

Lady Elish Angiolini KC

Statement to Press Conference

1. Good afternoon. Today the Home Secretary has laid before Parliament the second Report of the Angiolini Inquiry. As a non-statutory inquiry, the Home Secretary is responsible for publishing this Report. The Inquiry is, however, independent of Government, and this Report is the result of over two years work.
2. My first Report investigated how off-duty police officer Wayne Couzens was able to abduct, rape and murder Sarah Everard. This was published last year, in February 2024.
3. I was clear in that Report that Wayne Couzens should never have been a police officer. When I published my first Report, I warned police and political leaders that there was nothing stopping another Couzens from operating in plain sight. Not enough was done to stop him from establishing and continuing a policing career. Opportunities to disrupt his offending and thereby prevent some of his abhorrent crimes were missed.
4. Part 2 of the Angiolini Inquiry was launched to examine whether there was a risk of recurrence across policing. This meant investigating issues to do with police misconduct, information-sharing, recruitment, vetting, transfers, and culture.
5. However, I was concerned that looking within policing alone was not enough to address the wider societal issues highlighted by Couzens' crimes. Wayne Couzens was a repeat perpetrator of crimes against women. He abducted Sarah Everard from a well-lit, busy London road, before raping and murdering her. He was able to commit multiple indecent exposure offences against women in public spaces without being apprehended. There were multiple missed opportunities to

disrupt this offending and bring an end to his policing career sooner. The abhorrent crimes of Wayne Couzens tragically highlighted broader concerns surrounding women's safety in public spaces. There was a critical and unprecedented call for action and change from members of the public.

6. There are still many victims because there are still many perpetrators of sexually motivated crimes who escape detection and prosecution. With a greater spotlight on the safety of women in public, women should feel safer in public spaces, but many do not. Women change their travel plans, their routines, and their lives out of fears for their safety in public, while far too many perpetrators continue to roam freely. Women deserve to *feel* safer. They deserve to *be* safer. Making women safer should make everyone safer. This is the focus of my second Report.

7. I make 13 new recommendations asking a range of Government Departments, as well as police forces and wider policing organisations to act. I ask leaders to be courageous in their action to respond to, and implement, these recommendations. Changing this situation will be difficult and challenging. But we have to rise to this challenge.

8. During every stage of the Inquiry's work, my thoughts have always been focused on Sarah Everard, whose life was cruelly cut short, devastating her loving family and friends. My Report lays bare the continued pain Sarah's family experience at the loss of their beloved daughter. Sarah's mother describes this unrelenting grief as a turmoil of emotions. In Sue's own words, the horror of Sarah's final hours is a constant torment to her and her family.

9. I will never lose sight of the impact that these crimes have on victims and their families. Since Sarah's death, more women have had their lives taken from them at the hands of dangerous perpetrators. I have had the immense privilege of meeting a brave victim who survived attempted murder and rape. It has also been a privilege to meet some of the family members of women, murdered by perpetrators who, in many cases, were previously known to the authorities.

10. Prevention is most effective when it confronts those who cause harm. And yet, too many opportunities to apprehend violent perpetrators have not been acted upon. Too many women are victimised, and too many lives are lost or irrevocably changed forever.
11. The second part of the Inquiry allowed me to build on the themes identified in my Part 1 Report and I was able to gather evidence across a wide range of sectors and organisations. This was necessary as sexually motivated crime in public spaces is a whole society issue that requires a whole society response.
12. I continue to be very grateful to all those who provided evidence to the Inquiry and for the way organisations have cooperated with the Inquiry's work. I have had the privilege of hearing from truly inspiring individuals who are dedicated to preventing sexually motivated crimes against women in public spaces, both within and beyond policing. This was encouraging to hear.
13. Undoubtedly, there has been an increase, since Sarah's death, in measures to prevent sexually motivated crimes against women in public spaces. We heard this from across Government; the criminal justice sector; national policing bodies; as well as the charity and voluntary sectors.
14. What is of great concern to me, still, is that basic questions cannot be answered. No one was able to confidently tell me how many women nationally, report being the victim of sexually motivated crimes in public spaces. This gap in knowledge fundamentally impacted my ability to assess how effective current measures are at preventing these crimes. For example, we cannot answer basic questions such as 'how many women were raped by strangers in public spaces, as opposed to someone known to them in private spaces, in England and Wales last year?' and there is limited data on sexual assault and indecent exposure. If this data is not being gathered and recorded consistently across forces, how can it be analysed to spot patterns in offending? This is a critical failure.

15. There is more to do to understand the prevalence and scale of the problem, but we already know all too well the toll these crimes take on the victims and the ways in which the threat of these crimes impact women's confidence in public spaces.
16. The Inquiry identified multiple surveys and research which consistently articulate the fact that women do not feel safe, and that this unease is often compounded by repeated street harassment or victimisation. Our own survey findings were stark: around half of all women surveyed had experienced an incident in the last three years that made them feel unsafe due to someone else's actions or behaviour. Among women aged 18 to 24, 76 per cent reported feeling unsafe in public because of the actions or behaviour of a man or men.
17. These are not new findings. In 2021, the United Nations surveyed over 1,000 women in the United Kingdom and found that 71 per cent had experienced some form of sexual harassment in a public space at some point in their lives. Women have been clear and consistent: it is now time for the government, and wider society, to focus on disrupting the perpetrator.
18. This has to start with prevention. Perpetrators need to be stopped and prevented from reoffending against women in a similar way again. While I have seen evidence that a shift in focus towards the perpetrator is happening, more needs to be done. I have found that data on men who are the perpetrators of these crimes is limited and disjointed, further impacting the ability for anyone to get a grip of the issues, and the solutions.
19. This is not just in relation to early intervention. It includes ensuring measures are effective in preventing known offenders from committing further sexual offences against women in public spaces. Too many perpetrators are slipping through the cracks in an overworked system; police, prison and probation resources are overstretched and under-funded.
20. This is despite Violence Against Women and Girls being described as a 'national threat' in the 2023 Strategic Policing Requirement. For the first time, the

government outlined how police forces needed to coordinate their response and resources to tackle such crimes in line with other national threats. In parallel, the police made a national commitment to relentlessly pursue perpetrators and create safer spaces.

21. In reality, I have found the response overall lacks what is afforded to other high-priority crimes where funding and preventative activity (with sometimes little data on success) is the norm. Prevention is mentioned in almost every single violence against women and girls strategy, reflecting an increased awareness. However, too often, prevention in this space remains just words. Until this disparity is addressed, violence against women and girls cannot credibly be called a 'national priority'.

22. Funding also remains a critical challenge. This is not just about tackling sexually motivated crimes against women in public spaces – it spans violence against women and girls more broadly. The Inquiry found chronic underfunding across the criminal justice system. Victim services, research into prevention, and perpetrator intervention programmes all fall short. Where there is funding, it is very often fragmented and inefficiently allocated. Organisations seeking financial recognition and support – often already overstretched – must fight relentlessly for even the smallest pots of money, time and time again.

23. I am in no doubt that proving that a crime has been prevented can be difficult. At the heart of prevention activity is the aim of stopping something happening, which in itself is hard to establish. This issue is heightened by an already overstretched and demanding environment. Yet, despite these barriers, many excellent initiatives are being delivered at local levels by passionate individuals who often go above and beyond their day jobs. These efforts operate in a system that struggles to provide a mechanism or funding to scale-up even the most promising measures.

24. The Inquiry found that there are a thousand flowers blooming in this space, reflecting a genuine commitment to improvement, but which are not being delivered consistently across England and Wales. Progress requires courage and

stable funding, to recognise promising initiatives and to look beyond the immediate to the long term.

25. Sadly, I have seen duplication, siloed working and inconsistency scattered across England and Wales. Different areas apply different solutions to the same problem, or a watered-down version of the same solution. This is creating an unacceptable level of inconsistency: the landscape is littered with inefficient, patchwork initiatives that vary from place to place, while the experience of women are often the same or similar. The public should be able to rely on a consistent service that prioritises their safety wherever they live in England and Wales.

26. When considering prevention activity and the safety of women in public spaces, it became clear to me that understanding the impact of pornography and social media is critical to improving women's safety. The safety of online spaces was not within my Terms of Reference. However, during my investigation, nearly every witness shared their concerns about the impact that violent, misogynistic pornography and unfettered access to harmful content has on users.

27. In my Part 1 Report I was resolute in highlighting Wayne Couzens' interest in extreme and violent pornography. The gap between 'online' and 'physical' worlds is closing, especially for the youngest and potentially the most vulnerable in our society. Online spaces are becoming increasingly violent and degrading places, where misogyny and hatred towards women not only flourishes, but is disgustingly celebrated.

28. I find it inconceivable to see how this cannot impact offending in the 'physical' world too. I also find it inconceivable that we have not yet got a better grip on safety in online spaces. It needs to form a vital part of any strategy focused on the prevention of violence against women and girls, which must also outline how these harms may, in turn, affect men and boys.

29. My Report outlines a number of barriers that make prevention work difficult. My recommendations provide the framework to ensure prevention is treated as a fundamental part of tackling issues relating to the safety of women in public

spaces. Prevention needs to be incorporated at every level; society needs to stop normalising misogynistic perpetrator behaviour and authorities need to start intervening early by targeting places and people that are known to be risks. Similarly, intervening and tackling offending patterns of known offenders, whether this be through custodial sentencing, behaviour change referrals, or orders, is a crucial part of future prevention and serves to reduce the risk of future victimisation. I call on all sectors and society to work together. Addressing these issues by firmly recognising sexually motivated crime against women as a public health matter as well as a criminal matter, is crucial.

30. The recommendations I make are clear. I ask those responsible to: implement the recommendations, fund the solutions and protect women.

31. I also want people in our communities to feel liberated to act. This is to ensure, as far as possible, the safety of each other in public. I also call for better data recording and collection, supported by strong and collaborative leadership, unified by a shared goal and clear communication. Underpinning all of this is the need for properly sustained investment in measures we already know work.

32. I ask leaders to be courageous; I therefore call for urgent implementation on a focused set of key measures. In particular, two successful policing measures: Project Vigilant, which started in Thames Valley Police and Operation Soteria, which started in Avon and Somerset Police. It was rare to find examples of measures so closely aligned at addressing, specifically, the crimes of interest set out in the Terms of Reference of this Report. I call for urgent national implementation and long-term, consistent funding of these measures and argue that the challenge is not a lack of ideas but a lack of coordination and a shared momentum.

33. None of the recommendations I make should be received with surprise. In fact, some of my recommendations seek to echo reports that have already been published in the last twelve months: the Independent Pornography Review, the 2025 Girlguiding Attitudes Survey, and reports by the Home Affairs Committee and the National Audit Office on the effectiveness on tackling violence against

women and girls. So many of these reports, reviews, surveys and investigations are saying the same thing.

34. It has been over four and a half years since the abduction, rape and murder of Sarah Everard, and 22 months since the publication of my Part 1 Report. During this time, countless other women have been victimised by perpetrators in public spaces.
35. A month after my Part 1 Report, I was pleased to receive unanimous agreement across policing and government who accepted all of the recommendations. This demonstrated that those responsible understood that my recommendations were an urgent call for action. My second Report lays bare the reality. Despite widespread support for the level of change needed, **the lack of consistent and unified action to implement all of the Part 1 recommendations** is deeply disappointing.
36. Despite this, I remain open to the possibility that this will change. I don't underestimate the difficulty of making that change a reality. Getting the data is difficult, evaluation is hard, and results may take time.
37. However, sexually motivated crimes against women are not inevitable. We want women and those who offend against them to know that we do not tolerate these crimes.
38. Looking ahead to the festive period, when many women will be travelling, and meeting friends and family, I continue to be worried about their safety in public spaces. There is no better time to act than now. I want leaders to, quite simply, get a move on. There are lives at stake.
39. During this Inquiry, I have had the privilege of working with an outstanding and dedicated team of Civil Servants.
40. The Inquiry has much more work to do. My next (and third) report will look at policing in more detail, and address the issues identified in relation to recruitment,

vetting, transfers, standards and culture. My fourth and final report will address the shocking crimes committed by David Carrick and seek to understand how he was able to remain in policing for such a long period of time.

41. Thank you.