



# Hampshire Constabulary

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Dear Colleague

The tragic and awful death of Sarah Everard has made me reflect deeply over the last few days and I wanted to write to you about what we are doing locally in relation to violence against women. In the coming days I will also be engaging again with those crucial third sector partners who do so much to support those women who are subjected to violence and fear.

Of immediate note, over this last weekend we have had two small vigils - one on Southampton Common and one in Portsmouth, and we were able to work with those organisers to ensure that both events went peacefully and were supported by neighbourhood police officers. Our engagement with such groups in our communities is fundamental to trust and confidence.

I hope that this update serves as some reassurance to you about our response to policing in our communities against the ongoing backdrop of COVID-19 enforcement. The operational context in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight is of course different to London, but we will also pay the closest attention to any lessons from the review into what has happened and the facts underpinning how, what I understand to be, seven hours of peaceful vigil, ended with the images that are raising so many questions.

It is not only the tragic circumstances of Sarah's death that has struck such a chord for all of us, although that in itself is the most terrible of crimes, it is also the timing of this tragedy. We are approaching a year of living with COVID-19 and the social and economic challenges this brings. It is unacceptable but not new, that women are so often the victims of crimes linked to serious violence.



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We have also seen how harm behind closed doors, and those crimes associated with sexual violence, including rape and domestic abuse have required even more focus during COVID-19. We knew that; we have shone a light on this, and used our resources to focus on domestic abuse and harm in the home. As a high harm force, protecting the vulnerable and those (usually women) impacted by domestic abuse is a key priority for us. Bringing perpetrators to justice and ensuring that cases get to court and victims are supported remains our focus. We are proud that we have continued to see our reporting in this area increase and our outcomes for high harm crime, relating to high risk domestic abuse and sexual violence, increase during 2020/21, but we must do more. I have also previously shared with you that I am still very concerned by how difficult it remains to secure a conviction for these offences and am hopeful that national reviews will shift the needle.

A second important piece of context relates to all of the new restrictions placed on our communities. We police using the 4 Es to engage, explain and encourage and only after these, to enforce. This has stood us in good stead and kept the confidence of our communities. Policing by consent is really important to me as Chief Constable and we need our communities to trust us even more than they ever did, once this pandemic is over. We couldn't and didn't want to alienate the communities we serve and needed to tread that line delicately. Our communities tell us that we have got this right in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, and we will continue to tread this careful line. I wanted to give you this personal assurance as it is important to me.

In the context of the above, it is therefore profoundly saddening to me personally and professionally, to see the impact of the last few days on how women feel in our society. I reflect that I was given personal safety training as a 14 year old school girl. At this early age I was taught to consider my journeys because of the very risk women are currently being heard describing – I understand, and it is important that we are again discussing it together. It cannot be right that all of these years on women face the same reality. As your Chief Constable, I want to give you assurance that we always have, and will continue to prioritise the prevention of and response to, violence against women and girls. This includes taking action on voyeurism, harassment or indecent exposure, whether ultimately a crime (as per Parliament's Will) or not. To be able to do this we need to maintain the confidence of women and girls to report offences to us, and anything that you can do to support that at this crucial time is so important.

I would also encourage you to please join with me to do the hardest work which is fighting for the change we need in society and keeping this important issue in the public eye. What we know is that enforcement alone is not enough. We must work ever closer with our partners to ensure, the commitment and funding is there for preventative services, for necessary support services for women such as trauma therapy for victims of male violence, for work with perpetrators of domestic abuse to hold violent men accountable, and for better and more proactive education teaching healthy relationships to children in school. Where there are male victims of violence at home we must be there for them too. It is only in partnership that we can make the kind of difference that is needed.



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For our part, Hampshire Constabulary will:

- Continue to prioritise violence against women and girls, standing with those who call out on misogyny, and tackling all those who bully women or perpetuate violence against women. We perform well in this area and will be renewing our focus on arresting domestic abuse perpetrators and playing our part in securing justice for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence.
- Continue to ensure that the people we employ within Hampshire Constabulary are held to account for the highest ethical standards. This includes the vetting of new officers and proactively rooting out quickly any officer or staff member not meeting our standards in relation to discriminatory behaviour.
- Continue to stand up for injustice and inequality, and continue in our efforts to increase the representation of individuals from our diverse communities across Hampshire, attracting minority ethnic and women as well as men into careers in policing. We continue to prioritise this through Operation Uplift and during 2021 will be placing many more officers into our communities. I will be writing to you specifically about our progress at the start of 2021/22 and what we are doing to increase our visible difference.
- Continue to police the pandemic as we have throughout the last 12 months – with policing by consent, ensuring we have the legitimacy to do what we do working with you and your communities. A key part of this remains enforcing blatant breaches but also working with partners, such as health and local councils, who are so important to ensuring our communities understand the importance of compliance and encouraging people to choose to keep themselves and others safe from COVID, rather than it having to be enforced. Where there are plans for protest on any matter during these times, I will ensure that District Commanders are working with you and your local communities, and where possible reaching out to organisers.

The very real issue of violence against women and misogyny remains a continued focus for Hampshire Constabulary. I recognise that this will also be a priority for you, and I look forward to working together on this essential matter.

Yours sincerely



**Olivia Pinkney**  
**Chief Constable**



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