

Male

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS REPORT

VIOLENCE
AGAINST
WOMEN
AND GIRLS
COMMISSION
for PLYMOUTH



stop!

FOREWORDS

Councillor Rebecca Smith
Chair of the Commission



We began this Commission in response to the abduction and murder of Bobbi-Anne McLeod in November 2021. We saw the fear amongst young women and girls in the city that such an incident could take place in a public place in the early evening and wanted to take action to make the city feel safer. We know nothing we can say in this report will bring Bobbi-Anne back or make sense of what was done to her. However, Bobbi-Anne's death prompted this piece of work, and in the midst of the pain and disbelief felt by so many, it is my hope that the recommendations we are proposing will bring about substantial change to the way men and boys treat women and girls in this city. We want the recommendations to lead to Plymouth becoming an even safer city, where women and girls feel safe to live their lives.

We set out to shine a light on the wide range of issues that encompass 'Violence against Women and Girls' (VAWG). We have intentionally named this report the 'Male Violence against Women and Girls' report to articulate what is often left unsaid in reference to VAWG work – that we are specifically referring to harm, abuse and violence aimed at women by men. Equally, we have intentionally explored issues relating to the whole range of causes and factors incorporated within the VAWG terminology – from sexual assault to domestic abuse and violence, from online harm and pornography to stalking, from rape to drink spiking – recognising that all areas need to be addressed if we are to see lasting change.

Some of our recommendations will be more straightforward to implement than others. We know Plymouth is an ambitious and resourceful city and believe everyone will collectively rise to the challenge and support positive culture change that stops male violence against women and girls. We want women and girls affected by male violence to get the support they need and men and boys who are perpetrators of male violence to receive the education and input they need to stop these behaviours. We believe that Plymouth can be a city where sexism and misogyny is called out and we see women and girls of all ages respected and honoured.

We are inviting you to join us on this journey.

Nazir Afzal OBE
Independent Advisor to the Commission

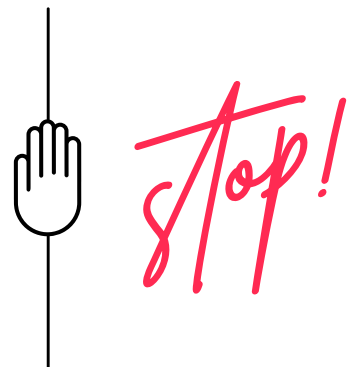


The City of Plymouth has had more than its fair share of violence against women and girls this past year and the terrible crimes are a reflection of the journey that all of us are on to eliminate these harms.

The Commission is a bold and brave development, and its findings and recommendations are in many respects ground-breaking, but they are all evidence-based responses to the significant challenges that we face. At its heart is the understanding that we can't just repeat the same mistakes and that we must address the causes and not just the consequences. I remember the teenage son giving evidence at the trial of his father for the murder of his mother after she had suffered years of abuse, telling the court 'He wished that a neighbour or a family member or friend had said something because he was too scared to do so'.

Plymouth knows eliminating violence is everybody's business and this report is the beginning of that journey

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ABOUT THE COMMISSION

Violence against women and girls covers a range of crimes that have been identified as being committed primarily but not exclusively, by men against women. Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is not a new phenomenon, however the murder of Sarah Everard in March 2021 ignited a national conversation and generated increased awareness of male violence and the dangers facing women. The extensive media coverage has prompted many women and girls to reflect and speak out about their personal experiences of male violence and abuse.

In 2021, Plymouth experienced first-hand the tragic and ultimate consequence of violence against women and girls with the devastating shootings in Keyham on 12 August 2021, which resulted in the murder of five victims. In November 2021, Bobbi-Anne McLeod was murdered. These events made it an absolute imperative to assess what more can be done at a local level to address male violence and ensure that women and girls are safe and feel empowered to live without fear of harm, abuse or intimidation.

In November 2021, Plymouth City Council announced a new multi-agency Commission to tackle violence against women and girls in Plymouth. The Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Commission was set up to review what is being done across the city to educate people, prevent and deter these types of crimes, consider what support is available for victims and make recommendations on what more could be done to make women and girls safer in the city.

The Commission met for the first time on 10 January 2022 and throughout February and March listened to the experience and feedback of a wide range of local people, including survivors of sexual violence and domestic abuse, and from organisations and experts.

The aims of the Commission were to:

- Take a proactive stance to better understand a wide range of views and experiences and consider what more needs to be done to tackle the issue

- Improve the perception and the lived experience of women and girls that Plymouth is a safe city
- Promote a better understanding of the causes and means of addressing male violence against women and girls
- Provide impetus for partners and the private sector to review their contribution to tackling VAWG in the city
- Take the opportunity to revisit and revise local policies if appropriate
- Share widely the work and findings of the Commission across local, regional and national systems
- Review existing partnership arrangements in the city to make sure there is a clear focus and tangible action on addressing VAWG, including its wider impact on the families and children of victims and abusers
- Ensure there is strong and visible leadership on VAWG for the city to drive through the recommendations identified by the Commission, and to be the champion for change

The Commission was made up of a panel of experts with a range of experience, all committed to the same goal of tackling the root causes of male violence towards women and girls. In addition, national leading expert and former Chief Crown Prosecutor for North West England, Nazir Afzal OBE worked with the Commission as an independent advisor.

More information on the Commission members can be found in Appendix A.

The Commission's ambition is to see Plymouth as a city leading the way on the issue of male violence against women and girls, raising the bar in terms of expectations across a range of sectors – including education, local public sector organisations and employers - to play their part and go beyond what is already expected of them.



SCOPE OF THE COMMISSION

The national Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls strategy outlined that the term 'violence against women and girls' refers to acts of violence or abuse that we know disproportionately affect women and girls. Crimes and behaviour covered by this term include rape and other sexual offences, domestic abuse, stalking and harassment, 'honour-based' abuse, including female genital mutilation, as well as many others, including offences committed online.

The Plymouth Violence Against Women and Girls Commission used the Home Office definition as the basis for their inquiry and focused specifically on violence committed by men against women and girls. The Commission took the decision to widen the crimes and behaviour covered by the term VAWG to also include drink spiking, misogyny, sexism and pornography.

Due to constraints on time and resources locally, we acknowledge that some types of crime under the category of VAWG, such as honour-based abuse, (including forced marriage and female genital mutilation), were not given thorough consideration. The important and hidden nature of this type of violence means that it should be subject to a more targeted and focused inquiry. The Commission is clear that resources should be allocated to a further targeted inquiry into honour-based abuse in the future.

From its inception, the Commission recognised the importance of intersectionality¹ and how each person's experience of violence, harassment or abuse will be unique. We understood the need to consider the interaction of multiple factors that might contribute to marginalisation such as gender, race, and disability. The Commission undertook engagement with people through this lens and strived to speak to diverse groups, whilst acknowledging that time constraints did not allow for the examination of some issues as closely as we would have liked.

¹ Intersectionality is defined as the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, and gender; regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage (Oxford English Dictionary). It is the recognition that different factors can combine, leading to people facing multiple layers of disadvantage and inequality. This can include gender, age, sexual orientation or physical disability.



METHODOLOGY

The Commission's findings and report have been shaped by comprehensive engagement and evidence gathering activities. We were keen to hear from as many different voices as possible to inform the report and recommendations. Engagement activities were aimed specifically at, but not limited to, women and girls and included:

- An initial public Question and Answer (Q&A) session, comprising of a panel of representatives from organisations and partnerships in the city
- A public facing online survey open to everyone including residents, stakeholders and partners to ensure a wide range of views
- An online call for evidence that was open to all. Written submissions were encouraged from a wide range of stakeholders, professionals and people with lived experience of male violence
- Forty hours of listening in evidence sessions from organisations and professionals with experience of working on the prevention of male violence and providing support to victims
- In addition to the above evidence sessions, the Commission also held additional engagement sessions with groups of young people

To ensure that the engagement activities were trauma informed we worked with subject matter experts and tested our survey approach several times to gather feedback.

PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

In December 2021, a public virtual Q&A session was hosted where representatives from organisations and partnerships in the city talked about the vast amount of work that was already happening across the city to address male violence against women and girls. This event also provided a chance for local people to give their views on what more needs to be done.

The questions and answers were summarised under the following themes:

- The Commission – membership, how it will work and how will it ensure it is inclusive of many voices
- General Safety – creating safe spaces and increasing feelings of safety through self-defence and safety initiatives, issues around online safety – what more can be done?
- CCTV / Street lights / Buses and Taxis – the need to work with public transport operators to see what

more can be done, review of infrastructure that will help to increase safety and feelings of safety

- Culture and Education – working with schools to empower and increase self-confidence in girls and young women, working with men and boys around the impact of misogynistic and sexist language and behaviour; giving confidence to men and boys to challenge attitudes that perpetuate negative stereotypes of women and understanding healthy relationships
- Pubs and Venues – what more can be done to support initiatives to encourage a thriving evening and night-time economy where women are safe and exploring the role that sports clubs play
- Policing – police presence in areas of the city most in need, addressing coercive control, domestic abuse and stalking. What more can be done to tackle repeat offenders and improve conviction rates?

ONLINE SURVEY AND ONLINE CALL FOR EVIDENCE

To enable as many people as possible to input into the Commission, an online survey was developed to gather views on people's perceptions and experiences of male violence against women and girls.

The survey was not only designed to gather people's perceptions and experiences when out in their local area and Plymouth more widely, but to help the Commission understand people's experience in their homes. It also provided respondents with an opportunity to suggest what more can be done to combat male violence against women and girls in the city and what further support is needed for victims and survivors.

The survey ran between 13 January and 15 February 2022 and was promoted using a wide range of communication channels, including targeted social media, and was shared within existing networks. A total of 1,327 responses were received. Most responses were from women and girls, however the survey did generate a range of views from people with diverse backgrounds and identities.

To complement the online survey, the Commission also ran an open call for evidence which allowed people to respond with their own experiences, data and/or insight around this issue. A total of 30 responses were received and submissions included recommendations for preventing and tackling male violence against women and girls, accounts of individual experiences, and relevant research data and information to support the work of the Commission.

EVIDENCE SESSIONS

To allow us to explore the issues surrounding violence against women and girls in more depth, the Commission held two days of evidence gathering sessions. This was primarily with experts working in this field, however we also heard from women with lived experience who courageously shared their experiences with us.

The Commission received a variety of information and heard about a vast number of issues in these evidence sessions. The sessions were arranged under the key themes of the role of men and boys, children and young people, places and spaces and culture as well as a session focused on innovation and best practice.

All the evidence collected through the different methods was collated and analysed and has been used to inform the Commission's recommendations.

A list of all the organisations that we heard from in the evidence sessions can be found in the Acknowledgments section.



NATIONAL CONTEXT

In November 2021, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) published for the first time a suite of evidence to highlight the scale and severity of the issue of violence against women and girls:

'The range and prevalence of VAWG crimes is widespread. An estimated 1.6 million women aged 16 to 74 suffered domestic abuse in England and Wales in the last year, and around 5.1 million women aged 18 to 74 were victims of some form of abuse as a child. Tragically, in the year ending March 2020, 81 women were killed in a domestic homicide.

Considering some of the less hidden crimes, we estimate one in three women over the age of 16 in Great Britain were subjected to at least one form of harassment in the last year. This increases to two in three for women aged 16 to 34.²

Recent statistics show that one in five women are victims of sexual assault (or attempted assault) in their lifetime (5% of victims are men), over 27% of women had experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16 (14% of men), and 20% of women aged 16-74 had experienced stalking since the age of 16 (10% of men)³.

The number of police recorded domestic abuse related crimes in England and Wales rose 6% in the year ending March 2021 to 845,734 (618,232 women and 227,502 men). In the year ending March 2021, the victim was female in 73.1% of domestic abuse related crimes. (ONS, 2021).

In July 2021 the government published an updated [Strategy for Tackling Violence against Women and Girls](#), shaped by a comprehensive call for evidence. The ambitions of this strategy are to:

- Increase support for victims and survivors
- Increase the number of perpetrators brought to justice
- Reduce the prevalence of violence against women and girls

More recently, the government launched a new [Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan](#) which aligns with the ambitions of the government's Strategy for Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls. The Plan recognises that domestic abuse is the most prevalent form of male violence against women and girls and sets out an aim to create a robust system which drives down domestic abuse and domestic homicide cases, while ensuring the victims and survivors get the support they need. The Plan is based around three pillars;

- Prioritising prevention - Reduce the amount of domestic abuse, domestic homicide, and suicides linked to domestic abuse, by stopping people from becoming perpetrators and victims to begin with
- Supporting victims - Help all victims and survivors who have escaped from domestic abuse feel that they can get back to life as normal, with support for their health, emotional, economic, and social needs
- Pursuing perpetrators - Reduce the amount of people who are repeat offenders and make sure that those who commit this crime feel the full force of the law

The Government has also included measures in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 which will give victims of domestic abuse longer to report offences to the police.

The Plymouth Violence Against Women and Girls Commission aims to build on the ambitions and measures in the national legislation and provide a set of recommendations that relate specifically to the City of Plymouth and consider the local context that this issue is set in.

² <https://blog.ons.gov.uk/2021/11/24/violence-against-women-and-girls-helping-to-understand-the-scale-and-impact-of-the-problem/>

³ Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls, HM Government, July 2021

LOCAL CONTEXT

With a resident population of 262,800, Plymouth is one of the largest cities on the south coast and the fifteenth largest city in England. With a travel-to-work area bringing in over 100,000 people, a tourist industry drawing in more than five million visitors, and approximately 26,000 students, the city is a significant economic and cultural centre which also enjoys a thriving evening and night-time economy.

While Plymouth has a lot to offer and has ambitious plans, the city faces several deep-rooted challenges. Plymouth is a city that has significant deprivation and is within the 20% most deprived local authority districts in England. Two areas fall within the most deprived 1% in England, while 28 fall within the most deprived 10% in England. This affects around 46,000 people within the city. Just under one in five children in Plymouth are estimated to be living in poverty and this rises to one in four in one of our most deprived wards. Inequalities occur both geographically across the city, and within and across communities, with disadvantaged and marginalised populations most severely affected. These communities experience multiple social and economic issues, such as lower incomes, higher unemployment rates, poorer health outcomes and inadequate housing conditions, which are all considered to be risk factors for violence.

An estimated 132,300 women and girls currently live in Plymouth, with 107,600 being over 16⁴. Therefore, around 36,000 Plymouth women are likely to have been subjected to at least one form of harassment in the last year (based on the ONS estimate of one in three women).

In Plymouth:

- Victims of interpersonal violence are disproportionately women and perpetrators are disproportionately men (69.3% of domestic abuse victims were women and 74.4% of suspects were male)
- In the twelve months to May 2021 there were 2,955 stalking or harassment crimes, an increase of 25% on the previous year. 68% of the victims were female
- Annual crime statistics for sexual offences in Plymouth as of end of January 2021 show 991 offences, an increase of 4.1% on the previous year.

In the twelve months to March 2021 there was an increase in domestic abuse crimes from 4,882 to 4,956 (a rise of 1.5%). Therefore, we know that around 5,000 people in the city each year are victims of domestic abuse, with an estimated 73% being women and girls. As domestic abuse is often a hidden crime, these are only the cases that have been reported - there are likely to be many more.

According to the 2011 Census, 92.9% of Plymouth's population considered themselves White British which is significantly higher than the England average (79.8%). 7.1% considered themselves Black and Minority Ethnic with White Other (2.7%), Chinese (0.5%) and Other Asian (0.5%) the most common ethnic groups. Plymouth has lower percentages of residents within each ethnic group compared with the national average although it is estimated that the city's ethnic minority population is increasing rapidly.

Christianity is the most common religion in Plymouth. 2011 Census data shows that 32.9% of the Plymouth population stated they had no religion. Other religions such as Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism or Sikhism are followed by less than 1% of Plymouth residents.

The health of people in Plymouth is worse than the England average, with life expectancy for both men and women lower than the England average. Within Plymouth, there is considerable inequality in health, with a difference of 7 years and nine months in life expectancy across the city from the East (Plympton Chaddlewood) to the West (St Peter & the Waterfront).

Plymouth has a comparatively low level of overall crime for a city of its type and at 79.76 crimes per 1,000 resident population, the crime rate is much lower than its comparator group (95.68 crimes per 1,000 population)⁵ However, the rates of offences relating to male violence against women and girls are higher than some of our comparators and are on the increase.

SUMMARY SURVEY FINDINGS

The Plymouth City Council Violence Against Women and Girls Survey undertaken in March 2022, found that 89% of respondents agreed that violence against women and girls is a problem, with 60% feeling that it happened more often now compared to five years ago.

81% of the respondents felt very or fairly safe whilst at home, including when in their garden or outside space, whilst 11% felt very or fairly unsafe.

49% of respondents indicated that they had experienced some level of harm, abuse and/or inappropriate behaviour whilst at home, including when in their garden or outside space. The survey also found that 61% of respondents said that they had experienced 'inappropriate staring or leering that made them feel intimidated' when out.

The full results and report can be found [here](#).

⁴ 2020 Population Estimates, Office for National Statistics

⁵ Safer Plymouth Strategic Assessment of Threat, Risk and Harm 2020/21

WHAT IS ALREADY BEING DONE?

'Safer Plymouth' is the city's Community Safety Partnership and is made up of five statutory organisations (Devon and Cornwall Police, Devon Clinical Commissioning Group, Plymouth City Council, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Services and Devon and Cornwall Probation Services) working alongside a wide range of other organisations and agencies. The city's strategy for strengthening communities and improving community safety is contained within the overarching [Plymouth Plan](#), which sets out the direction of travel for the long-term future of the city until 2034, specifically;

'The city will support strong and inclusive communities where people have a sense of belonging and ownership, feel safe and confident, with the opportunity to live, work and play in good quality sustainable neighbourhoods'.

Domestic abuse and sexual violence have been top priorities for the Safer Plymouth Partnership for several years and the Commission found that there is a lot of strong partnership work already underway.

Safer Plymouth has a committed and active Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (DASV) Partnership which meets monthly. Violence against women and girls is embedded within the partnership plans. The members work collaboratively on the priorities and share responsibility for addressing concerns.

The DASV partnership has a range of active working groups which consider the most pressing needs impacting on women and girls in the city. This includes a monthly group which has been meeting to look at our local response to the needs of prostituted women in the city. A report has been commissioned 'Improving Exit Pathways for Prostituted Women in Plymouth' (SERIO, June 2022) which will help the partnership set out a blueprint for how they support this highly marginalised group of women and better meet their multiple support needs more effectively.

The DASV partnership also acts as a key working group for our 'Changing Futures' work. This work is aimed at reducing male violence experienced by women and girls who are disadvantaged in multiple ways in the city. The [Changing Futures Programme](#) will lead improved workforce development for DASV partners, develop an integrated data management system, promote innovation in their work with perpetrators and prioritise the involvement of lived experience in achieving system change. The Programme will be instrumental in progressing the Commission recommendations and in ensuring that there is a genuine, joined up system response for the most vulnerable women in the city.

Plymouth is committed to becoming a [Trauma Informed City](#)⁶ and has a Trauma-Informed Network with more than 330 members, including people with lived experience of trauma and professionals from different agencies including Devon and Cornwall Police, schools, Barnardos, NSPCC, Harbour Drug and Alcohol Service, Devon Clinical Commissioning Group and Plymouth City Council.

As a Trauma Informed City, Plymouth's ambition is

"to be safe and deliver person centred responses that are kind; where communities and professionals work collaboratively with each other, and their service users; and are focused on empowering and encouraging each other to innovate and transform culture."

Safer Plymouth has a strong commitment to community engagement and working collaboratively with people with lived experience of violence and abuse. In 2019, as part of the development of the annual Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (DASV) Plan, the partnership listened to over 150 people with lived experience of domestic abuse. The work of the Trauma Informed Plymouth Network has significantly elevated the voices of lived experience within the city and has specific groups focussed on experiences of domestic abuse and sexual violence. The Commission linked with these groups to hear direct testimonies from victims and survivors of male violence.

Safer Plymouth also has a strategic focus on the prevention of offending and harmful sexual behaviours. In March 2021 they collaborated with partners at [Together for Childhood](#) to hold a week-long series of training events which reached over 1,000 participants. Together for Childhood has also developed and implemented a city-wide campaign focussed on preventing harmful sexual behaviour

Plymouth has been piloting a range of innovations aimed at reducing perpetration of domestic abuse. This has included training trainers to roll out 'Active Bystander Training,' training the workforce in 'Respect' training for young people to reduce 'child to parent' violence and investing in the specialist provider Ahimsa to deliver workforce development and co-location with our Integrated Offender Management team.

⁶Trauma-Informed Practice is a strengths-based approach, which seeks to understand and respond to the impact of trauma on people's lives. The approach emphasises physical, psychological, and emotional safety for everyone and aims to empower individuals to re-establish control of their lives. Trauma-informed practice recognises the prevalence of trauma and its impact on the emotional, psychological and social wellbeing of people.

Under the Safer Plymouth partnership there are several other programmes directed towards tackling violence against women and girls. These include:

- Funding from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) that is invested in an integrated programme of work that includes support services for victims of domestic abuse and therapeutic support for victims of sexual violence
- Safer Streets funding that has been invested in infrastructure improvements, such as street lighting and CCTV, to improve safety in public spaces and bystander training to support people to intervene where they see threatening and inappropriate behaviours
- The Changing Futures Programme that is focused on improving responses for people experiencing homelessness, problematic substance use, domestic abuse and sexual violence
- The Trevi South West Womens Spark Project that is working with the most vulnerable women in the city to prevent them being affected by violence and abuse and improve their quality of life
- A programme of work with neighbouring local authorities, the Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner and Devon Clinical Commission Group to radically improve trauma informed responses to sexual violence (NHSE Trauma Pathfinder)

With a strong, active Community Safety Partnership dedicated to tackling violence against women and girls, a well-embedded trauma informed approach and several new initiatives, Plymouth is in a strong position to make positive changes in relation to addressing male violence. Over three months of evidence gathering, the Commission heard about the work that is already happening in the city or planned to take place. We heard from dedicated, professional organisations working to make real changes to the lives of women and girls. We also heard that there are many challenges preventing organisations from making sustainable changes including a lack of longer-term funding, workforce challenges and being overwhelmed by demand. It is clear from recent tragic events nationally and locally and the continued reports of violence and abuse, that a lot more needs to be done to address and tackle the root causes of male violence towards women and girls.

As a Commission, we were acutely aware that part of the job is to hold a mirror to the existing system and try to understand what was working well, where the gaps are and where we could make recommendations that will make a real difference. Rather than start from a blank page, we have focussed on recommendations that either strengthen the valuable work that is already taking place, fill gaps in existing approaches and provision or new initiatives to bring about lasting change.



STRENGTHENING THE CITY'S RESPONSE TO MALE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

'We want Plymouth to be free from violence and be a place where everybody takes an active role in making it the safest city in the country.'

Plymouth has a bold ambition to eradicate male violence and make the city a safe place for everyone – a city where women and girls feel safe at home, at school, college or university, at work and moving around the city.

We know that to achieve this requires fundamental cultural and behavioural change and do not underestimate the dedication, time and resource that is needed to make this happen. Therefore, we want to ensure that our recommendations are long-lasting and will endure long beyond the life of the Commission. For this to happen, change needs to be embedded in existing systems and structures and become part of everyday activities.

To facilitate this systemic change, we have developed a set of guiding principles that underpin the recommendations and their delivery. These guiding principles are based on the evidence we heard and will sit at the heart of any activity we undertake in the city relating to preventing and tackling male violence against women and girls.

Plymouth will adopt a city-wide public health approach to violence against women and girls, which seeks to prevent and tackle the root causes of male violence, abuse and harassment.

The city must fully adopt a public health approach and embed this into the strategies and plans of all organisations working in this area. A public health approach to male violence against women and girls recognises that there are multiple factors that influence the likelihood of being a perpetrator or victim of violence. These include environmental and economic factors, familial and peer influences and deep-rooted gender inequalities that perpetuate negative social and cultural norms about women and girls.

The underlying principles of a public health approach⁷ are that it is:

- focused on a defined population, often with a health risk in common
- with and for communities
- not constrained by organisational or professional boundaries
- focused on generating long term as well as short term solutions
- based on data and intelligence to identify the burden on the population, including any inequalities

⁷ [A whole-system multi-agency approach to serious violence prevention \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

- rooted in evidence of effectiveness to tackle the problem

Through considering these wider determinants of male violence, taking a public health approach provides us with a framework for understanding the root causes of violence and working together as a whole system to prevent it. It takes a long-term view directed towards challenging and changing norms, practices and structures that condone, normalise and perpetuate male violence against women and girls. This public health approach adopts three types of prevention.

Primary Prevention – approaches that stop violence before it occurs. These approaches and interventions focus on changing attitudes and behaviours and building the knowledge and skills to prevent people becoming perpetrators or victims of violence. Primary prevention also focuses on challenging structures, practices and social norms that perpetuate violence.

Examples include schools-based programmes that build relationship skills, challenge gender inequalities and model healthy relationships.

Secondary Prevention – these are often referred to as early intervention approaches. They are directed towards people and groups who are at risk of, or who are displaying early signs of, being a perpetrator or victim of violence. Secondary prevention is also concerned with ensuring that people in relevant public facing services and key individuals in communities can recognise and respond when people are at risk of being a perpetrator or victim of violence.

Examples include hospital-based Independent Domestic Abuse Advisers (IDVAs), youth diversion schemes and outreach projects.

Tertiary Prevention – these approaches are concerned with responding to violence and preventing and reducing harm and preventing escalation and reoccurrence.

Examples include support, treatment and protection for people who have experienced violence and criminal justice and therapeutic interventions for perpetrators of violence.

In July 2019, the Home Secretary announced a new legal duty on public bodies to prevent and tackle serious violence as part of a new 'public health approach' to tackling violent crime.

To make fundamental and sustained cultural and behaviour change, it is critical to understand the underlying social factors that exist within our local communities. It was clear from the evidence the Commission heard that the issue of male violence against women and girls needs to consider the wider determinants of health and wider system issues such as poverty, inequality, parenting, unemployment and

alcohol or substance abuse. As well as tackling risk factors, a public health approach to violence is empowering and seeks to enhance protective factors such as school readiness, good housing and a sense of connectedness and belonging within the community.

Plymouth will listen, engage and work collaboratively with people with lived experiences. This will be done in an inclusive way and will enable women and girls, regardless of their background or personal circumstances, to have a voice in the development of future policy and services.

The Commission recognise that having the voice of someone with lived experience included in the development of any new policy or service is central to challenging stereotypes and inequalities and to driving and leading positive change.

It is imperative that Safer Plymouth and other strategic partners lead the way and commit to all ongoing activity being co-produced with people with lived experience.

The [Changing Futures programme](#) will offer significant opportunities to do more work with those who have experienced male violence through a range of peer research, peer mentoring and volunteering opportunities. This work is being monitored by the Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC) as being of national significance and is part of a joined-up approach across the city to ensure services are better shaped by the citizens who use them.

As outlined on page 5, the Commission recognised the importance of considering violence against women and girls through the lens of intersectionality. Evidence shows that amongst adults aged 16 to 74 in the year ending March 2020, disabled people were more than twice as likely to have been victims of domestic abuse, stalking or rape as opposed to people without a disability. In addition, when considering sexual orientation, gay, lesbian or bisexual people were more likely to be victims of domestic abuse than heterosexual people. This was also the case for stalking, sexual violence and rape⁸.

Crimes relating to violence against women and girls can be hidden crimes so our understanding of them is incomplete and there is not always the supporting data such as ethnicity or religion of the victim, to help aid our understanding.

This guiding principle will enable organisations across the city to listen to, and work with, women and girls with lived

experience from a variety of backgrounds which will lead to a wider understanding of the root causes of male violence. It will assist in ensuring that support services are designed inclusively, supporting all the women and girls that they aim to support, no matter their background or what additional support needs they may have.

All agencies will commit to an approach of mutual learning and support. They will review and evaluate the impact of the recommendations to enable evidence-based decision making going forward.

The Commission is aware that not any one organisation on its own will be able to deliver the culture change needed in the city. Recognising the amount of work that is already happening locally and the strong collaboration between agencies, we are keen to encourage an environment of learning and support within, and between agencies. This includes working together to create a culture of evidence-based decision making through the sharing of evidence and robust evaluation of any activity undertaken in this field.

To support the development of a culture of research and evaluation, and to develop the evidence base in Plymouth and beyond, the Commission has recently supported an application to the UKRI Economic and Social Research Council. This application brings together Devon and Cornwall police, partner organisations and the University of Plymouth to work with each other and with public engagement groups to map what is already happening in the city, identify priorities and develop research and evaluation teams to work on projects to tackle these priorities.

Plymouth will be fully committed to continuing the work of the Commission, including looking at issues that were not within scope of the initial evidence gathering, such as honour-based abuse.

The Commission recognises that, due to the limited timescales and the breadth of the topic of male violence against women and girls, we were unable to cover some issues with the depth of focus that they deserve. Examples of this include honour-based abuse such as female genital manipulation or forced marriage. These specialist areas of violence need to be understood in detail and it was not possible to achieve this in the lifetime of the Commission. As a city, we are fully committed to continuing the work of the Commission and undertaking specialist areas of research to support our understanding and treatment of violence against women and girls in the future. We are committed to sharing what we have learned and will be open to learning from others.

⁸ Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls, HM Government, July 2021

RECOMMENDATIONS IN SUMMARY

To drive the culture change needed to challenge male violence against women and girls the Commission recommends that:

Plymouth commits to being a city which does not tolerate sexist or misogynistic language and behaviour:

- Through targeted training and facilitated discussion groups in male-populated environments, e.g. work places and sports clubs, men will be invited to become part of the solution
- Through the development of support networks in schools, businesses and social settings, men and boys will be supported to become active bystanders who proactively challenge inappropriate behaviour and language
- Men and boys will be offered learning opportunities, in formal and informal settings, which enable them to become positive role models and use their influence to act against sexism, misogyny, gender inequalities and violence against women and girls
- Through a targeted campaign and work in schools, women and girls will be empowered and supported to speak out about male harassment, abuse and violence

Plymouth should create a culture where it is safe to have open and honest conversations about sexism, misogyny, male violence and online harm and their impact on women and girls: There will be an annual programme of communications and events to amplify national campaigns, direct local messaging and give a voice to local communities and people with lived experience. This will include a VAWG conference this year to mark six months of action.

Schools in Plymouth should actively promote a culture of safety and equality for all by adopting a consistent and robust approach to tackling male violence against women and girls: This whole school approach goes beyond the quality assured relationship and sex education that is already mandated. It will ensure that all school staff and young people are helped to explore the factors that cause male violence against women and girls and the meaning of healthy relationships and respectful behaviours. Parents and carers will be supported and involved.

Young people are invited to develop a city-wide campaign to kick start conversations about online harm: This will build on existing campaigns and give a specific focus to social media and the impact of pornography.

Plymouth should share their learning and experience with others:

Plymouth will share its story as widely as possible so others can learn from the experiences of people in the city and the work of the Commission. The Commission will call on local MPs to host a debate in Westminster on male violence against women and girls in Plymouth.

To better support women and girls who have been subjected to male violence and abuse the VAWG Commission recommend that:

Women and girls in Plymouth are supported and empowered to report violence and abuse:

The appropriate agencies, including the police, will ensure that women and girls have an efficient, consistent and co-ordinated response to their disclosure or report of an incident. This will include a review of online reporting systems to maximise digital inclusion and provide opportunities for women and girls to highlight issues of safety and report violence and abuse.

Women and girls in Plymouth who have been subjected to male violence and abuse get the support they need, at the right time and in the right place:

This support will be provided by appropriately commissioned, easily accessible services centred around a trauma informed approach.

Plymouth is a city where women and girls who have been subjected to male violence only have to tell their story once within agencies: Plymouth agencies, including the police, will be trained to understand that having to re-tell violent incidents can be re-traumatising for women. They will commit to looking at how information about violence or abuse can be safely shared, with appropriate consent.

To create safe places and spaces the VAWG Commission recommend that:

Everyone has access to a 'Safe in Plymouth' online information hub:

This portal will provide a single online space which will be able to signpost people to information, training resources and specific help and advice.

Plymouth should be a place where women and girls are safe and feel safe when travelling around the city:

Work will continue with a refreshed focus on women's safety, to review and maintain pedestrian routes, public transport infrastructure, street lighting and CCTV across the city. Enhanced safety measures will draw on lived experience, evidence and new technologies.



Plymouth actively targets perpetrators of male violence against women and girls: Relevant organisations will develop a co-ordinated response to identify men and boys who are violent or abusive and cause harm, with a focus on supporting them to change their attitudes and behaviours.

The Commission recognises that the work doesn't stop with this report and recommendations. To ensure the building blocks are in place to enable real change to happen the VAWG Commission recommend that:

The Safer Plymouth Partnership will provide the leadership and direction for the co-ordinated city-wide delivery of the recommendations and collaborate to appoint a cross-organisation dedicated VAWG Strategic Lead: All relevant organisations will work together and pool resources to create a post dedicated to driving and delivering a co-ordinated and ambitious programme of work.

There should be a network of people who are empowered to take forward this agenda for preventing and addressing male violence against women and girls: All organisations in the city, including public, private and not for profit, will identify, name and resource a responsible person to champion and lead activity within their own organisation.

Plymouth should adopt a Violence Against Women and Girls Charter Mark Scheme: This scheme will enable organisations and local communities to demonstrate their commitment to addressing male violence, promoting gender equalities and supporting women and girls.

Plymouth should develop an accessible training package covering key aspects of VAWG and that this should be available by the end of the year: By the end of 2022, a range of training modules will be available to organisations and communities across the city to access free of charge.

WORKING TOGETHER TO CHANGE THE CULTURE

‘To end men’s violence towards women and girls it is vital to involve men in challenging other men and speaking out about men’s violence and holding men accountable for our behaviour’
(Plymouth VAWG survey respondent)

PREVENTION

The Commission heard evidence from several service providers in the city that a co-ordinated approach involving a range of organisations working together to implement early interventions and tackle the root cause of male violence towards women and girls would be the most effective way to address the issue.

Tackling the culture of ‘toxic masculinity’, or promoting positive masculinity, and addressing the social concepts of what it means to be a man were raised as key to preventing male violence against women and girls. According to the evidence heard, one of the most effective ways to prevent violence against women and girls is to challenge negative behaviour rather than simply to accept it – this lowers the risk of normalising such behaviour.

The Commission heard that, whilst everyone is responsible for creating a change in culture, men and boys can be particularly effective in challenging the inappropriate behaviour of other men. Several respondents and contributors felt strongly that violence against women and girls is a men’s issue and requires men to help stop a culture of harassment and abuse towards women. We heard about the importance of male allies in a range of different settings, such as schools, workplaces and sports clubs. This is particularly the case for predominantly male-populated environments. Involving men as positive role models to drive a change in behaviours and attitudes that contribute to violence against women and girls is highly effective.

“I would also like to see more men standing up as role models to challenge each other... More male led initiatives and groups for men to come together are needed in the city to raise awareness of how men need to change language, behaviours and perceptions of women”. (Plymouth VAWG survey respondent)

The Commission heard from several providers of preventative programmes aimed at children, young people and adults. Programmes are already taking place in the city with the aim of allowing men and boys to discuss the social concepts associated with masculinity.

One such organisation is ‘Beyond Equality’, an organisation working with men and boys of all ages on topics such as gender inequality, inclusive communities and healthier relationships to bring about behavioural and cultural change.

They use a workshop approach, mainly in schools but also in workplaces and sporting environments.

The importance of ‘going where men are’ was highlighted in several sessions within this theme, with small groups and strong facilitation being key to positive outcomes. Male only discussion groups were recommended.

The Commission received some feedback from participants of the Male Allyship Network Programme delivered as part of the Safer Streets 3 programmed by ‘Beyond Equality’

“The way I was able to link things in and understand, it helped me stop trying to fix stuff and just stand back and say how can I help rather than how can I fix it... in the typical man sense.”

“The head, heart, hands at the end of the last day... having 12 blokes unpack a lot of stuff and to see them open up and the difference in them... I think we had a lot of personal growth... set some cogs going but also to give me some confidence.”

“Really good... and better than expected. We were building up to this for a while and were wondering what it was gonna be like. What was better than expected was how the men showed up and bought into this together and amongst a very different group of people... Exciting times really.”

The Commission heard from providers that there is a desire to roll out schemes to a wider audience using pre-existing structures but having access to adequate and/or appropriate resources often prevented this.

In evidence provided by young men and boys we heard that it is challenging being a young man today as there are mixed messages given about how to behave and what ‘the rules’ are. This also came through in one survey response:

“I am a man who often walks home late at night. Most nights I see young women walking alone. What can I do to make them feel safe? Should I cross the road and walk on the other side until I am some distance ahead? If I want to go into a side street, should I do so where they can see me or should I stay back until they have walked past? If they turn into a street that I want to walk down should I follow them or go round the block with the chance that I might meet them coming the other way?”

The importance of early intervention was highlighted. The Commission heard that the earlier discussions which address male behaviour, language and attitude take place the better (with content being age appropriate). We were advised that targeting men aged 30 and over was considered to have real impact, as over 70 per cent of the women who were murdered last year were murdered by men over the age of 30. This is also the age they are likely to have a wide range of female contacts, such as wives or girlfriends, mothers, sisters, work colleagues, female friends. Official figures show that 83% of domestic homicides in 2019 – 2020 were committed by men and the average age of perpetrators was 40, with over half being committed by perpetrators aged between 30 and 59⁹.

One of the challenges that was woven through many of the sessions under this theme was the need to scale up programmes that address healthy male behaviour so that they are available to more men and boys in more settings. Strong and effective facilitators are needed to deliver the programmes and there are often not enough trained workers available. Also, sustained funding is needed to ensure that these programmes can be delivered on an ongoing, regular basis.

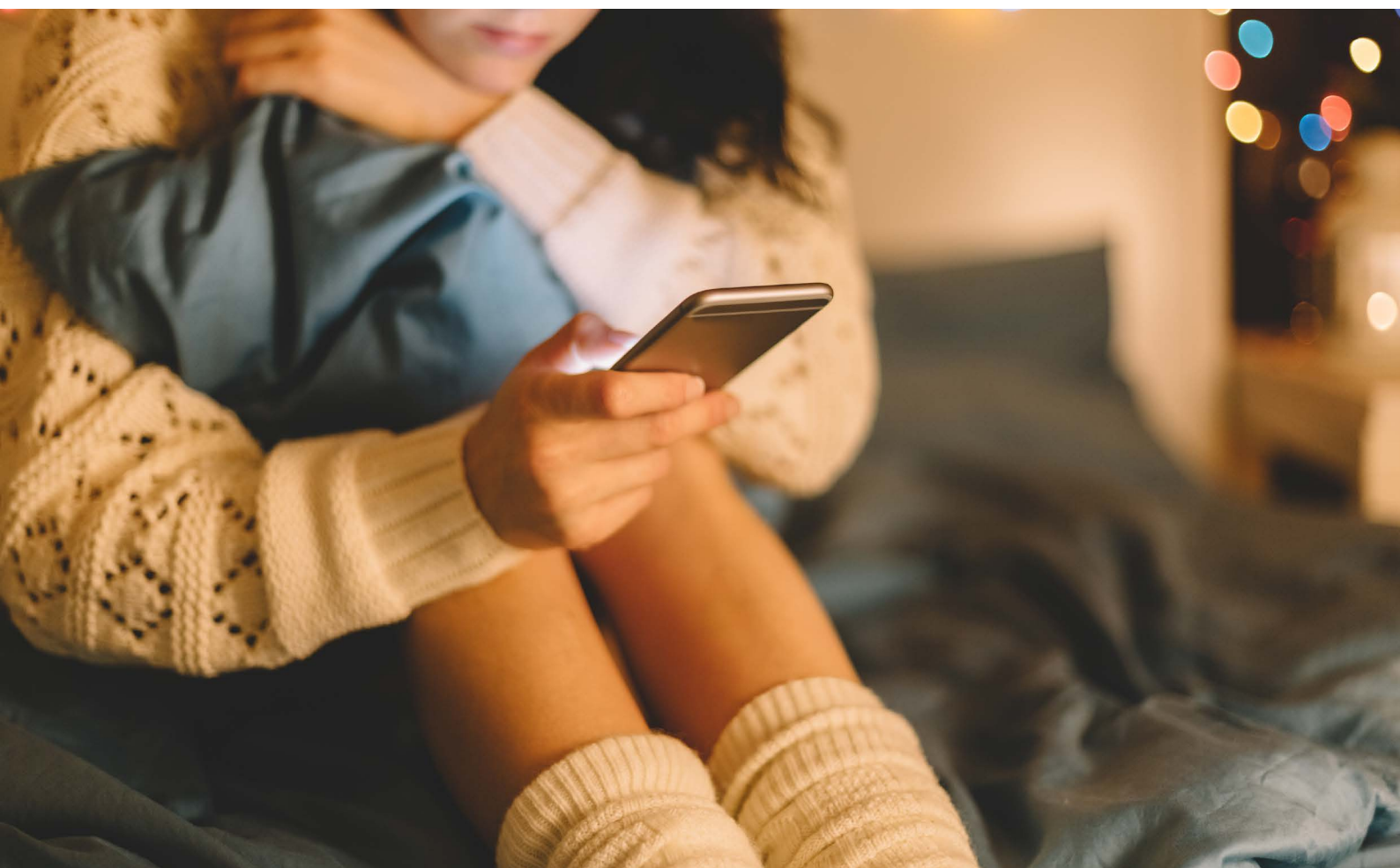
⁹ Key Findings from Analysis of Domestic Homicide Reviews, Home Office, March 2022

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The Commission heard from a range of organisations working towards the prevention of violence in boys and young men.

They heard that to change attitudes towards women and girls and develop an awareness of what is, and more importantly, what is not acceptable behaviour, it is crucial to start these discussions at an early age. A whole school approach is needed to embed a culture of safety and equality within schools and to discuss topics such as healthy relationships, equality and appropriate language and behaviour.

It was strongly suggested that part of this should include relationship and sex education. The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019 make Relationships Education compulsory for all pupils receiving primary education and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) compulsory for all pupils receiving secondary education. Schools are free to determine how to deliver the content set out in the related statutory guidance.



Evidence suggests there is variation in the quality of some of the RSE being delivered in Plymouth's schools and there is currently no accepted standard or quality assured approach. The Commission heard evidence that the person delivering the material is as important as the material itself and that confident delivery is key. In some instances, this could be through upskilling a teacher in the school and in others, it may be beneficial to bring in an external resource.

The Commission heard from providers about the 'whole school' approach they have developed and the programmes they are delivering locally to address issues such as sexual harm and consent. As previously mentioned, the challenges of workforce confidence and capacity to deliver were highlighted as there is no focussed resource, this leads to 'scrabbling about' for funding. Also, difficulty in getting some schools to engage as they are already overloaded was raised as a concern. However, the Commission welcomes the announcement in the new Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan (March 2022) that the Department of Education will work with experts to deliver a package of support for teachers.

Several sessions were also held with children and young people to better understand from both girls and boys what they consider are the drivers of male violence and to share some of their experiences. Both boys and girls reported witnessing their female friends being made to feel uncomfortable by the behaviour of men or boys, for example 'cat calling' or inappropriate touching. Both groups felt that education and culture change were fundamental to challenge stereotypes and change the attitudes of men towards women and girls.

Young people spoke about how they felt that pornography was part of the problem as it led to an unrealistic impression of sex and normalised behaviours that were not necessarily normal. Social media was also expressed as a concern as it makes it easier for people to make unwanted contact and that it can be used to encourage violent behaviour. Young men in particular reported feeling that the internet is a place where a lot of toxic masculinity is present and is a source of information and accessible pornography for boys.

Some of the young women that we spoke to felt that the receiving of unsolicited pictures was an issue as was the increased use of social media. Results from the Plymouth City Council Violence Against Women and Girls Survey show that 60% of those aged 19 years or under and 55% of those aged 20 – 24 years indicated that they had received unwanted sexually explicit online comments, emails, messages or images in the last five years, and 55% of those aged 19 years or under indicated that they had somebody sending or showing them sexually explicit pictures, photos or gifts that made them feel uncomfortable.

In addition, 57% of those aged 20 to 24 years indicated that

they had received inappropriate comments or messages that offended or made them feel uncomfortable on social networking websites in the past five years.

The Commission also heard evidence that the content of pornography is becoming more violent and extreme. There is concern that this is normalising violence and other harmful behaviours among men of all ages. Raising awareness of the link between pornography and male violence towards women and girls is considered an important part of changing the current culture.

COMMUNICATION

To start to address the language and behaviours that might lead to male violence against women and girls it is important to consider the tools and mechanisms by which this culture change can be navigated. Working together to change attitudes and behaviours will not only require a focused effort on prevention as detailed above but will require an impactful and sustainable long-term commitment to generating agreed key messages, communications and campaigns across the city.

The Commission has agreed that the communication approach will be to align an annual programme with other related activities and milestone events, such as National Stalking Week and Sexual Violence Awareness Week, in the city to ensure that these conversations happen frequently and are part of wider discussions around equality and community safety.

This will include a Violence Against Women and Girls conference in November 2022 to mark six months of action and review the progress of implementing the Commission's recommendations. The conference will form part of Plymouth's activities to support the national 16 Days of Action and White Ribbon Day 2022.

The messaging will actively reach out to parts of the community who have not been traditionally engaged in VAWG related conversations. The intention is that everyone in Plymouth understands the impact that sexist and misogynistic language and behaviour has on women and girls and how to recognise and challenge it, and for everyone to be aware and recognise what a healthy and fulfilling relationship looks like.

The Commission also see the importance and relevance of ensuring that what is learned is shared. Much has been learned already from the work taking place to recover from the tragic events that happened in the city, but this needs to go further. So, as work continues and campaigns are rolled out, engagement with key stakeholders and organisations across the city and with local MPs will be imperative to ensure this issue stays at the top of Plymouth's and the government's agenda.

To drive the culture change needed to challenge male violence against women and girls the Commission recommends that:

Plymouth commits to being a city which does not tolerate sexist or misogynistic language and behaviour:

- Through targeted training and facilitated discussion groups in male-populated environments, e.g. work places and sports clubs, men will be invited to become part of the solution
- Through the development of support networks in schools, businesses and social settings, men and boys will be supported to become active bystanders who proactively challenge inappropriate behaviour and language
- Men and boys will be offered learning opportunities, in formal and informal settings, which enable them to become positive role models and use their influence to act against sexism, misogyny, gender inequalities and violence against women and girls
- Through a targeted campaign and work in schools, women and girls will be empowered and supported to speak out about male harassment, abuse and violence

Plymouth should create a culture where it is safe to have open and honest conversations about sexism, misogyny, male violence and online harm and their impact on women and girls: There will be an annual programme of communications and events to amplify national campaigns, direct local messaging and

give a voice to local communities and people with lived experience. This will include a VAWG conference this year to mark six months of action.

Schools in Plymouth should actively promote a culture of safety and equality for all by adopting a consistent and robust approach to tackling male violence against women and girls: This whole school approach goes beyond the quality assured relationship and sex education that is already mandated. It will ensure that all school staff and young people are helped to explore the factors that cause male violence against women and girls and the meaning of healthy relationships and respectful behaviours. Parents and carers will be supported and involved.

Young people are invited to develop a city-wide campaign to kick start conversations about online harm: This will build on existing campaigns and give a specific focus to social media and the impact of pornography.

Plymouth should share their learning and experience with others: Plymouth will share its story as widely as possible so others can learn from the experiences of people in the city and the work of the Commission. The Commission will call on local MPs to host a debate in Westminster on male violence against women and girls in Plymouth.



WORKING TOGETHER TO SUPPORT WOMEN AND GIRLS

Several evidence sessions were held with providers of support services for women and girls who have experienced domestic violence. They reported seeing an increase in demand and in the complexity of need among young people and adults.

Concerningly, they have seen a significant increase in victims approaching them who do not want to report incidents to the police due to a lack of trust following the Sarah Everard case and the reports of endemic sexism and misogyny in the police and wider criminal justice system. The Commission heard from local police representatives that there is a drive locally to improve standards and to change the culture in relation to this issue in frontline policing. All local police officers are receiving additional training in domestic abuse, particularly front-line officers. Mandatory sexual violence training is centred on the understanding of reporting and the role of the Independent Sexual Violence Advisor.

“26% of respondents agreed to some extent that that it would be easy for them to get help and support if they, a friend or family member suffered from violence against women and girls whilst 43% disagreed”.
(Plymouth Violence Against Women and Girls Survey 2022)

The Commission also heard evidence from a local women's and children's charity Trevi, who outlined some of their services to support local women with complex needs. The challenges we heard about include wider issues such as trauma, mental health, sexual exploitation, coercion and control, poverty and homelessness. Trevi stressed that long-term sustainable funding for therapy and counselling services was crucial for ensuring women most in need receive continuing support. Providing services must be done through the lens of 'women only' provision to provide a safe space for women to talk openly and recover in a positive way. Specialist services are needed for women from a range of diverse backgrounds, so it is important to be aware of the needs of different groups of women that are resident in the city.

The Commission went on to hear about an organisation working with women who have been subjected to violence and abuse who have a learning disability. We heard that someone with a disability is more than twice as likely to be a victim of domestic abuse. Consistency of messaging and language in campaigns, and easily accessible safe spaces in public places are of particular importance to women with learning disabilities.

The evidence that the Commission heard demonstrated that there is a greater need for a sector wide response so that women not only feel confident to report incidents and talk about their experiences, but that there are services in place when they most need them. To support system wide change that is sustainable and ensures services can effectively

challenge and respond to violence against women and girls, further integration of existing services and infrastructure is vital. These services together, must meet the needs of diverse communities and have robust policies in place that ensure their staff are appropriately trained.

To support this work the government has recently updated the [VAWG commissioning toolkit](#). The toolkit provides advice to demonstrate how commissioning services can be effective in tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG). Its purpose is to ensure that professionals can work together to provide an effective commissioning approach for services to support anyone affected by any form of VAWG. The Commission feels that it will be a useful practical guide to both commissioners and providers of services.

To better support women and girls who have been subjected to male violence and abuse the VAWG Commission recommend that:

Women and girls in Plymouth are supported and empowered to report violence and abuse:

The appropriate agencies, including the police, will ensure that women and girls have an efficient, consistent and co-ordinated response to their disclosure or report of an incident. This will include a review of online reporting systems to maximise digital inclusion and provide opportunities for women and girls to highlight issues of safety and report violence and abuse.

Women and girls in Plymouth who have been subjected to male violence and abuse get the support they need, at the right time and in the right place:

This support will be provided by appropriately commissioned, easily accessible services centred around a trauma informed approach.

Plymouth is a city where women and girls who have been subjected to male violence only have to tell their story once within agencies:

Plymouth agencies, including the police, will be trained to understand that having to re-tell violent incidents can be re-traumatising for women. They will commit to looking at how information about violence or abuse can be safely shared, with appropriate consent.



Case Study: Together for Childhood - Most Significant Change

KAITLIN'S STORY

“The most significant change from Together for Childhood both in my personal and professional life is that I feel empowered, and I hope I have empowered others, to talk about sexual abuse. In the past, sexual abuse was something that was only whispered about, something people didn't want to talk about. Even in safeguarding meetings it was something that was alluded to rather than using the actual words

“The Together for Childhood's focus on prevention has made it easier to talk about child sexual abuse. People don't feel like you are accusing them of anything. Conversations can be about keeping children safe and that's something people are happy to talk about and take action on.”

“An understanding of trauma and injustice adding to that trauma and the impact on many women and girls, their relationships, education, work, social life and ability to function - it's not laziness or madness- it's being in survival mode. For those going through trauma, it's back to basics – hard to eat, wash, sleep. Rather than spending time navigating re-traumatising services – they need time and space to just be and collect themselves and heal a bit so they can re-engage more effectively in society and have a healthier more fulfilling life”.

*(Lived Experience Group Member,
Plymouth Trauma Informed Network)*

WORKING TOGETHER TO CREATE SAFE PLACES AND SPACES

GETTING AROUND THE CITY

The theme of safer transport in the city came through clearly in the evidence sessions, the survey and in the additional sessions that were held with children and young people.

The Violence Against Women and Girls survey found that only 13% of respondents felt very or fairly safe when out after dark, while over three quarters (78%) felt very or fairly unsafe. 79% of respondents reported that they had avoided taking certain streets or going to certain streets/area when out and about in the city.

84% of respondents outlined 'improving/increasing street lighting' would help women and girls feel safer and 71% of respondents outlined 'increasing CCTV' would help women and girls feel safer in the city.

“Better lighting surrounding bus areas and pathways to and from shops open late to the bus areas is required.” (VAWG Survey respondent)

“Please can you improve the street lighting... I also feel vulnerable as the street lighting is so dim, can't see people approaching you and neither can passing cars.” (VAWG Survey respondent)

The survey also asked respondents to provide locations where they felt unsafe in the city. Some parts of the city clearly felt less safe to respondents than others. The City Centre was cited most often as a place where respondents felt unsafe (216), this included respondents naming specific locations such as “City Centre car parks” and “bottom end of town”.

The table below lists the main locations that were identified as being the areas where respondents felt most unsafe.

	Number
City Centre	216
Mutley area / Mutley Plain	136
Stonehouse	124
Union Street	113
Central Park	90
Barbican	83
Devonport	76

In addition, there were 219 respondents who mentioned feeling unsafe in parks across the city. To support this finding, a piece of evidence was submitted to the Commission that looked specifically at Central Park and feelings of safety at night. This evidence was the first-hand experiences of a group of women who, when walking in the park at night, were able to find specific areas that were not well lit or did not have any lighting at all and which therefore highlighted that within Central Park there is currently no adequately lit route from one side of the park to the other.

During the evidence sessions, the Commission heard evidence that there is a current shortage of taxi drivers in the evenings. Young women also reported feeling less safe with male taxi drivers, and too often there were no women taxi drivers available. Concerns were also raised about feeling safe at bus stops and walking between locations and bus stops in the dark.

“In terms of safety at night, it is often impossible to book a taxi home. Public transport cannot be relied on either.” (VAWG Survey respondent)

Young girls shared that they do not feel safe in the dark and even less so since the tragic events over the past year. Some of the young women spoken to stated that they never walk by themselves in the dark.

The Commission heard that a night bus had been piloted in 2021, however due to the Covid pandemic, the trial was not as successful as it may have been at a different time. Buses can be a safe space for women and there is a need to maximise this potential, so we feel there may be some merit in exploring a further pilot.

THE EVENING AND NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY

The evening and night-time economy (ENTE) is considered one of the areas where violence against women and girls is more likely to occur, due to several factors brought on by increased vulnerability. These could be either through the use of alcohol and other substances, which can impair judgement about respectful language and behaviour and the issue of consent, or by lack of lighting and footfall in some areas of the city.

The Commission heard from representatives from Devon and Cornwall Police, Plymouth City Council and from the Plymouth [Best Bar None scheme](#).

The ENTE Alcohol Harm Reduction Group meet monthly to look at issues and requirements to improve the ENTE. Supported by members of partnership agencies, including

the police and Council licensing, the Military and Navy Police, University of Plymouth Student Union, Plymouth Against Retail Crime (PARC), Pubwatch and Street Pastors, it has achieved a number of significant improvements over the last five years including increased CCTV, street lighting and enhanced training.

The group has submitted its application for the 3rd year of Purple Flag Accreditation. Purple Flag recognises vibrant and well run ENTEs and is delivered through the ENTE Alcohol Harm Reduction Group.

Best Bar None has been running in the city for over twelve years and there is evidence of strong partnership working. We heard how ENTE door and bar staff are trained in safety issues and awareness of vulnerabilities. Since reopening after the Covid pandemic, there has been an issue with staff turnover however this is being addressed. New innovations are also being explored to help record information about individuals in venues with low level concerning behaviour and to build a database to support the understanding of repeat problem causers.

There is perceived to be a current gap in educating young people about how to keep safe on a night out and raising awareness of the range of help available to them.

DRINK SPIKING¹⁰

The level of drink spiking in Plymouth still needs to be better understood. A recent House of Commons Home Affairs Committee [report on drink spiking](#) found that a true picture of national prevalence is hard to get due to poor quality data and that the true rate is likely to be much higher than reported. The report states that as licensing authorities, councils play an important role in regulating the night-time economy and calls on the Government to work with councils to develop an anti-spiking strategy. The report references Plymouth's strong partnership work with businesses, voluntary and community partnerships to improve safeguarding the night-time.

The Commission was informed that an anti drink spiking scheme started in Plymouth in 2019 and some of the initiatives, such as the use of screening devices, are now being used elsewhere. The presence of CCTV and the training and awareness of door staff and bar staff locally helps to prevent offences occurring and means that intelligence can be passed to police quickly.

The Commission feels that, due to the level of dedicated partnership work already underway in the city, that a specific recommendation on the evening and night-time economy and the issue of drink spiking is not needed. A number of agencies in the city, including the police and Best Bar None, are looking to develop a local ENTE Safety Charter and we are keen to support the development of this.

We are also fully committed to supporting any future initiatives and in co-ordinating the ENTE work already underway with the new programmes of work proposed in this report. For example, we would also like to see drink spiking included in the conversations and campaigns that are planned for the city.

¹⁰ Drink spiking refers to someone putting drugs or alcohol into a person's drink without their knowledge or consent.



SUPPORTING PERPETRATORS TO CHANGE THEIR BEHAVIOUR

“Historically, it’s all about the victim. We have tools but we don’t have the evidence to really do good work with perpetrators. We need to reduce offending behaviours, and we need to change the behaviour of perpetrators.” (Plymouth Community Homes Worker, Plymouth Lived Experience Interviews 2021)

Several of the evidence sessions considered support for perpetrators of male violence and the Commission heard from several providers of perpetrator support programmes in the city. We heard that demand for support currently outstrips availability, with a disproportionate number of children and adults waiting for support services. We also heard that there is no local or national perpetrator strategy with a singular focus on perpetrators of VAWG which the Commission was advised would be beneficial in co-ordinating and driving forward this work.

In January 2022, the government set out its policy for [tackling perpetrators](#) and announced its intention to publish a comprehensive perpetrator strategy within 12 months of Royal Assent of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. In the national Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls strategy, the government has also committed to pursuing perpetrators.

Evidence presented to us suggests that currently less than 1% of perpetrators engage with a specialist intervention to challenge or change their behaviour. Opportunities are being missed to stop a perpetrator abusing their current victim or to prevent them from moving on to their next. This failure to prevent the cycle of abuse costs the lives of two women a week and around £66bn a year in social and economic costs.¹¹

The Commission heard that the vast majority of perpetrators have suffered trauma themselves in their lifetime thus there is a need to focus on delivering support to victims of abuse and childhood trauma. Local providers of perpetrator support programmes highlighted those perpetrators with complex needs must have these needs addressed before they can engage with further behaviour change work. Issues such as substance misuse and homelessness need to be resolved before perpetrators can focus on long-term meaningful change.

The Commission also heard evidence on the issue of stalking. Statistics were presented that showed one in five women will be stalked and that 70% of stalking victims wait

until they have had 100 instances of unwanted behaviour before they tell anyone about it. We were told that stalking permanently and irreversibly changes the way someone lives their life and stalking victims often feel they have their life stolen from them. It was presented that there needs to be greater awareness that stalking is a crime which links closely with other crimes and that stalking crosses all boundaries and can happen to anyone. The Commission was advised that perpetrators need to be proactively targeted with therapeutic, legal and/or social interventions to prevent early behaviour escalating.

There were concerns raised with the Commission about the lack of skilled staff with sufficient training to deliver perpetrator programmes. There is also the challenge that these programmes must be of sufficient length to provoke fundamental behaviour change and, in some instances, resources do not make this possible. The piecemeal, temporary nature of funding often means that schemes cannot be guaranteed for any length of time. A long-term strategy and funding commitment would help to address these issues locally and ensure that sustainable programmes are put in place.

There is still a lot that is unknown about perpetrator programmes and what is the most effective approach. The national strategy highlighted that robust evaluation is needed. The Commission felt that it is important that local evaluation of perpetrator programmes takes place and are therefore calling on the University of Plymouth to undertake evaluation research into the quality and effectiveness of locally delivered programmes and to seek out best practice nationally.

We heard in summary that focusing resources on perpetrator support programmes is fundamental to addressing the root causes of violence against women and girls. These efforts need to be underpinned by a focused strategy and delivery plan, supported by partners across the city and embedded within local partnership plans.

¹¹ [‘Publish and fund a domestic abuse perpetrator strategy to cut violent crime and protect victims’ backers of a new campaign tell Government – Drive Project](#)

To create safe places and spaces the VAWG Commission recommend that:

Everyone has access to a 'Safe in Plymouth' online information hub: This portal will provide a single online space which will be able to signpost people to information, training resources and specific help and advice.

Plymouth should be a place where women and girls are safe and feel safe when travelling around the city: Work will continue with a refreshed focus on women's safety, to review and maintain pedestrian routes, public transport infrastructure, street lighting and CCTV across the city. Enhanced safety measures will draw on lived experience, evidence and new technologies.

Plymouth actively targets perpetrators of male violence against women and girls: Relevant organisations will develop a co-ordinated response to identify men and boys who are violent or abusive and cause harm, with a focus on supporting them to change their attitudes and behaviours.





Case Study: Stalking and Harassment

“I was relocated to Plymouth by domestic violence services / Children’s Social Care in 2012, I spent years in MARACI, maybe ten years, probably until my daughter’s dad died in 2017 because there were restraining orders granted every year 2012 - 2017; and have unfortunately recently been back through the police system due to harassment and stalking.

In particular I would like to talk about how excruciating it is to get protective measures put in place after perpetrators are arrested.

It takes weeks / months for police to make arrest after taking statements and all evidence. In the meantime we are just constantly ringing 101 making endless logs; we have to wait until we can evidence that we are being stalked (standing on street corners on school runs with my child to take videos of perpetrator stalking me), before anyone is arrested. Then we have to wait to be harassed /stalked / abused further before any protective measures are put in place, then we have to be harassed/stalked/abused further before anything gets to court etc etc. Having spent a third of my life in the DV system I can assure you this happens.”

(Plymouth Lived Experience Evidence Session Attendee)

LEADING THE WAY AND EARLY COMMITMENTS

The amount of evidence and data that was brought forward to support the VAWG inquiry, clearly demonstrated to us that there is a lot of excellent work happening in this space, but that more could and should be done to shine a light on this issue and to further support practitioners, professionals and organisations to collaborate and tackle male violence against women and girls.

The Commission wanted to put forward some practical recommendations to support and add value to existing work in this area. Whilst acknowledging the need for system wide change and that achieving a significant culture shift will not happen quickly, we felt that applying some initial formal structure and governance would raise the profile and provide some early tangible outcomes.

The Commission recognises that the work doesn't stop with this report and recommendations. To ensure the building blocks are in place to enable real change to happen the VAWG Commission recommend that:

The Safer Plymouth Partnership will provide the leadership and direction for the co-ordinated city-wide delivery of the recommendations and collaborate to appoint a cross-organisation dedicated VAWG Strategic Lead: All relevant organisations will work together and pool resources to create a post dedicated to driving and delivering a co-ordinated and ambitious programme of work.

The Safer Plymouth Partnership is a strong and well-established Community Safety Partnership and is therefore ideally placed to drive forward the recommendations of the Commission. The Safer Plymouth Partnership has committed to establish a new VAWG working group with city-wide representation.

A dedicated VAWG Strategic Lead will be appointed to work in collaboration with the Safer Plymouth VAWG working group and relevant agencies to drive forward an initial programme of work. They will play a key role in ensuring VAWG is kept high on the city's agenda and in co-ordinating and delivering an effective, multi-agency response to violence against women and girls.

The VAWG Strategic Lead will work with partners and agencies to deliver the following activities:

- Develop a city blueprint / action plan to address male violence and improve the local response to VAWG
- Ensure that the city blueprint and commitment to tackling male violence against women and girls is embedded in the Plymouth Plan (the overarching plan for the city to 2034) at the next review in 2024

- Develop a local repository for information, campaigns, policy, details of quality assured training courses and materials, and best practice relating to VAWG
- Regularly monitor and report on the delivery of VAWG Commission recommendations and provide ongoing evaluation of the impact of recommendations through existing structures and surveys

There should be a network of people who are empowered to take forward this agenda for preventing and addressing male violence against women and girls: All organisations in the city, including public, private and not for profit, will identify, name and resource a responsible person to champion and lead activity within their own organisation.

The Commission is calling on organisations in the public, private and voluntary and community sectors to name a strategic lead who will hold responsibility for preventing and addressing male violence against women and girls within their business or organisation.

When the Commission reconvenes for a review of progress, we would like to hear from those organisations about the work they have been undertaking and the plans they have in place to prevent and address violence against women and girls in their organisation.

These champions will be invaluable in supporting the VAWG Strategic Lead and Safer Plymouth VAWG group to deliver this ambitious programme of change.

The following recommendations are ones that the Commission feel are pivotal to kickstarting the fundamental change needed. Therefore, the Plymouth Violence Against Women and Girls Commission are committing to delivering these recommendations by the end of 2022.

Plymouth should adopt a Violence Against Women and Girls Charter Mark Scheme: This scheme will enable organisations and local communities to demonstrate their commitment to addressing male violence, promoting gender equalities and supporting women and girls.

Within the next six to twelve months, Plymouth will develop a Charter Mark scheme, offering an accreditation to organisations to indicate that they are actively working to tackle male violence against women and girls in their organisation, school or group through behaviour, culture change and providing support for anyone affected.

One of the first responsibilities of the new VAWG Strategic Lead once recruited will be to collaborate with partners across the city and with people with lived experience to define, design and implement the Charter Mark scheme.

Whilst the specific nature of the Charter Mark will be explored and developed by the VAWG Strategic Lead in collaboration with others, it is intended that a tiered approach is made available with different sets of requirements tailored to different types of organisations and businesses. This will ensure the scheme is accessible to all and will enable different businesses and different sized organisations to achieve the Charter Mark.

Throughout the evidence sessions that the Commission held, one message that was repeated often was the importance of safe spaces for women. Part of the Charter Mark might include businesses and organisations committing to being part of a network of safe spaces that are easily identifiable and quick to locate where women and girls can feel assured that there is always somewhere for them to go. It might also include committing to training staff using the dedicated 'Safe in Plymouth' online portal or having a policy setting out their position and how they will address incidents of violence against women and girls within their organisation or business.

Larger organisations will be encouraged to sign up for White Ribbon status or a similar scheme. The Commission welcomes the announcement that Plymouth City Council have already committed to working towards White Ribbon status.

We are calling on organisations across the city to adapt existing workplace wellbeing and wellbeing champion schemes to ensure that they have a focus on preventing sexism, misogyny and male violence and providing support to women and girls when needed. We will also be asking organisations in the city to impact assess all future policies and decisions to ensure that they do not disadvantage women and girls and proactively promote gender equality.

The Commission understands that this could look different depending on the type and size of organisation – this will be supported with published guidelines. It is expected that the network of responsible organisational leads will be actively working towards achieving the Charter Mark and will act as ambassadors, supporting smaller organisations, community groups and others in their journey.

Plymouth should develop an accessible training package covering key aspects of VAWG and that this should be available by the end of the year:

By the end of 2022, a range of training modules will be available to organisations and communities across the city to access free of charge.

Relevant organisations in the city will collaborate to develop a training programme to include topics such as stalking, male allyship and sensitive enquiry, that are tailored to different audiences and that will provide the practical tools needed to challenge and address male violence against women and girls.

The Commission heard accounts from several survey respondents who cited the need for 'training' as a tool for tackling inappropriate male behaviour and/or language and acts of violence against women and girls.

“Workers who are on the street e.g. bin collectors/posties, should be trained and aware of safety of women when they are working. I often run early morning by myself and pass street services various times during my run. I would like to think that they are aware of me and my safety.”

“...Please target major nightclubs. The staff in these nightclubs are trained in how to help women after being victimized. They're not trained in how to identify predators and keep them away in the first place. This expands into what is the most important principle to understand here: making women “feel” safe will only come after the men's behaviour is addressed. Go after the men who are prone to violence. For example, the Union Room is a major business that allows the same men back into their doors over and over again. Staff here are trained in how to get women home safely or to police AFTER they've been drugged, but there's no training on how to prevent/remove predators that are taking advantage of women.”

“...Training teachers, SENCO'S¹², families to be more trauma informed and importance of acting upon questioning and seeking help for problematic abusive behaviour making it the man's problem not the women.”

The survey found that 58% of respondents outlined 'providing training to people so they can safely intervene if they witness violence against women and girls' should be a priority for organisations to tackle violence against women and girls in Plymouth.

The Commission received a clear message that there is a need for a variety of general and bespoke training to be made available, and most importantly, for this training to be made easily accessible for businesses, shops and hospitality, sports clubs, and the wider community.

¹² Special Educational Needs Coordinators

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Plymouth Violence Against Women and Girls Commission is grateful to those individuals, groups and organisations who gave their time and energy to help us by responding to the survey or by giving evidence.

The Commission would specifically like to thank all of the individuals and organisations who attended the evidence gathering sessions including:

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)

Plymouth City Council

Real Man Project

Beyond Equality

Safer Plymouth Evening and Night Time Economy Delivery Group

Best Bar None

Safer Plymouth Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Local Partnership Board

Devon and Cornwall Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

Devon and Cornwall Police

Cornwall Council

Ahimsa

The Drive Partnership

Alexis Bowater

First Light

Staff and women from Trevi

Plymouth Domestic Abuse Service (PDAS)

Trauma Informed Plymouth Network

Livewell Southwest

Babcock International

University of Plymouth

Wolseley Trust

Highbury Trust

Plymouth Youth Parliament

Safe Lives

The Zone

DS David Thomason of the Harm Reduction Unit, Cheshire Police

WCID (What Can I Do?)

Chris Miller

George Shepherd

CEASE – The Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation

APPENDIX A

MEMBERSHIP OF THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS COMMISSION

Councillor Rebecca Smith, Plymouth City Council (Chair)

Rebecca Smith has been a member of Plymouth City Council since May 2018 representing Plymstock Radford Ward and is Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Homes and Communities. In 2019 she stood as Parliamentary Candidate in Plymouth Sutton and Devonport. She was previously Chair of the Planning Committee. She lived and worked in Brussels and London for a number of years before returning home to Plymouth in 2015. Her career across the public and non-profit sectors has involved public engagement and communications, operations management and research and policy development in areas such as addictions and criminal justice.

In addition, former Chief Crown Prosecutor for NW England, **Nazir Afzal OBE**, has been working with the Commission as an independent advisor, bringing expertise from his 24 year career prosecuting the most high-profile cases in the country and advising on many others. He has led nationally on several legal topics including Violence against Women and Girls, child sexual abuse, and honour-based violence. His prosecutions of the “Rochdale grooming gang” and hundreds of others were ground-breaking and drove the work that has changed the landscape of child protection.

Cllr Sally Haydon, Plymouth City Council

Sally Haydon has been a Labour Councillor since 2006, representing St Budeaux in Plymouth. She has been Deputy Lady Mayoress, Chair of various scrutiny committees such as Children and Young People, Ambitious Plymouth and Place and Corporate, also Vice-Chair of Taxi Licensing, Corporate Parenting and Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel. Sally was also a Cabinet Member from 2018 – 2021 for Customer Focus and Community Safety.

Alexis Wright, Domestic Abuse Consultant

Alexis has an MA in the Dynamics of Domestic Abuse from Worcester University and is qualified as an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor. She has worked as an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor specifically working with Black and Minoritized communities and has trained public and voluntary organisations on anti-racist practice. She is currently working to setup a 'by and for' charity in Devon that will support Black and Minoritized victims and survivors and will deliver training to public and voluntary organisations.

Chief Supt Matt Longman, Devon and Cornwall Police

Matt has been the police commander for the City of Plymouth since October 2020. Ch Supt Longman started his career in Hampshire in 1997 and moved to Devon & Cornwall in 2003. He has worked in a wide range of policing roles across Cornwall, Plymouth and Devon which include Investigation, Intelligence, Partnership working. He is the

Force lead on Legitimacy Issues and was also a lead planner and commander for this year's G7 summit held in Cornwall.

Dr Lynne Callaghan, Plymouth University

Lynne is Senior Research Fellow in the National Institute for Health and Care Research Applied Research Collaboration South West Peninsula (PenARC), and has been based in the Community and Primary Care Research Group at the University of Plymouth for nine years. She is interested in the development and evaluation of complex interventions for traditionally marginalised groups, particularly those who have contact with the Criminal Justice System. Lynne has worked on a range of projects developing health and wellbeing interventions in prisons and the probation service and has and continues to work with Devon and Cornwall Police in the areas of mental health, domestic abuse, sexual violence and injecting drug use. She is dedicated to ensuring the involvement of people with lived experience at all stages of the research process.

This report is independent research. Lynne Callaghan's contribution to the Commission is supported by the National Institute for Health and Care Research Applied Research Collaboration South West Peninsula. The views expressed in this publication are those of the Commission and not necessarily those of the National Institute for Health and Care Research or the Department of Health and Social Care.

Clare Baker, Membership Experience Manager Devon and Plymouth Chamber of Commerce

Clare's career has always centred around people, from the early days in hospitality in London, Norwich, and Hong Kong to the last 24 years in banking. Her last role with Barclays was working with local communities across the southwest; educational establishments, professional service providers, our NHS Trusts, Chambers of Commerce, BID districts, charities and more sharing financial wellbeing and financial educational resources. She is passionate about communities working together and support networks and that together we are stronger. This has led her to several fantastic roles volunteering as a trustee for St Luke's Hospice Plymouth, a governor at All Saints Academy and now the Membership Experience Manager at the Devon and Plymouth Chamber of Commerce.

Her proudest achievement was co-founding and running SW Women in Business CIC for six years. Established with the belief that they could create something unique supporting Women in Business in our communities.

Nate Eisenstadt, University of Bristol

Nate is a Senior Research Associate at the University of Bristol Medical School, Domestic Violence and Health Group. Nathan's research is centred on gender-based

violence prevention and response with a particular focus on work with men and boys and masculinity. Nathan was lead qualitative evaluator on the Drive Project – a national pilot addressing high-harm perpetrators of domestic abuse. He is currently working on Reprovide, a pioneering Randomised Controlled Trial of a Domestic Abuse Perpetrator programme for men. With Dr Rachel Fenton at University of Exeter, Nathan co-designed and delivered Football Onside - the first UK bystander intervention programme tackling domestic abuse and sexual violence through football and sport. Nathan and Rachel are co-founders of Kindling Transformative Interventions which offers bystander training in a range of settings for violence prevention, equality and diversity.

Prof Luna Dolezal, University of Exeter

Luna Dolezal is an Associate Professor of Philosophy and Medical Humanities at the University of Exeter. She leads two large research projects that investigate how shame is relevant in healthcare and public health: Shame and Medicine and Scenes of Shame and Stigma in COVID-19. Part of her research has been to consider the relevance of shame in experiences of trauma and post-trauma states. Along with her research team, the aim of Luna's current research is to develop principles of 'shame-sensitive practice' that can be applied within healthcare contexts, and also within other care and social services.

Richard Woodland, Westcounty Schools Trust

Having studied Biological Sciences at the University of Exeter, Richard spent three years as a voluntary youth worker before completing his PGCE. Alongside developing his teaching of science, he completed a master's degree in Educational Research and took on pastoral, and outdoor education responsibilities before being appointment to a senior leadership team in 2010. Following ten years in senior leadership, five of them as a Head teacher, he joined the WeST central team as the Director of Inclusion. He currently leads the Westcounty Schools Trust in SEND, inclusion, attendance and safeguarding.

Emi Dowse, Plymouth University Student Union

Emi is the President of the University of Plymouth Students' Union (UPSU). Emi was elected to the role of President by the student body. In her role, Emi also chairs UPSU's Board of Trustees and is a Governor for the University. Previously Emi was the Vice President Education for UPSU. During her time as Vice President, she worked closely with the University on their Covid-19 response, particularly in the re-implementation of the safety net. Emi also focussed her efforts on revising the extenuating policy, improving digital accessibility and improving students' wellbeing.

Emi graduated from the School of Biological and Marine Sciences in 2020 with a degree in Animal Behaviour and Welfare. In her first year at University, Emi was a course rep, and she worked with academics to get her school accredited with the Royal Society of Biology. Emi was also heavily involved in Raise and Give (RAG) throughout her studies, fundraising over £5,000 for her chosen charities. In her final year, she was the President of RAG, which saw her organising large fundraising events on campus and leading over 100 student fundraisers in raising £100,000 for charity.

Edd Moore, Plymouth Live

Edd Moore is the Senior Editor of PlymouthLive and currently Regional Editor of Reach PLC's digital titles across Devon and Cornwall. He has lived in the Plymouth area for most of his life and been involved in the local media in the city since joining The Herald in 2008.

Carolyn Giles, Plymouth Citybus

Carolyn currently works as Head of People and Operations for Plymouth Citybus, and has been a Vice Chair of Devon and Plymouth Chamber of Commerce, a Vice Chair of governors for a local secondary school, and is Chair of Trustees for a local charity. Carolyn is currently a Director of South West Women in Business, a member of the Trauma Informed Network, and sits on the Inclusive Growth Board. Her interest in VAWG is personal and professional regarding an interest in protecting vulnerable members of our community, but also understanding how Citybus can support the aims and activities of the commission.

Ollie Mackie, NSPCC

Oliver leads the NSPCC Plymouth partnership – Together for Childhood. This strategic partnership is one of four nationally working on a ground-breaking approach to prevention of child sexual abuse using a public health approach. Prior to this role at NSPCC Oliver led the Barnardo's services in the Peninsula developing and implementing services ranging from family centres to supported accommodation for young people on care journeys. A passionate advocate for trauma informed practice and working with communities to design solutions based on principles of social justice.

Dr. Ishani Kar-Purkayastha, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities

Dr Ishani Kar-Purkayastha is a Consultant in Public Health with experience across Health Improvement, Environmental Public Health, and Health Protection. She is currently based in the South West Region within the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, where her portfolio includes Violence Prevention, and the Wider Determinants of Health.

Anna MacGregor, Domestic Abuse Commissioner's Office

Anna has over ten years professional experience with the DASV sector; working independently with victims of DASV who were linked to gangs, in Buckinghamshire, then moving into an IDVA role in Cornwall.

She holds a strategic role with Cornwall Council within the DASV commissioning team, as DASV Co-ordinator and MARAC Chair, which she is still delivering, alongside her role within the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's Office, as Practice and Partnership Geographical Lead for Wales and the Southwest of England. Anna is also the founder and CEO of Safer Spaces Now CIC, providing training, safety, support and education to prevent violence against women and girls at festivals and events. Her passion and drive to improve outcomes for women and girls and all people impacted by DASV stems from her own personal experience of a 15 year abusive relationship.

