence development, data collection and multi-agency working, which had limited opportunities to protect children and pursue offenders. Discussion also covered the funding and training requirements associated with Op Beaconport.

Concerns were raised about the increasing focus on historical investigations and the impact this was having on policing resources. While recognising the importance of addressing past failures, members reflected on the challenge of balancing historic enquiries with existing demand and the need to provide effective services to victims. The importance of a sustainable funding plan was highlighted, particularly given the growing number of competing pressures facing policing.

02/26/24 Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment (SASH) Auditing Service [FOIA Open]

Jim Colwell shared the paper regarding the SASH Auditing Service, which was taken as read. The paper outlined plans for DCP to implement the SASH Audit Service across the organisation. The service provided a structured audit framework for policing and partner organisations to better understand sexual abuse and sexual harassment, including how incidents were experienced, reported and responded to. The following highlights were noted:

- Since April 2026, the Task and Finish Group has met on three occasions, on 21 April 2026, 12 May 2026 and 3 June 2026, to consider the detailed aspects of the audit and its implementation.
- The audit had been designed to focus on experiences from the previous 12 months to reflect current realities.
- Completion time was expected to be approximately 30 minutes for most participants.
- Participation was voluntary but strongly encouraged, with a communications plan developed to support engagement.
- It was recognised that participation in both the survey and audit could not be mandated, particularly given the sensitive nature of the subject matter. Efforts would focus on encouraging the highest possible response rate to ensure meaningful results.
- Officers and staff would be provided with 30 minutes of protected time to complete the audit during the autumn.
- Preparatory communications would be issued In August 2026, supported by engagement with line managers.
- The next Task and Finish Group meeting was scheduled for 15 September 2026, with the audit expected to launch in October 2026.
- Executive and governance approval was required due to the significant time investment involved, equating to approximately 6,000 staff members each being allocated 30 minutes to participate.

Tanya Croft rejoined the meeting.

Members sought clarity regarding the possibility of a nil return, noting that communications should make it clear that all officers and staff were expected to complete the audit, regardless of whether they had experienced sexual assault or related inappropriate behaviour or not. It was felt that reinforcing this message would strengthen participation and improve the value of the findings.

Discussion took place regarding the communications plan and how the audit linked to previous organisational work. There was interest in reviewing the questions in advance, and it was suggested that providing information about the anticipated timescales for analysis and feedback might help encourage greater participation. However, it was acknowledged that setting clear deadlines for feedback could be difficult, as the nature and volume of responses might affect the time required to analyse the results.



Members highlighted the importance of gathering demographic information, including protected characteristics, geographical data, and information relating to power dynamics. This would help identify any patterns or areas of concern within teams, locations or groups. It was recognised that the audit would not be anonymous and that this would need to be communicated carefully due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter and the potential for difficult conversations to arise.

There was interest in understanding whether any findings indicated broader leadership issues or the misuse of power and position. Members agreed that an important next step would be determining how the organisation would respond to the results. It was suggested that a range of plausible scenarios should be considered in advance, including inappropriate behaviours being identified within specific teams or stations. Members felt that intervention plans, resources and support mechanisms should be prepared beforehand to enable a swift and effective response to the audit where required. Jim Colwell would establish plans for any feasible outcome and bring these back to the VAWG Platinum meeting on 12 October 2026.

For action by: **Jim Colwell**

Strong support was expressed for the overall direction of the work. Members emphasised the need for a clear intervention plan that could be implemented quickly and highlighted the importance of properly managing the protected time allocated for completion of the audit. It was noted that managers would need to actively support participation and ensure staff were able to use the allocated 30 minutes without creating additional pressures elsewhere in their workload.

Further discussion focused on the need to distinguish between individuals who chose not to complete the audit and those who may have been unwilling to disclose their experiences. It was recognised that these represented different issues and should be considered separately when reviewing participation rates. Members acknowledged that the content of the audit could be upsetting or triggering for some individuals and stressed the importance of handling the process sensitively.

Members reflected on previous staff surveys and agreed that the real value of the exercise would be determined by the action taken in response to the findings. It was noted that this was the first audit of this scale for some time and that the organisation would need to remain agile in responding to results. A clear commitment was given to acting on the results, and it was recognised that sufficient budgetary provision might be required to support any interventions arising from the findings.

The Board:

1. Noted the work undertaken by the Task and Finish Group and supported the roll out of the SASH audit across the organisation.
2. Agreed to provide protected time of 30 minutes (during duty time) for officers and staff to participate in the audit.

02/26/25 Communications Update [FOIA Open unless exemptions specified below]

Tanya Croft provided a verbal update on communications activity supporting VAWG and associated safeguarding work. Members noted the emerging threat of Organised Drug Facilitated Sexual Assault (ODFSA) and the ongoing Operation Synodontid. This activity linked to the national Op Soteria programme, which was continuing to develop. Corporate Communications were working closely with Nicky Seager on this issue.

Work was also underway with Falmouth University to scope future campaign activity. Some of this work had been supported through POCA funds. Proposals aimed at young men had not been developed as successfully as anticipated; however, positive ideas had emerged around engaging and educating parents which would be further developed.

As part of the campaign work, opportunities were being explored to use social media platforms and influencers to reach younger audiences, as well as a campaign around impact on siblings. This included work linked to Snapchat and discussions with a content creator whose audience was predominantly males aged 15 to 25. It was hoped that this partnership could support future awareness and prevention activity.

This paragraph has been redacted under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 s.43.

02/26/26 Community Reference Group Update [FOIA Open]

Dinah Cox gave a verbal update as to the activities of the VAWG Community Reference Group. Although the group had not met recently, engagement has continued through email communications. Information had been shared on the Homicide Timeline training, the 2026 Victims' Survey and the Kulpa feedback application, and members had been asked to provide examples of Bystander-Upstander and Unconscious Bias training; however, no examples had been received.

Concerns were raised about declining engagement levels. Discussions had taken place with some of the group's more active members to explore whether the Terms of Reference should be reviewed and how engagement within the group could be improved. To better understand the reasons for the declining engagement, further one-to-one discussions were planned with members and a future meeting would take place without police representation to encourage open feedback on the group's effectiveness and future direction. Consideration was being given to co-opting additional members, and work would continue to develop the group's effectiveness.

Discussion highlighted that travel expenses were already available for members attending meetings. One in-person meeting was held each year, with lunch and travel costs provided, while other meetings were conducted online. It was recognised that many members had significant personal and professional commitments, which could affect participation levels. Despite this, members agreed that the group contained highly capable and committed individuals whose expertise remained valuable to the Force.



**02/26/27 Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) Provision [FOIA Closed s.22
Information Intended for Future Publication]**

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

02/26/28 Summary of Actions [FOIA Open]

Jane Makewell summarised and clarified the actions that had been created during the meeting.

Date, Time, and Location of Next Meeting

There being no other business the meeting closed at 11.56am. The next VAWG Platinum Board meeting will be held on Monday 12 October 2026 commencing at 1.30pm in the Executive Conference Room, HQ, Middlemoor.