



**University of Brighton**

# Project Vigilant Evaluation

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# Context

- Violence Against Women and Girls, or VAWG, is a significant international human rights and public health issue.
- Devastating impact
- ‘an epidemic of offending against women and girls’
- Improvements?
- But...
- New strategy for tackling VAWG (Home Office, 2021)
- A ‘statement of expectations’ to guide the commissioning of services to support victims and survivors (Home Office, 2022).
- New VAWG police framework (National Police Chiefs Council/College of Policing, 202)
- ‘we can’t just *police* our way out of violence against women and girls’

## Project Vigilant

- Aims to prevent sexual offences by perpetrators by proactively identifying predatory sexual behaviour and intervening to prevent this behaviour escalating to an offence.
- Uses combined overt (i.e., uniformed officers) and covert (i.e., non-uniformed officers) resources;
- Police-led
- Perpetrator focussed
- Officer Training

## PROJECT VIGILANT

Awarded Nearly

**£300K** 

as part of the Safety of Women at Night (SWAN) fund

THIS INCLUDES:



More Project Vigilant  
deployments across  
the force



Enhanced training for  
officers to identify  
predatory behaviour



Training to empower  
partners and venues to  
challenge behaviour



New behaviour  
intervention progr  
with Circles South



## Aim, Design & Method

- How effective is Project Vigilant in prevention sexual offending in the NTE?
- 'What works, for whom and in what circumstances'
- Patrol observations: 42 hours of observation, 88 interactions between officers and the public
- Views from the Police (interviews & focus groups)
- Survey: Public Perceptions, Experiences, & Awareness
- Data from the Police (recorded)
- Aggregated data on Project Vigilant activities



## Views from the Police

- Changing Police Priorities
- Changing Police Attitudes
- Public Engagement & Effective Patrol Activity
- From Victim Blaming to a Perpetrator Focus
- Intelligence Collation & Administrative Support
- Organisational Challenges

## Views from the Police & Issues Arising

- **Changing Police Priorities**
  - **Changing Police Attitudes**
- } Training, Skills  
Institutional  
Memory
- **Public Engagement & Effective Patrol Activity**
- } The sexual division of police labour
- **From Victim Blaming to a Perpetrator Focus**
- } 'Big Sisters' – reclaiming the night
- **Intelligence Collation & Administrative Support**
- } Police led vs. multi-agency impact
- **Organisational Challenges**
- } Sustainability  
Normalisation, Resourcing

## Public Survey

- 158 respondents aged 16 or over
- Living in Oxford or surrounding areas
- Majority female
- Youngest respondent aged 16, oldest 84 years old
- Predominately White
- No disability or impairment
- One quarter students



How can we make  
Oxford feel **safer**?  
Have **your say**.

**Project Vigilant** is an initiative by Thames Valley Police to tackle crimes such as street harassment and sexual violence.

If you are aged 16 or over, let us know about how safe you feel when going about your daily life in the city. We are particularly interested in hearing from women.

Complete our **quick online survey** by 31 March 2022. You will be entered in a draw for a chance to win a £100 voucher.

Follow the link or scan QR code  
<https://bit.ly/3sxUE28>



How to report crime  
Website:  
[www.thamesvalley.police.uk](http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk)  
Telephone: **101**  
In an emergency, dial 999



The survey is being conducted by the University of Brighton; it is part of an evaluation of Project Vigilant and will be used to inform improvements.

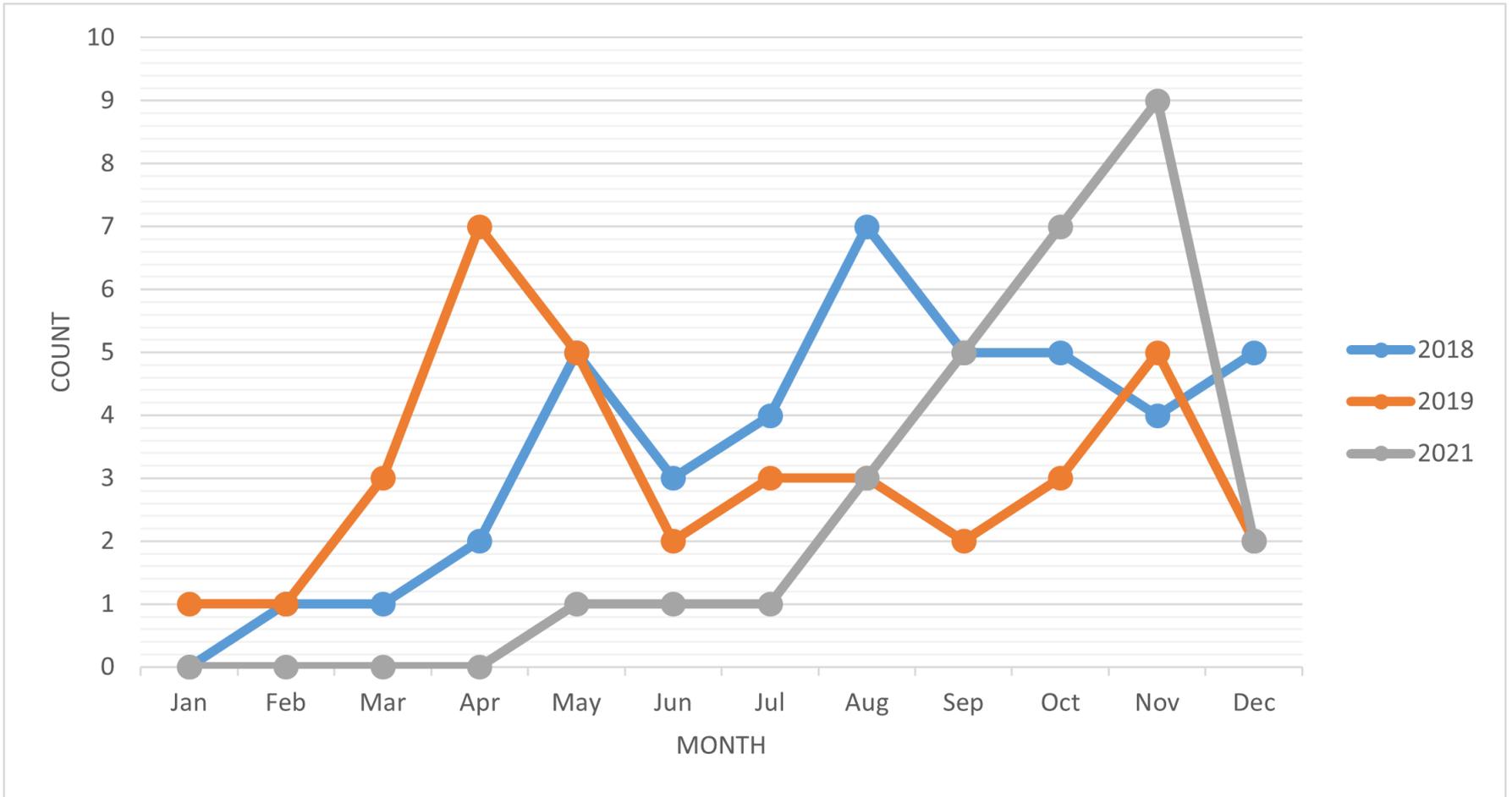
## Project Vigilant Awareness & Safety

- Public awareness around Project Vigilant was low
- Less than 20% indicated that they heard about Project Vigilant before completing the survey
- Presence of uniformed officers was linked to increased feelings of safety
- Not so much in relation to the deployment of plain clothed officers



# Information on Project Vigilant Activities

- **123 stops** between 1 September 2021 and 31 March 2022 across the four PFAs where the Vigilant was operational at the time of the evaluation involving **116 individuals** (four men were stopped twice and another stopped four times)
- **Half (59; 51%)** of the men stopped were already known to Thames Valley Police.
- Of these, **20 men** showed up on Thames Valley Police records as linked to a **previous domestic abuse incident (or incidents) or sexual offences**
- One individual was a registered sex offender.
- Nine arrests (7% of stops) were made further to a stop
- One man went on to be arrested on suspicion of rape



Total number of police recorded NTE sexual offences by month, LPA-level, 2018, 2019, 2021

## Police recorded number of NTE sexual offence type and outcome, LPA-level, 2018, 2019, 2021

- Overall, fewer sexual offences in the NTE recorded in 2021 compared to 2019 and 2018.
- No police recorded rapes in the NTE in the LPA in 2021 (compared to 11 recorded in 2018 and 14 in 2019);
- fewer sexual assaults in 2021 compared to 2019 and 2018; and
- a higher number of sexual assaults by touching in 2021 compared to 2019 and 2018.

	2018	2019	2021	Grand Total
<b>Administering a noxious substance with intent to injure or annoy</b>	1	0	0	1
NFA	1	0	0	1
<b>Attempt Sexual Assault</b>	1	0	0	1
NFA	1	0	0	1
<b>Attempted Rape</b>	1	1	1	3
NFA	1	1	0	2
Ongoing	0	0	1	1
<b>Rape</b>	14	11	0	25
Charged	1	1	0	2
Currently under Investigation	1	0	0	1
NFA	11	10	0	21
Ongoing	1	0	0	1
<b>Sexual assault</b>	11	10	4	25
Charged	1	0	0	1
Currently under Investigation	3	0	0	3
NFA	7	10	3	20
Suspect abroad, shown as wanted on PNC	0	0	1	1
<b>Sexual assault by penetration</b>	4	1	2	7
NFA	3	1	2	6
Ongoing	1	0	0	1
<b>Sexual assault by touching</b>	6	11	22	39
Charged	0	2	2	4
NFA	6	9	20	35
<b>Sexual assault over clothing</b>	4	2	0	6
NFA	4	2	0	6
<b>Grand Total</b>	42	37	29	108

# Final Thoughts

1. Advantages of/Issues around gender/mixed crewing/patrolling
2. Mainstreaming the initiative despite constrained resources (partnership/community)
3. Reclaiming the night: Who from? Who for?
4. Broadening the behavioural detection training
5. Extending the police family = Greater Vigilance = more eyes watching (street pastors, security, CCTV operators, NTE employees etc.)
6. Greater public awareness (media campaign, social media, press success reports, VAWG hotline/app)
7. Quantifying success ('hard' evidence) required further mapping of the theories behind Project Vigilant to inform outcome measures.
8. Absent voices: views from marginalised members of the community, especially those with intersecting identities, and those with lived experiences, i.e. survivor/victims, especially younger women/girls.