



## **Women's Forum**

Minutes of a meeting of the Women's Forum held at The Jeffrey Room - The Guildhall, Northampton, NN1 1DE on Tuesday 25 July 2023 at 6.00 pm.

### **Present:**

Pauline Woodhouse (Co-Chair), Cllr Anna King (Co-Chair), DCI Nickie Deeks, Chris Carr, Dawn Thomas, Annabel Pickering, Rachel Duncan, Julie Parsons, Cllr Janice Duff, Cllr Danielle Stone, Eleri Neale, April Ventour-Griffiths, Debs Burns, Sally Woods, Neelam Aggarwal, Mavis Munderwa, Debbie MacColl

### **Welcomes, Introductions and Apologies**

Everyone was welcomed to the meeting and introductions made around the screen and the room. Apologies were received from Morcea Walker, Cllr Rosie Humphries, Rachel Packman, Cllr Cathrine Russell, Tina Collett and Anjona Roy.

### **Code of Conduct**

### **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The Minutes of the last meeting were agreed to be a true record.

### **Violence Against Women & Girls**

DCI Nickie Deeks introduced herself as the Force lead for VAWG (Violence Against Women and Girls) which included sex workers and domestic abuse. She also oversaw paedophile and online offences.

Northamptonshire Police consulted with the public every 3 years to help determine the 4 main Matters of Priority. They were:-

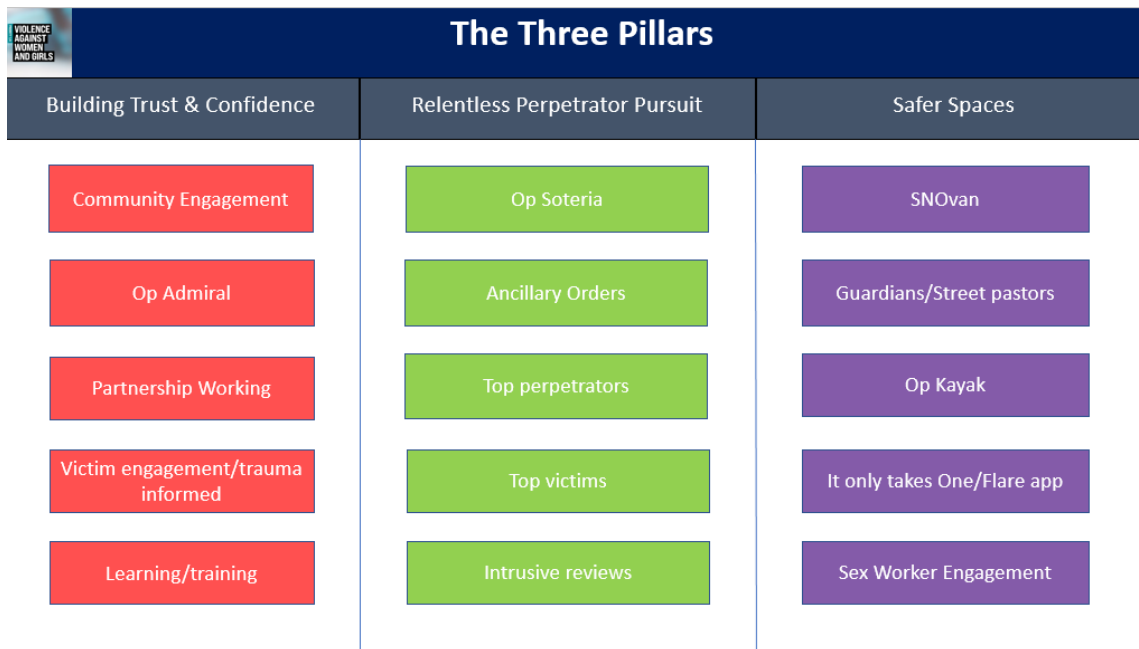
Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Drug Harm

Serious & Organised Crime

Serious Violence

Females were disproportionately affected by violence and the Force were committed to creating an environment that women and girls feel safe in and this included internally within the Police Force. These were looked at nationally under 3 pillars



### 1 Build trust and confidence

This included challenging misogyny internally, working with other organisations, working with people who report, safeguarding through the justice system and making sure the right officers were in the right place. There was a dedicated Rape Team, all DCs, co-located with the Domestic Abuse (DA) Team/Child Abuse Team under the Vulnerable Persons umbrella. Work was currently underway to set up an exploitation hub.

There was a lot of community engagement with use of the Beat Bus, work in schools, internal review to police response to all offences to make sure everything possible was done, updating processes for vetting of Officers at recruitment and re-checking.

Partnership working included working with social care, Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC), Northampton Rape Crisis (NRC) etc. It wasn't possible to solve these issues by working in silo.

Victim survivors highlight areas where agencies can do better and one even produced a video for police training. Everyone needs to use trauma informed processes. New officers upwards received vulnerability training

### 2 Relentless perpetrator pursuit

Targeting the most dangerous perpetrators, groomers and sex offenders, better use of police powers. Rape was the most difficult to investigate and sometimes the evidence does not meet the threshold for prosecution but they can look at what else they can do with the perpetrator, sometimes it was nothing, but maybe a Sexual Risk Order or DV Protection Order in which case if they breached they would be back in court. All rapes were reviewed to see if there was anything that could have been done better. Once someone had been the victim of rape they were much more likely to become a victim again. They had adopted a trauma informed process and there was a need to recognise that people do not react to a situation in a single way. Victims were fully safeguarded. The top 10 offenders were identified –other teams

were made aware of who they were and see who else could get evidence, look to see if anything had changed.

Top 10 victims were also identified – make sure they are safeguarded and signposted. Look to see if anything had changed with them.

Interview review – have a theme each month, the review would be carried out from the rank of Inspector up. Find out how the victim felt, review everything all the different teams have done and learn from it.

### 3 Safer spaces

Home should always be a safe place but for many people it isn't. The OFPCC's office had carried out a lot of initiatives to keep people safe using the Safer Streets Funding including the Flare App, scanning technology, SNO van staffed by the Guardians, Street Pastors, additional CCTV and Safer routes. Op Kayack was setup after lockdown with NTE Officers challenging those with predatory behaviours. Using ANPR to know when known offenders are out and about, seeing if anyone is hassling sex workers, going to hotels. RISE had trained a lot of hotel staff to know what to look out for and using text purchasing methods with an older plain clothed officer and a younger Cadet. Weekly meetings to look at every single thing that had happened then looking to disrupt. Working with the University on Friday, Saturday and Student nights. The SNO van carried spiking test kits.

Op Uncanny was a multi agency op supporting and safeguarding sex workers.

The highlights, to date, include:-

The new DCI role for VAWG giving a greater focus.

The Force was becoming more diverse with 36% female officers.

SWAN (Safer Women at Night) with £800k funding

IDVA's

Accelerated detective pathway to tackle the shortage of Detectives. There was a robust 18 weeks on the front line before an exam which they needed to pass.

Northants had the youngest police force they had ever had, a lot of officers with great passion, technical skills etc. Not all came through the University route, but also life experience.

Chief Inspectors had regular Weeks of Action around priorities with each taking a different area to look at. Look East had previously filmed a session out on Op Kayack which had received over 1 million hits.

### How can the Women's Forum help?

Nickie asked if the Forum could perhaps be a scrutiny group round VAWG. This was welcomed by the group.

Julie thanked Nickie for the information and asked about the C2C female offenders they supported because when details of their offence were released, their home address was revealed. As over 90% were victims of domestic abuse, this put them at risk. **Action: Julie to email Nickie separately some examples to review to what could be done** Nickie added that everything they did should make things better but there were a few things that were difficult so no promises at this stage.

Cllr Stone thanked Nickie and stated that they had recently held a women's well-being day with over 60 women attending and a community safety day would be well received.

Mavis asked if Officers had training on cultural competence as, with most black and brown women, a DA incident would involve all of the family. Nicky responded that they did some excellent all-round training but there was an expectation for the front line officers to know everything which was unrealistic. If Mavis could send some examples Nickie could double check on what was in the training.

Neelam stated that some partnerships/organisations delivering services were not picking up on specific issues of black and brown women. There needed to be a specific approach for black and brown women as the family pressure to not engage was immense even with 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generations. She also wanted clarity that there was a collaboration with other services.

Nickie responded they did a lot of ethnic minority work and HBV (Honour Base Violence) was owned by the DA unit along with a specialist Risk Assessment. They had identified that if they didn't do things right the first time, they would lose that person. She explained that they completed returns to the VAWG Task Force, people own different parts and feed into it. Some of this is confidential so she does not get to see all the details but there is a list they need to score against which has just been changed so it was a good time to review and see where they were lacking. Neelam added that a lot of progress had been made through the Forum and she did not want ethnic minorities to be an after thought but taken in parallel. Nickie stated she would talk to Rachel & Eleri to see what could be done.

April stated that one of the barriers to reporting was the huge ripple effect when someone had a bad experience and it is difficult to defend when speaking to someone who is still waiting for feedback on their case. There was a need to understanding adultification of black girls as they look older than they are. Creating Equalz was doing a lot of work around reporting of sexual assaults and why cases fall apart.

Nickie responded that a lot of work had been done around victim blaming language such as how much someone might have drunk and adultification was included although that was more around black male children who had gone missing as the presumption was often that they were older and less vulnerable. Language had a massive impact on someone's thought process. They did look at cases that had adverse outcomes when going to Court and why. It wasn't the police who made the decisions but the gathered the evidence to see if there was enough for the average Jury to come to a Guilty verdict. They could go to the CPS for early advice and she encouraged Officers to do that. If it came to a 'no further action' it would be reviewed to see if anything else could be done. If there was a particular case April was aware of, to let Nickie know and she could look at it.

Cllr Duffy asked if inappropriate behaviour of Officers towards women would be looked at. Nickie responded that yes, absolutely it would be investigated by Professional Standards and the Chief would be on it like a ton of bricks!

## Community Information Exchange

Annabel (C2C) – reminded everyone of C2C's Women's Centre in Kettering – look on the website for courses and how to refer. Also the Shine Girl programme which could be delivered in schools.

April (Creating Equalz) – the Black and brown women's DA meeting had been that morning. Members were very committed to what they were doing and fed into WNC's Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence strategy. Creating Equalz were delivering a fourth recovery toolkit with Divya supporting. Also supporting Mavis to work through the toolkit so she could deliver the programme in November with April supporting. Links to the podcasts were on the website.

Chris (Women's Institute) – WI were running a Campaign to raise awareness of ADHD and Autism in women and girls. To try and make it easier to get earlier diagnosis and funding at a local level. Dawn added they were looking at other ways of supporting women with autism than in a room by looking to the green spaces and walking / talking. Annabel offered Dawn C2C's allotment as a green space.

Julie (Emmanuel Church) – informed the group of the GoodSam app - link [GoodSAM \(goodsamapp.org\)](https://goodsamapp.org), which was used by ambulance service, most police forces and fire. The public could live stream videos of incidents straight through to police. From a medical point of view, cardiac arrest cases had 2 times survival rate and police had 3 times higher arrest rates using this method.

Mavis (Power of the Mind) – ladies chat sessions continued. April had delivered 3 sessions and the invite was out for other speakers. They used a holistic approach for DA survivors around mental health, and wellbeing. About to start a Healthy Heart Campaign in mid-August doing blood pressure tests to see if people were at risk then sending the info to their GP for follow up. Black women were more pre-disposed to heart problems. They had managed to secure a community space and were moving into Springs Centre on 1<sup>st</sup> April.

Neelam (IHWO) Chia & Chat and walk & talk were a lifeline to many ladies. They had entered the Bloom Neighbourhood competition with judging on 16 August. A charity was chosen each year to raise money for and this year it was Northampton Association for the Blind (NAB) as they had been inspired by a staff member – if you want to donate, get in touch. India Independence Day flag raising on 15 August. Diwali was still going ahead despite the Market Square not being available and would be on Saturday 4 November – look out for further information nearer the date.

Debs (WNC) – there was now a community events page on the WNC website as well as the newsletter – let Debs know of any content to add. [Calendar of events | West Northamptonshire Council \(westnorthants.gov.uk\)](https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/calendar-of-events)

Debbie (WNC) – the Women's Business Networking meetings were close to realisation and would be delivered in partnership with Patricia Greaves, Senior Information Manager, Business & IP Centre, Central Library. These meetings would initially be aimed at grass roots level for women thinking of starting a business or having recently started. We would though, be asking the more establish business

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women we had met over the last few years to join us as speakers! A hybrid meeting was arranged for Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> October at 12pm – 1.30pm. More details out soon.

### **Items for Future Meetings**

Serious Violence Duty – Vicki Martin  
No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

### **Date of Next Meeting**

Tuesday 26 September, 11am, in the Jeffrey Room, The Guildhall and on Teams