



**REPORT TO: POLICE AND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON
18 NOVEMBER 2021**

**SUBJECT: THEMATIC REPORT – MORAY VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
AND GIRLS PARTNERSHIP**

**BY: DETECTIVE CHIEF INSPECTOR DAVID HOWIESON, POLICE
SCOTLAND, CHAIR – MORAY VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
AND GIRLS PARTNERSHIP**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee on the progress of the Moray Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership (MVAWGP).
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (J) (4) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to the monitoring of delivery of the Police and Fire & Rescue Services in Moray.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Police and Fire & Rescue Services Committee scrutinise and note the information contained within this report and Appendix 1.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Moray Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership (MVAWGP) reports through the Moray Public Protection Chief Officer's Group. It is currently chaired by Police Scotland and is the key multi-agency driver of implementation of the Scottish Government and COSLA's Equally Safe strategy across Moray. This report highlights the progress and work of the partnership towards this strategy and the additional work undertaken during the Coronavirus pandemic and associated restrictions.

4. RESPONSE

- 4.1 Similar to other VAW partnerships across the UK, COVID-19 restrictions and their implications have been a particular focus of the MVAWGP. Lockdown restrictions inadvertently resulted in the potential for victims of abuse to be in the company of new or existing abusers for prolonged periods, whilst not being seen by friends, family or professionals, thus increasing opportunities for abuse. Furthermore, victims of abuse may have been unable to report abuse due to the proximity of their abuser or may have been under the impression that normal pathways to support may not have been available due

to the restrictions. [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Supplementary National Violence Against Women Guidance](#) published by the Scottish Government and COSLA assisted in formulating the response to the restrictions and associated risks.

- 4.2 As the course of the pandemic has changed, the risk register for the MVAWGP has remained under review, recognising the impact of changes in society on the risks posed and mitigating measures required. This document is in the process of being further updated and along with the terms of reference will influence the 2022 action plan for the MVAWGP.
- 4.3 The Scottish Government Domestic Abuse campaign, in conjunction with Police Scotland and Safer Scotland, was well supported by the MVAWGP. This included local messaging being sent out through community channels to ensure the messages were as wide-reaching as possible and to articles being published in conventional media publications, aiming to reach those who may not have internet access. With local radio supporting the campaign, this preventative multi-faceted public messaging was continued to ensure focus remained on helping the most vulnerable in our communities.
- 4.4 Work is ongoing within the partnership to formalise a Communications Strategy. This will build on the co-ordinated messaging throughout the pandemic highlighting the continued availability of services during that time and signposting towards publicly available online information and support related to gender based violence. Co-ordinated messaging also featured awareness raising campaigns promoting safety messaging in relation to sexual offending to coincide with the relaxing of lockdown restrictions in the hospitality sector.
- 4.5 In August 2021 the MVAWGP were successful in a Partnership bid for Scottish Government 'Equally Safe' funding to support the employment of a Partnership Development Officer. This post, on an initial two year contract, will be funded entirely from this award and the post holder will support the partnership in a number of key areas including the co-ordinated delivery of Safe and Together training to frontline practitioners across Moray.
- 4.6 Following a restructure of roles within services a new Lead Officer has been identified for the MVAWGP. PC Sarah Dawson from Police Scotland has taken on this role and will provide vital support to the partnership with the ability to focus on co-ordination and progressing key work streams, supporting individual agencies and providing a link between the MVAWGP and national VAW structures.
- 4.7 Membership of the group has expanded to incorporate more third sector representation, further strengthening the collaborative approach of the partnership. The MVAWGP continues to enjoy the support of local Elected Members and the two-way communication they afford with the communities they represent.
- 4.8 It is noted certain services have reported increased demand, particularly at times when lockdown restrictions eased whilst others report demand similar to previous years. The combined issue of 'hidden harm' and potential 'delayed

demand' post COVID-19 restrictions is one which is closely monitored by the partnership.

- 4.9 The MVAWGP has recently aligned to two key subgroups to further support work towards the priorities identified in our Action Plan. These subgroups are pan-Grampian and led by Police Scotland and NHS Grampian, recognising the strength in having consistency across the North East in two key areas.

Data, Performance and Quality Assurance Group

- 4.10 This is a multi-agency pan-Grampian group being led by Police Scotland. The ACC Digital team is supporting the creation on a VAWP Data dashboard for each of the Grampian areas. To begin with, only domestic abuse information is being collated and, although still in the process of collecting management information around domestic abuse and identifying gaps, it is starting to compare data from 2020. Data on the other forms of Violence Against Women and Girls will be collected once domestic abuse data has been finalised. It should be noted that this is a local management tool and the data collated is not for publication beyond the respective Partnerships at this time. This group is currently meeting every 6 weeks and will be integral in steering the direction of the partnership as it strives to meet collective objectives.

Training, Learning and Development Group

- 4.11 This is also a multi-agency pan-Grampian group and is being led by NHS Grampian. The group is currently collectively evaluating what training is available in each of the Grampian areas and identifying gaps in training need with a view to creating a virtual training programme of local and national learning and development opportunities. The aim is to provide practitioners and volunteers with the knowledge to respond appropriately when working with individuals affected by gender-based violence or abuse.
- 4.12 In November and December the focus of the partnership turns to the local delivery of the national annual '16 Days of Action', campaign in relation to Violence Against Women. Aside from the additional enforcement element of this campaign which forms part of the Police approach, events are also in planning, including awareness raising, training for practitioners, Police Officers and volunteers, and a proposed multi-agency webinar or Facebook live event aimed at victims and those affected by domestic violence.

5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

The Moray Council's responsibilities with regards to the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 are directly relevant to Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan.

The work of the MVAWGP is closely aligned to the overarching LOIP outcome for Moray of "Raising Aspirations."

The work of the partnership contributes directly to priorities 2 and 4 of the LOIP

“Building a better future for our children and young people in Moray.”

And

“Improving the wellbeing of our population.”

(b) Policy and Legal

This report is presented to the Moray Police and Fire & Rescue Services Committee within its remit for local scrutiny of the Police.

(c) Financial implications

There are no identified financial implications.

(d) Risk Implications

There are no identified risk implications.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no identified staffing implications.

(f) Property

Not applicable.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

Not applicable.

(h) Consultations

The Local Police Plan, upon which the performance is reporting, was subject to consultation with elected representatives and was heavily influenced by ongoing feedback from local communities within the Moray Council area

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Throughout the Coronavirus pandemic the Moray Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership has remained dedicated to tackling violence against women in all its forms and coordinating services from voluntary and statutory agencies to ensure appropriate support is provided to those affected by it.

6.2 National and local strategies have aligned and supported the partnership to co-ordinate and deliver actions to safeguard women and children affected by violence in all its forms and to implement measures to prevent harm.

6.3 Public confidence and trust in the MVAWGP and its constituent members is enhanced through the cohesive and collaborative strategies set and delivered in a high risk and high profile area.

Author of Report: Detective Chief Inspector David Howieson
Public Protection – Moray and Aberdeenshire
North East Division
Police Scotland

Background Papers: Moray VAWGP ToR

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