



From Listening to Lasting Change: Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2026-2029

SUSAN DUNGWORTH
NORTHUMBRIA
POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER

CONTENTS

03 Introduction
04 2 – About this strategy
08 3 – What we have achieved so far
11 4 – Current picture of VAWG
13 5 – Our Priorities:
14 Priority 1: Prioritising Prevention
19 Priority 2: Support Victim-Survivors
24 Priority 3: Action Against Perpetrators
28 Priority 4: Creating Stronger Systems to Address VAWG
38 6 – Taking the strategy forward



INTRODUCTION

As Police and Crime Commissioner I talk to a lot of people, and whether it's in schools and colleges, through consultation events, community meetings or conversations with victim-survivors, one message comes through time and time again -violence against women and girls continues to impact too many lives.

I've spoken with older women about how they have coped and recovered from years of abuse and violence and moved on with their lives. And I have spoken with young girls who have changed their everyday routines to feel safer, avoiding certain places, thinking twice about travelling alone or feeling uneasy online. No woman or girl should have to live that way, yet these experiences are commonplace.

Violence against women and girls is an issue affecting every age, background and circumstance. Its impact reaches far beyond the immediate harm caused, affecting confidence, mental health, relationships, education, employment and independence. At its heart - this is not just about crime. It is about safety, equality and freedom.

Sadly, the reality is we've all known someone whose life has been affected by violence, abuse or harassment. Behind every statistic is a person – and sometimes children too. That is why tackling violence against women and girls is a top priority for me.

I am proud of the work my office has achieved over the years. Together with partners, we have strengthened support for victim-survivors, invested in prevention and education, improved services and continued efforts to hold perpetrators to account. These are important steps forward, but we all know there is still much more to do.

At the same time, new challenges continue to emerge. Misogyny, harmful stereotypes and extreme online influences are reaching new audiences, particularly young men and boys. These attitudes can help to normalise harmful behaviours and create environments where abuse and violence are tolerated. But they need to be challenged. By us all.

That is why this new strategy sets out a clear and determined approach, building on the foundations of our previous strategy and reaffirming our commitment to preventing violence before it happens and working with partners to create safer communities. Just as importantly, it reflects our commitment to keep listening, learning and adapting as we need to.

Finally, my thanks go to the many women and girls who have shared their views and experiences to help guide our work as we look ahead to the next two years. We must all keep pushing for the change that women and girls deserve - and we need to ensure men and boys are on board pushing for it too.



Susan Dungworth
Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner



2 - ABOUT THIS STRATEGY

What is Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)?

Violence against Women and Girls is a term that covers a wide range of crime types and behaviours which disproportionately affect women and girls. VAWG is often rooted within the context of power and control and linked to women's inequality and the violation of women's rights.

VAWG crimes and behaviours include but are not limited to:

- Domestic abuse – including teenage relationship abuse, controlling and coercive behaviour and non-fatal strangulation
- Rape, sexual violence and sexual harassment
- Stalking and harassment
- 'So-called Honour'-based violence – including forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM)
- Online and tech-facilitated abuse – including 'cyberflashing' and non-consensual intimate image-based abuse or non-consensual sexually explicit deepfakes
- Child sexual abuse and exploitation
- Modern slavery and human trafficking for the purpose of exploitation
- Drug-facilitated abuse - including Spiking
- Public space sexual harassment

We recognise that men and boys can also be victim-survivors of the above crimes and behaviours and we are committed to tackling these in any form and ensuring support for all victim-survivors regardless of sex or gender or any other protected characteristics. We do however have to acknowledge that these crimes and behaviours are primarily committed by men against women and girls; and by men against men and boys. Prosecution data shows that over 90% of those prosecuted for domestic abuse, stalking or sexual offences are male.





Terminology

- **Victim-survivor** – throughout this strategy we use the term 'victim-survivor' to refer to someone who has experienced VAWG. Each victim-survivor will have their own preferred language and we respect this.
- **Perpetrators** – we also use the term 'perpetrator' throughout this strategy to refer to those who are causing harm as this term includes those outside of the criminal justice system
- We also use the term 'young people causing harm' to refer to children and young people displaying harmful or abusive behaviours

This strategy has been informed and developed by the lived experiences of victim-survivors, and we thank them for their bravery, insights and contributions. We would also like to thank our local experts and partners in the VAWG sector who have helped to inform the strategy.

The Role of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs)

Police and Crime Commissioners have a key role to play in tackling VAWG. My vision is to create safer streets and stronger communities by:

- Listening to the voices of residents across Northumbria to understand the issues they are facing in relation to VAWG
- Holding the Chief Constable of Northumbria Police to account on how they respond to VAWG
- Working in partnership with specialists and experts across the region from a range of sectors
- Commissioning a range of initiatives and services that prevent crime and disorder and help victim-survivors in Northumbria
- Supporting the delivery of national policing priorities including actions within the government's VAWG strategy - 'Freedom from Violence and Abuse: a cross-government strategy to build a safer society for women and girls'

Reducing violence against women and girls is a key priority within my Police and Crime Plan 2025-2029. Further details on this can be found here - Police & Crime Plan - Northumbria PCC

Our Commitments

Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) devastates the lives of adults, children and families within our communities. Too many people are fearing for their safety and suffering in silence. We recognise the negative and harmful impact of violence and abuse and our role in tackling VAWG across the region. Through consultations with specialist statutory and voluntary partners working within the VAWG sector and with victim-survivors and those causing harm, we have gathered their views and expertise on how to prevent and eliminate this abuse.

As a result of our consultations we have listened and together with our partners we commit to the following pledges when designing, delivering and commissioning services:

Break the silence:

- Ensure that the voice of all victim-survivors of VAWG is at the heart of everything we do
- Use our voices to engage with communities and create conversations that raise awareness of VAWG
- Understand the issues that affect victim-survivors from marginalised communities to meet their needs effectively

Take action:

- Focus on long-term, innovative approaches to tackling VAWG and promoting sustainable change that will span multiple generations
- Ensure that victim-survivors of VAWG are aware of their options for accessing support and that services are available to meet their individual recovery and support needs
- Ensure robust data informs our responses to VAWG and to identify areas of priority in our region
- Advocate for a full range of effective perpetrator responses that are essential to reduce risk, increase victim-survivor safety and breaking the cycle of VAWG for good
- Ensure that key learning around VAWG is implemented and embedded in our responses
- Ensure those causing harm know how to access help to address their behaviour

Educate:

- Support innovation in education and early interventions, with boys, girls, young men and women, around the root causes and the harmful behaviours and attitudes that can lead to VAWG
- Promote and use more inclusive and consistent language around VAWG so that information is accessible to all and eradicates victim blaming

Collaborate:

- Commit to convening and creating opportunities for partners to work together to share expertise, promote good practice and develop a whole system approach to tackling VAWG

Everybody has the right to feel safe and live a life free from violence and abuse. These commitments build upon the invaluable work and input of the partnership and their dedication to eradicating VAWG in all its forms.



3 - WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED SO FAR

Our 2023-2025 VAWG strategy included several outcomes that we wanted to achieve in our work towards lasting change. I am extremely proud of everything we have accomplished so far to make Northumbria a safe and inclusive place for everyone. The following achievements and statistics cover the period of our previous VAWG strategy and have driven meaningful and enduring impact in support of our four strategic priorities. Much of this work remains ongoing to support the delivery of our long-term ambitions.

Prioritising Prevention

1. 409 delegates attended Changing Lives 'Sex Work, Survival Sex and Sexual Exploitation' training
2. 45 Active Bystander Training courses delivered to 555 delegates to tackle sexual harassment and 99 professionals trained to deliver Active Bystander Training by Kindling Interventions
3. Alice Ruggles Trust raised awareness of Stalking in 16 assemblies across 6 schools to 1240 pupils and staff
4. Northumbria OPCC achieved White Ribbon Supporter Status with 9 champions and ambassadors trained
5. Sunderland University students created short films based on sexual harassment in the night-time economy and on Stalking through the Annual Police Award project funded by the OPCC
6. £15,000 reinvested into Newcastle's night-time economy Community Engagement and Safety Hub refurbishment for women's safety
7. Funded Rape Crisis Tyneside and Northumberland to deliver the #ItAllAddsUp Campaign and educational resources – It All Adds Up - Northumbria PCC
8. Engaging over 300 girls, boys, trans and non-binary young people for research on their experiences of safety in the night-time economy

Support victim-survivors

1. The Angel Centre (SARC) supported 568 victim-survivors of sexual violence between August 2023 and April 2025
2. Grants totalling over £5.5 million awarded to 29 specialist VAWG organisations across the region including therapeutic support for children
3. Over 830 victim-survivors received specialist support from trained domestic abuse advocates when calling the police control rooms to report an incident
4. 172 new delegates from across the region trained through the Domestic Abuse Workplace Champions scheme – growing the network to 779
5. Digital promotion of the Victim's Code – allowing victim-survivors to access information about their rights through the criminal justice process
6. Creation of a Virtual Reality learning resource on domestic abuse for the Judiciary
7. WWIN's Findaway service supported 172 people worried about someone in an abusive relationship on understanding domestic abuse and how to help the victim-survivor
8. Support for migrant survivors of domestic abuse including updated resources and training for professionals

Action Against Perpetrators

1. £647,728 secured from the Home Office perpetrator fund to provide 1-1 and group work interventions each year
2. 247 perpetrators at risk of causing serious or fatal harm referred for Hub and Spoke 1-1 intensive case management since 2022
3. 244 domestic abuse perpetrators referred to Project CARA awareness raising workshops in the first 8 months
4. Operation Cloak officers completed 1150 interventions to tackle sexual harassment in the night-time economy
5. Operation Salus officers completed 650 interventions including 59 arrests to tackle sexual violence, fake taxis, spiking and non-contact sexual offences
6. 208 staff completed the DARE Toolkit Training on engaging with domestic abuse perpetrators from an early stage
7. 62 perpetrators of domestic abuse referred to Newcastle's Make a Change service in the first 12 months
8. Northumbria Stalking Interventions Programme saw 66 high-risk stalking referrals between Jan 2024 and March 2025

Creating Stronger Systems to Address VAWG

1. Held monthly meetings with the Chief Constable to discuss Northumbria Police's approaches to VAWG
2. The Victim and Witness Improvement Board ran from 2021-2024, capturing victim-survivors experiences of the Criminal Justice System to inform our work
3. Understanding barriers for Black and minoritised victim-survivors engagement with the police
4. Working with partners from the Local Criminal Justice Board on the Domestic Abuse Retention Plan to combat victim-survivors withdrawing from the Criminal Justice Process
5. Launch of several partnership groups including: VAWG External Advisory Panel, Northumbria Collaborative Commissioning Forum and the Northumbria Sexual Violence and Domestic Abuse Provider networks.
6. Evaluation of the support pathways for Adult victim-survivors of Rape and Serious Sexual Offences and Domestic Abuse
7. Strengthened our strategic responses to VAWG in partnership with the six local domestic abuse boards
8. 30 Women's Specialist Support Sector professionals engaged via the Women's Safety in Public Places Women's Sub-group

Testimonials from people who have attended our Active Bystander training

> **I have learned how damaging misogynistic attitudes can be if left unchallenged, and frightening how media, advertising and social media perpetuate the problem. I feel more empowered and motivated to do more if I encounter this behaviour in future.**

> **Very informative day. I enjoyed all of the sessions. Very thought provoking.**

> **The two sessions were brilliant , the whole group were open and honest, shared their stories, friendly. Brilliant learners and very knowledgeable and understanding. Recommend this training to everyone.**

> **Sexual harassment can happen anywhere, everyone is likely to have witnessed sexual harassment at some point, we can all take an active approach to stopping sexual harassment.**

> **The average person cares about tackling VAWG.**

My 2026-2029 strategy builds upon the progress made through our previous strategy, acknowledging that there are always further opportunities and actions we can take to strengthen our responses to tackling VAWG.

4 - CURRENT PICTURE OF VAWG

The Northumbria Police force area comprises six local authority areas – Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland. Northumbria Police is one of the largest forces in the country, serving a population of 1.5 million people and an area of more than 2000 square miles.

Living in the Northumbria area offers the best of both worlds: the energy and culture of its vibrant cities and towns combined with immediate access to some of the UK's best and most breathtaking beaches and countryside. However, like every region, the North-East is not immune to the realities of violence against women and girls. Acknowledging this reality enables us to work proactively alongside our partners and communities to prevent and tackle VAWG, ensuring that the region's strengths are matched by a commitment to protection, safety and support.

National Prevalence of VAWG

The National Police Chief's Council state that every year, more than two million women in the UK are victims of violence perpetrated by men. They estimate that at least 1 in every 12 women will be a victim of VAWG every year however they acknowledge that due to under-reporting of VAWG crimes, these figures are likely to fall far short of the real numbers.

The government's 'Freedom from Violence and Abuse' strategy highlights that:

- One in eight women in England and Wales in the year ending March 2025 experienced domestic abuse, sexual assault or stalking
- In the year ending June 2025, almost 200 rapes were recorded by the police every single day

Unseen's 2025 annual report on their Modern Slavery and Exploitation helpline states that women and girls were over-represented compared to men for calls in relation to sexual exploitation (96%) and domestic servitude (80%). The report also found that male potential exploiters made up 77% of their data.

Local prevalence of VAWG

Statistics from 2025 show that 40% of total crime in Northumbria is VAWG related, with a total of 54,150 VAWG crimes reported.

Data

The use of the data that is available to us is extremely important in influencing our work within this strategy and in tackling VAWG. Robust data allows us to:

- Make evidence-based decisions
- Identify trends, themes and gaps in knowledge and in service provision
- Helps us tailor our response to meet victim-survivor needs rather than make assumptions
- Ensures transparency



We will continue to work with our partners in Northumbria Police to keep gathering data on VAWG. We are also regularly provided with data from our commissioned services within the voluntary sector who are essential in delivering support for victim-survivors of VAWG who may never report to the police.

We acknowledge that we don't have the complete picture due to several factors such as mis-recorded and unreported VAWG, with many women choosing not to report due to several factors such as not being believed or taken seriously. VAWG can happen within many contexts and settings and as a result we may be missing insights that we're not even aware of Robust data can also help us to track the most harmful and prolific perpetrators of VAWG.

Throughout the period covered within this strategy, we are committed to improving our use, knowledge and collation of data. The government's mission is to halve VAWG within a decade. We are in support of this however, we need to understand the scale of the issue and work towards a clear and measurable plan for this work which supports us to monitor and track our progress.

Over the next two years we will:

- Work closely with Northumbria Police to ensure that officers are made aware of their responsibilities around recognising, responding to and accurately recording VAWG related offences
- Develop our grant monitoring processes to ensure that we are collecting clear, consistent and relevant data from our commissioned services on VAWG and how we collate this to identify any key themes or gaps
- Work with partners within the six local authority areas to explore their use of data to ensure we have a fuller picture of VAWG and avoid unnecessary duplication
- Exploring our outcomes framework by drawing on the national VAWG strategy and their development of measures, metrics, evidence and evaluation for monitoring VAWG interventions





5 - OUR PRIORITIES

1 – Prioritising Prevention

1.1 Education and early intervention

1.2 Online spaces and tech-facilitated abuse

1.3 Creating opportunities for children and young people

1.4 Support for people who are worried about a friend or loved one

1.5 Creating allies and awareness raising

1.6 VAWG in public places

2 – Support Victim-Survivors

2.1 Commissioning Specialist Support

2.2 Early intervention and clear pathways to support

2.3 Addressing the barriers for victim-survivors with multiple, complex and diverse needs

2.4 Sector targeted support

3 – Action Against Perpetrators

3.1 Early intervention with perpetrators and those causing harm

3.2 Our response to high-risk, high-harm and serial VAWG perpetrators

3.3 Behaviour Change work

3.4 Working with Northumbria Police on police-led initiatives

4 – Creating Stronger Systems to Address VAWG

4.1 Engaging in collective action

4.2 Listening to the voices of those who have been harmed

4.3 Criminal Justice System

4.4 Working with the police to get responses right

4.5 Targeted initiatives

4.6 Collaboration with other agencies

4.7 Learning from tragedy

PRIORITY 1: PRIORITISING PREVENTION

> **Prevention should be seen as an imperative investment.**
>
> Victim-survivor support provider

> **I want to highlight the need for bystander training. A lot of people in my networks didn't know how to deal with the situation and therefore stay silent.**
>
> Anonymous victim-survivor

My VAWG strategy starts with a focus on prevention which is a key element to tackling VAWG. Looking at the root causes of VAWG such as sexist societal attitudes, outdated gender norms, harmful beliefs, sexual harassment disguised as 'banter', misogynistic behaviours and the platforms in which they are shared is essential. When these go unchallenged, VAWG can become normalised, tolerated, and at worst encouraged.

Members of a Youth Panel facilitated by one of our commissioned services have said that it is important that boys are included in prevention strategies and that the whole focus is not just on girls learning how to keep themselves safe. We acknowledge this and we agree – it is not enough to expect women and girls to change their behaviours or rely solely on themselves to keep safe. We must focus on how to prevent VAWG happening in the first place.

1.1 Education and early intervention

During consultation with women accessing Your Voice Counts, they told us that they predominantly experience VAWG-related incidents perpetrated by young people. Education is one of the strongest tools we have for creating environments where harmful behaviours and stereotypes can be challenged and where young people can learn about healthy relationships, fairness and developing respectful, positive perspectives of gender roles.

What we want to achieve	Our work in action
Girls, boys, young men and young women able to easily access resources and information	• Providing funding to allow schools to access healthy relationship lesson plans and other resources through Pol-Ed so that young people recognise signs of abuse and can be signposted to early help and support • Providing funding for the Alice Ruggles Trust to deliver Stalking awareness assemblies to schools in the region • Providing funding to develop further resources for community-based organisations on healthy relationships, teen relationship harm and promoting gender equality • Commissioning a range of specialist organisations who can deliver VAWG related education in schools • Designing, developing and facilitating innovations in Active Bystander training for young people across the region • Dedicated training for teachers through the Violence Reduction Unit's new Training and Education Officer who will work alongside Northumbria Police's Prevention team

1.2 Online spaces and tech-facilitated abuse

The statistics on tech-facilitated VAWG paint a worrying picture on the prevalence of harm in online spaces. According to the charity Refuge, 1 in 3 UK women (36%) have experienced online abuse or harassment, rising to almost 2 in 3 among young women aged 18–34 (62%). Between 2018 and 2024, Refuge's dedicated Technology-Facilitated Abuse and Economic Empowerment (TFAEE) team experienced a 205% increase in referrals.

Young people from a local Youth Panel have also said that harmful and sexist language is very common online and many of them had experienced negative behaviour and bullying in online spaces.

Advances in technology have created even more opportunities for misogynistic and harmful content to be shared using online platforms. We must be aware of VAWG committed using technology such as social media, sharing abusive and sexual images without consent, extreme pornography and non-consensual sexually explicit deepfakes (digitally altered audio, image or video). Whilst the government has set out a programme of actions through legislative measures, including the Online Safety Act, to address VAWG, our focus in the interim is on the actions that can be taken at a local level.

We acknowledge that technology is continually evolving and that our approach therefore must remain proactive and dynamic.

What we want to achieve	Our work in action
Develop further awareness and understanding of the nature and scope of online abuse in our region.	• Work with our commissioned services and partner organisations to explore the impact of online abuse on victim-survivors and acknowledging that technology can be both a help and a harm towards victim-survivors of VAWG • Work alongside Northumbria Police to encourage consistency in the use of technology and safety planning • Develop a collective resource on support and interventions available for victim-survivors of online abuse

1.3 Creating opportunities for children and young people

Lack of opportunities and access to support can create situations where children and young people are vulnerable to negative influences, exploitation and isolation. This can lead young people, especially boys and young men online, where they may be targeted with content which normalises and encourages VAWG and influences harmful beliefs.

What we want to achieve	Our work in action
Creating positive opportunities for children and young people to achieve and thrive	• Use the Commissioner's Community Fund to support grassroots projects and local groups to provide support for vulnerable people, create positive opportunities for young people and reduce anti-social behaviour and crime • Commissioning specialist services to provide support to young people who have experienced or witnessed crime to help them cope and recover using positive coping strategies

1.4 Support for people who are worried about a friend or loved one

Family members and friends are often the first to notice when someone they know is experiencing domestic abuse and can be in the best position to offer support from an early stage. It is important that those who are worried about someone can have the opportunity to ask for help on how they can support the person they are worried about.

What we want to achieve	Our work in action
Early intervention for families, friends and communities to better support someone they are worried about who may be experiencing harm in their relationship	• Providing part-funding for the Findaway service to: offer a free Phone line and Webchat service operated by trained advisors who can offer practical information and support in their own right; signposting in relation to domestic abuse for the person they are worried about; and community-based training and awareness raising around domestic abuse

1.5 Creating allies and awareness raising

In order to try and tackle VAWG at its root causes, we need the support of the whole community. We need adults to examine their own behaviours and attitudes and recognise harmful situations. Adults from one of our commissioned services Adults Participation Panel said that both non-abusive men and women should work together to challenge abuse.

We need men to be allies who advocate for fairness, challenge negative attitudes towards women and girls and who use their voice to raise awareness of VAWG.

What we want to achieve	Our work in action
Inspire adults to be active allies who challenge harmful attitudes and behaviours and promote safety, respect, and fairness for women and girls	• Continued delivery of our Active Bystander training across several different sectors • Promoting both regional and national VAWG campaigns using inclusive and consistent language informed by victim-survivors to improve public understanding of VAWG

1.6 VAWG in public places

We want women and girls to feel safe within our communities. Women have the right to work, to socialise, to travel, to study and to access services without restrictions. Any time a woman or girl feels it is unsafe to do this is another example of inequality and unfairness. Our public spaces and transport should be safe, accessible and operate in a way that prevents VAWG from taking place.

What we want to achieve	Our work in action
Interventions that support women and girls to feel safer in public and prevent VAWG from happening	• Ongoing partnership meetings and collaboration with local authorities, policing and the transport sector with a focus on addressing sexual harassment, improving data driven decision making, reporting pathways, awareness and responses • Ongoing investment and implementation of the Safe Haven resource in the region's nighttime economy, offering support to access a safe place on a night out and preventing exposure to predatory behaviour • Development of a Women's Safety Charter and continued support for the annual Reclaim the Night march and events for the region in partnership with key stakeholders to show women and communities that their safety from VAWG is a collective priority • Co-ordination and promotion of our VAWG Training Programme that enables everyone in our communities to gain the confidence, knowledge and skills to identify vulnerability, address sexism and signpost women to access specialist support • A new workstream of engagement with the student community and other marginalised communities whose voices often go unheard to raise awareness of the support available and ensure they are included in the development of interventions • Continued delivery of our 'How Safe Are We?' training, helping participants who work in and around the night-time economy recognise the signs of vulnerability linked to sexual violence, domestic abuse and exploitation. The training provides practical advice on how to respond, safeguard those at risk and access the appropriate support and reporting pathways

Change is rarely immediate, and meaningful transformation often takes time and sustained effort. However, taking proactive steps toward prevention is one of the most powerful ways to move society in a safer and more positive direction.

By focusing on prevention, we can address challenges before they escalate, reduce risks, and create environments where people feel secure and supported.

This commitment not only drives lasting improvement but also ensures that the benefits are shared across Northumbria.


SHOW
RACISM
THE
RED
CARD

PRIORITY 2: SUPPORTING VICTIM-SURVIVORS

> **I would not have gone to the police if I did not feel my life was in danger.**
>
> Anonymous victim-survivor

> **I only contacted the police when the abuse became unbearable.**
>
> Anonymous victim-survivor

Victim-survivors of VAWG have told us that they only contacted the police when the abuse they were experiencing became so bad that they were in fear for their life. Victim-survivors across our region need to know that they can access specialist, trauma-informed support before things get worse.

2.1 Commissioning Specialist Support

One of the key roles of the Police and Crime Commissioners office is to commission initiatives and services that provide support for victim-survivors of crime to cope and recover from their experiences. This also includes commissioning services that can support with navigating the criminal justice process. We have committed to funding these services for the period of this strategy, recognising that long-term interventions are key to establishing lasting change.

What we want to achieve	Our work in action
Victim-survivors being able to access specialist support for VAWG related offences and behaviours based on the 8 funding priorities identified through consultation with victim-survivors and partner agencies: • Domestic Abuse • Sexual Violence • Stalking • Support for Children and Young People • Hate crime • Violent crime • Exploitation and modern slavery • Victim-survivors with other vulnerabilities	• Commissioning services through our Supporting Victims Programme 2026-2029 • Continue to engage with victim-survivors to understand their needs when accessing services and identifying any barriers or gaps within our commissioning framework • Thorough monitoring processes with our commissioned services to ensure that they are delivering appropriate, specialist, trauma-informed approaches that tailor support to the individual needs of each victim-survivor

2.2 Early Intervention and clear pathways to support

In a September 2025 survey carried out by Northumbria OPCC, 29% of victim-survivors said they would have liked support earlier in the process. It's important for victim-survivors to know that they can access specialist support after a VAWG crime as soon as they want to, and that they can do this without having to go through the criminal justice system.

Whilst a key priority of ours is to ensure that we commission specialist services to support victim-survivors of VAWG, it is ineffective if there are not clear referral and support pathways for how a victim-survivor can access these services. We don't want to see any victim-survivor becoming lost in the system or feeling unable to access the support they need.

What we want to achieve	Our work in action
Opportunities for victim-survivors to access support in relation to VAWG from the earliest opportunity	• Continue to update our Victim Services Directory on the Northumbria OPCC website • Regularly share information about local support services that we commission through our website and social media channels • Funding to place specially trained domestic abuse workers in police control rooms to enhance opportunities for victim-survivors of domestic abuse to receive support immediately after an incident has been reported • Funding and overseeing, with Northumbria Police, Phase 2 of the Raneem's Law Pilot, which places specialist domestic abuse workers in each police control room to support the police in delivering the best first response to victim-survivors and identifying appropriate support
VAWG Victim-survivors having clear and consistent access to specialist support services	• Identifying the support pathways for Adult and Child victim-survivors of rape, sexual assault and domestic abuse and embedding recommendations from these to our commissioning approach and partnership working • Working with Northumbria Police and partners within our Anti-Slavery network to increase referrals for victim-survivors of Modern Slavery to specialist services

2.3 Addressing the barriers for victim-survivors with multiple, complex and diverse needs

We recognise that a standardised approach to tackling VAWG and supporting victim-survivors is not effective. Different circumstances require tailored approaches and we are committed to ensuring that solutions are responsive to the diverse demographic groups that we serve.

What we want to achieve	Our work in action
Clear recognition of the nature of abuse and harm within **teenage relationships** and tailored support for younger victim-survivors of VAWG	• Nearly 40% of 13-17 year olds have been in a violent and/or abusive relationship • Through our Supporting Victims Programme 2026-2029 we have ensured that we are commissioning support for teenagers and young people by asking specialist domestic abuse providers to lower the age for their referral criteria. Through this we have guaranteed that support is available across the region for young people from at least the age of 13 • We will continue to work with Holly's Hope towards enhancing services and how victim-survivors are supported and understanding the pathways to support • Work in collaboration with Northumbria Police in their development of a force wide definition of teenage relationship abuse
Ensuring that **children and young people** across our region have access to therapeutic interventions to help them recover from the trauma they have experienced as they transition to adulthood	• There is a significant impact on the development of children and young people who directly experience or witness VAWG which can include: attachment issues, dissociation, feeling unsafe, heightened stress responses, emotional dysregulation and impact on memory and learning • We know that developmental trauma can be repaired with the right support and intervention and that the first five years of a child's life are the most important for their development • We will continue to commission specialist services which provide therapeutic support to children and young people from birth to adulthood, supporting them to build connections, regulate their emotions and develop core life skills and resilience

What we want to achieve	Our work in action
Support for **Black and minoritised women and children** through specialist 'By-and-for' interventions	• Between March 2022 and March 2025, people from the Black/Black British ethnic group were 2.5 times as likely to be a victim of domestic homicide than those from the White ethnic group (Freedom from Violence and Abuse strategy, Dec 25). Black women are also more likely to experience repeat victimisation than women from other ethnic groups: 35% of Black women who experience domestic abuse are victimised more than once, compared to 26% of white women (Refuge) • We will continue to fund specialist support for Black and minoritised women and children through our Supporting Victims Programme from Black-led organisations, ensuring that women and children who may face systematic barriers in mainstream support services can access holistic support safely from women with an understanding of cultural and religious issues. • We will also continue to collaborate with our local by-and-for organisations and work in partnership to ensure that the voices of minoritised women and children are shared and heard at the highest level
Acknowledgement that **men and boys** can be victim-survivors of violence and abuse with a commitment to addressing the distinct barriers that may prevent them from accessing support	• 1 in 5 men have experienced domestic abuse, 1 in 17 have experienced sexual assault and 1 in 13 men have experienced stalking since the age of 16. The true figure is likely to be much higher due to several barriers which can prevent them from disclosing the abuse • We want to make it clear that men do not have to stay silent and isolated. My office commissions specialist services for male victim-survivors of abuse. These services offer safe spaces for men to seek support without judgement and gain access to advocates who will work with them on their individual needs and wishes • Within the period of this strategy, we will work with partners to ensure that men and boys know how to access support through collaborative working and awareness raising

2.4 Sector targeted support

The North-East is well-known for having one of the most vibrant, energetic and diverse nightlife's in the UK, attracting visitors from across the country. Northumbria is also home to three dynamic universities, offering a lively academic and social atmosphere for students.

We want our residents and visitors to feel free and able to engage in their local communities, nightlife and be safe at our universities. If a woman is feeling unsafe, they need to know that there is support available to them.

What we want to achieve	Our work in action
Women to have access to interventions within nightlife environments where they can access places of safety	• Engaging with night-time economy professionals including licensing teams, medical services, Northumbria Police and the Security Industry Authority to ensure that predatory behaviour is identified and addressed and that support is available for those at risk • Working with partners to explore options for providing awareness raising and training for door supervisors • Strategic support and promotion of the resources in our region's nighttime economies such as community Safe Haven's and additional resources focused on Women's Safety in Public Places • Supporting Operation Salus, a Northumbria Police initiative in Newcastle that targets vehicle-related risks with the aim of preventing and reducing sexual offences • Supporting Operation Vigilant, in which Northumbria Police use bespoke behavioural observation training to upskill frontline officers in risk management and encourage proactivity in recognising predatory behaviours, enabling them to intervene before behaviours escalate

What we want to achieve	Our work in action
Effective student safety initiatives and interventions	• Working in collaboration with universities and partner organisations to develop an engagement plan with the aim of enabling the student community to feel safe and supported and have a say in how we approach them
Enhanced community based support for victim-survivors of domestic abuse through the hair and beauty industry	• Launching the OPCC's Care in the Chair campaign, which recognises the unique position of members of the hair and beauty industry and the trusted relationships they build with their clients as well as the safe spaces they create for people who may be experiencing domestic abuse • Developing the campaign to offer tailored awareness raising webinars to those working in the hair and beauty industry to help increase their knowledge of domestic abuse, recognise the signs, provide information on how to respond to potential disclosures and how to signpost to specialist support

Victim-survivors of VAWG deserve to be taken seriously and have the opportunity to recover and rebuild their lives within a safe and supportive community. Our approach and our systems must be centred on victim-survivors. They must never feel blamed or judged for what has happened to them.

If we can ensure that appropriate support is in place which is informed by trauma and equitable access, we can encourage more people to come forward and prevent repeat victimisation.






Rape Crisis
Tyneside and Northumberland




Worried about your relationship?
They don't seem to spend as much time with family or friends any more, should I be worried?
I don't understand, how can you get back with someone after they treated you like that?





PRIORITY 3: ACTION AGAINST PERPETRATORS

> **Perpetrators know how to continue abuse.**
>
> Anonymous victim-survivor

> **It's important that people who harm receive support or intervention or consequences, not just relying on victims to engage in work.**
>
> Members of a Youth Panel facilitated by one of our commissioned services

We must take action against perpetrators and young people causing harm. For too long the onus has been on the victim-survivor to change their behaviour or seek out measures on their own in order to keep themselves safe.

We are hearing that victim-survivors have been told to leave their homes, to move away from their support networks, to take different routes to work, to move their children's school, to change their phone numbers and to stop using social media. Members of a Service User Forum facilitated by one of our commissioned services have said they feel that domestic abuse is the only crime where a victim-survivor has to explain themselves more than the perpetrator. Victim-survivors of VAWG deserve protection, not punishment – the consequences should fall on the perpetrators.

We are therefore committed to supporting approaches that pivot towards the perpetrator. This includes working with criminal justice partners and funding providers to focus the approach by asking not what the victim needs to do to keep themselves safe, but what interventions can we take against the perpetrator to hold them to account, disrupt abuse and secure criminal convictions. We are committed to helping people to change but this needs the right support, challenge, and personal accountability. By addressing both their behaviour and any underlying causes of harm, we aim to create safer families, safer relationships, and safer communities.

3.1 Early intervention with perpetrators and those causing harm

We want to ensure that there are appropriate responses in place for perpetrators from an early stage with the aim of preventing repeat offending and an escalation of abusive and violent behaviour. This includes supporting practitioners who may be working with people causing harm to recognise and engage with perpetrators, to offer early opportunities to change when they first come to the attention of the police and to increase the provision of direct work with young people causing harm in their own relationships.

What we want to achieve	Our work in action
Provide funding to enable early interventions with perpetrators who have been identified within the Criminal Justice Process	• Funding through our Violence Reduction Unit who are also overseeing Project CARA which aims to reduce repeat offending and connect victim-survivors with help and support • Project CARA has already been receiving around 300 referrals per year, with 15 facilitators able to deliver CARA workshops to perpetrators of abuse
Supporting frontline professionals to engage early with perpetrators of Domestic Abuse	• Funding through the Violence Reduction Unit to Hampton Trust who created a network of local DARE trainers in our partner agencies who are rolling out the training to their own staff. This aims to improve the skills and confidence levels of frontline professionals to recognise and engage from an early stage with domestic abuse perpetrators • The Violence Reduction Unit will continue to support workforce development and training needs for local services and staff working with those causing harm
Direct work with young people causing harm in their relationships	• Almost two in five teenagers have experienced abuse within their relationships, meaning there are significant levels of young people who are causing harm to their partners • We are funding Dating Detox training for professionals across Northumbria to increase the provision of direct work with young people causing harm in their relationships • We will also continue to liaise with the Home Office and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioner's to explore opportunities for further funding to help us respond to this issue





3.2 Our response to high-risk, high-harm and serial VAWG perpetrators

It is vital that we have appropriate and responsive interventions with perpetrators identified as high-risk who have offended multiple times and caused significant harm to victim-survivors. Interventions such as these require a multi-agency approach and direct, intensive one to one work.

What we want to achieve	Our work in action
Effective, multi-agency response to high-risk, high-harm and serial Domestic Abuse perpetrators	• Funding and oversight through our Violence Reduction Unit, in partnership with the local authorities and the behaviour change services, for the delivery of the Hub and Spoke model for perpetrators across Northumbria. This is intensive 1:1 case management support which combines practical help with structured stabilisation and behaviour change • We will also complete an independent external evaluation of the Northumbria Hub and Spoke model alongside our partners
Interventions with perpetrators at high-risk of Stalking offences	• We will support and part-fund the Northumbria Stalking Interventions Programme (NSIP), which aims to enhance the risk management response to Stalking, strengthen support to victim-survivors and offer training for frontline professionals to better understand and respond to Stalking. We will also explore funding opportunities to expand this model across the whole of Northumbria. • Fund Interventions Alliance to deliver 1:1 behaviour change interventions in partnership with NSIP to help perpetrators recognise and reframe harmful, compulsive and obsessive thought patterns

3.3 Behaviour Change work

In relation to Domestic Abuse, perpetrator behaviour change programmes are a critical part of preventing this VAWG related offending and reducing long-term harm. They challenge harmful behaviours, reduce reoffending, enhance victim-survivor safety and address the root causes of abuse. They encourage perpetrators to recognise the harm they cause, develop non-violent coping strategies and understand power and control dynamics. We recognise the need for such interventions – to truly break the cycle of abuse the behaviour of the person causing harm must be addressed.

What we want to achieve	Our work in action
Availability of behaviour change intervention programmes	• Alongside our partners in Newcastle City Council, we will continue to contribute to the behaviour change service, which includes Hub & Spoke (high risk, high harm perpetrators) and the Make a Change intervention for those using harmful and abusive behaviours in their relationships. We will also explore funding opportunities to expand the Make a Change model across other areas in Northumbria • This programme includes 26 weeks of behaviour change, workforce development and community engagement with concurrent support for victim-survivors
Effective partnership working to tackle some of the issues to support long-term prevention	• Joint funding a project through Our Violence Reduction Unit and Sunderland City Council to enable the Right Turn service to develop a virtual reality tool to enhance direct work with perpetrators of domestic abuse with issues around parenting and substance misuse

3.4 Working with Northumbria Police on police-led initiatives

The police must treat VAWG as a top priority. Their responses must be relentless and must show that there are consequences for those who think it is ok to abuse women and girls. We will work closely with our partners in Northumbria Police to support the implementation of various initiatives being introduced to help tackle and respond to VAWG perpetrators.

Through regular scrutiny, communication and multi-agency working with key figures in Northumbria Police, we will continue to explore actions taken against VAWG perpetrators.
Police initiatives we support:

- **Rollout of Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPO's)** – civil protective orders that impose restrictions on the perpetrator such as prohibiting contact with the victim-survivor, preventing them from entering specific areas, monitoring their location and requiring them to attend behaviour change programmes

- Working in partnership with the **National Centre for Violence Against Women and Girls and Public Protection (NCVPP)**, which was established in April 2025 to support forces with specialist knowledge and training on VAWG and leading on a national approach to preventing perpetrators

- Clear and consistent approaches to the **Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare's Law)** which allows individuals to request information from the police about a partner's history of abusive or violent behaviour. Northumbria Police are already showing their support and commitment to the use of Clare's Law by using Independent Domestic Violence Advisors to help deliver disclosures to victim-survivors in certain cases

- Roll out of **Rapid Video Response (RVR)** in Northumbria which enables victim-survivors to speak to an officer via immediate and secure video call when reporting an incident. Data so far shows that arrest rates of perpetrators are 50% higher when this is used

Effective action against perpetrators will see positive outcomes across all priorities within this VAWG strategy.

"While feeling lost, I felt intervention came at the right time. This has helped me to recognise, - you are in control of your emotions and actions – to keep safe. Found the learning important, glad I was challenged for growth to happen. Thank you".
(CARA client, 2026)

"He now acknowledges his behaviour and has shown remorse. He realises it's not just physical abuse. He is much more grateful for me and recognises me as a person. The abuse has reduced"
(Survivor of a partner who completed Make a Change, 2026)

When the police consistently use their powers to hold perpetrators to account, it will send a clear message to others who are displaying harmful behaviours towards women and girls that there are consequences.

Taking decisive action against perpetrators can help build trust in the criminal justice system, resulting in more victim-survivors of VAWG feeling able to report their abusers. Effective perpetrator interventions and disruptions give victim-survivors the space to access the specialist support they need and reduces the onus on them to take actions for their safety which can have a negative effect on their wellbeing.

Behaviour Change programmes can also support our priority around prevention, educating abusers on the harmful behaviours they are displaying and breaking the cycle of abuse.

PRIORITY 4: CREATING STRONGER SYSTEMS TO ADDRESS VAWG

> **It is vital that any formal partnership is meaningful and impactful for service provision with clear outcomes and accountability.**
>
> Victim-survivor support provider

We can all take individual action against VAWG. Tackling VAWG in its entirety however is not something any one person, community or organisation can do alone. Meaningful and long-term change depends on collaboration.

The government's 'Freedom from Violence and Abuse strategy to build a safer society for women and girls' references drawing on and sharing best practice from Police and Crime Commissioners who are already bringing together local services such as police, health and specialist support providers to manage perpetrators and protect victim-survivors more effectively. I am committed to continuing this approach. Collaboration is one of the key aspects of the day to day running of my office, creating opportunities for voluntary and statutory partners to come together within a whole system approach to address VAWG across the region.

4.1 Engaging in collective action

We can create stronger systems to address VAWG by taking collective action and listening to the experts. My office launched our VAWG External Advisory Panel in March 2024 which has continued to go from strength to strength. The panel brings together expert members with both strategic and operational knowledge and experience of working with Northumbria Police. The aim of the panel is to provide open, transparent and thematic scrutiny and advice on VAWG, review Northumbria Police practices and seek to increase victim-survivor and partner confidence in the Northumbria Police's approach to tackling VAWG.

So far, the VAWG External Advisory panel has examined cases of rape and serious sexual assault, stalking, coercive control, victim-blaming language and black and minoritised victim-survivors experiences of domestic abuse.

What we want to achieve	Our work in action
Continue to convene the VAWG External Advisory Panel	• Our VAWG External Advisory Panel will continue to bring key partners from across the VAWG sector and Northumbria Police to consider cases under the three pillars of: Building Trust and Confidence, Relentless Pursuit of Perpetrators and Creating Safer Spaces • Working to ensure that our External Advisory Panels form a key element of our Scrutiny processes • We will ensure that every panel incorporates the views of victim-survivors with lived experience so that their voices are at the core of what we do

4.2 Listening to the voices of those who have been harmed

We must consider the voices of those who have direct experience of gendered violence. They are the ones who can tell us what they have lived through, what they need and what matters most to them. This is one of the most important aspects of our work.

"When they [the police] informed me about his arrest and invited me to submit a statement, that was the most crucial moment when I needed empathy and emotional support" (Victim-survivor)

Behind every strategy, including this one, are people who can give us the insights that we need to lead and shape our decisions. We value this input in highlighting what works and challenging assumptions. Lived experience is crucial in helping us to humanise complex issues such as VAWG and keeps people at the centre of our work in tackling this.

One of the key commitments in our previous VAWG strategy was to continue to listen to victim-survivors of VAWG. We have acted on this by working with our partners, using several different forums, focus groups, surveys and one to one engagement on a number of VAWG related issues which include:

- HerCircle and the Council for Complex Motherhood
- Your Voice Counts
- Sexual violence
- Adults and children who have experienced the family court process
- WSIPP
- Jewish Women's Aid
- Families of people who have experienced domestic abuse

Over the next two years we want to expand on this even further as we recognise that the benefits of victim-survivor led practice are unprecedented.

What we want to achieve	Our work in action
Further develop opportunities to engage with victim-survivors and how we use their voices to influence our work	• Explore how we can engage with victim-survivors of VAWG and co-produce services to ensure these are responsive and informed by their needs • Working with partners in the community to identify seldom-heard groups in order to ensure that we are inclusively embedding the views and experiences of a range of individuals • The Domestic Abuse Commissioner's 2025 Report ' Victim's in their own right?' highlights that children's voices are not being considered. We are aligned with their recommendation of centring children's voices by exploring with our commissioned services ways in which we can capture the views of children and young people who experience or witness VAWG related abuse • We have developed a system that allows us to capture survivor voices on an ongoing basis – we will continue to prioritise reference to this in our work with partners in the Criminal Justice System and wider organisations

4.3 Criminal Justice System

Northumbria Local Criminal Justice Board

This is a multi-agency meeting involving key strategic partners and decision makers within the criminal justice system. Through the LCJB we have a common goal – to deliver improvements locally to create an effective criminal justice system which supports victim-survivors and delivers justice. No one should have to experience the trauma and impact of violence and abuse, but if they do we need the system to work for them.

What we want to achieve	Our work in action
Continue to chair the Northumbria Local Criminal Justice Board to create a better criminal justice system for our region	• Ensure that the voice of victim-survivors is shared through the LCJB so that strategic leaders are made aware of victim-survivor experiences and use this to influence key decisions • Using the LCJB to understand how the National Victim's Code of Practice is adhered to and delivered across Northumbria • Working on key initiatives driven through the LCJB in relation to VAWG including the Domestic Abuse Victim and Witness Retention plan which looks at a series of actions to improve the number of victim-survivors of domestic abuse who stay engaged with the criminal justice process

4.4 Working with the police to get responses right

We don't want victim-survivors of VAWG across Northumbria to feel that they can't tell anyone about the abuse or report what is happening to the police until things get 'too bad'. VAWG has a devastating impact and no one should have to carry this on their own. We want victim-survivors to have trust in our police and criminal justice system so that they feel confident to seek help.

What we want to achieve	Our work in action
A responsive, trustworthy and empathetic police response to VAWG	• We will continue to work closely with the police, ensuring that we have effective and consistent communication and keep VAWG as a top priority • Continue to create forums and opportunities for VAWG victim-survivors and partner agencies to share best practice on police responses and ensure that their input is shared with senior leaders in the police for officer training and development • Officers from the Northumbria Police Strategic Safeguarding team regularly attend the meetings of our OPCC VAWG delivery group so that they can continue to contribute to our action plan and ensure that our priorities are aligned when tackling VAWG

4.5 Targeted initiatives

VAWG is constantly evolving, therefore our responses should too. Our 2026-2028 strategy has certain key initiatives and areas of focus based on growing trends that we have seen both locally and nationally. We are committed to how we can create stronger systems to address some of these issues.

What we want to achieve	Our work in action
Commitment to the **Angel Centre (Sexual Assault Referral Centre)** receiving accredited status	• Since 2022, we have been collaborating with our SARC co-commissioning partners in NHS England, our SARC provider Mountain Healthcare and with the police, partner agencies and victim-survivors, working towards UKAS Accreditation in 2026. These standards of accreditation will ensure that victim-survivors of sexual violence receive safe, consistent, trauma informed and evidence-based care
Working with partners to address Drug facilitated abuse – including **Spiking**	• Implementing the evaluation findings from a pilot working with potential victim-survivors of Spiking with the aim of supporting them to navigate through pathways to support if they have been found to have been spiked • The pilot involves collaboration with Police, Health, Local Authority support services and local universities to support continued awareness raising and improved investigations into drug-facilitated abuse
Collaborative approach to **Domestic and Sexual Abuse**	• In the period of our last VAWG strategy we developed and chaired the Northumbria Domestic Abuse Provider Forum and the Sexual Violence Provider Forum, after identifying that there are several different specialist support providers across the region who would benefit from a collective space to come together and share best practice and key information. These forums have already been achieving key outcomes that will improve victim-survivors experiences of the criminal justice system • The next two years will focus on developing these forums to ensure that partners from the criminal justice system and other relevant sectors such as healthcare, education, social care and addiction recovery have a seat around the table to help tackle VAWG using a collaborative, multi-agency approach
Act as a key strategic partner continuing to support the **Women's Intensive Supervision Court** in Northumbria	• Northumbria OPCC played a key role in securing funding from the Ministry of Justice to implement a Women's Intensive Supervision Court (ISC) • The women's ISC provides an alternative to custody by providing intensive support to address multiple and complex unmet needs such as abuse and trauma, mental health and substance misuse, to support health and wellbeing and reduce re-offending. • Many of the women eligible for this model will have experienced VAWG

Continued >

Supporting the rollout of the **Child Focused Court** in Northumbria	• We will work with the Ministry of Justice, our neighbouring OPCC's, the courts and local specialist Domestic Abuse services to support the implementation of Child Focused Courts in Northumbria – these focus the voice of the child in family court proceedings and encourage a multi-agency approach • Northumbria OPCC will lead on commissioning Independent Domestic Violence Advisors through Ministry of Justice funding to offer their support and expertise within Northumbria's Child Focused Courts • We will also promote the locally developed domestic abuse training resource ' Through the Eyes of Another' for use by the Judiciary, especially within the Family Courts across the region
Development of a **Women's Safety Charter** to engage partners	• Developing a framework to set agreed-upon principles that define the way in which partners within the community pledge to tackle VAWG including the involvement of: education, community mentors, youth services, health care providers, transport professionals, local authorities, places of worship, bar and restaurant professionals, securityprofessionals, food and retail businesses, football clubs and urban planning professionals
Development of **Northumbria's Trauma Informed Network**	• Northumbria OPCC has provided funding which has allowed professionals from fourteen of our commissioned services to complete a Trauma-Informed Educators Training course through Rock Pool • The network is committed to creating a trauma-informed Northumbria, where every interaction is rooted in curiosity, compassion, and understanding. Guided by the principles of safety, trust, choice, collaboration, empowerment, and cultural awareness, we will support organisations to embed trauma-informed practice at every level—so that every contact becomes an opportunity for positive impact
Improving responses to **Stalking** across multiple sectors	• Stalking will affect around 1 in 5 women and 1 in 10 men during their lifetime (Alice Ruggles Trust). It can have a life-changing impact on the victim-survivor • We are committed to working in partnership with agencies across the region to ensure that victim-survivors receive timely responses to Stalking and that they are taken seriously • We will fund Paladin to deliver Police Stalking Champions training to officers in Northumbria Police • Our Violence Reduction Unit is also committed to funding training to local specialist domestic abuse and VAWG services to equip them with the tools to understand Stalking behaviours and respond effectively

4.6 Collaboration with other agencies

Victim-survivors of VAWG often interact with several different agencies who all have their own responsibilities over how they identify, record and respond to VAWG. We must work in collaboration with these agencies to ensure our approaches are consistent and so that we can enable alignment of local and national strategies.

What we want to achieve	Our work in action
Ensure that we are a key partner within multi-agency approaches across the region	• Our Violence Reduction Unit continues to be represented within the Domestic Abuse strategic boards across the six local authority areas in Northumbria. From 2026, we have committed to ensuring that our Victim's and Commissioning team are also participating in these in order to guarantee that the aims and actions of the whole OPCC in relation to VAWG are reflected and shared with our partners in the local authorities • We have also committed to ensuring our presence at the six local authority Community Safety Partnership meetings, which bring together various stakeholders to tackle crime and disorder in their communities. The experts within our office can ensure that key messages on our approach to VAWG are delivered within this forum and gain an understanding of how these align with stakeholder strategies
Involvement with the Duty to Collaborate	• We have made significant steps with our partners in the Local Authorities and Integrated Care Boards towards the Duty to Collaborate, which aims to strengthen approaches towards commissioning and our statutory duties • Continue to convene the Northumbria Collaborative Commissioning Forum
Working with local universities	• We will continue our annual work with Sunderland University students, Northumbria Police and specialist organisations to raise awareness of VAWG related issues • A theme is set each year to guide students in creating a film to raise awareness of each issue and is particularly beneficial for engaging a younger audience • Previous themes have included Stalking and Domestic Abuse

4.7 Learning from tragedy

Any death resulting from VAWG is a profound tragedy. Every life lost to VAWG reinforces the need for action and a whole system approach to strengthen our responses, prioritise prevention, support victim-survivors and pursue perpetrators.

Since the development of our previous strategy in 2023, there has been an increased acknowledgement that suicides related to domestic abuse make up the majority of domestic abuse related deaths. Astonishingly, a 2025 report by the College of Policing highlighted that in the case of suicides, almost 90% of victim-survivors and/or perpetrators were known to partner agencies. We cannot ignore this. We must work together with our partners to ensure that VAWG is treated as a top priority and that lessons are learned to prevent any further loss of life.

What we want to achieve	Our work in action
Facilitate cross-boundary sharing of learning from domestic abuse-related death reviews (DARDRs)	• The Violence Reduction Unit will host an annual Northumbria Domestic Homicide Reviews/Domestic Abuse-Related Death Reviews Clinic aimed at review panel members. This seeks to share local learning across boundaries; and to consider common themes from these reviews, with the aim of taking a more preventative approach
Appropriate support for families bereaved by domestic abuse related deaths	• Through our Supporting Victims Programme 2026-2029, we are committed to ensuring that families who have been affected by domestic abuse related deaths continue to receive specialist support. We will continue to commission AAFDA to deliver this

The work we are undertaking within this priority is essential to effectively address VAWG. Working collaboratively and in partnership across a number of systems brings together diverse expertise, resources and perspectives, all of which help to create a consistent, robust and sustainable response to VAWG.

This strategy has been built around listening to the views and experiences of victim-survivors of VAWG and the people who support them. We will continue to ensure that victim-survivors are at the heart of everything we do and that the partnerships and systems in place are informed by their insights and strong enough to respond to them effectively.






8587

Please note – the next page includes a poem, which has been provided to us through one of our commissioned specialist domestic abuse services. The poem has been written by a family member of a woman who took her own life after experiencing domestic abuse. Claire* consented to sharing this poem and wrote it to give her sister a voice.

The poem is extremely emotive and contains references to trauma and abuse. If you do not wish to read this please move ahead to page 38. Thank you.

See Me

Claire* wrote this poem to give her sister a voice

A 999 call, there's a body on the beach,
Please listen, can you hear me, I have so much to teach.
Are there any identifiers, do we know who she was?
My name is Sarah and I have so many scars.

Policies and protocol, reports to complete,
You're not listening or seeing me coz my life's obsolete.
We'll have to tell the family, is it your turn or mine?
I was abused and belittled, broken in spirit, body and mind.

Have we got all we need here, witness statements and things?
I'm sorry for my suicide and the trouble it brings.
Telling the family is not easy at all,
We have listened and if missed anything just give us a call.

You've not listened to anything, you don't know my life.
You've got what you need though, next of kin and the like.
You've got someone to identify the body on the beach,
But you've missed the desperation in my family's speech.

They are begging you to help me,
to know who I am,
I'm a mother, daughter, sister and friend,
but I'm also the wife of a cruel, monstrous man.

I fought for my life, fought with all that I had,
But I was coerced and controlled and abused so bad.
I was left feeling worthless and scared and sad,
The abuse left me thinking that I was going mad.

Should we question capacity, could that give us a lead?
Please don't insult me. Question abuse, that's what I need.
You see, if you ask the right questions and understand who I was,
I'm no longer a body, crime number or report, I die as a victim and that's who I was.

6 – TAKING THE STRATEGY FORWARD

Over the next two years, my office and I are committed to doing all that we can to end VAWG and to support those affected. In this strategy I have set out my renewed commitments and actions across our four priorities for tackling VAWG.

There are several ways in which we will take the strategy forward including:

Northumbria OPCC VAWG Delivery Group

Members of my team involved in tackling VAWG will continue to meet every two months to report on progress against the priorities and commitments highlighted within this strategy, using an action plan to reflect on and monitor our progress. The VAWG Delivery Group will drive forward with working on our pledges of breaking the silence, taking action, education and collaboration.

The VAWG Delivery Group will continue to respond to national updates, strategies, and policies on VAWG, adapting our approach to remain current, informed, and responsive to emerging and priority issues.

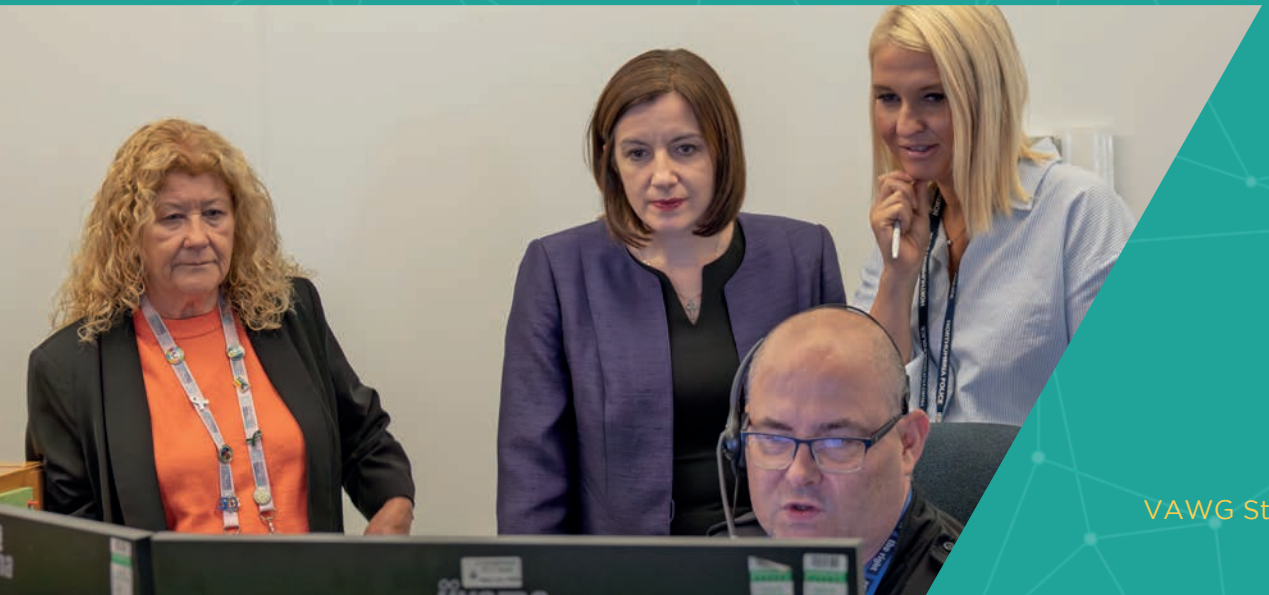
Scrutiny

My role as PCC is to hold primary responsibilities aimed at ensuring effective and accountable policing within Northumbria. The scrutiny process is a formal way to support fulfilment of these statutory responsibilities. I will use regular meetings with the Chief Constable of Northumbria Police to hold them to account on behalf of communities in respect of:

- Delivery of policing across Northumberland and Tyne and Wear that it is efficient and effective
- Ensure accountability, transparency, and value for money across a broad range of police functions, decisions and inspections
- Demonstrate progress made against the policing and crime objectives set out in the PCC's Police and Crime Plan
- Delivery of the statutory requirements of the Strategic Policing Requirement

The scrutiny framework in Northumbria ensures the workplan for the year reflects the Police and Crime Plan and emerging community priorities, which includes reducing VAWG. The Accountability Board, that sits within the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), meet in advance of scrutiny meetings to review and collate various intelligence sources to form proposed questions relating to the specific priority to be scrutinised per meeting.

The intelligence and information obtained to inform scrutiny content comes from various sources for example; VAWG External Advisory Panel, previous scrutiny reports, HMICFRS/Super Complaint inspections and processes, service user roundtables, Government guidance.







Police and Crime Panel

The Northumbria Police and Crime Panel consists of local councillors from across the region to scrutinise the performance of Northumbria OPCC and promote openness in the delivery of police services throughout Northumbria. The panels are an opportunity for representative councillors to engage, raise concerns and contribute to making safer streets and stronger communities, including our approaches to tackling VAWG.

Previous Police and Crime Panel meetings have included discussions on work happening to tackle Child Sexual Exploitation, responding to growing online crime demands and VAWG being a key area of investment for 2026.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The OPCC for Northumbria is committed to promoting equality and participation in all our activities, including our Police and Crime Plan, VAWG strategy and in our day-to-day business. It is our responsibility to ensure that we are complying with the Equality Act 2010, requiring us to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations when making decisions and developing policies.

We are committed to removing barriers and improving participation for people or groups with protected characteristics or people experiencing socio-economic disadvantages. This VAWG strategy has been developed and considered with a commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, with its own Equality Impact Assessment to ensure that we understand the effects of our activities on different groups, that our decisions are transparent and based on evidence with clear reasoning and that any adverse impacts have been identified and action taken to remove or mitigate them.

Updates and Communication

We will continue to share updates through our social media channels on our ongoing work taking place to help tackle VAWG.

If you want to know more about anything you have read within this strategy, please contact us via the following channels:

- enquiries@northumbria-pcc.gov.uk
- NorthumbriaOPCC
- northumbriaopcc
- Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner for Northumbria
- northumbria-pcc.gov.uk

SUSAN DUNGWORTH
NORTHUMBRIA
POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER



From Listening to Lasting Change: Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2026-2029

northumbria-pcc.gov.uk

0191 2219800

enquiries@northumbria-pcc.gov.uk

