



Inspecting policing  
in the public interest

# **Durham Constabulary's approach to tackling domestic abuse**

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## Introduction

The extent and nature of domestic abuse remains shocking. A core part of the policing mission is to prevent crime and disorder. Domestic abuse causes both serious harm and constitutes a considerable proportion of overall crime. It costs society an estimated £15.7 billion a year.<sup>1</sup> 77 women were killed by their partners or ex-partners in 2012/13.<sup>2</sup> In the UK, one in four young people aged 10 to 24 reported that they experienced domestic violence and abuse during their childhood.<sup>3</sup> Forces told us that crime relating to domestic abuse constitutes some 8 percent of all recorded crime in their area, and one third of their recorded assaults with injury. On average the police receive an emergency call relating to domestic abuse every 30 seconds.

People may experience domestic abuse regardless of their gender, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, class, age or disability. Domestic abuse may also occur in a range of different relationships including heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender, as well as within families.

While both men and women can be victims of domestic abuse, women are much more likely to be victims than men.

The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is:

*“any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:<sup>4</sup>*

- *psychological*
- *physical*
- *sexual*
- *financial*
- *emotional”.*

<sup>1</sup> Walby, S. (2009). *The cost of domestic violence*. Retrieved from: [www.lancaster.ac.uk/fass/doc.../Cost\\_of\\_domestic\\_violence\\_update.doc](http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/fass/doc.../Cost_of_domestic_violence_update.doc)

<sup>2</sup> Office for National Statistics (2013). *Focus on violent crime and sexual offences 2012/13 – Chapter 4: Intimate Personal Violence and Partner Abuse*. Retrieved from: [http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776\\_352362.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_352362.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Radford L, Corral S, Bradley C et al (2011) *Child abuse and neglect in the UK today*. London: NSPCC.

<sup>4</sup> All definitions are taken from [www.gov.uk/domestic-violence-and-abuse](http://www.gov.uk/domestic-violence-and-abuse)

*Controlling behaviour* is defined as a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

*Coercive behaviour* is defined as: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim. This definition includes so-called honour-based violence, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

Tackling domestic abuse and keeping its victims safe is both vitally important, and incredibly complicated. The police service needs to have the right tools, resources, training and partnerships in place to help it identify victims and keep them safe. It also needs to investigate and bring to justice offenders, when no two domestic abuse environments are the same, and some victims have suffered in silence for years or even decades.

In September 2013, the Home Secretary commissioned HMIC to conduct an inspection.<sup>5</sup> We were asked to consider:

- the effectiveness of the police approach to domestic violence and abuse, focusing on the outcomes for victims;
- whether risks to victims of domestic violence and abuse are adequately managed;
- identifying lessons learnt from how the police approach domestic violence and abuse; and
- making any necessary recommendations in relation to these findings when considered alongside current practice.

To answer these questions, HMIC collected data and reviewed files from the 43 Home Office funded forces. We spoke to 70 victims of domestic abuse in focus groups throughout England and Wales and surveyed over 100 victims online. We also surveyed 200 professionals working with victims of domestic abuse.

We inspected all police forces in England and Wales, interviewing senior and operational leads in forces, holding focus groups with frontline staff and partners, and carrying out visits to police stations (which were unannounced) to test the reality of each force's approach with frontline officers. Our inspection teams were supplemented by expert peers, which included public protection

<sup>5</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/news/major-review-of-police-response-to-domestic-violence](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/major-review-of-police-response-to-domestic-violence)

experts from over 15 forces and those working with victims of domestic abuse in voluntary and community sector organisations.

This report details what HMIC found in Durham Constabulary and at the end of the report we set out some recommendations. These recommendations should be considered in conjunction with the recommendations for all forces made in the national report<sup>6</sup>.

A glossary of frequently used terms also appears at the end of the report.

<sup>6</sup> There is a requirement under section 55(5) and section 55(6) of the 1996 Police Act for the police and crime commissioner to publish a copy of their comments on this report and the recommendations for all forces in the national report and forward these to the Home Secretary.

## Domestic abuse in Durham<sup>7</sup>

### Calls for assistance



In Durham, domestic abuse accounts for 8% of calls to the police for assistance. Of these calls 7% were from repeat victims

### Crime

# 8%

Domestic abuse accounts for 8% of all recorded crime.

### Assault with intent

# 17%

Durham recorded 118 assaults with intent to cause serious harm, of these 20 were domestic abuse related. This is 17% of all assaults with intent to cause serious harm recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

### Assault with injury

# 35%

The force also recorded 2,312 assaults with injury, of these 814 were domestic abuse related. This is 35% of all assaults with injury recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Data in this section is based upon forces' own definition of calls for assistance and domestic abuse, and forces' use of domestic abuse markers on IT systems.

Source: HMIC data collection. Crime figures are taken from police-recorded crime submitted to the Home Office

## Harassment

# 63%

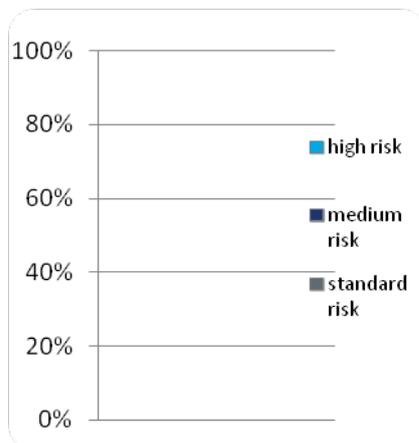
The force recorded 317 harassment offences, of these 199 were domestic abuse related. This is 63% of all harassment offences recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

## Sexual offences

# 5%

The force also recorded 501 sexual offences, of these 23 were domestic abuse related. This is 5% of all sexual offences recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

## Risk levels



Durham was unable to provide data relating to the number of active high, medium and standard risk cases they had.

## Arrests



Durham was unable to provide the number of domestic abuse related arrests. For most forces the number is between 45 and 90 arrests per 100 domestic abuse marked crimes for the 12 months to 31 August 2013.

## Outcomes



Durham recorded 2,280 domestic abuse related crimes for the 12 months to the end of August 2013. Of these crimes 42% resulted in a charge, 26% resulted in a caution and, 2% had an out of court disposal, for example, a fixed penalty notice for disorderly conduct.

## Executive summary

The communities of County Durham and Darlington can have confidence that the police provide a good service to victims of domestic abuse and help keep them safe. Tackling domestic abuse is a priority for the constabulary and staff demonstrated a high level of commitment and awareness. They exercised appropriate discretion and worked well with partners.

HMIC found that there is a strong focus on victim care and safety at each stage in the process. There are many positive examples of good practice that the constabulary has developed, and there are sound and robust processes in place to help to keep victims safe. However, this report outlines a number of areas where the constabulary could further strengthen its response.

### Identifying victims

Victims of domestic abuse are identified by the constabulary when a call from a member of the public is received at one of the constabulary's two communication centres. The constabulary has good systems in place to identify repeat callers. Staff are trained, and question callers to collect as much relevant information as possible, so they can establish risk levels before deciding the most appropriate response. They also routinely research police databases to gather available information about a caller, perpetrator, family or address to help officers attending the incident to assess the threat of harm to a victim and any children present.

However, we found that dispatchers are not always sending the nearest and most appropriate resource, and attending officers are not being given sufficient background information routinely. Call handlers are clear that where a victim has been subject to repeat incidents of abuse, or are particularly vulnerable, then they should be given greater priority. They make extra effort to identify vulnerable and repeat victims at the first point of contact, which informs how the call is managed, the initial risk assessment, and the level of scrutiny given to the incident by supervisors in the communication centres. There was little evidence of any checking process to make sure the officer in the case submits all the necessary documentation about the incident before it concludes.

### Keeping victims safe

Tackling domestic abuse is a priority for the constabulary, with clear direction provided to staff, and comprehensive guidance documents on procedure. HMIC found some good, innovative practice which ensures that domestic abuse is taken seriously by the constabulary, for example, a 'safeguarding champions' initiative and a pilot project aimed at developing staff competencies in dealing

with domestic abuse. While there has been a comprehensive training programme, we did find some areas where training has been more limited. The training some staff received has not covered the full spectrum of abuse, including stalking, harassment and so-called honour-based violence. And we found that, although staff working on the front enquiry desk in police stations regularly receive reports of domestic abuse, they have not received any specific training.

Officers attending incidents involving domestic abuse are very mindful of the need to ensure the safety of the victim and any children, with necessary measures put in place to protect them. The constabulary has introduced an initiative called 'through the eyes of the child' to prompt officers to think about children's perspective when witnessing domestic abuse. The constabulary has good oversight of cases involving repeat and vulnerable victims at the Safeguarding Peer Review meeting. Officers conduct an investigation to a satisfactory standard and keep victims updated according to an agreed 'contact contract'. Investigations are allocated to staff based on the level of risk to the victim, and are regularly reviewed by supervisors to ensure positive action has been taken.

## **Management of risk**

All cases assessed as high, medium or standard risk using the domestic abuse stalking and harassment (DASH) risk assessment are reviewed by specialist staff. They are co-located with staff from other agencies, such as social services.

Currently, specialist staff deal with all high risk victims and some medium risk. Prisoner handling teams deal with most other victims and perpetrators.

The constabulary has published a toolkit to assist staff when they decide which measures to include in a victim's safety plan. Safety plans for high risk victims are managed by staff in the domestic abuse investigation teams. Prisoner handling teams mainly deal with plans for medium and standard risk victims. However, from the time a perpetrator had been charged, through to their court proceedings, we found lack of clarity about who is responsible for the safety planning arrangements for medium and standard risk victims. The multi-agency risk assessment conferences are working well and there are good relationships with partners, which means that information is exchanged promptly, risk assessed, and safety plans put in place to reduce risk.

HMIC found that staff, throughout the constabulary, take their responsibility for making victims safe seriously and there is a strong emphasis on providing and effective service to victims.

## **Organisational effectiveness for keeping people safe**

HMIC found that the constabulary works effectively to manage the future safety of domestic abuse victims. There are robust processes in place to ensure contact is maintained with the victim, and that they are kept informed about release dates, in cases where a perpetrator is imprisoned. In the case of a perpetrator being released from court or police bail, the constabulary ensures the victim is updated at the earliest opportunity. However, for court hearings held on a Saturday, the constabulary needs to review current practices to ensure the victim is informed at the earliest opportunity, the risk is reassessed, and safety plans are updated.

There is good work underway with partners to work with serious and serial perpetrators to prevent them from reoffending. This approach is supported by other perpetrator programmes led by partners. Local officers and commanders understand which families are at greatest risk in their area. The constabulary ensures that lessons learned from domestic homicide reviews are translated into improvements in constabulary procedures and practices. Performance in tackling domestic abuse is measured and managed as part of the constabulary's performance management processes. Scrutiny and accountability is evident at various levels in the constabulary, with a particular focus on reducing the number of vulnerable and repeat victims, and managing perpetrators.

## Findings

### **How does the force identify victims of domestic abuse, and in particular repeat and vulnerable victims?**

Victims of domestic abuse are identified by the constabulary when a call from a member of the public is received at one of the constabulary's two communication centres. The constabulary has good systems in place to identify repeat callers. Staff are trained, and question callers to collect as much relevant information as possible, so they can establish risk levels before deciding the most appropriate response. They also routinely research police databases to gather available information about a caller, perpetrator, family or address to help officers attending the incident to assess the threat of harm to a victim and any children present.

However, we found that dispatchers are not always sending the nearest and most appropriate resource, and attending officers are not being given sufficient background information routinely. Call handlers are clear that where a victim has been subject to repeat incidents of abuse, or are particularly vulnerable, then they should be given greater priority. They make extra effort to identify vulnerable and repeat victims at the first point of contact, which informs how the call is managed, the initial risk assessment, and the level of scrutiny given to the incident by supervisors in the communication centres. There was little evidence of any checking process to make sure the officer in the case submits all the necessary documentation about the incident before it concludes.

The majority of calls to the police about domestic abuse are received in the constabulary's two communication centres. The identification of victims of domestic abuse is the responsibility of the call handlers, who will assess the urgency of the response needed and grade the call accordingly. Call handlers are trained to gather as much relevant information from the caller as they can to give them a full picture of the incident and the risk posed to the victim and any children who may be present.

The constabulary has defined what makes a victim of domestic abuse a repeat or vulnerable victim. Call handlers use these definitions to identify vulnerable and repeat victims at the first point of contact. To assist them they will question callers, using a list of prompts to ensure they gather all relevant information about the incident, victim and previous history (unless the need for an urgent response makes this unrealistic). When a caller is identified as a vulnerable or repeat victim, this is recorded on the constabulary systems in a way that will highlight the issue for future calls.

While they are questioning the caller the call handlers begin to enter the details of the incident onto the constabulary IT system, and carry out checks for any previous history of police involvement at the address, or with the victim and alleged perpetrator. They use an automated checking mechanism which searches the constabulary databases and can alert them to any warnings previously placed on the system for that address which the attending officer will need to be made aware of.

These checks will highlight if a victim has already been identified as a vulnerable or repeat victim. The call handler uses all of this relevant information to carry out a risk assessment using a tool known as 'THRIVE', so named because it considers, threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement. This assessment is then used in determining the appropriate initial police response, and the incident is graded as either scheduled, priority or immediate response.

Once graded, the incident is passed to a dispatcher who uses an IT system and GPS to identify and deploy the most appropriate and timely resource to the incident. The dispatcher also has responsibility for relaying the background information that has been gathered, to the attending officers.

HMIC found that in the case of incidents requiring an immediate response dispatchers are not consistently managing resources to ensure the nearest and most appropriate resource is deployed. In addition, during busy periods in the communication centres, background information is not always provided in sufficient detail to attending officers.

Staff working in both of the constabulary's communication centres have received sufficient training to have an understanding of how to deal with incidents involving domestic abuse, with a strong focus on the identification of vulnerable and repeat victims at the earliest opportunity; and an understanding of the THRIVE risk assessment tool. In addition to this, they have been given training about incidents involving stalking and harassment. We found staff to have a good understanding of domestic abuse and their role, and that they had received appropriate training to enable them to fulfil their role effectively.

Supervisors in the communication centres actively track and monitor the response to domestic abuse incidents as they are happening, to ensure the response is correct and timely; that sufficient detail is recorded on the incident log; and that it is appropriately closed. In addition, all incidents for County Durham are overseen by the central referral unit (CRU) and in Darlington by the multi agency safeguarding hub (MASH) to ensure the incidents are appropriately managed at a local level.

Both reality testing and the incident logs reviewed by HMIC, showed that in the majority of cases, a comprehensive update of the actions taken had been recorded on the log prior to finalisation. However, there was little evidence of any arrangements for checking the officer in the case submits all the necessary documentation relating to the incident, prior to its conclusion, by supervisors in the communication centres.

Regular and robust supervision and quality assurance processes are in place for staff in the two communication centres. These processes include supervisors reviewing a sample of domestic abuse incidents in order to evaluate the skills of the call handlers and dispatchers to ensure the incident was given the appropriate response.

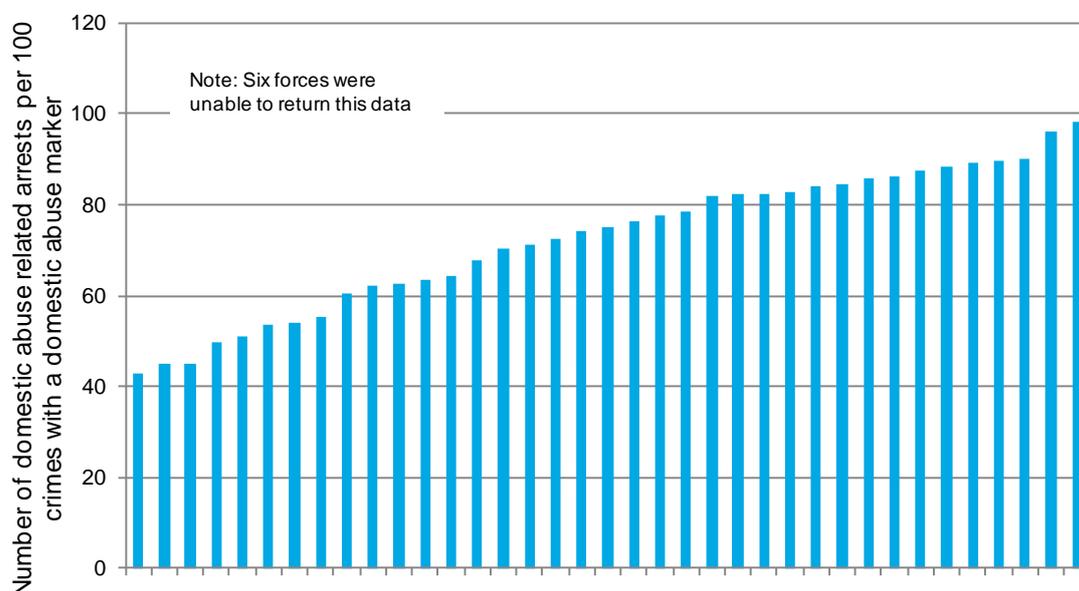
## **How does the force respond to victims of domestic abuse? This includes initial action, including risk assessment**

Tackling domestic abuse is a priority for the constabulary, with clear direction provided to staff, and comprehensive guidance documents on procedure. HMIC found some good, innovative practice which ensures that domestic abuse is taken seriously by the constabulary, for example, a 'safeguarding champions' initiative and a pilot project aimed at developing staff competencies in dealing with domestic abuse. While there has been a comprehensive training programme, we did find some areas where training has been more limited. The training some staff received has not covered the full spectrum of abuse, including stalking, harassment and so-called honour-based violence. And we found that, although staff working on the front enquiry desk in police stations regularly receive reports of domestic abuse, they have not received any specific training.

Officers attending incidents involving domestic abuse are very mindful of the need to ensure the safety of the victim and any children, with necessary measures put in place to protect them. The constabulary has introduced an initiative called 'through the eyes of the child' to prompt officers to think about children's perspective when witnessing domestic abuse. The constabulary has good oversight of cases involving repeat and vulnerable victims at the Safeguarding Peer Review meeting. Officers conduct an investigation to a satisfactory standard and keep victims updated according to an agreed 'contact contract'. Investigations are allocated to staff based on the level of risk to the victim, and are regularly reviewed by supervisors to ensure positive action has been taken.

Durham was unable to provide the number of domestic abuse related arrests when HMIC originally requested it, and is therefore not included in the following chart.<sup>8</sup> For most forces the number is between 45 and 90 arrests per 100 domestic abuse marked crimes for the 12 months to 31 August 2013.

**Figure 1: Number of domestic abuse related arrests per 100 crimes with a domestic abuse marker for the 12 months to 31 August 2013<sup>9</sup>**



Source: HMIC data collection

Tackling domestic abuse is a clear priority for Durham Constabulary; both the police and crime commissioner (PCC) and chief constable provide strong leadership on the issue. This is reinforced in the PCC’s Police and crime plan 2013–17 and the constabulary’s strategic plan (known as ‘a Plan on a Page’). The constabulary has also invested in a poster campaign, bulletins and webcasts from chief officers and senior managers to ensure the issue is viewed as a priority by staff.

<sup>8</sup> Following HMIC’s data request, the force altered its systems and was able to provide data on more recent cases. For the period covering November 2013 to January 2014 there were 751 domestic abuse marked crimes, resulting in 372 domestic abuse related arrests. This is 50 domestic abuse related arrests per 100 domestic abuse marked crimes. As this is for a different time period compared with other forces’ data, Durham’s arrests are not shown in figure 1.

<sup>9</sup> Based on forces’ own definition of domestic abuse and use of a domestic abuse marker on IT systems.

In addition, the three PCCs for Cleveland, Durham and Northumbria are working together to tackle domestic abuse at a regional level. In December 2013 they launched a regional strategy to tackle violence against women and girls in the North East. The proposal was for each objective within the strategy to have an action plan to ensure improvements are delivered in a co-ordinated and timely way.

The constabulary has also prioritised domestic abuse by putting in place a 'safeguarding champions' initiative. This has involved providing additional training to selected staff from 24/7 response and neighbourhood policing teams (NPTs). Training covers safeguarding issues, including domestic abuse, and these 'champions' then cascade this learning to their colleagues, and act as a point of reference and guidance for all safeguarding matters.

HMIC found that staff understand that tackling domestic abuse is a constabulary priority and were clear about how they contributed to delivering the aims in the constabulary's plans. They provided examples of problem-solving initiatives they had been involved with, to manage and reduce abuse to repeat and vulnerable victims, repeat perpetrators and 'problem' families (those households described as having a 'high impact' on others).

The constabulary ensures staff have clear direction regarding how they should tackle domestic abuse by publishing detailed procedural documents. Examples of these were seen by the inspection team and related to domestic abuse, stalking and harassment and so-called honour-based violence.

The constabulary has made an investment in training staff on domestic abuse including coercive control, stalking, harassment and so-called honour-based violence. Training has been provided predominantly using eLearning (learning provided electronically), enhanced by contributions from specialist staff and partner agencies. Recent training has had a greater focus on the psychological effect of domestic abuse on the victim and children, with a recent presentation provided by a leading national expert.

Staff in the constabulary's prisoner handling teams (PHTs) deal with both victims and arrested perpetrators of domestic abuse, and have responsibility for maintaining contact with the victim. The constabulary is currently running a pilot scheme for staff in the PHT at Peterlee. This involves them completing an individual portfolio to show evidence of their competency in dealing with cases of domestic abuse. If found successful, this scheme will be rolled out across the constabulary.

We found that officers and staff dealing with victims were knowledgeable and understood domestic abuse, but not all those that HMIC spoke to had received training on stalking, harassment and so-called honour-based violence.

Officers attending domestic abuse incidents are required to complete a formal assessment of the risk faced by the victim, using the nationally recognised domestic abuse, stalking and harassment (DASH) tool. All officers in 24/7 response and neighbourhood policing teams (NPTs) have received effective training in the use of the DASH risk assessment process.

Domestic abuse has been part of student officer and detective training for a number of years with the aims, objectives and contents changing over time to reflect the latest legislation and best practice. In addition, all student officers receive a three week attachment to the safeguarding teams, which includes one week working with the domestic abuse investigation teams (DAIT).

Front enquiry desk staff, working in police stations, are often a first point of contact for victims reporting incidents of domestic abuse. However, we found the majority of these staff have received little or no training on domestic abuse. Currently they use their professional judgement, taking sufficient details to enable the communication centres to arrange for the appropriate response. This means that for these victims, the force cannot be confident that their risk is being assessed appropriately at the first point of contact.

At the scene, the officer carries out the DASH risk assessment based on information provided by the victim against a set of questions. Details are recorded in the officer's pocket notebook. Although the DASH tool includes 27 questions, officers can use their discretion as to which questions they ask a victim, for example, questions about rape and sexual assault may not be appropriate in all cases.

The process also takes full account of risks to any children in the household, irrespective of whether the children are present at the time of the incident. In 2012, the constabulary introduced a requirement for staff to record additional information under a section called 'through the eyes of the child' to prompt officers to think about the child in that home and comment on how a child may view their situation. The perception of staff and representatives from partner agencies was that this has enhanced their understanding of the risks faced by children involved in domestic abuse cases.

The DASH risk assessment is entered onto the constabulary IT systems, and the officer uses their professional judgement to grade the incident as high, medium or standard depending on the level of risk to the victim. The information will then be quality assured by staff in the MASH or CRU, who make additional checks with other services working within the hub or unit, such as mental health and children's services. This ensures all information is taken into consideration in deciding the appropriate grade of risk.

In addition, where the victim has consented to share their details with victim support services, contact will be made for an outreach support worker to get in touch with the victim. The MASH and CRU also have their own diversionary<sup>10</sup> officers who work closely with the outreach services to ensure victims are supported and directed to appropriate support.

HMIC found that staff had a good understanding of the risk assessment tool and confirmed their ability to apply discretion and professional judgement at any stage of the process. However, there was a lack of consistency and reliability in how officers record the information required for the DASH form, with some relying solely on their memory to recall the details rather than recording them in their pocket book.

Domestic abuse incidents given a grade 1 response by the control room staff (attendance within 10 minutes in urban areas, 20 minutes in rural areas) will usually be attended by 24/7 response officers. Grade 2 incidents (attendance as soon as possible but within 60 minutes) are attended by 24/7 response or NPTs if available. Their initial and immediate action is to reduce the risk to the victim and, where necessary, arrest the perpetrator.

In cases where the level of risk to the victim is assessed as standard, they will be referred to a support agency, but usually only with their consent. For those assessed to be at medium risk, they will usually be supported by staff from either 24/7 response or the DAIT. In cases where the perpetrator has been arrested, staff from the PHTs will usually take responsibility for victim care. The appropriate officer will have responsibility for completing investigation and safety plans for the victim, both of these will be recorded on the constabulary IT systems.

Victims assessed as being at high risk, will be dealt with by DAIT, which takes over the case and will complete and manage investigation and safety plans. These cases will also be referred to an Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA). They are co-located with the DAIT and provide additional support to victims, for example, by assisting in the review of the victim's safety plan, and by referral to other support agencies. This support will continue throughout any court process.

We found oversight and supervision to be comprehensive and effective. The response to domestic abuse incidents, the risk assessments and safety plans are monitored and managed predominantly by supervisors in 24/7 response,

<sup>10</sup> A diversionary officer provides an independent domestic violence adviser (IDVA) style service to a victim.

PHT and the DAIT. In addition, on a daily basis the senior management team, in each of the constabulary's four localities (East, West, South and Darlington), will hold a daily management meeting. As part of this meeting they will scrutinise domestic abuse incidents in terms of actions, victim safety planning, and perpetrators wanted for arrest.

There is good monitoring and oversight of the safeguarding of domestic abuse victims. The inspection team attended a Safeguarding Peer Review meeting. The meeting is held monthly and chaired by a detective superintendent, the constabulary lead for safeguarding vulnerable people. Those attending include chief inspectors from the four localities, and representatives from CID and DAIT. This meeting effectively reviews cases involving repeat and vulnerable victims of domestic abuse, to ensure safeguarding measures are in place to manage and reduce, or remove, risks to the victim. A record is kept of the agreed actions with nominated owners and timescales. Actions are regularly reviewed to ensure they are being delivered, and updates will be scrutinised at the next meeting.

Officers conduct an investigation to a satisfactory standard and keep victims updated according to an agreed 'contact contract' made between the officer in the case and the victim. The contract details the victim's wishes regarding the frequency and method of contact, and this is recorded on the constabulary's IT system. All contact with the victim is recorded and updated accordingly. The contract is regularly reviewed regularly by the officer and their supervisors to ensure continuing compliance with the victim's wishes.

Investigation plans are also regularly reviewed by supervisors to ensure positive action has been taken, such as ensuring all efforts have been made to arrest the perpetrator wanted in connection with the incident.

We found evidence of prosecutions being actively pursued, even if the victim was not willing to support proceedings (often due to the victim being too frightened). This is done by capturing other evidence to support the investigation. For example, the constabulary has purchased 'body cams' (a video camera worn by staff on their clothing) for all 24/7 response staff to ensure all possible evidence is secured without relying solely on evidence from the victim. Video footage of the incident, showing the demeanour of the perpetrator and any injuries to the victim or damage to the property, can be compelling evidence, and can often mean that a prosecution need not rely on the victim having to give evidence against their abuser.

There has been an increase in the number of such prosecutions but the constabulary continues to work with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to ensure further progress. To support these arrangements formally a protocol was

agreed in July 2013 between the CPS North East, Cleveland Police, Durham Constabulary and Northumbria Police. The protocol defines the minimum standard required for corroborative evidence in all cases of domestic abuse to increase the number of victimless prosecutions.

## **How are victims of domestic abuse made safer as a result of the police response and subsequent action?**

All cases assessed as high, medium or standard risk using the domestic abuse stalking and harassment (DASH) risk assessment are reviewed by specialist staff. They are co-located with staff from other agencies, such as social services.

Currently, specialist staff deal with all high risk victims and some medium risk. Prisoner handling teams deal with most other victims and perpetrators.

The constabulary has published a toolkit to assist staff when they decide which measures to include in a victim's safety plan. Safety plans for high risk victims are managed by staff in the domestic abuse investigation teams. Prisoner handling teams mainly deal with plans for medium and standard risk victims. However, from the time a perpetrator had been charged, through to their court proceedings, we found lack of clarity about who is responsible for the safety planning arrangements for medium and standard risk victims. The multi-agency risk assessment conferences are working well and there are good relationships with partners, which means that information is exchanged promptly, risk assessed, and safety plans put in place to reduce risk.

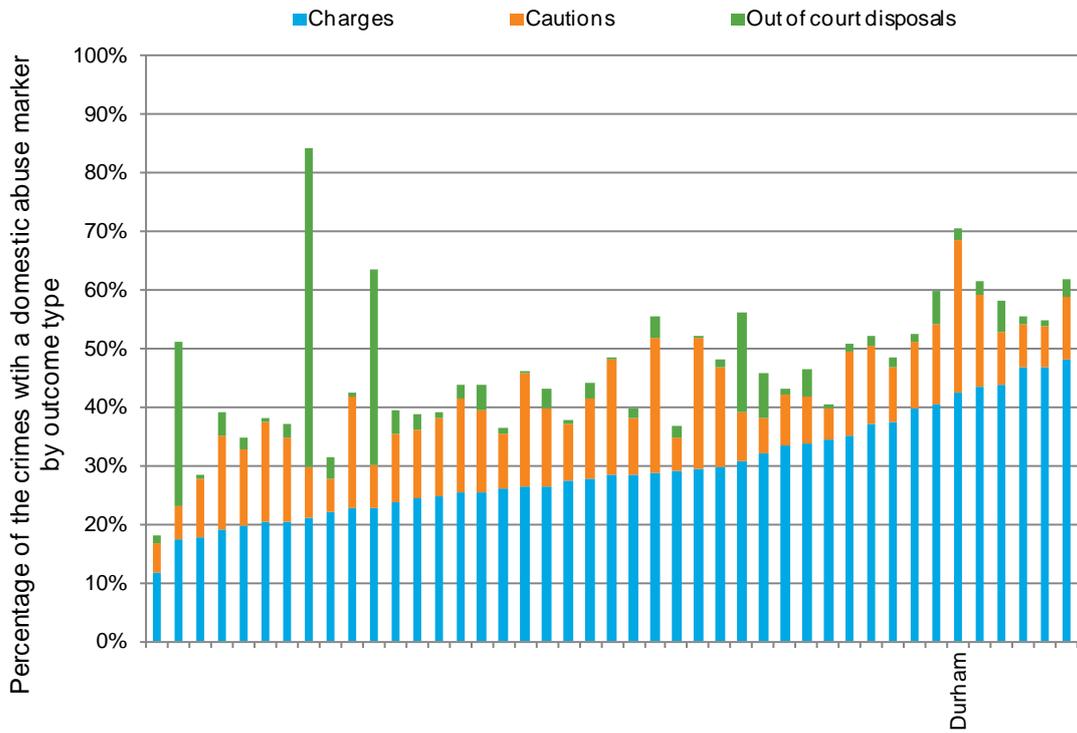
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Durham recorded 2,280 domestic abuse related crimes for the 12 months to the end of August 2013. Of these crimes 42 percent resulted in a charge, 26 percent resulted in a caution and, 2 percent had an out of court disposal, for example a fixed penalty notice for disorderly conduct.<sup>11</sup>

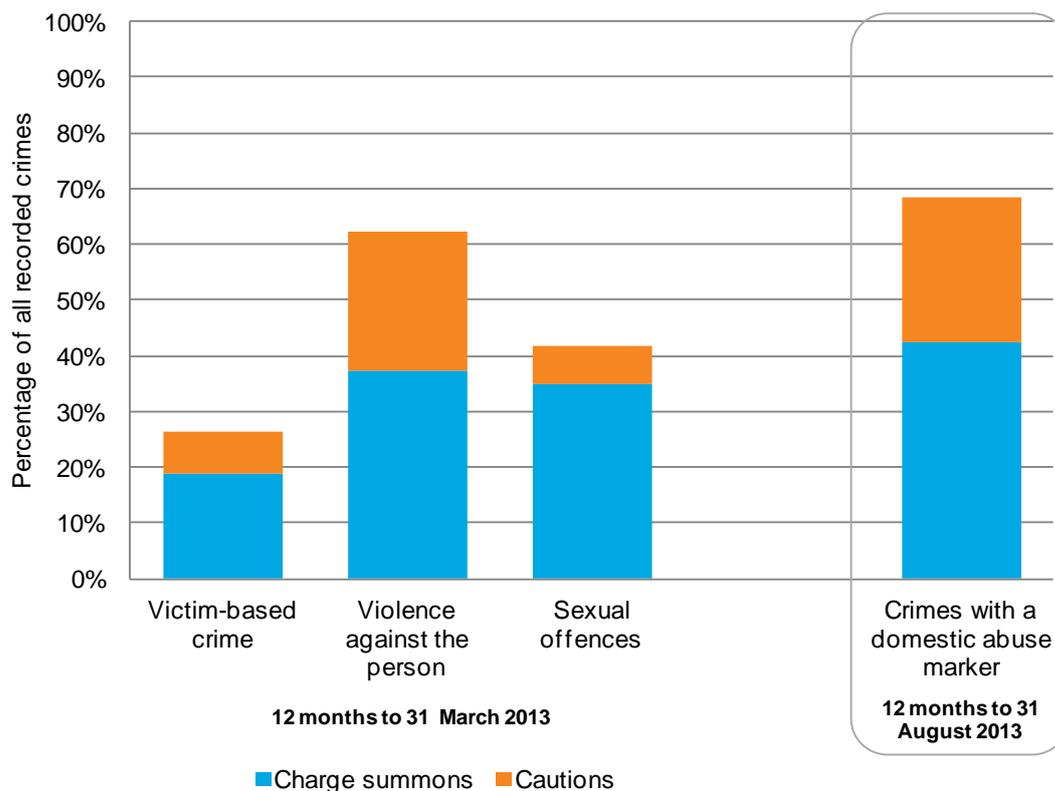
**Figure 2: Percentage of different outcome types used for crimes with a domestic abuse marker for the 12 months to the end of August 2013<sup>12</sup>**

<sup>11</sup> Based on forces' own definition of domestic abuse and use of a domestic abuse marker on IT systems.

<sup>12</sup> Based on forces' own definition of domestic abuse and use of a domestic abuse marker on IT systems.



**Figure 3: Percentage of charge summons and cautions used for victim-based crime, violence against the person, sexual offences and all crimes with a domestic abuse marker**<sup>13</sup>



Source: HMIC data collection and *Crimes Detected in England and Wales, 2012 to 2013*, Home Office

The constabulary’s safeguarding vulnerable people department has the strategic responsibility for domestic abuse. Within this area of business there are four specialist domestic abuse investigation teams (DAITs) based in Durham, Peterlee, Bishop Auckland and Darlington. Each team is made up of at least three detective constables and is led by a detective sergeant.

The constabulary also has staff based within the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) and the central referral unit (CRU) who review and quality assure the risk assessments after the initial assessment has been completed by the officer in the case. They are co-located with staff from social services (adults and children’s) and mental health services. They are therefore able to share information with partners to ensure they have as full a picture as possible of the

<sup>13</sup> Based on forces' own definition of domestic abuse and use of a domestic abuse marker on IT systems.

risk to victims and can seek specialist advice should a risk assessment need reviewing.

The CRU and MASH role in the risk assessment process has three objectives:

- To gather detailed and relevant information from victims, that can then be shared with other agencies.
- To identify those who will need more intensive support in order to save life and prevent further harm.
- To make agencies aware of the most dangerous offenders.

The majority of those police staff working in the DAIT, CRU and MASH are fully trained detectives. All staff have received specific domestic abuse training as well as working through a personal portfolio to develop skills and awareness. DAIT officers spoken to during reality testing felt that they had received sufficient training in respect of fulfilling their role.

Currently DAIT staff deal with suspects in cases of all offences committed against victims considered at high risk and some at medium risk depending on the circumstances.

The constabulary recognises the importance of working with partner agencies to tackle domestic abuse. Evidence of this is provided by both the CRU and MASH. They have improved the safety of victims by providing a joined up approach which has been further enhanced by having agencies co-located. In addition we were provided with numerous examples of DAIT, PHTs and NPTs working in partnership with local authorities, CPS, probation, health, and the voluntary sector to reduce the risk to victims.

The constabulary area covers the two local authorities of Durham County Council (DCC) and Darlington Borough Council (DBC), each have their own strategy for tackling domestic abuse supported with a delivery plan. For DCC, the strategy is monitored and managed by the Domestic Abuse Forum Executive Group (DAFEG). The group is supported at a local level by the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Core Group which is attended by practitioners from all agencies. Similarly for DBC, delivery of the strategy is overseen by the Vulnerability Strategic Group (VSG) and at a practitioner level by the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Network (DASAN). The constabulary is represented on all these groups.

In 2011, a multi-agency Sexual Violence Group was also established which includes representatives from partner agencies covering both DCC and DBC. The purpose of the group is to quickly address emerging threats and national issues such as the issue of violence against women and girls. The group is

chaired by the detective chief inspector for 'safeguarding vulnerable people' and funding from partners is used to employ a full time sexual violence co-ordinator. A single action plan is used by the partnership with regular events to encourage third sector and other partner agencies to contribute. The group is fully supported by the constabulary and PCC.

Minutes from these various partnership forums provided evidence as to how the constabulary works with partners to tackle domestic abuse. However, on a day-to-day basis it is the activities of the CRU and MASH which predominantly drives partnership activity to reduce risk to victims and manage perpetrators.

Further support is provided to victims through the independent domestic violence adviser (IDVA) services. There are four IDVAs working across the constabulary area, one based within each of the four DAITs. One IDVA is employed by the constabulary with the others on secondment from the probation service. All victims assessed as being at high risk and some at medium risk are referred to an IDVA.

The IDVA plays a key role if a victim's case is referred to a multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC). This brings together relevant agencies to share information and provide a co-ordinated response to victims of domestic abuse. The IDVA's role within this forum is to ensure the victim understands the process. The IDVA will be their voice at the meeting and will update them of the outcome.

The IDVA will monitor constantly and help manage the assessment of risk for the victim and any special requirements regarding any court process. Once the court case and MARAC meeting has taken place the advisor's role will cease. The IDVA will put the victim in touch with other relevant agencies throughout their engagement with them, to ensure that when their role ends, the victim will still have access to other avenues of support.

In August 2013, the constabulary carried out a review to improve the way in which it manages victims at a medium level of risk. The review has resulted in the setting up of a post of a diversionary officer to provide an IDVA-style service to all medium risk victims.

We found that partnership working is constructive; partners were very positive about their relationship with the constabulary and the effectiveness of joint working to tackle domestic abuse, especially to reduce the risk to victims.

The level of risk to a victim will be regularly reviewed and reassessed as circumstances change for the victim throughout the process using the DASH risk assessment and the constabulary's IT systems are then updated.

There are clear roles and responsibilities about who deals with victims of domestic abuse with DAIT managing high risk victims, PHT predominantly dealing with those at medium risk and 24/7 response handling those at standard risk.

The constabulary has published a toolkit to assist staff when dealing with safeguarding issues such as formulating safety plans for vulnerable and repeat victims of domestic abuse. The kit includes a list of options for consideration to improve the safety of the victim. For example, the fitting of additional security measures, such as locks and alarms. Use of the toolkit is assessed to find out what works best for victims and successful outcomes are identified and spread across the constabulary.

Safety plans for high risk victims are completed and reviewed by staff in the DAIT. Plans for medium and standard risk victims, where a perpetrator has been arrested, are usually developed and reviewed by the PHTs with support and advice provided by the DAIT. PHTs will maintain responsibility for these plans until the perpetrator is charged and bailed. However, from the time a perpetrator had been charged through to their court proceedings, we found a lack of clarity about who was responsible for safety planning arrangements for medium and standard risk victims. This means that victims may not be updated about what is happening in their case or be updated by a number of people.

Two separate MARACs operate in the constabulary area, one for County Durham and the other for Darlington. In addition to providing a co-ordinated response to victims of domestic abuse, they will also organise and manage interventions for some perpetrators. Both MARACs are chaired by a detective inspector from the respective safeguarding team, ensuring consistency of approach and decision-making.

A MARAC co-ordinator, employed by the probation service and based in the CRU, acts as gatekeeper and screens all MARAC referrals which include police referrals (high risk and some medium) and other agency referrals where the abuse is deemed high risk. Victims, who suffer a further episode of violence within 12 months from the date of the MARAC, are also discussed. MARAC cases are heard on a weekly basis in County Durham and fortnightly in Darlington.

The effective operation of the MARACs is overseen by the MARAC Project Board which meets every six months. The board is currently overseeing a review of the MARACs to ensure they are efficient and effective. The review is expected to deliver more integrated and dynamic structures and processes.

Representatives from the MARACs and MARAC Project Board, spoken to as part of this inspection, described the caseload of the meetings as manageable

and appropriate. The conferences are seen as well established with information being shared effectively. Decisions and actions are recorded with those responsible for delivering them held to account. All partner agencies use the DASH risk assessment process and these are submitted through the MARAC co-ordinator. MARACs were viewed as effective in reducing risk to victims.

During our inspection we found that staff throughout the constabulary take responsibility for making victims safe. The constabulary has reinforced this principle through its 'Total Victim Care' initiative, which aims to improve the way the constabulary deals with all victims of crime.

During reality testing we spoke to numerous staff, and this commitment to improve the services provided to victims was evident throughout. This was the case whether staff worked in the communication centres, front enquiry offices, 24/7 response, NPT or the DAIT. For example, in Darlington the NPTs have worked with the Polish community to increase the reporting of domestic abuse. Incidents were only being reported when they had escalated, putting the victim at medium or high risk. The outcome from the initiative is an increase in the reporting of incidents where the victim is assessed as being at lower risk enabling intervention at an earlier opportunity which can prevent the risk escalating.

## **Does the force have appropriate systems, processes and understanding to manage domestic abuse and risk to victims in the future?**

HMIC found that the constabulary works effectively to manage the future safety of domestic abuse victims. There are robust processes in place to ensure contact is maintained with the victim, and that they are kept informed about release dates, in cases where a perpetrator is imprisoned. In the case of a perpetrator being released from court or police bail, the constabulary ensures the victim is updated at the earliest opportunity. However, for court hearings held on a Saturday, the constabulary needs to review current practices to ensure the victim is informed at the earliest opportunity, the risk is reassessed, and safety plans are updated.

There is good work underway with partners to work with serious and serial perpetrators to prevent them from reoffending. This approach is supported by other perpetrator programmes led by partners. Local officers and commanders understand which families are at greatest risk in their area. The constabulary ensures that lessons learned from domestic homicide reviews are translated into improvements in constabulary procedures and practices. Performance in tackling domestic abuse is measured and managed as part of the constabulary's performance management processes. Scrutiny and

accountability is evident at various levels in the constabulary, with a particular focus on reducing the number of vulnerable and repeat victims, and managing perpetrators.

The constabulary has processes in place to ensure contact is maintained with the victim in cases where a perpetrator is imprisoned, to ensure victims are kept informed about release dates. The CRU and MASH receive notification of prison releases usually from the probation service. They will then ensure the risk level to the victim is reviewed and safety plans put in place. During 'reality testing' in the inspection, the constabulary was able to show how this worked in practice, with its response to an imminent prison release, which would significantly increase the level of risk to a victim.

Where a perpetrator is released from bail the risk level to the victim is reviewed by either the DAIT or the PHTs depending on the risk posed to the victim. The constabulary has worked with the courts to ensure the CRU or MASH are contacted to carry out an address check, to confirm its suitability, prior to a perpetrator being released on bail to reside at that location. This enables victims to be informed of any court decisions at the earliest opportunity. Safety plans will be updated to reflect any changes in circumstances and risk.

However, reality testing showed that in the case of court hearings held on a Saturday, the constabulary is not always being informed if perpetrators are released on bail. This means delays in updating the victim, the risk assessment, and in putting the necessary safety plans in place.

HMIC found good evidence of serial and serious perpetrators being identified and managed by the constabulary, often working in partnership with other agencies. The constabulary has processes in place supported by the constabulary IT systems to identify repeat perpetrators, or, as the constabulary refers to them, serial perpetrators of violence (SPOVs).

Once identified, checks are made to ensure the SPOV is not already being managed via another process, for example, through multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) or a MARAC. If not, then the SPOV is managed by the Safeguarding Peer Review Group with a plan put in place to reduce offending, often by adopting a multi-agency problem-solving approach. Activities to deliver the plan are monitored and managed by the group.

The safeguarding peer review meeting, as well as managing victims of domestic abuse, coordinates activities to tackle perpetrators. Evidence was provided of how the constabulary reviews plans to address SPOVs to ensure measures are in place to manage and reduce their offending behaviour. Owners of these plans are held to account for the delivery of agreed actions with clear

timescales. Progress is scrutinised at the next meeting of the group and at the constabulary's tactical threat and risk meeting.

This approach is supported by other perpetrator programmes. There is a nationally accredited 'Respect' perpetrator programme run by the prisons in the area. This is a 30 week programme for serving prisoners which is run by probation, as part of a prisoner's sentence. There is also a 20 week voluntary perpetrator programme which started six weeks prior to HMIC's inspection, commissioned by DCC and DBC. The programme has been funded for one year and is open to any perpetrator of domestic abuse who is assessed as suitable to take part in. There are currently 45 people on the programme.

The constabulary has made a bid for £120,000 through its Area Action Partnerships to establish a four hour perpetrator programme to deal with the volume of perpetrators who do not currently have access to any voluntary programmes. Durham University has agreed to evaluate the programme if the bid is successful.

Repeat victims, where there have been no further calls, are reviewed by the CRU and MASH. The inspection team attended a safeguarding peer review meeting which provided evidence of how the constabulary reviews cases involving repeat victims of domestic abuse, to ensure safeguarding measures are in place to manage, and reduce or remove risks to the victim.

Local officers and commanders understand which families are at greatest risk in their area. Information is brought to their attention in various ways such as through local briefings, daily leadership meetings and regular meetings with partner agencies, for example the local authority housing departments. This knowledge and understanding was evident during interviews and reality testing with staff. In particular, NPTs are involved in problem-solving initiatives to manage those families involved in repeat incidents of domestic abuse where the level of risk to the victim is assessed as standard or medium.

The constabulary ensures that corporate learning is maintained and embedded following domestic homicide reviews (DHR). Reviews are managed by the Safe Durham Partnership and Darlington Community Safety Partnership. Recommendations for improvements are incorporated into action plans with delivery of the plans overseen by the DAFEG (DCC) and VSG (DBC).

During our inspection, representatives from local partner agencies described the process as open and honest with the constabulary fully engaged. The constabulary has seven ongoing domestic homicide reviews (DHRs) at present and provided evidence of the processes they have in place to ensure recommendations are turned into positive action. There were recent examples

where findings from a DHR had changed constabulary procedures, for instance, the way it deals with applications and renewals for firearms licences.

Domestic abuse is embedded in the constabulary's performance management processes. Scrutiny and accountability for performance relating to domestic abuse is evident at various levels of the constabulary, with a particular focus on reducing the number of vulnerable and repeat victims and managing perpetrators.

The constabulary itself reviews performance in tackling domestic abuse through a wide range of forums including the monthly Force Leadership Group (FLG), Citizen's Journey Board and Strategic Threat and Risk meetings chaired by the Chief constable or his deputy.

Progress against the Police and crime plan and other constabulary plans is monitored and managed at the FLG, chaired by the Chief constable and attended by the PCC and senior managers. At a command level the deputy chief constable conducts monthly performance meetings with each of the command leads. Performance at a local level is managed through various meetings between senior managers and staff. The current performance management regime is enhanced by the constabulary IT system – 'Durham Constabulary Organisational Performance' – which provides performance data at a constabulary level, down to data relating to an individual's performance.

In addition, the four localities hold daily leadership meetings to co-ordinate police activity to tackle domestic abuse. They are attended by senior managers, supervisors and detectives. HMIC found that these meetings effectively review domestic abuse incidents, with a strong focus on actions taken to deal with incidents involving medium and high risk victims. This focus will include a review of safety planning arrangements and the deployment of resources to arrest perpetrators.

## Recommendations

As a result of this inspection, HMIC has developed recommendations which are designed to tackle any risks identified in the service to victims of domestic abuse. These constabulary specific recommendations should be considered in conjunction with recommendations to all forces set out in HMIC's national report on domestic abuse.

1. The constabulary should review working practices in the communication centres to improve the way dispatchers manage resources.
2. The constabulary should review procedures in the communication centres to make sure that officers attending all incidents of domestic abuse are provided with sufficient background information, prior to their attendance.
3. The constabulary should implement robust checks to ensure the officer in the case submits all the necessary documentation relating to a domestic abuse incident before supervisors close the case in the communication centres.
4. The constabulary should ensure training on domestic abuse includes stalking, harassment and so-called honour-based violence.
5. The constabulary should provide domestic abuse training to front enquiry desk staff, working in police stations.
6. The constabulary should review how officers record the information required for the domestic abuse, stalking and harassment (DASH) form to ensure they are recording details according to constabulary procedures.
7. The constabulary needs to review safety planning arrangements to ensure there is clear responsibility for these arrangements for medium and standard risk victims, from the time a perpetrator has been charged, through to their court proceedings.
8. In relation to court hearings held on a Saturday morning, the constabulary needs to review how victims are informed of court bail decisions, to ensure the victim is updated at the earliest opportunity, the risk reassessed and safety plans updated.

## Glossary

### **Bail conditions**

A court can remand a defendant in custody or grant bail, with or without conditions attached. Before the first court hearing, the police can also retain a defendant in custody or grant bail, with or without conditions attached, but their powers to do so are more limited than the court's. Conditions can only be imposed to ensure that the defendant attends the next court hearing, commits no new offences in the meantime, and does not interfere with any witnesses or obstruct the course of justice.

### **Body worn camera**

A video camera, worn on the helmet or upper body of an officer, which records visual and audio footage of an incident.

### **CAADA (Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse)**

CAADA is a national charity supporting a strong multi-agency response to domestic abuse. Its work focuses on saving lives and public money.

CAADA provides practical help to support professionals and organisations working with domestic abuse victims. The aim is to protect the highest risk victims and their children – those at risk of murder or serious harm.

### **CCTV**

Evidence from Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) can be used to support police investigations. It is primarily used for corroborating what is already known in investigating incidents and to trigger further opportunities to carry out investigation, such as the identification of witnesses and suspects.

### **Clare's Law**

Clare's Law – the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme – is designed to provide victims with information that may protect them from an abusive situation before it ends in tragedy. The scheme allows the police to disclose information about a partner's previous history of domestic violence or violent acts. The

Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme is named after Clare Wood who was brutally murdered in 2009 by her former partner George Appleton, who had a record of violence against women.

### **Code of Practice for Victims of Crime**

The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (the Victims' Code) places a statutory obligation on criminal justice agencies to provide a standard of service to victims of crime or, where the victim died as a result of the criminal conduct, their relatives. The obligations the Victims' Code places on the agencies concerned include that:

- They provide victims, or their relatives, with information about the crime, including about arrests, prosecutions and court decisions;
- They provide information about eligibility for compensation under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme;
- Victims be told about Victim Support and either be referred on to them or offered their service;
- Bereaved relatives be assigned a family liaison police officer; and
- Victims of an offender who receives a sentence of 12 months or more after being convicted of a sexual or violent offence have the opportunity to make representations about what licence conditions or supervision requirements the offender should be subject to on release from prison.

There are enhanced entitlements for victims of the most serious crime which includes domestic violence.

### **Coercive control**

This is term and concept developed by Evan Stark which seeks to explain the range of tactics used by perpetrators and the impact of those on victims. It highlights the on-going nature of the behaviour and the extent to which the actions of the perpetrator control the victim through isolation, intimidation, degradation and micro-regulation of everyday life. Crucially it sets out such abuse can be psychological as well as physical. Coercive control is explicitly covered by the definition of domestic abuse.

## **Control room**

A police control or communications room manages emergency (999) and non-emergency (101) calls, and sending police officers to these calls.

## **Counter-allegation**

Where someone initially identified as the perpetrator makes an allegation against the victim. If counter-allegations are not identified and resolved agencies may be providing services to the perpetrator and inadvertently helping them isolate and control the victim. The victim may not get access to the services they need because they are labelled 'the perpetrator'.

## **Crime Scene Investigator**

Police staff who work alongside uniformed and plain clothed police officers during the investigation of a crime to locate, record and recover evidence from crime scenes.

## **DASH – domestic abuse, stalking and harassment (DASH 2009)**

DASH is a risk identification, assessment and management model adopted by UK police forces and partner agencies in 2009. The aim of the DASH assessment is to help front-line practitioners identify high risk cases of domestic abuse, stalking and so-called honour-based violence.

## **Domestic Homicide Review**

Local areas are expected to undertake a multi-agency review following a domestic homicide. The process aims to assist all those involved, to identify the lessons that can be learned from homicides where a person is killed as a result of domestic violence, with a view to preventing future homicides and violence.

## **Domestic Violence Prevention Notices (DVPN)**

A DVPN is the initial notice issued by the police to provide emergency protection to an individual believed to be the victim of domestic violence.

This notice, which must be authorised by a police superintendent, contains prohibitions that effectively bar the suspected perpetrator from returning to the victim's home or otherwise contacting the victim.

A DVPN may be issued to a person aged 18 years and over if the police superintendent has reasonable grounds for believing that:

- the individual has been violent towards, or
- has threatened violence towards an associated person, and
- the DVPN is necessary to protect that person from violence or a threat of violence by the intended recipient of the DVPN

### **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

Female genital mutilation (sometimes referred to as female circumcision) refers to procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The practice is illegal in the UK.

### **Frontline**

These are police officers or police staff who are in everyday contact with the public and who directly intervene to keep people safe and enforce the law. The HMIC publication, *Policing in Austerity: Rising to the Challenge* (2013) sets this out in more detail.

### **Golden hour**

Commonly used to refer to the time after a crime has been committed during which there is maximum potential for recovery of forensic evidence

### **Harassment**

The term harassment is used to cover the 'causing alarm or distress' offences under section 2 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 as amended (PHA), and 'putting people in fear of violence' offences under section 4 of the PHA.

## **House-to- house**

House-to-house enquiries are likely to feature in many investigations to: identify suspects and canvas for witnesses in areas connected to an incident, establish who lives or works in a particular location, and obtain an account of their movements during relevant times.

## **High risk**

Term used when, following a DASH risk assessment, there are identifiable indicators of risk of serious harm. The potential event could happen at any time and the impact would be serious. Risk of serious harm (Home Office 2002 and OASys 2006): 'A risk which is life threatening and/or traumatic, and from which recovery, whether physical or psychological, can be expected to be difficult or impossible'.

## **IDVA – independent domestic violence adviser**

Independent domestic violence advisers or advocates (IDVAs) are trained specialists who provide a service to victims at high risk of harm from intimate partners, ex-partners or family members, with the aim of securing their safety and the safety of their children. Serving as a victim's primary point of contact, IDVAs normally work with their clients from the point of crisis, to assess the level of risk, discuss the range of suitable options and develop safety plans.

## **Incident**

When a member of the public calls for police assistance, or a police officer observes or discovers a crime the police usually create an incident record. This is the first step, the police will then decide whether a crime has been committed and, if it is appropriate, create a crime record.

## **Intimate Partner Violence**

This describes physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse. This type of violence can occur among heterosexual or same-sex couples and does not require sexual intimacy.

## **MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference)**

MARACs are regular local meetings where information about high risk domestic abuse victims (those at risk of murder or serious harm) is shared between local agencies. By bringing all agencies together at a MARAC, and ensuring that whenever possible the voice of the victim is represented by the IDVA, a risk focused, co-ordinated safety plan can be drawn up to support the victim. There are currently over 270 MARACs operating across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland managing more than 64,000 cases a year.

## **MASH – Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub**

A Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) brings together staff from police and partner agencies who work from the same location, sharing information and ensuring a timely and joined-up response to protect children and vulnerable adults.

## **Medium risk**

Term used when following a DASH risk assessment there are identifiable indicators of risk of serious harm. The offender has the potential to cause serious harm but is unlikely to do so unless there is a change in circumstances, for example, failure to take medication, loss of accommodation, relationship breakdown, drug or alcohol misuse.

## **National Domestic Abuse helpline**

A Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline, run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge, is a national service for women experiencing domestic violence, their family, friends, colleagues and others calling on their behalf.

The Helpline can give support, help and information over the telephone, wherever the caller might be in the country. The Helpline is staffed 24 hours a day by fully trained female helpline support workers and volunteers. All calls are completely confidential. Translation facilities for callers whose first language is not English, and a service for callers who are deaf or hard of hearing are available.

## **Partnership**

A term used where collaborative working is established between the police and other public, private or voluntary organisations.

## **Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE)**

The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and the PACE codes of practice provide the core framework of police powers and safeguards around stop and search, arrest, detention, investigation, identification and interviewing detainees.

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-and-criminal-evidence-act-1984-pace-current-versions](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-and-criminal-evidence-act-1984-pace-current-versions)

## **Positive action**

The term refers to the steps and action taken at all stages of the police response to ensure effective protection of victims and children, while allowing the criminal justice system to hold the offender to account. It is often used in the context of arrest policy, police guidance states that “arrest will normally be ‘necessary’ under the terms of PACE to protect a child or vulnerable person, prevent the suspect causing injury and/or to allow for the prompt and effective investigation of the offence”.

## **Problem-solving**

Problem-solving is a term used in policing where forces systematically identify and analyse crime and disorder problems, develop specific responses to individual problems and subsequently assess whether the response has been successful.

## **Refuge**

A refuge is a safe house where women and children who are experiencing domestic violence can stay free from abuse. Refuge addresses (and sometimes telephone numbers) are confidential. According to Women’s Aid on a typical day, **over 7000 women and children** are resident in refuge accommodation in England

## **Risk assessment**

A risk assessment is based on structured professional judgment. It provides structure and informs decisions that are already being made. It is only a guide/checklist and should not be seen as a scientific predictive solution. Its completion is intended to assist officers in the decision-making process on appropriate levels of intervention for victims of domestic violence.

## **Safeguarding**

The term safeguarding is applied when protecting children and other vulnerable people. The UK Government has defined the term 'safeguarding children' as: *"The process of protecting children from abuse or neglect, preventing impairment of their health and development, and ensuring they are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care that enables children to have optimum life chances and enter adulthood successfully."*

## **Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)**

SARCs are specialist medical and forensic services for anyone who has been raped or sexually assaulted.

They aim to be a one-stop service, providing the following under one roof: medical care and forensic examination following assault/rape and, in some locations, sexual health services.

## **Standard Risk**

Term used following a DASH risk assessment where current evidence does not indicate likelihood of causing serious harm.

## **Victim Personal Statement**

The Victim Personal Statement (VPS) gives victims an opportunity to describe the wider effects of the crime upon them, express their concerns and indicate whether or not they require any support.

Provisions relating to the making of a VPS and its use in criminal proceedings are included in the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (Victims' Code), which was published on 29 October 2013 and came into force on 10 December 2013.

**Vulnerable**

A term used to describe a person who is in need of special care, support, or protection because of age, disability, or risk of abuse or neglect.

**What Works Centre for Crime Reduction**

The What Works Centre for Crime Reduction is hosted by the College of Policing. The What Works Centre for Crime Reduction will: review research on practices and interventions to reduce crime, label the evidence base in terms of quality, cost and impact, and provide police and crime commissioners and other crime reduction partners with the knowledge, tools and guidance to help them target their resources more effectively.

It will be led by a core team from the College of Policing, and supported by a "commissioned partnership programme" which has been jointly funded by the College and the Economic and Social Research Council.