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**Crown Prosecution Service**  
Delivering justice



**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS**  
CRIME REPORT 2015-16

(INCLUSIVE OF DATA ON MEN AND BOYS)



# Violence against Women and Girls

VAWG work continued to be a key priority within CPS National and Area business plans in 2015-16. In particular our focus has been on improving services for victims and witnesses and casework quality.

## CPS VAWG framework

### **National CPS VAWG Champion:**

A Chief Crown Prosecutor acts as a national CPS VAWG Champion, linking across HQ and all Areas, as well as chairing the External Consultation Group (see below).

### **National CPS VAWG leads:**

National CPS VAWG leads in the Operations Directorate of CPS Headquarters oversee the VAWG work across CPS Areas. The VAWG strategy managers oversee the delivery of the VAWG strategy, especially through the VAWG assurance process outlined below.

### **VAWG Coordinators:**

In 2015-16 CPS Area VAWG Coordinators continued to lead VAWG prosecutions locally and worked with Area Equality and Diversity Community Engagement Managers (EDCEMs) in the running of Local Scrutiny and Involvement Panels (LSIPs). All Areas have panels covering VAWG issues – predominantly addressing DA and rape prosecutions – with some also focused on other VAWG strands.

Coordinators work with their Chief Crown Prosecutors in providing bi-annual reports on performance directly to the DPP through the VAWG assurance system. They meet bi-annually as a network – roundtable meetings were held in June 2015 and April 2016 to discuss the implementation of actions at a local level.

### **Stakeholder support:**

At a national level the CPS VAWG External Consultation Group (ECG), involving key VAWG expert groups, continues to advise the CPS VAWG team as a subgroup of the wider CPS Community Accountability Forum. Locally stakeholders provide feedback and offer advice through CPS LSIPs.

### **CPS VAWG casework and knowledge hubs:**

In line with the CPS' priority of ensuring that prosecutors have the tools and skills for the job, VAWG sections have been set up within the CPS casework and knowledge hubs. The hubs are an internal online resource and the VAWG sections provide prosecutors with practical assistance related to casework preparation as well as good practice examples, links to local leads, coordinators, legal guidance, toolkits and VAWG newsletters. The CPS will continue to review and build on the information provided to ensure it is accessible and relevant to prosecutors.

### **CPS VAWG Newsletters:**

The national VAWG leads publish quarterly CPS VAWG newsletters, outlining updates of work across all VAWG strands.



**The Advocate's Gateway:**

The CPS continues to contribute to the Advocate's Gateway which provides practical guidance for criminal justice practitioners on vulnerable witnesses and defendants.

**National victim and witness satisfaction survey:**

The CPS conducted a national satisfaction survey to assess the level of satisfaction by victims and witnesses of the service they have received from the CPS. Approximately 7,700 victims and witnesses participated in the survey and the results were published in September 2015. The key findings were that 82% of victims and 88% of witnesses felt that, when they had contact with a CPS Victim Liaison Unit (VLU), it was helpful.

Overall satisfaction was higher amongst witnesses than victims, with 74% of witnesses 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied, compared to 67% of victims. Victims and witnesses were asked whether they would consent to being a witness in a criminal trial in future if they were asked to do so. 60% of witnesses said they would, compared to 52% of victims. Less than 10% of respondents said they were unlikely or highly unlikely to give evidence – the remainder said that it would depend on the circumstances of the new case.

The survey was made available to victims of DA but take up was low (with just over 100 respondents in identified DA cases) – in part because of the adjustments made to ensure they were not placed at risk.

The CPS published a victim and witness action plan in September 2015 to address these issues and a further national survey is planned for 2017. Plans are underway to work with stakeholders to assess how the views of DA and sexual violence victims might be better captured in the next surveying activities.

## Social Media

The CPS has updated its guidelines on social media to incorporate new and emerging crimes that are being committed online and to provide clear advice to further help our prosecutors in dealing with cyber-enabled crime.

The social media guidelines need to be read in conjunction with the Code for Crown Prosecutors. This identifies public interest factors which include whether the offence was motivated by any form of discrimination against the victim, including gender discrimination.

The CPS launched a public consultation in March 2016 about the proposed revisions to the updated Social Media Guidelines including consideration of whether a new section on VAWG offences should be included. This is because developments in technology have created a new landscape for controlling, sexually-motivated or other forms of inter-personal offending. The use of the internet, social media platforms, emails, text messages, smartphone apps, spyware and GPS tracking software to humiliate, control and threaten victims is rising. The proposed new section alerts prosecutors to the various forms of cyber-stalking. Furthermore, new guidance has been produced on disclosing private sexual images without consent and controlling or coercive behaviour - offences which have been created since the initial guidelines were published. The CPS also wanted to alert prosecutors to the emerging trend of potentially grossly offensive communications, containing images of women with very serious injuries, being raped or being subjected to sadistic acts of violence.

Advice has been added to the guidelines about the use of false online profiles and websites which are being set up in the victim's name, with false and damaging information. The consultation closed in May 2016 and the finalised guidelines are anticipated to be published in September 2016.

