RE-IMAGINING THE POLICING OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: WHAT CAN THE WORLD LEARN FROM WOMEN’S POLICE STATIONS

PRESENTATION TO UNITED NATIONS 65TH COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN, NGO SESSIONS

NEW YORK, MARCH 24, 2021
Presenters

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Bedfordshire Police, UK
In 2018
Buenos Aires Province, Argentina:

Comisarías de la Mujer y Familia (CMF)
Police Stations for Women and Families Designed to receive victims

- Had 2,300 employees
- Responded to 245,437 reports of domestic violence
- Received 7,277 reports of sexual abuse
EMERGENCE OF POLICE STATIONS FOR WOMEN AND FAMILIES DESIGNED TO RECEIVE VICTIMS

- First established at La Plata in 1988
- 2004 there were only 12
- 2009 -> 37
- 2018 -> 128
- 2019 -> 131

- 11 March 2009 - Law 26.485, Comprehensive protection law to prevent, punish and eradicate violence against women
- National Action Plan
- 2012 - Offence of femicide
- Gender policy unit, Ministry of Security
- Local Boards
Australian Research Council funded study of Women’s Police Stations
Argentina
2018-2021
AUD $228,000
Findings from Argentinian specialist police stations in responding to gender-based violence

1. Work with victims and perpetrators to prevent re-victimisation

2. Work with organisations to prevent gender-based violence

3. Work with communities to prevent gender-based violence
STAGE TWO:

WHAT COULD BE LEARNT FROM THESE UNIQUE APPROACHES TO POLICING IN AUSTRALIA AND ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD
Survey Design

A  Demographic Information
- Work involves responding to gender-based violence
- Vocation
- Industry experience
- Specialist training

B  Perceptions of Women’s Police Stations
- Two key questions
- WPS in ATSI communities
- Experience with police about gender-based matter
- Other ideas how to prevent gender-based violence
Question One:

In your opinion, which aspects of Women's Police Stations (in Argentina) could improve how police stations respond to victims of gender-based violence?

12 Aspects:

- Designed to receive victims
- Provide child care
- Multi-disciplinary teams
- Work from a gender perspective
- Provide emergency support
- Operate from suburban houses
- Staffed predominantly by female police officers
- Prevention work in community
- Collaborate with local agencies
- Work with victims to break cycle
- Work with offenders to break cycle
- Interview rooms for victims
Question Two:

Ideally, how should police respond to victims of gender-based violence?

5 Statements:

- Allow victims to choose a female police officer
- Empower victims to leave a violent partner
- Help victims to remove the offender from the home
- Listen to victim's stories without judging
- Work from a gender perspective
AUSTRALIAN STUDY
What can Australia learn from Women’s Police Stations?

Overview of Nation-wide survey:

Workforce

Survey:
17 questions + 1 open-ended question

Recruited:
Through:
- Qualtrics
- DFV peak bodies
- Australian universities
- The Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency (ANZPAA)

Survey open:
12 March 2019 to 26 October 2019

Complete responses:
277

Work experience:
63%
have more than 6 years
What can Australia learn from Women’s Police Stations?

Overview of Nation-wide survey:
Community

- Survey: 15 questions + 3 open-ended questions
- Recruited: via Facebook ads
- Survey open: 25 September 2019 to 26 October 2019
- Complete responses: 566
- Work experience: 47% have more than 6 years
Australian Socio-demographics

Total survey respondents
Workforce: 277
Community: 566

Workforce
- Male: 23.5%
- Female: 76.2%
- Other: 0.4%
- ATSI: 4%

Community
- Male: 39.2%
- Female: 54.8%
- Other: 6%
- ATSI: 8%

98% involved in responding to and/or preventing gender violence
80% worked with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people or agencies
24% involved in responding to and/or preventing gender violence
27% worked with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people or agencies

Type of work involved in responding to and/or preventing gender violence:
- Policing
- Research
- Domestic/Sexual Violence
- Counselling
- DV Court Services
- Victims Support Agency
- First Responder Crisis
- Legal & Advocacy Services
- Policy & Advice
- Government Agency
- Other
- Work with Offenders

Workforce work region:
- Metropolitan (76%)
- Rural (20%)
- Regional (4%)

Community work region:
- Metropolitan (58%)
- Rural (20%)
- Regional (13%)
- Remote (9%)

68% have specialist training in responding to gender violence
78% would like more specialist training
CANADIAN STUDY
What can Canada learn from Women’s Police Stations to prevent gender-based violence?

Overview of Nation-wide survey

Survey
15 questions + 3 open-ended questions

Recruited
via CSSLRV website, partner and collaborator networks and websites, social media, Twitter

Survey open
24 January 2020 to 30 April 2020

Complete responses
570

Work experience
63%

have more than 6 years
Canadian Socio-demographics
UK STUDY
What can England and Wales learn from Women’s Police Stations to prevent gender-based violence?

Overview of Nation-wide survey

Survey
17 questions + 3 open-ended questions

Recruited
via direct emails to organisations/individuals
University newsletter
Twitter
the police force covering England and Wales

Survey open
15 January 2021 and remains open

Complete responses
167 (currently)

Work experience
67%
have more than 6 years
UK Socio-demographics

Total survey respondents: 167

Gender:
- Male: 12%
- Female: 87%
- Other: 1%

Ethnic background:
- White: 88.5%
- Black/Black British: 3.6%
- Mixed: 2.4%
- Asian/Asian British: 1.8%
- Other: 1.2%
- Chinese: 0.7%

Work experience:
- 0-3 years: 19%
- 3-5 years: 14%
- 6-8 years: 10%
- 9-11 years: 10%
- 12-15 years: 12%
- 15+ years: 35%

Work region:
- City: 47.31%
- Town: 38.71%
- Rural: 3.23%
- Remote: 3.23%

Profession that describes role or job:
- DSV Support Worker: 20%
- Police Officer: 16%
- Social Worker: 7%
- Victim support worker: 7%
- Work with offenders: 7%
- Safeguarding: 5%
- NGO Worker: 4%
- Researcher: 4%
- Volunteer: 4%
- IDVA: 4%
- Therapist, Psychol, Psychiatrist: 4%
- Academic: 3%
- Counsellor: 3%
- Government policy advisor: 3%
- ISVA: 3%
- Health Worker: 2%
- Violence prevention worker: 2%
- MH crisis intervention: 1%
- Judicial, legal or advocacy: 1%
- Researcher: 1%
- Other: 15%

Workforce: 25% work in specific community groups

Age group:
- 18-24: 32%
- 25-34: 36%
- 35-44: 18%
- 45-54: 12%
- 55+: 7%
FINDINGS FROM THREE COUNTRIES
Question One:

Which aspects of Women's Police Stations could improve how police stations respond to victims of gender-based violence?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>UK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multi-disciplinary teams</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborate with local agencies</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide emergency support</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designed to receive victims</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide child care</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention work in community</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview rooms for victims</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with perpetrators to break cycle</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with victims to break cycle</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work from a gender perspective</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffed by female police officers</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operate from suburban houses</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question Two:

Ideally, how should police respond to victims of gender-based violence?
Allow female victims of male violence to choose a female police officer to receive their complaint

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>74.0%</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Listen to victim's stories without judging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>81.6%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>88.8%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Work from a gender perspective that understands domestic violence is a cycle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>70.4%</td>
<td>82.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Help victims to remove the offender from the home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>67.9%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>69.3%</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Empower victims to leave a violent partner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>61.0%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DISCUSSION
Could Women’s Police Stations work?

**Australian DFV worker**

“With over 25 years in the D&FV Sector we still haven’t got it right. This idea from Argentina definitely could be a major improvement and worth a pilot trial.”

**Canadian DFV worker**

“I love the ideas of women's police stations. Gender-based violence is so rooted in gender inequality and other forms of domination that it requires a multi-pronged approach. The visibility of and commitment to the issue demonstrated by the police stations would be a phenomenal contribution to addressing GBV at local levels.”

**UK DFV worker**

“Really think female police stations would be effective; they would allow the women to feel more at ease, which could also mean they feel more comfortable to disclose incidents of abuse. In my opinion, the most important way to address gender-based violence is creating a safe space for women to disclose/receive support and tailoring support to individual's; recognising that ‘a one size fits all’ approach cannot be adopted.”
Each Nation should decide for themselves. For my community, to prevent racial profiling only Indigenous police officers should serve and protect our small community.

Indigenous women in distress need to have a place where they can go and be received by women who have an understanding and appreciation for their traditional and emotional needs.

It is positive to have a broad spectrum of people to identify with. It helps to have Indigenous staff of both genders but sometimes people want a worker who is not from their own culture.

I believe that the majority of the staff should be Indigenous because of trust within amongst their people, a cultural understanding of traditions that can better support the victim. I also think it is Important to have non-Indigenous people as staff because we need to build on reconciliation, and an understanding of the culture and traditions. I would not have the non-indigenous as the director of the Centre.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous women and men</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous and non-Indigenous women only</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion/response</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Indigenous women and men</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous women only</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
So …
How can police operationalise survey findings and keep women and girls safe in the UK?

• Social issues from a crime lens
• Complexities of policing systems
• Ensure confidence in reporting
• VAWG strategy
• Engagement Internally and Externally
Recommendations

1. Trial of specialised police stations/justice centres staffed by multi-disciplinary teams to assess feasibility
2. Victim friendly interview rooms
3. Childcare and emergency support
4. Collaborate and share information with local agencies
5. Community prevention activities to challenge norms that sustain gender-based violence
6. Work with victims and offenders to break the cycle of domestic violence (not just incident focused)
7. Support survivor’s groups
8. Police as first responders be adequately trained with professional skills in responding to domestic and sexual violence by independent educational providers

The overwhelming majority of survey participants thought WPS have the potential to significantly enhance the policing of gender-based violence across Canada and Australia.

UK data is still in the field — similar responses thus far.

As a by-product they could also address the significant gender equity discrepancies in policing and improve careers for police-women and improve satisfaction with police.
9. Adopt protocols relating to the respectful treatment of victims/survivors:
   a. Show empathy and respect for victims
   b. Listen to victim’s stories without judging
   c. Help victims remove offenders from their home
   d. Support repeat victims who stay in violent relationships
   e. Work from a gender perspective
   f. Empower victims to leave a violent partner
   g. Allow victims of male violence to choose a female police officer

(In Australian Indigenous communities must be Indigenous led – like Community Justice Centres)
Questions?

THANK YOU

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