



Vulnerability Knowledge  
& Practice Programme



# SPOTLIGHT

## Briefing

### Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Learning for the Police  
from MAPPA Serious Case  
Reviews (SCRs)

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This briefing summarises some of the findings of our research into violence against women and girls perpetrated by individuals managed under MAPPA who went on to commit further serious offences. It is important to understand the high prevalence and nature of crimes against women and girls by perpetrators managed by MAPPA in order to provide effective prevention for current and future victims. Over 65% of victims in our sample were women and girls, with the youngest victim being just 4 years old.

This briefing:

- Highlights the extent and nature of violence against women and girls in our sample.
- Identifies police learning in relation to understanding and responding to violence against women and girls.
- Highlights the existing good practice that was identified by MAPPA SCR authors
- Provides some considerations for police and MAPPA partners when working with individuals who commit violence against women and girls.

We hope the briefing will be of benefit to police colleagues and multi-agency partners working within MAPPA or wider offender management.

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# Background

In 2021/22 the Review Team at The Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP) conducted a detailed analysis of police learning from serious case reviews (SCRs) where an individual subject to Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements (**MAPPA**) committed a serious further offence (SFO) causing death or serious harm. The purpose was to consolidate learning about missed opportunities and promising police practice regarding the management of individuals subject to MAPPA.

This briefing focuses specifically on identified police learning in relation to Violence Against Women and Girls (**VAWG**) featuring in the SCRs analysed. We also highlight resources which provide further information and guidance to support effective responses to women and girls who may be at risk of harm by individuals subject to MAPPA.

The sample<sup>1</sup> covered SCRs completed between 2012 and 2021, and the findings also reflect those found in previous analyses of other types of statutory serious case review<sup>2</sup>. This highlights the importance of considering the wider systemic issues which influence strategic and operational practice both within MAPPA and multi-agency working<sup>3</sup>.



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<sup>1</sup>Phase 1 - quantitative analysis of 81 SCRs completed between 2012 and 2021. This identified 57 reviews that contained specific police learning and were included in our Phase 2 qualitative analysis. Further detail about the methodology used can be found here [VKPP MAPPA Study](#)

<sup>2</sup>Allnock D, Dawson J, Rawden H (2020) 'The role of police in responding to child and adult vulnerability: a meta-analysis of 126 reviews of death and serious harm'. Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme. Available from: [Meta Analysis \(vkpp.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>3</sup>Full Report available at [Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme \(VKPP\)](#)

# Definitions

## VAWG

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, 'honour'-based abuse (including female genital mutilation forced marriage, and 'honour' killings), as well as many others, including offences committed online.

## MAPPA

The Criminal Justice Act 2003 ("CJA 2003") provided for the establishment of Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements ("MAPPA") in each of the 42 criminal justice areas in England and Wales. These are designed to protect the public, including previous victims of crime, from serious harm by sexual and violent offenders. They require the local criminal justice agencies and other bodies dealing with offenders to work together in partnership in dealing with these offenders.



# Prevalence of VAWG among MAPPA perpetrators

In the analysed subsample of 57 MAPPA SCRs, women and girls were disproportionately and consistently victims of violence from those supervised under MAPPA compared to men and boys.



**65.1 % of victims in MAPPA SCRs were women and girls**

Over **65% of victims** were women or girls and nearly **60%** of the serious further offences (SFOs) perpetrated against them resulted in serious harm whereas **7.1%** ended in death of a female victim. In all cases when the victim was a female, **the perpetrator was male**. In almost a **quarter of cases involving female victims the perpetrator was a current or an ex-partner** of the female victim.



**23.1% of perpetrators were current or ex-partners**

Women and girls were mostly victims of sexual offences, specifically rape, which was the case in over **76%** of cases involving female victims. This aligns with ONS figures, which indicate that women and girls are victims in 84% of sexual offences recorded by forces<sup>4</sup>. The remaining offences included physical violence in 18% of cases, and domestic abuse and mixed offences, both in **2.6%** of cases<sup>5</sup>. In all cases of physical violence, women were victims of homicide or attempted homicide. Information about victim characteristics, with the exception of sex and age, was generally not provided in the MAPPA SCR reports. The 41 female victims ranged in age from **4 to 77**, with **12 being girls under the age of 16**.

<sup>4</sup> Office for National Statistics (2020). Sexual offences victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2020. Available at Sexual offences victim characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

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# Identifying and managing the risk of VAWG within MAPPA

Issues with risk identification, assessment and management were identified in some cases that had or could have had direct impact on female victims. These included the omission of significant risk factors relating to the perpetrator, late risk identification and missed opportunities to consider potential future victims during the assessment process. In sexual offence cases perpetrators often failed to comply with their management plans and continued to pursue subsequent female victims. In a few cases there was evidence of ineffective information sharing between agencies and offender managers that led to less intense supervision than the risk required. In these instances, further offending against female victims occurred. Similar issues regarding information sharing between agencies in relation to risk identification and management have been identified in previous analysis of other types of statutory SCRs ([Allnock et al., 2020](#)).

**MAPPA guidelines** highlight the importance of appropriate risk identification and determine the duty of risk management for all offenders under MAPPA supervision. The guidelines clearly state the need for ongoing re-evaluation of risk and adjustment of risk management plans to best protect the victim. The College of Policing's Authorised Professional Practice (APP) also provides guidance on [managing sexual and violent offenders](#), including content [on identifying, assessing and managing their risk](#).

There are also several, regularly updated, guidelines in [relation to victim safety](#) (College of Policing, 2021). Police can use Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPN), Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPO) or Stalking Protection Orders (SPO) to manage risk around victims of domestic abuse. Police officers can also recommend applying for Non-Molestation Orders to regulate or prohibit any attempts by a perpetrator to contact the victim. The College have also published a [VAWG Toolkit](#) which supports forces in proactive prevention of VAWG. The use of protective orders more often, including better enforcement of any breaches, and ensure that there is robust, reflective supervision and risk assessment. Using all of the tools mentioned above more frequently and consistently in the management of perpetrators of VAWG should further strengthen protection for known or potential victims.

Police and MAPPA partners can also engage charity sector agencies to provide support for victims. This could include, but is not limited to, the use of Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA) and Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVA).

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The recently published **VAWG National Framework** (College of Policing, 2022) has set several goals to improve the police response to Violence Against Women and Girls. The second pillar of the framework is particularly relevant for MAPPA and focuses on pursuit and management of perpetrators who pose a high risk. The framework dictates a proactive process of identification and management of perpetrators, careful consideration of behavioural high risk-factors and emphasises the multi-agency, holistic approach to the prevention of VAWG. Police and partners are obligated to implement protective and preventative tools when appropriate, as well as respond dynamically to non-compliant perpetrators. The framework also addresses the ongoing issue of victim blaming and sets a basis for a shift from victim blaming to a perpetrator-focused strategy. **Current research frequently highlights that victim blaming attitudes shape the help seeking behaviours among victims making it more difficult to disclose abuse and violence<sup>5</sup>.** In our study we found a few examples of language and behaviour by MAPPA partners and serious case review authors suggestive of victim blaming attitudes.

'[The victim] remained a difficult person to protect and she refused to relocate to another part of the country, or move to a refuge'

Reviewer comment in a MAPPA SCR

**The National Vulnerability Action Plan (NVAP)** has been developed by the VKPP, the NPCC and the College of Policing to assist the police in responding to vulnerability. Within the plan a number of actions aid the protection of vulnerable victims and are directly related to the risk identification and management and can be utilised to further protect and support female victims and potential victims.

**2.1.1 Recognition and response:** To ensure staff are equipped to identify and manage risk and assess needs, as well as support and safeguard those requiring it.

**2.2.1. Appropriate Action:** In response to identified risk, ensure staff understand and utilise appropriate referral pathways including how to access partner provisions and are empowered to challenge or escalate decisions.

**2.3.3 Analytical Capability:** To predict future risk and therefore enable a multi-agency approach to early intervention and prevention and where appropriate diversion and exit strategies for offenders.

**2.4.1. Voice of the victim:** To understand if existing practice is meeting the need of the victim/witness and in line with the Victims' Code of Practice.

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<sup>5</sup> Martín-Fernández, M. et al. (2018) Assessing victim-blaming attitudes in cases of intimate partner violence against women: Development and validation of the VB-IPVAW scale. *Intervención psicosocial*. [Online] 27 (3), 133–143.0

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# Good Practice Recognised by MAPPA SCR Reviewers around risk identification, assessment and management

- Dynamic responses to risk management: safeguarding previous, current and potential future female victims.
- Identifying and obtaining additional resources to aid the risk management of perpetrators and safeguarding of victims.
- Excellent inter-agency information sharing aiding management of risk to female victims.
- The use of the IRiS model to help identify and manage high risk perpetrators<sup>6</sup>.
- Utilising Domestic Abuse Protection Notices to safeguard victims.



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<sup>6</sup> Information about IRiS can be found here: <https://www.impactpathways.org.uk/IRiS/>



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# Disclosure as a preventative and protective measure

**Common law police disclosure (CLPD)** creates provisions to all forces to proactively disclose relevant information to appropriate third parties. The police are also expected to share information within multiple strategic plans and disclose relevant information to potential victims when they have a strong ground to suspect the likelihood of risk escalation. Our study found that police and partner agencies sometimes missed opportunities to disclose relevant information to female victims which contributed to an increase of risk. In some cases, police missed the window of opportunity to better protect the female victim by volunteering the information too late.

The MAPPA framework grants police and partner agencies the right to disclose information to a third party when the risk of offence outweighs the privacy rights of the perpetrator. According to the **disclosure guidelines**, police and partner agencies can use a number of legislative acts and government approved disclosure schemas including **the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare's Law)**, the **Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme** and the **Common Law Police Disclosure scheme**. While the MAPPA framework provides the powers to disclose information to protect those who may be at risk of violence, it also states that disclosure of sensitive information must be justified and should follow rights established by The Human Rights Act 1998 and Data Protection Act 2018 which sets out principles for managing personal data.

Similarly, the **APP on information sharing** (College of Policing, 2021) outlines provisions in relation to information sharing which support disclosure of information when necessary. Police forces have a statutory obligation to share relevant information that is regulated by the Police Act 1997 Part V, Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Freedom of Information Act 2000, Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and Data Protection Act 2018. In addition, the police are also obligated by **The Code of Practice for Victims** to share all relevant information which may have impact on a victim's safety. At least three out of twelve victims' rights within the Code refer directly to the right to have relevant information about the perpetrator.

## **Victims Code -Rights Related to Disclosure of Information**

To be provided with information about the investigation and prosecution

To be given information about the outcome of the case and any appeals

To be given information about the offender following a conviction

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# Good Practice Recognised by MAPPA SCR Reviewers regarding disclosure:

- Utilising civil disclosure frameworks to safeguard female victims.
- Developing a good relationship with the victim and disclosing relevant information in timely fashion.



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# Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) as predictors of VAWG

Well-established work in the field of sexual violence provides supporting evidence and recognises that protected characteristics and vulnerabilities common for women can play a significant role in Violence Against Women and Girls (Kelly, 2013)<sup>7</sup>. Previous research shows that factors such as gender, race, economic status, sexuality, disability and even age can increase the likelihood of becoming a victim of violence (Abraham & Tastsoglou, 2016<sup>8</sup>; UN Women, 2015<sup>9</sup>). Furthermore, cases of VAWG among diverse communities carry additional risk which can include an increase of violence due to migration, economic difficulties, human trafficking and modern slavery, suggesting the need for implementation of new and more sophisticated protective measures (McIlwaine & Evans, 2020)<sup>10</sup>. The SCR data we analysed provided a very limited picture of protected characteristics and vulnerabilities among female victims as these factors are not routinely reported in SCR reports. However, the recent commencement of recording and reporting relevant EDI information in MAPPAs Annual Reports will help improve understanding in relation to perpetration and victimisation regarding MAPPAs cases. Our study showed that female victims were often subjected to multiple incidents of violence and abuse, trauma, economic abuse and gender-based discrimination by their abusers.

The **VAWG National Framework** acknowledges the underrepresentation of minorities within preventative measures and strategies and aims to involve charities, minoritised women and women with lived experience to support the ongoing development of support for female victims of violence and abuse. This can also help to inform policy and practice developments in relation to MAPPAs and the police role as part of the Responsible Authority.

**The APP on engagement with the public (College of Policing, 2021)** highlights the importance and impact of police engagement with communities and individual victims. The guidelines outline specific benefits of this engagement which include, but are not limited to, increased perception of safety among members of the public; reduction in disorder and anti-social behaviours and an increase in confidence in the police. Outreach work within communities can have a positive impact and increase the likelihood of reporting among female victims who generally feel a lack of support and are less likely to report crime (**HMICFRS, 2021**)<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Kelly, L. (2013) 'Moving in the shadows: introduction', in Rehman et al. (eds), 1–11.

<sup>8</sup> Abraham, M. and Tastsoglou, E. (2016). 'Interrogating gender, violence, and the state in national and transnational contexts: framing the issues', *Current Sociology*, 64(4), 517–34.

<sup>9</sup> UN Women (2015). A framework to underpin action to prevent violence against women. New York, UN Women, [https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Prevention\\_Framework\\_unwomen\\_nov2015.pdf](https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Prevention_Framework_unwomen_nov2015.pdf) (accessed 11 July 2018)

<sup>10</sup> McIlwaine, C. & Evans, Y. (2020) Urban Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in transnational perspective: reflections from Brazilian women in London. *International development planning review* 42 (1), 93–112.

<sup>11</sup> HMICFRS (2021). Interim report. Inspection into how effectively the police engage with women and girls. Available at: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/interim-report-inspection-into-how-effectively-police-engage-with-women-and-girls.pdf>

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# Good Practice Recognised by MAPPA SCR Reviewers regarding equity, diversity and inclusion:

- Positive processes instigated to safeguard female victims for Honour Based Violence.
- All MAPPA participating agencies showed high and continued engagement in additional training which translated into an awareness and understanding of EDI related complexities.

The police are working hard alongside other agencies and services to reduce Violence Against Women and Girls and the new VAWG framework helps support those efforts. Our research into police learning following serious further offending by individuals subject to MAPPA, has identified a number of opportunities for development regarding the protection of women and girls. This briefing has highlighted some of those opportunities as well as some of the good practice already found within policing. We have also provided links and resources to support effective responses to protect women and girls and below we summarise the key considerations for MAPPA practitioners arising from our study.



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# Key considerations for MAPPA practitioners

- Correctly identifying, assessing, and managing potential risks to women and girls is critical and needs to be dynamic.
  - Carefully consider any known vulnerabilities and protected characteristics of female victims/potential victims. Seek specialist advice or input from multi-agency partners to best understand these where necessary to inform risk assessment and management.
  - Ensure that any identified changes in both perpetrator and victim/potential victim circumstances are captured in a timely way in Risk Management Plans and regularly reviewed.
- Seek opportunities to understand and include the voices and experiences of female victims or potential victims in the management of sexual and violent offenders. For example, in the development and review of Risk Management Plans and seeking input from victim support and other relevant multi-agency partners in MAPPA meetings.
- Actively challenge any victim blaming attitudes about women and girls expressed by colleagues, practitioners, and partners.
- Maintain ongoing communication with victims of VAWG perpetrated by individuals subject either directly or via multi-agency partners. This is important to keep them informed of potential risks as well as to obtain any relevant information impacting on Risk Management Plans.
- Fully utilise provisions for appropriate disclosure to female victims/potential victims and do this in a timely way.
- Fully consider the use of any appropriate Protection and Non-Molestation orders to protect female victims/potential victims and continually review opportunities to seek these if circumstances change in a case.
- Take immediate action when there is evidence of breaches to imposed orders, record the action taken and communicate this with multi-agency partners.
- Ensure risk management and investigation strategies remain focused on the perpetrator. As the VAWG framework points out victims should not feel as though they are the ones under investigation. Engagement with victims and actions in the management of perpetrators should be focused on the pursuit of perpetrators, with care taken not to pass responsibility or expectation onto the victim to manage the risk themselves.

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# Useful Resources:

MAPPA Guidance. Available from: [MAPPA Guidance May 22 - Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements - MAPPA \(justice.gov.uk\)](#)

National Vulnerability Action Plan (NVAP). Available from: [NVAP 2020-2022 v2 \(vkpp.org.uk\)](#)

Authorised Professional Practice. Available from: [APP \(authorised professional practice\) | College of Policing](#)

Policing Violence Against Women and Girls. National Framework. Available from: [VAWG Policing Framework](#)

Domestic Homicides and Suspected Victim Suicides 2021-2022 Year 2 Report. Available from: <https://www.vkpp.org.uk/assets/Files/Domestic-Homicide-Project-Year-2-Report-December-2022.pdf>

Standards for Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Interventions. Available from: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1127284/Domestic\\_Abuse\\_Perpetrator\\_Standards.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1127284/Domestic_Abuse_Perpetrator_Standards.pdf)

Anglia Ruskin PIER National MAPPA Research. Available from: [The National MAPPA Research - ARU](#)