



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ETHICS AND TRANSPARENCY PANEL
23rd MARCH 14:00 – 16:00 HRS
MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM, FHQ
Shona Chapple, Executive Secretary – Minute Taker

Office of Police and Crime Commissioner

Mrs C Trewartha (Chief Executive)
Mrs L Starr (Director of Governance and Performance)
Mrs N Chamund (Governance Manager)
Mrs S Chapple (Executive Secretary)
Ms B Greasley (Assurance Officer)
Ms Sharan Dhillon (Violence Against Women and Girls Programme Lead)

Office of Chief Constable

ACC James Avery

Ethics and Transparency Panel Members

Ms Kathleen Harris Leighton
Dr Louise Bradley
Miss Lisa Vine
Ms Nikki Plant
Ms Katie Walker
Dr Frances Deepwell

1. Apologies

DCC M Kerr (Deputy Chief Constable)
Mr Matthew Young (Panel Member)
Mr Vipal Karavadra (Panel Member)
Dr Denis Tanfa (Panel member)

2. Declarations of Interest

None

3. Minutes of meeting of the Ethics and Transparency Panel held June 2025 & Rolling Action Log

Lizzie provided updates on the following Actions:

Action 41 – There is a challenge with buy in from both the Crown Prosecution Service and from Probation. Internal work is ongoing to encourage attendance at a future meeting. Lizzie also advised there is a spreadsheet regarding training that can be shared.

Action 46 – Over the last Quarter there has been a Quality Assurance Framework assessment taking place which has delayed the scheduling of Panel Members accompanying an ICV visit.

Action 49 – Linked to Action 49 – Panel Member visits will be scheduled within the next 3-6 months.

Action 53 – Further work is required with both the Academy and Force to allow for this training to be administered to Volunteers.

The Panel confirmed that the Minutes of previous meeting are approved with no requests for amendments.

4. Urgent Business & Chair Updates

Lizzie advised the Panel of the resignation of Vipal Karadvadra from his position as Chair.

The Panel collectively thanked Vipal for his contributions throughout his time as Chair of the Ethics and Transparency Panel and agreed that a letter of thanks will be sent.

Lizzie requested nominations for a new Chair.

The Panel elected Kathleen Harris-Leighton as Chair and Frances Deepwell as Vice Chair.

Kathleen, as Chair, noted the following areas of concern:

VAWG

The Panel raised an interest in the process followed for Officers who have been victims of VAWG or Domestic Violence.

Conduct of the Police and Crime Panel

The Panel have concerns around the leak of confidential information to the Press regarding the Disciplinary Hearing of the Police and Crime Commissioner, and how this impacts the confidence of the public and the Force in the Police and Crime Panels conduct.

ACTION: The Ethics and Transparency Panel will write to the Chair of the Police and Crime Panel to express their concern, highlighting the seriousness of the actions taken.

East Leicester Disturbance

The Panel highlighted that despite the extended time period, this subject will remain as an area of interest for the Panel with feedback on the review to be provided at a suitable and appropriate time.

Budget

The Panel requested guidance on the short and long term and implications of the 2026/2027 budget. Claire recommended that the Chair of the Panel meets with the Chair of the Joint Audit Risk Assurance Panel (JARAP) to gain assurances around the budget implications and avoid duplication of papers coming to multiple Panel meetings.

ACTION: Meeting for the Chair of Ethics and the Chair of JARAP to be arranged and minuted for salient points.

OP Marshall

The Panel requested further information on Op Marshall. Kathleen queried the number of Officers resourced to Op Marshall. ACC Avery advised that Op Marshall is a new Operation that has been running for approx. two months. ACC Avery advised that he is not aware of the specific number of Officers allocated to Op Marshall.

5. Gifts and Gratuities

The Panel confirmed that the Gifts and Gratuities register has been taken as read.

Lisa highlighted the ease of scrutiny with the newly re-formatted form and praised the decision making of Officers when presented with gifted items that would be considered as inappropriate.

6. Emerging Issues

Force and OPCC Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

ACC Avery gave an overview of the Paper prepared by DCC Kerr.

ACC Avery summarised that VAWG is a broad umbrella term for a number of offences that is used nationally to drive work in this area. ACC Avery noted that several elements of work carried out as part of VAWG are key elements in the operational delivery of Leicestershire Police.

Louise drew attention to the section of the paper that highlights the ambition to half VAWG offences. Louise queried if ACC Avery believes that this ambition is realistic.

ACC Avery confirmed that halving VAWG offences is a considerable challenge and Leicestershire Police are working towards this ambition with the delivery of the Strategy. ACC Avery advised that this work will require a system wide approach inclusive of; a societal approach to prevention, changing attitudes and improving the safety of public spaces amongst other things.

Lisa questioned if there is the potential for the definition of 'halving offences' to be amended to recognise the challenge of achieving this ambition.

ACC Avery advised he doesn't believe this will be the case, as there are set crime classifications that count towards this and it would be apparent if these were changed to increase the achievability to reduce VAWG by half.

ACC Avery highlighted that there are various challenges in the VAWG area, providing an example of Victim Reporting. This can be both a positive and negative indicator as a reduction in reporting could be a result of a reduction in offences taking place, or due to a lack of victim confidence in the Force.

ACC Avery drew attention to the one page overview of the Vulnerability Strategy. The Strategy is upheld by various workstreams that are supported by governance procedures to guide the tactical approach to delivery and drive response in these areas.

ACC Avery noted that the number of offences across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland are in line with national statistics and that this is also similar for demographic reporting.

ACC Avery advised that there is a challenge to accurately record ethnicity data across all Police Forces. Examples of scenarios where recording data is prevented would be where an offence is reported on behalf of a victim or Officer confidence with requesting/questioning a victim. ACC Avery also noted that Suspects present an additional challenge, as there are times where a Suspect will not be identified throughout an investigation. ACC Avery noted that there is a Protected Characteristics Data Recording Working Group which looks at this data for Leicestershire Police to check and challenge processes to ensure the service is robust.

Lisa queried if the data presented as Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) includes violence against men and boys. ACC Avery advised this data focuses on violence against Women and Girls. Violence against men and boys is recorded and collated separately to VAWG.

Kathleen and Louise requested a like for like comparison of the number of offences for VAWG and Violence against Men and Boys. Lizzie advised that this can be done but would require very limited and definitive crime types to provide a like for like comparison.

ACC Avery noted that a lot of VAWG will be domestic abuse, suggesting that a similar approach to highlight any disparity would be a comparison of Domestic Abuse of female and male, Sexual Assault, Rape and Stalking rather than all VAWG crime types.

ACTION: The Panel requested a like for like crime type analysis of VAWG and VAMB for the following offences; Domestic Abuse of Female and Male, Sexual Assault, Rape and Stalking to highlight disparity.

ACC Avery and Lisa discussed the complexities of tracking LGBTQ+ data.

Lisa noted that the NICHE management system does not request LGTBQ+ data from victims, which could result in data being uncaptured. Lizzie acknowledged that this challenge exists, highlighting this also applies to all 9 protected characteristics.

Lisa queried if the Forces Protected Characteristics Working Group will focus on all protected characteristics. ACC Avery advised that the Force are guided by the Home Office as to what is required for Forces to record to provide returns at a National Level. ACC Avery noted that the Records Management System would require national requirement to do so and cannot be changed by individual Forces.

Lisa challenged that there are LGTBQ+ communities across the UK and that the narrative is concerning around the Force's ability to record this data on NICHE.

Lisa also queried how an Officer would respectfully and inclusively work with someone who is LGTBQ+ that has experienced domestic or sexual abuse.

ACC Avery advised that the Force embed the need to be respectful and treat people based on their individual needs throughout both the initial training an Officer receives and through Equality Diversity and Inclusivity training. ACC Avery advised that the Force do not have multiple training packages for each individual protected characteristics, as the ambition is to ensure that the Forces response is fit for all.

ACC Avery invited Lisa to provide further information to identify gaps in delivery that may not be currently met by the Force. Lisa advised she is happy to have a more detailed conversation outside of the Panel meeting.

Frances questioned what changes are being proposed by the Protected Characteristics working group and how this relates to Op Soteria.

ACTION: The Panel requested an update on the work being carried out by the Protected Characteristics Working Group

ACC Avery provided an overview of Op Soteria, which is a model to investigate serious rape and sexual offences. ACC Avery advised that subject to investment and dedication, Leicestershire Police have an established SIGNAL Team made of approx. 35 experienced officers who undergo additional training to work on these cases. There are also 12 Specialist Rape Responders who are PC's providing a dedicated initial response to victims of rape. Op Soteria created a set of principles to be suspect focused, rather than victim led which feeds across into the Crown Prosecution Service to provide a unified approach.

Louise questioned how long Force Operations usually run for and when did Op Soteria begin.

ACC Avery clarified that Op Soteria is a National Change Programme, referred to as an operation as this is a familiar term used in policing.

Lizzie advised that Op Soteria was launched in 2021.

Claire noted that some Forces are now standing down their Op Soteria as the work is embedded and covered in business as usual.

ACC Avery advised that Op Soteria work is embedded into business-as-usual across Leicestershire Police and there has recently been an assessment by the College of Policing with a positive outcome.

Kathleen questioned how many female officers part of the SIGNAL Team.

ACC Avery advised that whilst he is not aware of the exact numbers, that SIGNAL and RASSO roles have traditionally attracted female officers. ACC Avery highlighted the benefits of having both male and female officers in these roles, all trained equally to engage with victims and witnesses, helps prevent gender imbalance in staffing.

Kathleen and Sharran discussed the value of having a mixed gender SIGNAL Team, enabling victims to have a choice in the support that they are provided with.

ACC Avery highlighted Outcome 16 – where 29% of crimes in this area of business had outcomes where victims did not feel that they were able to support an investigation.

ACC Avery advised that this is an ongoing challenge for the Force. On occasions where victims feel that they are unable to progress a case to prosecution, the Force will look to ensure that potential offenders are not able to continue to do harm and in cases where it would be in the public interest to prosecute an offender, these prosecutions can be evidence led. Evidence led prosecutions use supporting evidence, body cam footage, CCTV, phone evidence and 999 call recording. ACC Avery confirmed that throughout an evidence led process, victims are kept informed and supported where they feel able to, to opt in to a victim led process.

Frances queried what safeguards are in place for victims with cases that are dropped.

ACC Avery confirmed that for any investigation, particularly those with vulnerable victims, as part of the closure the Officer must document the case and complete a safeguarding plan to manage any identified risk. These are templated documents that are required for completion when closing a case, allowing Officers to create bespoke safeguarding plans for victims.

Frances queried what kind of referrals would be expected at this stage.

ACC Avery advised that Officers are expected to refer to appropriate support groups at the time that the offence is reported.

Lizzie highlighted that victims can self-refer at any point through commissioned services, irrelevant of victim or evidence led prosecutions.

Frances went on to enquire about referrals for suspects.

ACC Avery advised that in the event of a positive or diversionary outcome, pathway referrals would be issued, nuanced by crime type. ACC Avery advised that there are also several pathways for non-convicted suspects that are considered to pose an ongoing risk, despite not having a prosecution. These are passed to the Management of Sexual Offenders Team for the implementation of things like Civil Orders and monitoring plans.

ACC Avery clarified for the benefit of the panel that 'suspects released under investigation' means an investigation is still ongoing and 'NFA' (No Further Action) would be a case where there is no prospect of conviction.

Frances requested a NFA statistic against VAWG crimes.

ACC Avery clarified that both Outcomes 15 & 16 would be considered as NFA and these figures can be taken as a statistic of NFA against VAWG crimes.

Frances requested a breakdown of negative Outcome codes.

ACTION: The Panel requested a full breakdown of negative Outcome Codes.

Louise queried if OOCRs are mandatory.

ACC Avery confirmed that this depends on the OOCR as conditions can change. If there is a defined pathway to address an Offender's behaviour and then the OOCR is not complied with, it can be reviewed as a charge for non-compliance with the OOCR.

Frances questioned if Leicestershire Police track cases that are ongoing for longer than 3 years.

ACC Avery advised that the average length of all investigations are monitored by the Force and tracked at a strategic level, with set review points throughout an investigation period. Investigations over 180 days are flagged as part of performance monitoring for a Super Intendant to review, which is built into the Force's approach to performance monitoring.

Lizzie also highlighted that there is a challenge with partners using the term 'closed' differently with regards to Super Complaints, as this can be closed for police proceedings but open for criminal proceedings. Delays on the court process then has an impact on the closure of cases as the victim journey does not end at the close of police action.

Katie acknowledged the importance of education young people on VAWG and praised the Pol Ed preventative measures being offered to schools. As the Pol Ed offer is currently available across 14 Counties, Katie queried if the Force will be working with the Dept for Education to get this onto the Curriculum.

ACC Avery noted that there has been a consistent challenge to offer resourcing to schools to provide education. Pol Ed has received good feedback; however, this is a

product that is paid for by the OPCC and Leics Police. ACC Avery noted that the national drive for this should come for the Dept for Education.

Claire confirmed that SPB Exec (Strategic Partnership Board Executive) and the VRN (Violence Reduction Network) raise awareness for the Pol Ed resource across the County, however it is down to the individual schools for implementation.

Katie queried if the Force hold any local data on feedback from schools that have taken up the Pol Ed offer.

ACC Avery advised that at the end of last Quarter, there were 42% of secondary schools and 19% of Primary schools currently signed up, with an excess of 400 sessions rolled out which would equate to approximately 15k children.

Sharan highlighted that this is still a new initiative and will take national government time to review and catch up. Sharran also highlighted the SHUSH and SHARA projects for 10 –15-year- olds and 16 -19-year-olds that are available. The VRN are also partnered with both DeMontfort University and Leics University on a collaborative approach to delivering packages to bridge the educational gaps.

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy Review – Public Insight

Lizzie gave an overview of the VAWG paper completed by Siobhan Peters.

Lizzie highlighted that Leicestershire Police have high satisfaction feedback from victim surveys.

Sharan advised that where the Force are looking to support people from different backgrounds, there is a focus on lived experience and victim feedback giving marginalised groups a platform to share their insights and learning. This will create a feedback and impact loop across commissioned services and victim experience through different strands of work (commissioned services, educational work etc) and external stakeholders.

Sharan noted that Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland have a robust offer for people who have experienced sexual violence. Sharan also highlighted the challenges on age of victims/ survivors etc and their ability to access services. Sharan advised that Shamila Majid, Commissioning Manager within the OPCC, is focusing on this challenge moving forward.

Sharan drew attention to how impactful Claire's Law is and the gap within this service. Recently Sharan met with lived experience victims who were unable to access this service due to age barriers. Sharan advised that a VAGW Strategy review is currently taking place to evaluate where the OPCC are currently at and will inform the next few years of work.

Sharan advised that a review of the VAWG strategy has been commissioned and provided the Panel with a copy of the VAWG Strategy and a questionnaire, inviting their comments for review.

A Sharan advised that the included questionnaire also forms part of the review process, allowing for feedback to be obtained from external stakeholders, lived experience survivors etc.

Sharan invited the Panel to contact her outside of the meeting with any questions on the VAWG Strategy.

Kieran requested clarification on the term 'marginalised' and queried how groups are prioritised.

Sharan advised that external stakeholders, that are engaging with victims, determine who is marginalised. Groups are prioritised using a collaboration of data and reviewing partnership feedback to ensure that evidence led decisions are made. The data provides an informed picture of who is marginalised. Sharan acknowledged that those who are likely to be the most marginalised, probably have the least interaction with the partnership around VAWG, highlighting that there has recently been a VAWG Community Champion proposal approved to better provide access to people from marginalised communities with an alternative route to access services across 5 different within across Leicester Leicestershire and Rutland.

Nikki queried if VAWG are working with health colleagues across the NHS to interact with members of the community, like ladies using the Bradgate centre etc.

Sharan confirmed that there is a relationship across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland between the NHS, Stakeholders and Partnerships. Sharan highlighted that there is some fragmentation across services which comes down to the complex needs of individuals where some providers will present barriers with issues needing to be address separately rather than holistically.

Louise queried if there is reduced provision for someone who is deemed as low to medium risk.

Sharan confirmed that there is a reliance on external services and whilst the timescale may be slightly longer, there is support available. However, this is being reviewed through Commissioning. Sharan also noted that the Force are using a DARA tool to identify the risk level and then signpost to the right service. ACC Avery noted that there is prevention work taking place across the Partnership with a focus on getting upstream of this challenge.

Frances requested information on what the OPCC funds in relation to VAWG, what has been commissioned since 2024 and what has worked well.

Sharan confirmed that is the purpose of the VAWG Strategy Review that is currently taking place. Sharan advised that Shamila Majid, Commissioning Manager, would be able to provide feedback on the commissioning element of VAWG.

Louise queried what the expectation relating to the reference of waiting for Central Government to shorten the gap between investigation and trial for VAWG cases.

Claire advised this is generalised to the Crown Court backlog across the Country. ACC Avery highlighted that as of today there is a new Sentencing Bill which will see anyone with a 12month or less sentence issued with a community-based sentence rather than custodial, depending on crime type. There is a belief that this should in turn, increase the procession of court cases for serious and vulnerable crime types. ACC Avery advised that offenders not going to prison and remaining in the community, will also create an increased impact on policing in the community.

RASSO Ethical Dilemma/ Rape Crisis Super Complaint

ACC Avery gave an overview of the Rape Crisis Super Complaint.

ACC Avery noted that the length of an investigation can be impacted by resourcing, digital evidence and the use of national intermediators who support victims with giving evidence. There are also continuous delays within the criminal justice system, which partners continue to work on improving. Within the Forces control are the elements of keeping victims aware and informed of cases, despite the timelines being longer than would like.

ACC Avery noted there is a challenge of forensic timescales for new reports as these require quick and prompt responses to avoid loss of evidence, which impacts ongoing

case timescales as this can result on new offences are prioritised where there is a need to focus on forensics.

ACC Avery advised that there is now a dedicated resource within the Force to ensure that cases that do not have a forensic evidence issue are addressed.

ACC Avery confirmed that the Force will continue to work to mitigate these concerns and will continue to complete comparisons to highlight gaps and take recommendations which are addressed through delivery plans.

Lisa queried where ACC Avery would place LLR in terms of the delivery gaps.

ACC Avery noted that the key focus is victim care and compassion, as this is within the control of the Force and is something that the Force should be able to deliver. ACC Avery also highlighted timeliness, ensuring that the Force are as effective and efficient in factors that are within the control of the Force. ACC Avery also advised that there is an ongoing ambition to increase the charges brought to bring more offenders to justice.

Lisa requested an overview of empathy training that Officers receive.

ACTION – The Panel requested an overview of the empathy training provided to Officers of Leicestershire Police. This is to be given outside of a meeting.

Louise raised that the Panel would like to meet with the Rape Team.

ACC Avery advised there would be some practicalities to overcome, but that a visit or meeting could be arranged in the future.

ACTION: The OPCC will arrange for the Ethics and Transparency Panel to meet with the Rape Team.

7. AOB

None

8. Actions:

ACTION: The Ethics and Transparency Panel will write to the Chair of the Police and Crime Panel to express their concern, highlighting the seriousness of the actions taken.

ACTION: Meeting for the Chair of Ethics and the Chair of JARAP to be arranged and minuted for salient points.

ACTION: The Panel requested a like for like crime type analysis of VAWG and VAMB for the following offences; Domestic Abuse of Female and Male, Sexual Assault, Rape and Stalking to highlight disparity.

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