



Cambridgeshire 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.¹ 77 women were killed by their partners or ex-partners in 2012/13.² In the UK, one in four young people aged 10 to 24 reported that they experienced domestic violence and abuse during their childhood.³ 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:⁴

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

¹ Walby, S. (2009). *The cost of domestic violence*. Retrieved from: www.lancaster.ac.uk/fass/doc.../Cost_of_domestic_violence_update.doc

² 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

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

⁴ All definitions are taken from 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.⁵ 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

⁵ www.gov.uk/government/news/major-review-of-police-response-to-domestic-violence

protection 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 Cambridgeshire 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.⁶ A glossary of frequently used terms also appears at the end of the report.

⁶ There is a requirement under section 55(5) and section 55(6) of the Police Act 1996 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 Cambridgeshire⁷

Calls for assistance



In Cambridgeshire, domestic abuse accounts for 6% of calls to the police for assistance. The force was unable to provide the number of these calls that were from repeat victims.

Crime

7%

Domestic abuse accounts for 7% of all recorded crime.

Assault with intent

15%

Cambridgeshire recorded 213 assaults with intent to cause serious harm, of these 31 were domestic abuse related. This is 15% of all assaults with intent to cause serious harm recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

Assault with injury

39%

The force also recorded 2,645 assaults with injury, of these 1,021 were domestic abuse related. This is 39% of all assaults with injury recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

⁷ 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

61%

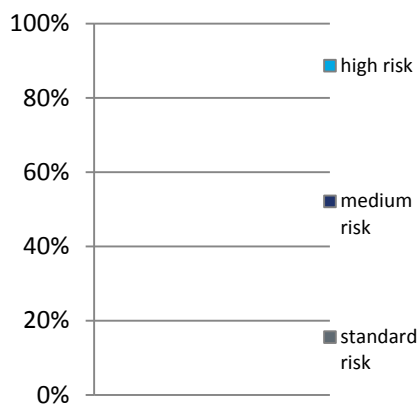
The force recorded 418 harassment offences, of these 255 were domestic abuse related. This is 61% of all harassment offences recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

Sexual offences

12%

The force also recorded 700 sexual offences, of these 81 were domestic abuse related. This is 12% of all sexual offences recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

Risk levels



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

Arrests



For every 100 domestic abuse crimes recorded, there were 54 arrests in Cambridgeshire. For most forces the number is between 45 and 90.

Outcomes



Cambridgeshire recorded 2,927 domestic abuse related crimes for the 12 months to the end of August 2013. Of these crimes, 37% resulted in a charge, 9% resulted in a caution and, 2% had an out of court disposal, for example, a fixed penalty notice for disorderly conduct.

Executive summary

When the force was inspected in November 2013, HMIC had significant concerns about the ability of Cambridgeshire Constabulary to deal consistently and appropriately with victims of domestic abuse and to reduce the risk of harm to them. Immediate remedial action has been taken by the force as a result of HMIC's findings. A re-inspection was conducted by HMIC on 13 and 14 February 2014 and, although there is still much to do, the force has made substantial improvements. There is a comprehensive action plan, through which the force intends to deliver an improved service to victims of domestic abuse.

The police and crime commissioner's (PCC's) plan includes a commitment to protect vulnerable people from abuse, and, although the force had invested in specialist officers and staff to deal with domestic abuse, this resource was stretched extremely thinly. Additional staff have been placed in these teams since our first inspection, and backlogs that had built up have been cleared. This means that victims are receiving prompt referrals to other agencies and a better service from the police.

The initial inspection found a lack of direction and focus on domestic abuse. There were weaknesses in the force's processes and systems, which resulted in too little attention being given to assessing and minimising the risks to victims. Officers and staff had not received recent training and felt that the safety of victims of domestic abuse was the responsibility of the specialist teams. The re-inspection found that much has been done in a small space of time to train officers and staff. There is already a greater recognition that they have an important role in keeping victims safe and they understand how they can do this.

Officers do not complete a domestic abuse, stalking and harassment (DASH) risk assessment where there have been no previous incidents and no crime has been committed. This is a concern, as high-risk victims may not be identified at the earliest possible opportunity and may not have necessary safety measures put in place.

Identifying victims

Call handlers in the control room had not received sufficient training to understand the full spectrum of domestic abuse. This meant that they were less likely to identify all forms of domestic abuse, and victims might not have received the support and safeguarding they needed. However, since our initial inspection the force has delivered enhanced training to these staff and they now have an improved understanding of all types of domestic abuse and vulnerability.

There were inconsistencies in the way the initial response, including that by attending officers, was supervised, which meant that the force could not be confident that victims consistently were getting the most appropriate response from the police. Clear standards of supervision have been given to all staff and this is improving consistency. This includes the introduction of a set of questions that control room staff will ask the attending officer before an incident can be closed. This covers plans to keep the victim safe. Incidents cannot be finalised until a control room inspector is satisfied that this is complete.

Officers do not attend all incidents of domestic abuse, however since the initial inspection, there is greater consideration given to those victims who have experienced domestic abuse before, and this will increase their perceived risk level. This means that there is a greater likelihood that officers will be sent to an incident and identify less obvious forms of domestic abuse, such as coercive and controlling behaviour.

Keeping victims safe

Domestic abuse did not receive the focus it needed in Cambridgeshire. It was not perceived as being as important as other offences, such as burglary, which received greater leadership and direction. During the re-inspection there was a clear understanding throughout the organisation that tackling domestic abuse is important and is a priority for the force. All staff are focussing on victim safety and delivering a better service to victims.

Improving outcomes for victims of domestic abuse is a goal stated in the police and crime plan and there is now far more clarity about how the constabulary is achieving that improvement.

The strong commitment from officers and an understanding of the importance of their role in making victims safer has been enhanced by training. The force recognises the importance of this and has a programme of more comprehensive training planned. Officers were focussed on dealing with perpetrators and the crime, rather than the ongoing risk to the victim, this focus has now shifted and victim care is at the forefront of officers' minds when they attend incidents.

Management of risk

The force has shown commitment to tackling domestic abuse with the continued investment of resources into specialist units – the domestic abuse investigation and safeguarding unit and the multi-agency referral unit. Specialist officers deal with domestic abuse cases where a crime has taken place. However, due to the volume of crimes they were dealing with, their capacity was stretched extremely, and their focus was on dealing with the crime and the offender.

Since our initial inspection, the force has posted more officers to these teams, and the specialist teams are now much more focused on dealing with victim safety.

Similarly, the capacity of officers in the referral unit was stretched. There were unacceptable delays in processing some referrals and sharing information with partners. This meant that victims were put at risk and were not getting the service they needed from either the police or other organisations. The force has since appointed additional staff to the referral unit and the backlogs have been removed, meaning victims are now being offered support when they need it.

Staff lacked an understanding of roles and responsibilities across the force; but needed to be clear who had responsibility for maintaining contact with victims, reviewing their risk level, and their safeguarding needs. The force has since addressed this, and although there is still room to do more, staff now have a better understanding of what the specialist teams do, and who is responsible for victim care at each stage of the criminal justice process.

Organisational effectiveness for keeping people safe

There were weaknesses in the force's systems and processes which meant staff did not manage risk effectively and safeguard victims adequately. There has been a complete review of the force's approach to tackling domestic abuse and how it delivers a service to victims. There are now plans in place to work with partners to develop longer-term improvements.

There was a lack of leadership and direction to local policing teams to enable them to play an effective role in managing perpetrators and future risk to victims. Risk to the victim, in most cases, was not re-assessed, and therefore their future safeguarding needs could not be understood or met. The force recognised that there were a number of areas where improvements are needed, and have started to put in place systems which will help to identify future risk to victims.

The force's response to the issues that were highlighted by the initial inspection has resulted in a comprehensive overhaul and change of focus. This has been led by the chief constable and has been embraced by the organisation. There is still much work to do to be confident that victims will be safeguarded properly within the county, but the force has made considerable improvements in a very short period of time.

Findings

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

Call handlers in the control room had not received sufficient training to understand the full spectrum of domestic abuse. This meant that they were less likely to identify all forms of domestic abuse, and victims might not have received the support and safeguarding they needed. However, since our initial inspection the force has delivered enhanced training to these staff and they now have an improved understanding of all types of domestic abuse and vulnerability.

There were inconsistencies in the way the initial response, including that by attending officers, was supervised, which meant that the force could not be confident that victims consistently were getting the most appropriate response from the police. Clear standards of supervision have been given to all staff and this is improving consistency. This includes the introduction of a set of questions that control room staff will ask the attending officer before an incident can be closed. This covers plans to keep the victim safe. Incidents cannot be finalised until a control room inspector is satisfied that this is complete.

Officers do not attend all incidents of domestic abuse, however since the initial inspection, there is greater consideration given to those victims who have experienced domestic abuse before, and this will increase their perceived risk level. This means that there is a greater likelihood that officers will be sent to an incident and identify less obvious forms of domestic abuse, such as coercive and controlling behaviour.

There are risks in the way Cambridgeshire Constabulary identifies victims of domestic violence. Most victims contact the police through calls to the force control room. They can also go in person to a police station or be referred from other agencies, such as the health service, social care or through the multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs). In the control room, staff are expected to carry out a prescribed set of actions when dealing with callers reporting domestic abuse. These actions are designed to ensure that they gather enough information to assess the risk accurately and enable them to send the right level of police response. Call handlers follow a series of questions to determine if the incident is domestic abuse. The call handler keeps the conversation free-flowing so they are able to gather as much information from the caller as possible and therefore better understand the risk they face. Accurately assessing risk at this initial stage is important to ensure that an immediate response is appropriate. The skills and knowledge of the call handlers are critical in this process. Staff in the control room had not had any

formal training on the wider spectrum of domestic abuse, such as coercive control; this had implications in how staff recognised and dealt with reports of domestic abuse. This was a concern and meant that call handlers might not identify all types of domestic abuse, and so victims might not receive the support and safeguarding they need. Training has since been delivered and staff are better equipped to identify domestic abuse.

When a call is received by the control room, the command and control system automatically identifies whether there has been a previous call from that telephone number or the address that is given. The call handler is then able to look at any previous police involvement. Other police information systems should also be checked to establish as full a picture as possible. The systems hold information such as previous calls to the address, information about the caller and alleged perpetrator, information held relating to children in the house who may also be at risk, and other actions that may have been taken in the past, for example court proceedings or the involvement of other agencies. Having a record of the previous history is important for the call handler, as it means they are in possession of information that can help to inform them on what initial actions need to be taken to keep a victim safe. This information is passed to the officers attending so they have a picture of the threat of harm and risk to the victim and other people involved, for example a child, when they attend.

The police in Cambridgeshire do not attend all reported incidents of domestic abuse. The need to attend, and how quickly, is based on the control room's assessment of threat of harm and risk faced by the victim. If attendance is required, the call handler locates and sends the nearest available officer, usually a response officer from the policing team in the area where the incident has taken place. The inspection found that, although every effort is made to respond to incidents where someone is in danger, the availability of officers can be a problem, which means that the police are not always getting to the incident as quickly as they would like to. Unless there is a risk to the officer's safety, the control room do not usually send more than one officer to incidents of domestic abuse. This means that the officer is unable to easily separate the parties involved and hear their account of what has happened, in isolation from the other party, or account for children who may be present.

The re-inspection found that a better understanding of the risks attached to repeat incidents means that staff are more likely to identify them.

Lately, there had been limited training, and recent changes to the definition of domestic abuse had been communicated to staff by email. There had been no testing to see if staff had read and understood this, and no analysis of training needs. Although there was a common-sense approach adopted by staff that led

them to understand that coercive behaviour should not be overlooked, the implications and risks of that behaviour were not understood. The force does have a manual of standards in respect of the investigation of domestic abuse (published in 2012) and there are other force policies and procedures that officers can refer to for guidance. The force recognises that it needs to develop the knowledge of all staff and intends to include domestic abuse at various future training events. Recent training has started to address these needs.

The force requires that a formal risk assessment is carried out by the attending officer, using the domestic abuse, stalking and harassment (DASH) risk assessment tool, at every domestic abuse incident where a crime has been committed, or where either the perpetrator or the victim have been involved in a domestic incident within the previous 12 months. A victim being subjected to repeat incidents or a repeat perpetrator will influence any risk assessment that is made. It is still not clear how repeat incidents will be identified consistently, where a DASH risk assessment is not completed at the first incident, because no crime has been committed. High-risk incidents may not be identified at the earliest possible opportunity and appropriate safety measures may not be put in place for victims. This is compounded by the fact that there are only limited records kept of incidents assessed as 'standard risk'. Patterns of coercive behaviour are still unlikely to be identified under current systems. This means that there might be patterns of repeated and escalating abuse that are missed, and victims who had been subjected to repeated incidents who are not getting the service they need from the police. This remains a concern. Improved training and processes mean that these issues are more likely to be identified but have not resolved the issue.

Some domestic abuse incidents are monitored by a local policing team supervisor to make sure that all relevant evidence has been captured at the scene of an incident. The supervisor also provides support and advice to officers attending incidents, and reviews the DASH risk assessment form to make sure it is completed correctly, and that the assessment, based on the information available, is accurate. Supervisors had not been given any specific training on overseeing domestic abuse incidents and not all incidents were supervised, leading to an inconsistent approach in how police respond to incidents of domestic abuse. Training and greater clarity about levels of supervision required mean that this is now far more consistent.

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

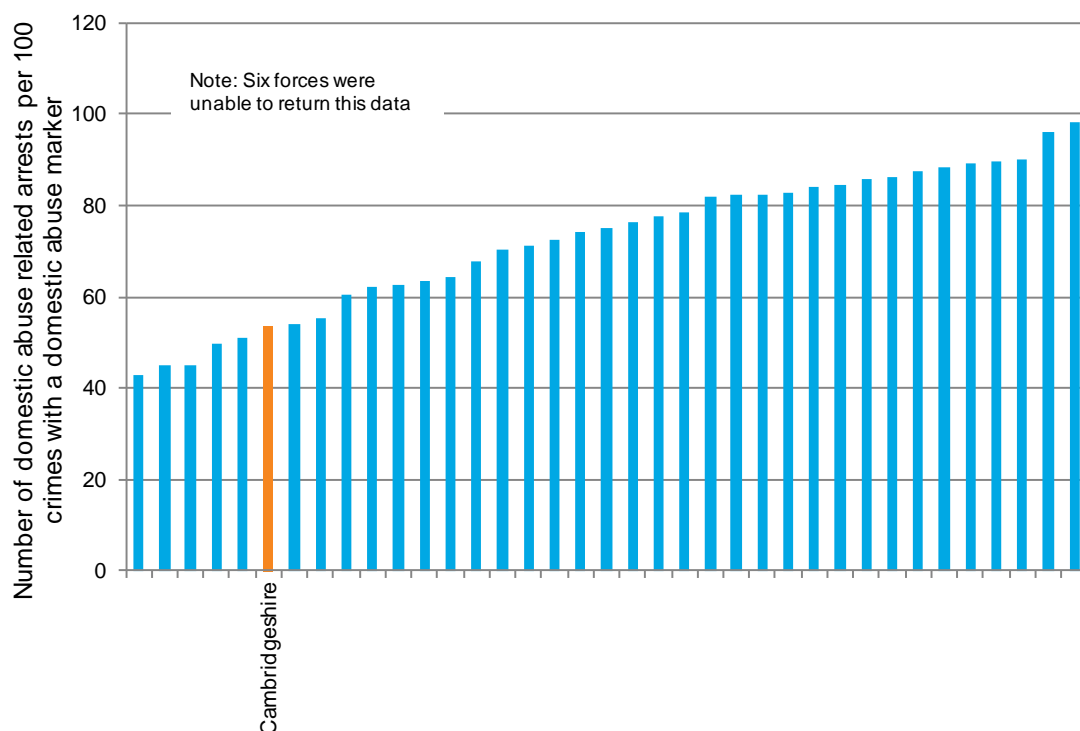
Domestic abuse did not receive the focus it needed in Cambridgeshire. It was not perceived as being as important as other offences, such as burglary, which received greater leadership and direction. During the re-inspection there was a clear understanding throughout the organisation that tackling domestic abuse is important and is a priority for the force. All staff are focussing on victim safety and delivering a better service to victims.

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For every 100 domestic abuse crimes recorded there were 54 arrests in Cambridgeshire. For most forces the number is between 45 and 90. This low arrest rate compared to other forces indicates that this is an issue the force may want to review.

Figure 1: Number of domestic abuse related arrests per 100 crimes with a domestic abuse marker for the 12 months to 31 August 2013⁸



Source: HMIC data collection

Cambridgeshire Constabulary sees tackling domestic abuse as important and is keen to deliver a good service to victims and to improve where it can. However, although it is acknowledged as a priority it did not get the focus that it required, particularly in respect of making victims safe. There was limited emphasis on domestic abuse in terms of strategic direction, training or guidance being provided to staff. The PCC’s police and crime plan includes a domestic abuse element within it, which has a desired outcome that: *‘the most vulnerable individuals are protected from abuse by providing a police and partnership response that meets the needs of the individuals and challenges the behaviour of offenders’*. However, there were no performance measures in place to understand how the force is delivering against these actions.

There were serious gaps and inherent risks in the way Cambridgeshire Constabulary were responding to domestic abuse. Senior officers were aware of the gaps and improvements needed, but little had been done to address them. The force did not have an overarching strategy with an action plan, to develop and improve services to victims either by the police alone or with

⁸ Based on forces' own definition of domestic abuse and use of a domestic abuse marker on IT systems.

partner agencies. The force now has a clear action plan about how it will deliver improvement at both strategic and operational levels

Staff understand the importance of their role in assessing the threat of harm and risk properly at each incident they attend. However, they believed domestic abuse is a priority in name only for Cambridgeshire; in reality, it was not perceived by staff to be as important as other crimes. Area commanders were not required to report on their performance in tackling domestic abuse, whereas they were held to account for performance in other offences (burglary, for example). Therefore, these offences were their priority and dealing with domestic abuse was not given sufficient management, leadership focus or oversight. Since the initial inspection, chief officers have ensured that all staff understand that domestic abuse is a priority.

Those involved in dealing with and attending domestic abuse incidents had received little training on domestic abuse and how to tackle it. Their understanding was limited and heavily reliant on a common-sense awareness of domestic abuse. When faced with an example of abuse in the form of coercive control, control room staff and some officers identified it as 'emotional abuse' and saw it as separate to domestic abuse. One officer felt that this type of behaviour would not require any action from them. This has been addressed with some additional training and although more is required, there is now a better understanding of the wide spectrum of domestic abuse.

As mentioned earlier, there is no requirement to complete the DASH risk assessment form in all circumstances. There were inconsistencies in the way that risk assessments were undertaken. Some officers completed a DASH risk assessment in any domestic abuse situation, while others only completed it when the specific criteria are met. The DASH risk assessment is intended to be used only as a tool and is not intended to take the place of professional judgement. Officers' understanding of the risk assessment process and their willingness to exercise discretion to assign a higher risk rating was variable. There was a good understanding of the need to establish any threat of harm and risk to victims and to do whatever they are able to reduce this; however some officers just counted the number of positive responses to questions on the risk assessment form rather than apply professional judgement. The force has made its expectations much clearer and along with additional training, staff have a better understanding of how to use the risk assessments properly.

In the majority of cases, there was a clear commitment displayed by staff in the control room; attending officers; and specialist officers; to understanding the risk to everyone connected to domestic abuse incidents, in particular, children and any vulnerable adults. Officers attending a domestic abuse incident where children have been present in the past or where children have been identified

as being at risk are informed of this by the control room. This helps them establish the current level of risk and take any action necessary to protect the children. However, the force's focus on other crimes; lack of training; and the workload of officers and staff within the specialist units; raised serious concerns about the force's ability to safeguard victims. The force has done much to address these concerns and is building a service which should improve the way in which victims are made safe.

The force has a policy that only one officer will attend incidents, including domestic abuse incidents, unless their safety is at risk, in which case more than one officer will be sent. This means that if they are on their own they are not able to speak to each party separately and gain an independent understanding of what has taken place. This could mean they are not being given the full or correct details of an incident. In addition it does not provide sufficient opportunity for the officer to consider the welfare of children who may be present. By the very nature of domestic abuse it often is difficult for a victim to feel able to disclose the full details of their abuse while the perpetrator is still present. Once in attendance, officers' main priority should be the safety of the victim and anyone else who may be at risk and so they must take some form of 'positive action'. Positive action does not necessarily mean arrest, but can mean support for victims and witnesses; removing those at risk to a safer place; or referral to social services; for example. The action must provide the necessary safety arrangements for the victim and other people present.

Officers are expected to make an arrest where an offence has been committed. They are also expected to complete safety planning for the victim. However, officers have had little training or guidance in how to do this and have limited awareness as to what actions they could take to make victims safer. Additional training has helped to improve this situation since our initial inspection.

A large proportion of domestic abuse victims in Cambridgeshire did not get an effective response, particularly in respect of their safeguarding. This was a serious concern. If an incident of domestic abuse is reported for the first time and the abuse has not resulted in a crime, no DASH risk assessment is required and the police will take no further action, the incident log is updated and the matter is closed. If the victim is risk-assessed as 'standard risk' and no crime has been committed, no further action is taken, even if the victim has been subjected to repeated incidents of abuse, and the incident will be closed after updating the record. This means that victims of domestic abuse, including repeated abuse, might not receive support and safeguarding. However, greater understanding since the initial inspection means that staff are now more likely to identify the heightened levels of risk attached to repeated incidents of domestic abuse.

Those incidents that are assessed as being at a medium or high risk are sent to the forces multi-agency referral unit (MARU). The purpose of this unit is to process, assess and share information with relevant partner agencies. For some medium-risk cases, there was a delay of up to five weeks in referring the victim to other agencies, due to backlogs of work. This process means that there is no further police contact with the victim following initial attendance at the incident. The police did not provide any further support or safeguarding advice. In those cases where a crime has been committed, the same procedure is followed in respect of the completed risk assessment. However, because there is a crime to investigate and an offender to deal with, there is further police involvement with the victim. These were serious omissions. The new processes that have been put in place have gone some way to address these omissions.

The collection of evidence at the scene of domestic abuse was patchy and potential evidence was not always gathered: for example, enquiries of neighbours to establish if they saw or heard anything; or photos of injuries to the victim or damage at the house. Officers sometimes have body-worn cameras with them which can be used to capture what the scene looks like, the demeanour of the victim and perpetrator, and anything they and any witness may say. Body-worn cameras were not available to all officers and some officers were reluctant to use them. The force is aware of these issues and will include guidance in its future training to help address this and encourage officers to use cameras at every opportunity.

All domestic abuse related crimes are investigated by the force domestic abuse investigation and safeguarding unit (DAISU). The specialist resource in the DAISU to carry out the investigation of all domestic abuse related crime was limited. Due to the number of cases the DAISU has to investigate, the focus of the unit was dealing with the crime and the perpetrator, rather than supporting the victim and appropriate safeguarding action. Contact with victims was not happening consistently. Staff and officers within the DAISU and MARU stated they would benefit from better communication between each other. The responsibility for and support to those victims who have been assessed as 'very high risk' (a small proportion of all victims) was robust due to partner agency involvement. However, it was less so in respect of all other victims who are assessed as at high, medium or standard risk. The additional staff and improved focus means that there is improved contact with victims, and staff within the two units now have better lines of communication.

All domestic abuse incidents where a DASH risk assessment has been completed are reviewed and reassessed by the officer's supervisor. Those cases that are assessed as medium or high risk are then further reviewed by staff within the MARU. This means that at the start of the police involvement

there is a level of scrutiny of risk which ensures that the action taken and level of support given to the victim is appropriate. However, the level of scrutiny at supervisory level was inconsistent. Greater clarity has been given to supervisors about their role and this has become more consistent as a result.

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

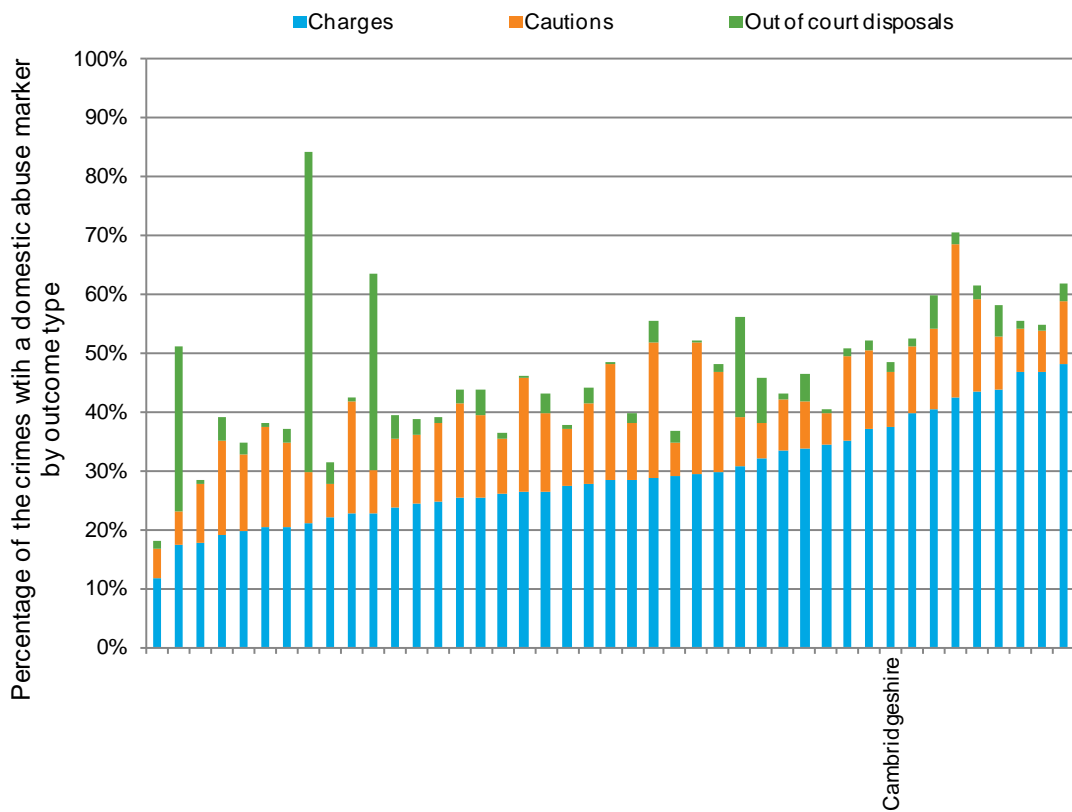
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Similarly, the capacity of officers in the referral unit was stretched. There were unacceptable delays in processing some referrals and sharing information with partners. This meant that victims were put at risk and were not getting the service they needed from either the police or other organisations. The force has since appointed additional staff to the referral unit and the backlogs have been removed, meaning victims are now being offered support when they need it.

Staff lacked an understanding of roles and responsibilities across the force; but needed to be clear who had responsibility for maintaining contact with victims, reviewing their risk level, and their safeguarding needs. The force has since addressed this, and although there is still room to do more, staff now have a better understanding of what the specialist teams do, and who is responsible for victim care at each stage of the criminal justice process.

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Figure 2: Percentage of different outcome types used for crimes with a domestic abuse marker for the 12 months to 31 August 2013⁹

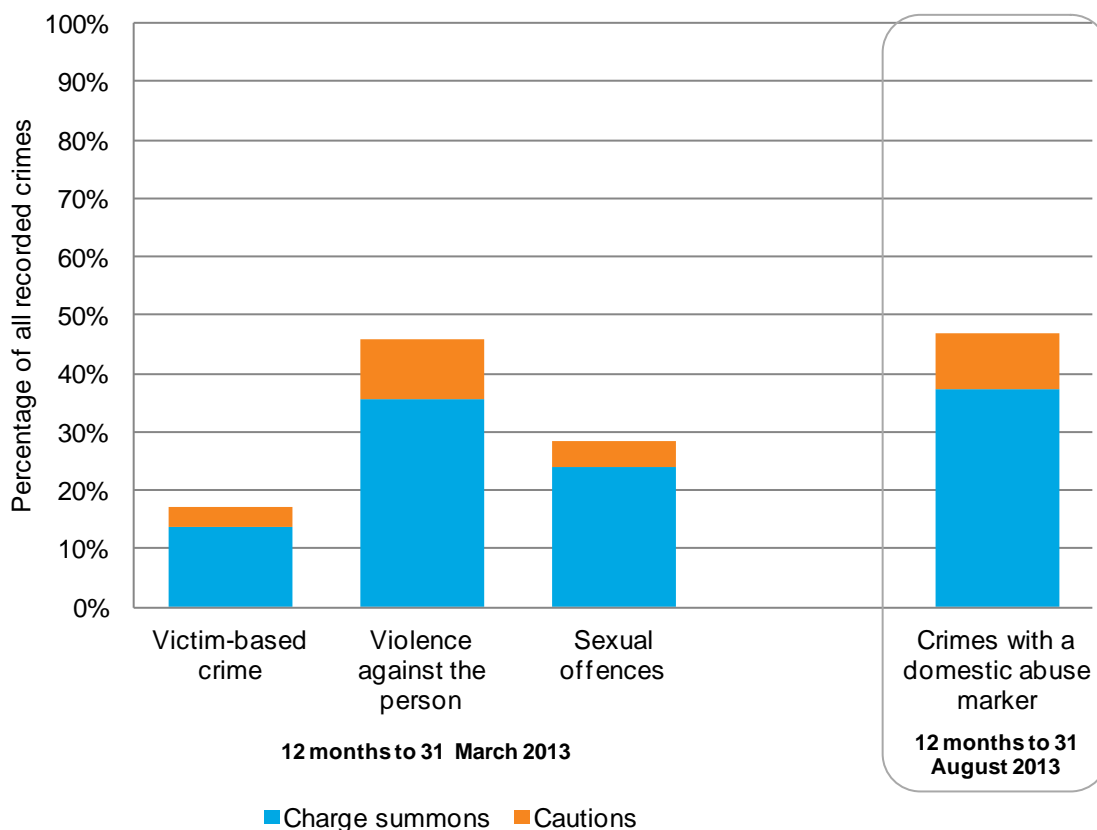


Source: HMIC data collection

Cambridgeshire Constabulary charges a higher proportion of crimes with a domestic abuse marker than recorded victim-based crime. This may indicate that the force has a different approach to domestic abuse outcomes than other crimes.

⁹ 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 marker¹⁰



Sources: HMIC data collection, Home Office Crimes detected in England and Wales, ONS Crime in England and Wales

The force has invested in specialist resources to deal with domestic abuse. There are skilled officers and staff within its specialist units – the specialist investigation unit, DAISU and the multi-agency referral unit, MARU. The DAISU has responsibility for the day-to-day management of domestic abuse crimes. Its primary objective is *‘to ensure the safeguarding of domestic abuse victims and that offenders are brought to justice in a timely manner so that they cannot continue or escalate any violent and or abusive behaviour towards the victim’*. The MARU receives referrals regarding anyone experiencing domestic abuse and processes, assesses and shares information with relevant partner agencies. However, due to a lack of capacity within both these units they had not been able to fulfil their core roles. Staff from the DAISU said that they were

¹⁰ Based on forces' own definition of domestic abuse and use of a domestic abuse marker on IT systems.

providing minimum safeguarding at best. Their focus was on 'prisoner handling' and as such they had a crime-led rather than a risk-to-victim-led process; because of this there was little time for safeguarding and victim support. Similarly the MARU was not able to process all DASH forms within the agreed 72-hour period. Medium risk cases were not dealt with for up to five weeks.

Of further concern, frontline officers and other teams did not really understand what the specialist units do and who had responsibility for what. There was a risk that staff perceived safeguarding and contact with victims to be the responsibility of somebody else, and consequently, the welfare of the victim might be overlooked. Due to the capacity of the specialist officers, and the capability of other officers outside the specialist units, that there was a gap in the level of safeguarding that was provided to victims. There was a serious risk that insufficient attention was paid by the police to either maintaining effective contact with victims or planning and supporting their safety.

Since the initial inspection additional staff have been placed in the specialist teams and there has been a significant shift in focus by the force, making it clear that domestic abuse is a priority. The role of officers and staff in reducing risk to victims has been highlighted and there is greater clarity about what officers should do to achieve this.

The specialist officers within the DAISU and MARU have not all received additional training in domestic abuse awareness and investigation. However, a number of the specialist officers are experienced and have been working in the domestic abuse arena for a number of years. They are competent and knowledgeable about domestic abuse; however, they also have to take on some child protection cases – an area in which they are less experienced. The force has recognised that morale among specialist staff has suffered; the workload within the unit was unmanageable and poses a risk to victim safeguarding. A pilot approach is being trialled in Peterborough that limits the work of the DAISU to cases involving intimate partner violence only, rather than the whole spectrum of domestic abuse incidents. Additional staff and greater focus on domestic abuse has brought about improvements for the specialist teams.

When an officer initially attends an incident, they assess the risk to the victim and develop a safety plan putting in place any immediate safeguarding measures to protect the victim and any children present. This might include re-housing the victim or perpetrator or ensuring that any further call to the address is treated as an emergency by placing a marker or flag on police systems. The risks posed to the victim can change and should be monitored and reviewed throughout the course of the investigation and any criminal proceedings. Officers were not confident that they had the knowledge to safeguard victims

beyond this immediate action at the time of the incident. Even in the case of high-risk victims there were no formal mechanisms in place to ensure that, at key stages in the investigative process, risk to the victim was reassessed and appropriate action taken to protect the victim. For example, there is no reassessment on the release of a perpetrator from police custody or approaching a court date. Where a victim is high risk the independent domestic violence adviser (IDVA) will remain in contact and will support safeguarding. However, in the case of medium and standard risk victims it was not clear who, if anyone, had responsibility for reviewing risk and updating safety plans, nor was it clear who should maintain contact with a victim and update them as to the progress of any investigation or court proceedings. There has been improvement in these areas since the first inspection but more needs to be done to ensure the processes are sound, and victims are all supported and updated.

The force has access to 13 IDVAs, including an IDVA for young people. The role of the IDVA is to offer advice and support on a range of issues including benefits, debt, criminal and civil law, homelessness and housing, safety planning and risk, safeguarding children and child contact. They do this via face-to-face meetings, over the telephone, text and email. They are partly funded by Cambridgeshire County Council, health and the PCC. They work very closely (and in some cases are co-located) with the police but are independent of them. Due to the number of cases, the IDVAs are only able to provide a service to victims who are at high risk. High and medium risk victims are also referred by the MARU to relevant agencies for information and appropriate support. There are some good working relationships with partners including health, housing and the local authorities. Effective partnership working helps reduce risk to victims and their children, as there is a wide range of information held within each organisation which provides a more complete picture of the risk faced, and each agency is then able to engage appropriately with the victim; however, the level of partnership working is not consistent across the county.

There are three multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) within the county. The purpose of the MARACs is to review high risk cases which have been referred by both police and partner agencies including the voluntary sector for example Women's Aid and Refuge. Each MARAC has a weekly conference call by telephone and a monthly meeting. These meetings are attended by the referring agencies.

The MARACs assess any new information and ensures that every organisation takes responsibility for what they can do to reduce the risk to a victim. This means that when very high risk victims' cases are discussed at the MARAC they are likely to receive a good multi-agency response to reduce risk. A detective inspector within the force's public protection department chairs each of the MARACs. The MARAC process in Cambridgeshire is regarded as working well. The organisation, Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA) has analysed the outcomes from the MARAC process. This will help the force understand how the process is working and where it can be improved.

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

There were weaknesses in the force's systems and processes which meant staff did not manage risk effectively and safeguard victims adequately. There has been a complete review of the force's approach to tackling domestic abuse and how it delivers a service to victims. There are now plans in place to work with partners to develop longer-term improvements.

There was a lack of leadership and direction to local policing teams to enable them to play an effective role in managing perpetrators and future risk to victims. Risk to the victim, in most cases, was not re-assessed, and therefore their future safeguarding needs could not be understood or met. The force recognised that there were a number of areas where improvements are needed, and have started to put in place systems which will help to identify future risk to victims.

The force's response to the issues that were highlighted by the initial inspection has resulted in a comprehensive overhaul and change of focus. This has been led by the chief constable and has been embraced by the organisation. There is still much work to do to be confident that victims will be safeguarded properly within the county, but the force has made considerable improvements in a very short period of time.

It is essential that victims are updated prior to a perpetrator being released from prison, and their levels of risk re-assessed in light of this. There was a lack of clarity about who was responsible for informing a victim of this. This meant that some victims were not being updated before a perpetrator was released, and a true understanding of their risk was not established. This was because, either the professionals involved might not have been aware that a perpetrator had been released, or they might have thought someone else had taken the appropriate action. More needs to be done to ensure that victims are updated, but new processes mean that victims are more likely to be updated than before the initial inspection.

The force does not have a formalised process to manage perpetrators to minimise the risk to victims from reoffending. Its focus is predominantly on crime investigation, with some victim support through other agencies. Frontline staff in local teams are not aware who the serial perpetrators are in their area, nor who the repeat victims of domestic abuse are. If they are routinely provided with this information they could contribute to the management of offenders and the safeguarding of victims. The force recognises this as an area for improvement and is developing a process that will focus on managing serial domestic abuse

perpetrators and proactively policing those who pose the greatest risk to victims.

No direction was given to local policing teams and no minimum standards set to inform how local teams should respond to and manage domestic abuse victims in their areas. They were not made aware of the vulnerable and repeat victims of domestic abuse in their area. There is no electronic system or list of high-risk victims, and knowledge of them is through previous attendance at a domestic abuse incident or 'word of mouth' from colleagues. Officers want to have this information so that they can provide a better service, particularly in respect of keeping the victim safe. By not being involved in the whole process and by not having full information they feel they are just providing an immediate response to the incident rather than being fully equipped to give the best service possible to victims' ongoing safety.

Access to systems which contain details of domestic abuse incidents and the intelligence associated with these incidents is available. However not all officers were aware of the full range of information they can access, for example, details of the involvement of, and actions from, the MARAC. In some areas local officers are playing a constructive role because domestic abuse is recognised by their team as a priority. However this was not consistent, and there was no mandated policy to say local officers should have a role in safeguarding victims. More needs to be done to provide information about high risk victims and serial perpetrators to officers and staff working in communities, but the improved focus on domestic abuse means that more staff now understand they have a role to play in keeping victims safe.

The processes in place mean that a formal risk assessment is not required for all incidents of domestic abuse. Unless an incident has resulted in a crime or the police have previously been involved, there is no risk assessment and no further police involvement.

There is no process for ensuring an effective service to victims suffering repeat abuse, if no incident results in an actual crime. This means that some victims may not be getting the service they need from the police and potentially may be unwilling to contact them again if a further incident occurred.

There are no robust processes in place to regularly review the risk posed to victims, (even those assessed as at high risk) and reassess their safeguarding needs. Where there have been no further calls from victims who have historically been victims on a number of occasions, there is no mechanism to understand why they have stopped calling.

There were no processes in place by which the force was able to ensure that learning from domestic homicide reviews was used to inform practice. The force has addressed this and has a clear policy on learning and how this will be embedded in working practice.

The force produces a number of performance reports. These reports are detailed and include analysis of data on how many crimes and incidents there have been, how many arrests are made, and how many cases are detected and a perpetrator charged. It is not clear how this data is used to evaluate outcomes for victims or to drive improvements in future outcomes. While the most important measure for the force, for domestic abuse, is how victims feel about the service, there has been no work at this time which gives a good understanding of this. The force recognises that its approach to tackling domestic abuse needs to change, particularly in respect of the threat of harm and risk, and needs to be focused on the victim and not just the crime.

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 force specific recommendations should be considered in conjunction with recommendations to all forces set out in the national report.

1. The force incident logs, particularly in respect of standard risk cases need to contain more detailed information. This will ensure that all information is captured and is available if researched at a later date.
2. There is a need for improved leadership, ownership and overall governance at a senior level. There are inherent gaps and risks in business processes. The force does not have an overarching strategy to develop and improve services to victims either by the police alone or with partner agencies.
3. A review of the capability, capacity, terms of reference and focus of the domestic abuse investigation and safeguarding unit (DAISU) needs to be undertaken as a matter of urgency. The force needs to ensure that there is focus on the risk posed to the victim as well as the perpetrator and the crime.
4. A review of the force's complex business processes needs should be undertaken from beginning to end. There is a lack of clarity of roles and functions across the organisation and as a result there is limited understanding among officers and staff about who has responsibility for ongoing victim care and safety planning.
5. A review of the training and awareness provision for domestic abuse needs to be undertaken to ensure that all staff are able to identify, understand and deal effectively with domestic abuse.
6. A review of the criteria in respect of completing the DASH risk assessment form, and the process of submission, needs to be undertaken to ensure that all information relating to the incident and victim is captured, understood and where necessary, appropriate action is taken.
7. The force needs to ensure that partner relationships are improved and maintained.
8. The capability and capacity of the multi-agency referral unit (MARU) should be reviewed as a matter of urgency.

9. The force should ensure there is a consistent approach to the risk-assessment process, and that all staff understand it.
10. A review of the criteria to refer to the multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) needs to be undertaken, to ensure those victims most at risk are being supported and properly safeguarded.
11. A formalised reassessment of risk should be undertaken throughout the process particularly at trigger points, for example release from custody. At present there is an inconsistent approach to this and very little reassessment takes place.
12. The force should ensure that staff understand the golden hour principles, the need for best evidence, how this is obtained and to act accordingly. The use of body-worn cameras needs to be encouraged.
13. The force does not have a minimum standard for the management of domestic abuse victims at a neighbourhood level. This should be reviewed and force expectations communicated clearly to staff.
14. Where victims did not wish to pursue a complaint or support a prosecution, less impetus is given to the investigative process. This is clearly not good practice and the force needs to ensure that it provides a consistent approach to all domestic abuse incidents.
15. The force should have an agreed criterion or process for dealing with repeat non-crime domestic abuse incidents.

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

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.