

To: Joint Audit Committee

From: Alice Thompson – Governance & Inspection Officer
Organisational Improvement Centre

Date: September 2021

Subject: Overview of HMICFRS publications – July 2021 to September 2021

Purpose:

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of reports published by HMICFRS between July 2021 and September 2021.

Overview of publications:

1. An inspection of the National Crime Agency’s crime reduction (investigating offences relating to organised crime) function

1.1. On 13th July 2021, HMICFRS published “[An inspection of the National Crime Agency’s crime reduction \(investigating offences relating to organised crime\) function](#)”.

1.2. HMICFRS is required by the Crime and Courts Act 2013 to inspect the National Crime Agency (NCA). This report examines the NCA’s crime reduction (investigations) function. The inspection looked at the non-specialist NCA investigation teams based at branch offices across the UK.

1.3. HMICFRS have made 13 recommendations (2 of which are causes for concern) for the NCA and the Home Office to improve how serious and organised crime is investigated and to increase value for money:

1.4. Recommendation 1: By 31 August 2021, the NCA should make sure that the skills and availability of staff are accessible and searchable.

- 1.5. Recommendation 2: By 30 November 2021, the NCA, in consultation with regional organised crime units (ROCUs), forces and the Home Office, should consider if the NCA should manage the reactive demand generated by seizures at the border.
- 1.6. Recommendation 3: By 31 August 2021, the NCA should review the balance of people in intelligence and investigations to meet the demand created by intelligence development cases.
- 1.7. Recommendation 4: By 31 May 2021, the NCA should publish a policy for the use of linked senior investigating officers (SIOs) as a way of ensuring smooth and timely handovers between intelligence and investigations. The practice of shifting decision-making responsibility from intelligence to investigations before a formal handover must stop.
- 1.8. Recommendation 5: By 31 May 2021, the NCA should ensure that organisational learning is added to every quality assurance review (QAR), is considered whenever a case is closed, and sent to the operational standards capability and assurance unit (OSCAU).
- 1.9. Recommendation 6: By 30 November 2021, the Home Office should make it clear how much money the NCA will have for the next three years to allow for future business planning and investment in longer-term projects.
- 1.10. Recommendation 7: With immediate effect, the NCA should prioritise IT investment that increases the automation of data transfer between systems to save staff time inputting information manually.
- 1.11. Recommendation 8: With immediate effect, the NCA should mandate the use of the Magnet ATLAS case management system for intelligence development, thereby reducing the manual inputting of information at the point of handover to investigations.

- 1.12. Recommendation 9: By 31 August 2021, the NCA should review its digital forensic capability to make sure it meets the needs of the organisation.
- 1.13. Recommendation 10 (cause for concern): With immediate effect, the NCA should make sure that the practice of using personal mobile phones to obtain evidence and to communicate during covert operations should stop.
- 1.14. Recommendation 11: By 31 May 2021, the NCA should consider investment to update surveillance equipment to make sure officers have the quality of equipment needed to tackle the most sophisticated criminals.
- 1.15. Recommendation 12 (cause for concern): With immediate effect, the NCA must ensure all officers have access to a radio during operations, or when dealing with suspects, and that they have the knowledge and confidence to log on to them correctly. Consideration should be given to making radios personal issue to officers on the front line.
- 1.16. Recommendation 13: By 31 August 2021, the director general, with the Home Office, should review its reporting mechanisms and make sure the time spent updating and reporting on investigations is necessary and proportionate.

2. Neurodiversity in the criminal justice system: A review of evidence

- 2.1. On 15th July 2021, HMICFRS published "[Neurodiversity in the criminal justice system: A review of evidence](#)".
- 2.2. In December 2020, the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice commissioned HM Inspectorate of Prisons and HM Inspectorate of Probation, with support from HMICFRS, to undertake an independent review of neurodiversity in the criminal justice system (CJS).

2.3. Overall, the review found evidence of good local partnerships and heard about many simple adjustments that could easily be made to support neurodivergent people in the CJS. However, such provision is inconsistent and uncoordinated. With more effective assessment of need, adaptation of services and better training of staff it would be possible to support those with neurodivergent conditions, wherever they are in the CJS.

2.4. The report makes six recommendations, including an overarching recommendation about coordination, to improve the experiences and outcomes for those with neurodivergent needs. All of the recommendations are addressed to the Ministry of Justice:

2.5. Recommendation 1: In order to improve outcomes for neurodivergent people within the criminal justice system a coordinated and cross-government approach is required. To give the leadership and direction needed, the Ministry of Justice should work with the Home Office, Department for Health and Social Care and the Department for Education and the Welsh Government to develop an overarching national strategy. This strategy should be developed together with people with person experience of neurodivergence.

2.6. Recommendation 2: A common screening tool for universal use within the criminal justice system should be introduced, supported by an information sharing protocol specifying how information should be appropriately shared within and between agencies, to make sure that necessary adjustments and extra support are provided for individuals as they progress through the criminal justice system.

2.7. Recommendation 3: Screening data should be systematically collected and aggregated to provide a more accurate assessment of the prevalence of neurodivergence to inform needs analysis and service planning at all levels of the criminal justice system.

2.8. Recommendation 4: A programme of awareness-raising and specialist training should be developed and delivered to staff working within criminal justice services. For frontline staff this learning should be broad-based, mandatory, raise awareness of neurodivergent conditions and how they impact on communication and be supported by practical strategies for working with neurodivergent people. More specialised training should be provided for staff whose roles require it. The programme should be developed and delivered in consultation with people who have personal experience of neurodivergence.

2.9. Recommendation 5: Adjustments to meet the needs of those with neurodivergent conditions should be made throughout the criminal justice system. Relevant departments and bodies should work together to anticipate needs and make adjustments in anticipation of needs. Simple and largely low-cost changes to create neurodiversity-friendly environments, communications and staff culture are likely to benefit those coming into contact with the criminal justice system, regardless of neurodivergent conditions, and should be made as soon as possible.

2.10. Recommendation 6: Criminal justice system agencies should work together and with other statutory and third sector organisations in a coordinated way, to understand and meet the needs of neurodivergent individuals in the community, prevent offending and support rehabilitation.

3. A joint thematic inspection of the police and Crown Prosecution Service's response to rape – Phase one: From report to police or CPS decision to take no further action

3.1. On 16th July 2021, HMICFRS published "[A joint thematic inspection of the police and Crown Prosecution Service's response to rape – Phase one: From report to police or CPS decision to take no further action](#)".

- 3.2. This is the first of two inspection reports that will consider the response, decision-making and effectiveness of the police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) at every stage of a rape case – from first report through to finalisation of the case. This report focuses on those cases where either the police or the CPS made the decision to take no further action. The second report, considering cases from charge to disposal, is expected to be published in Winter 2021.
- 3.3. Overall HMICFRS and HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSI) found that there needs to be a fundamental shift in how rape cases are investigated and prosecuted. The inspection findings have been passed to the Government Rape Review to provide further information to help promote joint improvements throughout the criminal justice system.
- 3.4. HMICFRS have set out 13 recommendations to improve how the investigation and prosecution of rape is currently handled. Progress against these recommendations will be tracked via the Constabulary's Business Assurance Meeting:
- 3.5. Recommendation 1: Immediately, police forces should ensure information on the protected characteristics of rape victims is accurately and consistently recorded.
- 3.6. Recommendation 2: Police forces and support services should work together at a local level to better understand each other's roles. A coordinated approach will help make sure that all available and bespoke wrap-around support is offered to the victim throughout every stage of the case. The input of victims and their experiences should play a central role in shaping the support offered.
- 3.7. Recommendation 3: Police forces should collect data to record the different stages when, and reasons why, a victim may withdraw support for a case. The Home Office should review the available outcome codes so that the data gathered can help target necessary remedial action and improve victim care.

3.8. Recommendation 4: Immediately, police forces and CPS Areas should work together at a local level to prioritise action to improve the effectiveness of case strategies and action plans, with rigorous target and review dates and a clear escalation and performance management process. The NPCC lead for adult sexual offences and the CPS lead should provide a national framework to help embed this activity.

3.9. Recommendation 5: Police forces and the CPS should work together at a local level to introduce appropriate ways to build a cohesive and seamless approach. This should improve relationships, communication and understanding of the roles of each organisation. As a minimum, the following should be included: 1) considering early investigative advice in every case and recording reasons for not seeking it; 2) the investigator and the reviewing prosecutor including their direct telephone and email contact details in all written communication; 3) in cases referred to the CPS, a face-to-face meeting (virtual or in person) between the investigator and prosecutor before deciding to take no further action; and 4) a clear escalation pathway available to both the police and the CPS in cases where the parties don't agree with decisions, subject to regular reviews to check effectiveness, and local results.

3.10. Recommendation 6: The police and the CPS, in consultation with commissioned and non-commissioned services and advocates, and victims, should review the current process for communicating to victims the fact that a decision to take no further action has been made. They should implement any changes needed so that these difficult messages are conveyed in a timely way that best suits the victims' needs.

3.11. Recommendation 7: Police forces should ensure investigators understand that victims are entitled to have police decisions not to charge reviewed under the Victims' Right to Review scheme and should periodically review levels of take-up.

- 3.12. Recommendation 8: The National Criminal Justice Board should review the existing statutory governance arrangements for rape and instigate swift reform, taking into account the findings from this report and from the Government Rape Review. The recent appointment of the Minister for Crime and Policing to lead the implementation of the Rape Review should make sure that there is sustained oversight and accountability throughout the whole criminal justice system, sufficient resourcing for the capacity and capability required, and improved outcomes for victims. To support this, a clear oversight framework, escalation processes and scrutiny need to be in place immediately.
- 3.13. Recommendation 9: Immediately, the CPS should review and update the information on the policy for prosecuting cases of rape that is available to the public. The information provided about how the CPS deals with cases of rape must be accurate. Victims and those who support them must be able to rely on the information provided to inform their decisions.
- 3.14. Recommendation 10: Immediately, the College of Policing and the NPCC lead for adult sexual offences should review the 2010 ACPO guidance on the investigation of rape in consultation with the CPS. The information contained in available guidance must be current to inform effective investigations of rape and provide the best service to victims.
- 3.15. Recommendation 11: The Home Office should undertake an urgent review of the role of the detective constable. This should identify appropriate incentives, career progression and support for police officer and police staff investigators to encourage this career path. It should include specific recommendations to ensure there is adequate capacity and capability in every force to investigate rape cases thoroughly and effectively.
- 3.16. Recommendation 12: The College of Policing and NPCC lead for adult sexual offences should work together to review the current training on rape,

including the Specialist Sexual Assault Investigators Development Programme (SSAIDP), to make sure that there is appropriate training available to build capability and expertise. This should promote continuous professional development and provide investigators with the right skills and knowledge to deal with reports of rape. Forces should then publish annual SSAIDP attendance figures, and information on their numbers of current qualified RASSO investigators.

- 3.17. Recommendation 13: The College of Policing, NPCC lead for adult sexual offences and the CPS should prioritise action to provide joint training for the police and the CPS on the impact of trauma on victims, to promote improved decision-making and victim care.

4. State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2020

- 4.1. On 21st July 2021, HMICFRS published "[State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2020](#)".

- 4.2. The report contains Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary's assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of policing in England and Wales based on the inspections HMICFRS carried out between March 2020 and March 2021.

5. A shared confidence: A summary of how law enforcement agencies use sensitive intelligence

- 5.1. On 29th July 2021, HMICFRS published "[A shared confidence: A summary of how law enforcement agencies use sensitive intelligence](#)".

- 5.2. In this inspection, HMICFRS examined how effectively and efficiently UK law enforcement use sensitive intelligence in the fight against serious and organised crime (SOC).
- 5.3. Overall, HMICFRS found some excellent work led by committed people working in a complex and difficult environment. However, they also found examples of inconsistency in approaches to governance, IT and evaluation which inhibits the effective use of sensitive intelligence and undermines the confidence between agencies that shared standards are recognised, applied and followed.
- 5.4. HMICFRS have made 14 recommendations aimed at improving the effectiveness of sensitive intelligence in tackling SOC, all of which are addressed to the NPCC, Director General of the NCA and/or the Home Office:
- 5.5. Recommendation 1: By 31 December 2021, the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for serious and organised crime and the Director General of the NCA should define the term 'sensitive intelligence'.
- 5.6. Recommendation 2: By 1 July 2022, the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for serious organised crime should establish an accreditation process for sensitive intelligence units.
- 5.7. Recommendation 3: By 1 July 2022, the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for serious organised crime should establish standard operating procedures for managing sensitive intelligence.
- 5.8. Recommendation 4: By 1 July 2022, the Director General of the NCA should establish a process for identifying, evaluating and, if appropriate, adopting best practice from other intercepting authorities.
- 5.9. Recommendation 5: By 31 December 2021, the Director General of the NCA should give guidance to staff on its interpretation of the Investigatory Powers

Act 2016, specifically the terms “minimum that is necessary” and “authorised purposes”.

- 5.10. Recommendation 6: By 1 July 2022, the Home Office should consider the benefits of a national serious organised crime intelligence structure.
- 5.11. Recommendation 7: By 28 February 2023, the Home Office should work with the National Police Chiefs’ Council lead for serious organised crime and the Director General of the NCA to devise a technical solution to make exchanging sensitive intelligence between organisations more efficient and effective.
- 5.12. Recommendation 8: By 31 December 2021, the National Police Chiefs’ Council lead for the Police National Database should give guidance on access permissions in relation to sensitive intelligence. Chief constables should comply with that guidance.
- 5.13. Recommendation 9: By 1 July 2022, the National Police Chiefs’ Council lead for serious and organised crime should set standards to make sure that each regional sensitive intelligence unit has full and ready access to all intelligence systems of each force in their region. Chief constables should comply with those standards.
- 5.14. Recommendation 10: By 1 July 2022, the Director General of the NCA and the National Police Chiefs’ Council lead for serious and organised crime should agree appropriate access for the NCA to all regional sensitive intelligence unit intelligence databases.
- 5.15. Recommendation 11: With immediate effect, the National Police Chiefs’ Council lead for serious organised crime and the Director General of the NCA should implement a method for the analysis of targeted intercept material within sensitive intelligence units that meets the operational needs of all parties. This should be formalised with a memorandum of understanding

and standard operating procedures. Compliance with these procedures should then be tested in an accreditation process.

- 5.16. Recommendation 12: With immediate effect, the Home Office should make sure that the sensitive intelligence network's user requirements are considered in the design stage of the replacement interception dissemination platform, Themis, and that the network is invited onto the Themis implementation oversight board as a full and equal member.
- 5.17. Recommendation 13: By 1 July 2022, the Director General of the NCA and the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for serious organised crime should make sure that the principles of Project Harmproof, designed to minimise the likelihood of intelligence failure, are embedded across the SIN.
- 5.18. Recommendation 14: By 31 December 2021, the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for serious and organised crime and the Director General of the NCA should give guidance on how sensitive intelligence should be used to consistently inform the MoRiLE, organised crime group mapping and serious organised crime system tasking processes.

6. A review of 'Fraud: Time to choose' – A revisit of the 2018 fraud inspection to assess progress of the recommendations and areas for improvement

- 6.1. On 5th August 2021, HMICFRS published "[A review of Fraud: Time to Choose – A revisit of the 2018 fraud inspection to assess progress of the recommendations and areas for improvement](#)".
- 6.2. In 2018, the Home Secretary commissioned HMICFRS to carry out a thematic inspection of fraud. In April 2019, they published "Fraud: Time to Choose" which contained 16 recommendations and 5 areas for improvement (AFIs). HMICFRS have now revisited the previous inspection to see how the police service has responded to the recommendations and AFIs. The report presents their findings on the progress that has been made.

6.3. As a result of their findings, HMICFRS made 3 further recommendations to improve the national response to fraud. Progress against these recommendations will be tracked via the Constabulary's Business Assurance Meeting:

6.4. Recommendation 1: By 30th September 2021, chief constables should make sure that their forces are following the guidance issued by the National Police Chief's Council Coordinator for Economic Crime about fraud-related calls for service.

6.5. Recommendation 2: By 31st March 2022, the National Police Chief's Council Coordinator for Economic Crime with the National Crime Agency, National Economic Crime Centre and City of London Police should set up an effective national tasking and coordination process for fraud.

6.6. Recommendation 3: By 31st October 2021, chief constables should adopt the guidance issued in September 2019 by the National Police Chief's Council Coordinator for Economic Crime that was aimed at improving information given to victims when reporting fraud.

7. A duty to protect: Police use of protective measures in cases involving violence against women and girls

7.1. On 24th August, HMICFRS published a super-complaint report "[A duty to protect: Police use of protective measures in cases involving violence against women and girls](#)".

7.2. In March 2019, the Centre for Women's Justice (CWJ) made a super-complaint to HMICFRS. The super-complaint was about the police's alleged failure to use protective measures to safeguard women and girls, namely pre-charge bail; non-molestation orders; domestic violence protection notices and orders; and restraining orders.

7.3. As a result of their findings, HMICFRS, the College of Policing and the IOPC have made 15 recommendations. These include recommendations that forces change and monitor their approaches in respect of protective measures and to make sure that police officers are better equipped to understand the full suite of measures available. Progress against these recommendations will be tracked via the Constabulary's Business Assurance Meeting:

7.4. Recommendation 1: Chief Constables, in conjunction with the NPCC lead for bail, should implement processes for managing RUI in line with the letter from the NPCC lead for bail management portfolio dated 29 January 2019. This is to ensure, as far as is possible, that investigations are conducted efficiently and effectively, thereby supporting both victims of crime and unconvicted suspects.

7.5. Recommendation 2: Chief constables should ensure data is gathered on the use of voluntary attendance to enable the identification of patterns of its use, particularly in relation to the types of cases, so that voluntary attendance is only used in those cases where it would be an appropriate case management tactic.

7.6. Recommendation 3: Chief constables should introduce processes to ensure that in all pre-charge bail cases where bail lapses, the investigator in charge of the case carries out an assessment of the need for pre-charge bail to continue. In those cases where the suspect has not been charged, the decision to extend or terminate bail should be recorded with a rationale.

7.7. Recommendation 4: The Home Office should commission research on whether bail reduces re-offending and protects victims, and publish the findings of any such research.

- 7.8. Recommendation 5: The Home Office and the Ministry of Justice should intensify and accelerate their consideration of the creation of a bespoke offence of breaching pre-charge bail.
- 7.9. Recommendation 6: The Ministry of Justice and the Home Office should review the mechanism for informing the police of NMOs and propose remedies for improvement.
- 7.10. Recommendation 7: Chief constables should review and if necessary refresh their policy on how the force processes notifications of NMOs, so officers can easily identify if an NMO exists.
- 7.11. Recommendation 8: The Ministry of Justice should review a sample of NMOs to consider whether the wording of these are ambiguous and could cause problems for enforcement and propose a remedy to prevent ambiguity in NMO wording, if it is identified.
- 7.12. Recommendation 9: The Home Office should publish data on the number of reported breaches of NMOs. This should form part of the annual data collection on the applications for and granting of NMOs.
- 7.13. Recommendation 10: The NPCC lead for domestic abuse should consider Home Office data on the number of reported breaches of NMOs, and provide a report to HMICFRS within six months on national actions and guidance as a result.
- 7.14. Recommendation 11: Chief constables should, until DAPOs replace DVPNs and DVPOs in their force: 1) review, and if necessary refresh their policy on DVPNs and DVPOs, and in line with the overarching recommendation, a) ensure that there is clear governance and communication to prioritise the effective use of DVPNs and DVPOs, when these are the most appropriate tools to use, b) monitor their use to ensure they are being used effectively; and 2) ensure experience and lessons learned on using DVPN / DVPOs informs the use of DAPOs.

- 7.15. Recommendation 12: The NPCC should formulate a robust process, working with the CPS, to clearly define roles to ensure restraining orders are applied for in all suitable cases and that the victims' consent is obtained. This process should ensure prosecutors are made aware of what conditions are appropriate to protect the victim and that victims are consulted on the proposed conditions.
- 7.16. Recommendation 13: Chief constables should assure themselves that:
1) their officers are fully supported in carrying out their duties to protect all vulnerable domestic abuse victims by: a) ensuring their officers understand the suite of protective measures available (including new measures such as DAPOs); b) ensuring officers are aware of referral pathways to third-party support organisations which are available to protect vulnerable domestic abuse victims; and c) ensuring their officers have guidance and support on how to choose the most appropriate response for the situation; and 2) governance is in place to monitor the use of all protection orders and to evaluate their effectiveness, including by seeking the views of victims.
- 7.17. Recommendation 14: Chief constables should consider what legal support they need to use protective measures (if they don't already have this) and secure this support. The NPCC should consider whether regional or national legal (or other) expertise could be made available, so forces can easily access specialist support and can maximise efficiency and consistency.
- 7.18. Recommendation 15: Monitoring of recommendations: 1) Home Office and Ministry of Justice to each provide a report to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary on progress in implementing HMICFRS's recommendations within six months of the date of publication of this report; and 2) NPCC to collate chief constables' progress in reviewing and, where applicable, implementing their recommendations and report these to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary within six months of the date of publication of this report.

- 7.19. HMICFRS, the College of Policing and the IOPC have also set some additional actions:
- 7.20. Action 1: In light of changes to pre-charge bail, we propose that HMICFRS should consider future inspection activity to review the impact of the changes.
- 7.21. Action 2: The College of Policing will update its guidance to reflect changes needed on the implementation of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill and to clarify that officers may consider that if a suspect were to be released from police detention on bail with lawfully imposed conditions, the need for those conditions may well fulfil the 'necessity test' for arrest.
- 7.22. Action 3: HMICFRS to continue to assess use of DVPN/DVPOs and any new domestic abuse orders through its wider inspection activity.
- 7.23. Action 4: HMICFRS should consider future inspection activity in respect of restraining orders, including supervision and monitoring use of these by police officers. After a suitable period when more data is available from the inspection activity, HMICFRS and HMCPSI should consider undertaking a review to assess how effective the police and CPS are at applying for restraining orders, and if there is any point of failure within the process that needs to be addressed.

8. Final report: Police engagement with women and girls inspection

- 8.1. On 17th September, HMICFRS published "[Final report: Police engagement with women and girls inspection](#)".
- 8.2. In March 2021, the Home Secretary commissioned HMICFRS to inspect the effectiveness of police engagement with women and girls. This report sets out findings and recommendations from one part of this inspection, which

focuses on how effectively the police respond to violence against women and girls (VAWG). It builds on the findings from the interim report published in July 2021.

8.3. HMICFRS found that the police have made vast improvements in response to VAWG over the last ten years. This includes better identification of repeat victims, improved techniques to collect evidence and improved safeguarding measures. However, they also found several areas where the police need to improve and given the significant inconsistencies between forces, HMICFRS recommend that all chief constables immediately review and improve where necessary the processes and practices related to VAWG in their forces, to make sure they are effective and consistent. HMICFRS' principle finding is that the police cannot tackle VAWG alone. They are therefore calling for a whole system approach to prevent and tackle these offences.

8.4. To address the issues identified, HMICFRS have made five overarching recommendations in the report and detail a number of actions needed to deliver them. Progress against these recommendations and actions will be tracked via the Constabulary's Business Assurance Meeting:

8.5. Recommendation 1: There should be an immediate and unequivocal commitment that the response to VAWG offences is an absolute priority for government, policing, the criminal justice system, and public-sector partnerships. This needs to be supported at a minimum by a relentless focus on these crimes; mandated responsibilities; and sufficient funding so that all partner agencies can work effectively as part of a whole-system approach to reduce and prevent the harms these offences are causing. To increase the prioritisation of VAWG offences in policing, we recommend:

8.6. Immediately, the National Police Chiefs' Council and the Home Office should jointly appoint a full-time NPCC VAWG National Delivery Lead to lead on all police activity related to violence against women and girls. The lead should act as a point of contact for each police force, work closely with the College of Policing to make sure best practice is identified and communicated, ensure

progress is monitored, act as the 'voice of policing' at cross-sector national discussions and regularly report to the Home Secretary.

8.7. Immediately, the Home Office should add the policing of violence against women and girls to the Strategic Policing Requirement.

8.8. By December 2021, the Home Office should make sure that violence against women and girls is a priority for the ministerially chaired crime and policing performance board.

8.9. By January 2022, the Home Office and the national policing lead should develop a new National Policing Strategy for violence against women and girls (VAWG), to elevate the priority of VAWG and set a clear direction to forces on what is expected. Consideration should be given to establishing an annual strategic assessment of VAWG to support this strategy, and to using the 4Ps as a delivery framework to implement it. This framework should emphasise the role of effective partnership working, a strong and clear policing culture, and continuous improvements across all the four strands.

8.10. To increase the prioritisation of VAWG as part of a whole-system approach, we recommend:

8.11. By March 2022, the Home Office should work with other government departments, including the Department for Education, Department for Health and Social Care and Ministry of Justice, to come to an agreement on the measures and actions that each partner agency needs to implement both at national and local levels to encourage joint responsibility in tackling violence against women and girls. This should be co-ordinated through the planned Home Secretary-chaired board. The agreement should also include sustained, multi-year funding to support collaboration between agencies, where they have joint responsibilities, and serious consideration of: 1) a new statutory framework and statutory guidance to define roles, responsibilities and expectations; to standardise existing non-statutory arrangements; and to allow better accountability at local level, and support and scrutiny at national

level; and 2) as part of this: a statutory duty requiring the police and relevant partner agencies to work together to collectively take action to prevent the harm caused by violence against women and girls (VAWG). In doing this, the Home Office should consider whether this could be included in any existing duties; how duties for safeguarding children will interact with and complement the changes; and how this duty will be incorporated into the new statutory framework for VAWG.

8.12. Recommendation 2: The relentless pursuit and disruption of adult perpetrators should be a national priority for the police, and their capability and capacity to do this should be enhanced. We recommend:

8.13. By March 2022, the Home Office and the relevant National Police Chiefs' Council leads should review police capability and capacity to relentlessly pursue and disrupt the perpetrators of violence against women and girls offences and enhance these, as necessary.

8.14. As part of the work to develop the Government's domestic abuse perpetrator strategy, the Home Office should carry out an urgent review of the role of the detective constable. This should establish appropriate incentives, progression and support for both officer and staff investigators to encourage this career path. This review should include specific recommendations to make sure there is adequate capacity and capability in every force to thoroughly and effectively investigate violence against women and girls offences.

8.15. By March 2022, as part of the work to establish and implement the Government's perpetrator strategy, the Home Office, together with the Ministry of Justice, should improve the evidence it has about the management of perpetrators.

8.16. By March 2022, as part of the work to establish and implement the Government's perpetrator strategy, the national policing lead, the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice should co-ordinate work to improve, review

and standardise the current arrangements and capability for the management of violence against women and girls (VAWG) offenders. This should aim to increase consistency in the use of multi-agency public protection arrangements, multi-agency tasking and co-ordination, and integrated offender management, and make recommendations to ensure there is sufficient capacity in the system to manage VAWG offenders effectively.

8.17. Recommendation 3: Structures and funding should be put in place to make sure victims receive tailored and consistent support. We recommend:

8.18. By March 2022, informed by and connected to work on the proposed Victims Bill, the Ministry of Justice, Home Office and other government departments should review funding to ensure it is sufficient for specialists to support victims making complaints to the point that they have received the outcome they need. The aim should be to provide funding so that an independent (non-legal) adviser/advocate is available to support victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence as they go through the criminal justice system (and should consider this for victims of other crimes that disproportionately affect women). This support should be designed in consultation with the victim and should continue after a perpetrator is released from prison.

8.19. By March 2022, all police forces should ensure information on the protected characteristics of victims is accurately and consistently recorded.

8.20. By March 2022, informed by and connected to work on the proposed Victims Bill, the national policing lead, National Police Chiefs' Council leads and the Home Office should work together to establish guidance for all forces on how the views and experiences of victims should be recorded, analysed and considered as part of performance management of VAWG offences. As a minimum, this should include a single national survey to measure victim satisfaction, and processes to link local performance management data with the proposed national VAWG improvement measures (recommendation 4.4). This should allow for both local and national quality assurance, as well as the

identification of any emerging issues, risks or variables that need further action to resolve. Police forces and partner agencies should have clear responsibilities in supporting victims through every stage of the case.

- 8.21. Recommendation 4: All chief constables should immediately review and ensure that there are consistently high standards in their forces' responses to violence against women and girls and should be supported in doing so by national standards and data. We recommend:
- 8.22. By March 2022, chief constables should establish and publish an action plan that specifies in detail what steps the force will take to improve and standardise its approach to responding to violence against women and girls offences, with the aim of ensuring policies, processes and practices are effective, actively monitored and managed, and meeting national standards. This should include (but is not limited to) improving and standardising: 1) the use of police powers to protect women, including arrest of perpetrators, use of pre-charge bail, the applications for orders (where appropriate) and processes for responding to breaches of non-molestation and other orders; 2) the use of the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme; 3) the capability of generalist and specialist staff to respond to violence against women and girls offences effectively, including consistent understanding of newer offences (such as coercive control); 4) the identification and management of high-harm violent offenders against women and girls (in partnership with other organisations); 5) the identification and protection of the most at-risk victims of violence against women and girls offences (in partnership with other organisations); and 6) internal and public communications related to violence against women and girls to ensure that messages raise awareness of the risk and emphasise the seriousness of the issues.
- 8.23. By December 2021, the NPCC VAWG National Delivery Lead should set a framework for the force-level action plans, and work with chief constables to make sure their action plans are in place. By June 2022, the national lead should then provide HMICFRS with an assessment of national progress, which establishes any potential gaps and areas for improvement.

- 8.24. This force-level activity should be supported by clearer standards and improved performance monitoring, to help chief constables better assure themselves of their forces' effectiveness in responding to VAWG, and to allow greater accountability, support and direction at local and national levels. We recommend:
- 8.25. Immediately, the College of Policing should develop a violence against women and girls minimum standard, creating a consistent and clear standard for police investigations. The Home Secretary or the College of Policing should then consider whether to use their powers under section 53A of the Police Act 1996 to require police forces to adopt the procedures and practices it sets out.
- 8.26. By March 2022, the College of Policing and the National Police Chiefs' Council should establish mechanisms and processes to allow rapid and consistent sharing of evidence, information, and evaluation on new and effective ways of working in response to violence against women and girls offences.
- 8.27. By December 2021, the Home Office together with other government departments should introduce a set of measures to monitor improvements in the criminal justice system approach to all crimes that disproportionately affect women and girls. This should be developed together with women and children's representatives and include a strong focus on evidence of victim experience (and include such information as is necessary to identify and act on variation in service provided to women with different protected characteristics). The measures should enable better accountability and support at local and national levels. Where possible, this should complement the work the Government is already doing following its end-to-end rape review to develop a 'scorecard' for measuring improvements to rape crimes.
- 8.28. By March 2022, the Home Office should work with other government departments, policing, and victim representatives and support organisations to build awareness of the importance of ensuring communications and

terminology related to violence against women and girls are appropriate and don't have any unintended consequences.

8.29. Recommendation 5: Immediate review of use of outcomes 15 and 16 in violence against women and girls offences. We therefore recommend that:

8.30. By March 2022, the Home Office should review and refine the data on outcome codes gathered nationally and make improvements in the ways this can be used to identify trends and outliers.

8.31. By December 2022, the NPCC VAWG National Delivery Lead should develop and disseminate to forces a process for consistent and robust monitoring of outcomes 15 and 16 violence against women and girls cases. This should require, as a minimum, inspector-level sign-off of these cases and that evidence on the rationale for these closure codes is recorded and auditable.

9. Recommendations

9.1. It is recommended that the Joint Audit Committee note the content of this paper.