



Cleveland Police'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 protection experts from over 15 forces and those working with victims of

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

domestic abuse in voluntary and community sector organisations.

This report details what HMIC found in Cleveland Police 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.

⁶There 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 Cleveland⁷

Calls for assistance



In Cleveland, domestic abuse accounts for 3% of calls to the police for assistance. Of these calls, 42% were from repeat victims.

Crime

8%

Domestic abuse accounts for 8% of all recorded crime.

Assault with intent

20%

Cleveland recorded 186 assaults with intent to cause serious harm, of these 37 were domestic abuse related. This is 20% of all assaults with intent to cause serious harm recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

Assault with injury

32%

The force also recorded 3,476 assaults with injury, of these 1,125 were domestic abuse related. This is 32% 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%

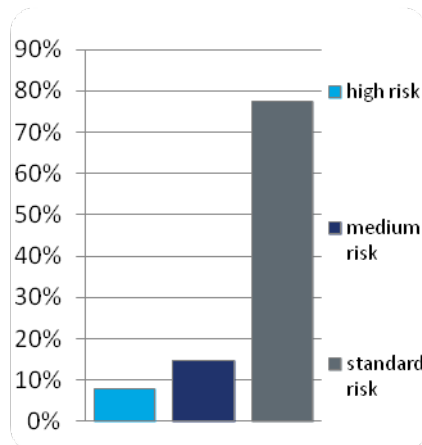
The force recorded 193 harassment offences, of these 117 were domestic abuse related. This is 61% of all harassment offences recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

Sexual offences

6%

The force also recorded 582 sexual offences, of these 37 were domestic abuse related. This is 6% of all sexual offences recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

Risk levels



On, 31 August 2013 Cleveland had 6,275 active domestic abuse cases; 8% were high risk, 15% were medium risk, and 77% were standard risk.

Arrests



For every 100 domestic abuse crimes recorded, there were 98 arrests in Cleveland. For most forces the number is between 45 and 90.

Outcomes



Cleveland recorded 3,168 domestic abuse related crimes for the 12 months to the end of August 2013. Of these crimes, 28% resulted in a charge, 10% resulted in a caution and, 1% had an out of court disposal, for example, a fixed penalty notice for disorderly conduct.

Executive summary

Although HMIC found much effective work being done to tackle domestic abuse, there are several areas for improvement which Cleveland Police needs to address before it can have confidence that it is providing a consistently good service to manage domestic abuse and minimise the risk to victims.

Identifying victims

Call handlers and dispatchers have received some training in recognising domestic abuse and there are good systems in place to enable them to check for previous history when a call is received. HMIC found a lack of knowledge among call handlers as to the definitions of a repeat or a vulnerable victim, although there was an understanding that these factors were important in risk assessing a victim. The force prioritises domestic abuse so that victims get a priority attendance by a police officer, although we found that it is not always the nearest officer who is sent, which means that the victim may not get as quick a response as is possible. Supervision is good and the force regularly assesses the quality of this initial response.

Keeping victims safe

Tackling domestic abuse is a clear priority in Cleveland; there is strong leadership and management of services from the police and the Police and crime commissioner (PCC). Staff are committed to providing an effective response and there is a proportionate approach based on the risks faced by victims. There is room for improvement in the training provided to staff and some officers lack a full understanding of the complex issues and variety of forms that abuse can take. More domestic abuse prosecutions fail to achieve a conviction in Cleveland than in other areas of the country, and the force is working to understand and improve this situation.

Management of risk

HMIC found that the specialist team in Cleveland is providing effective services to high-risk and some medium-risk victims of domestic abuse. It oversees and checks the risk assessments and safety plans of other police officers and staff dealing with lower-risk victims. Assessment of risk is well managed and all officers and staff throughout the force are clear about their responsibilities for keeping victims safe. However, there is scope to tighten the continuing review of risk for medium-risk victims and in some of the response teams there was a lack of awareness of the support that was available to victims. The force works well in partnership with other agencies to reduce the risk to victims.

Organisational effectiveness for keeping people safe

The force has effective systems and understanding to manage domestic abuse and the risks to victims, although there is still room for improvement. The force recognises the importance of maintaining contact with the victim whilst the offender is imprisoned and recognises that the level of risk and safeguarding of the victim needs to be reassessed when a perpetrator is released from prison. In most cases this happens, although there are some weaknesses in the systems for ensuring the police's prisoner handling team routinely keep victims updated when a perpetrator is released without charge following an initial arrest. Tackling the behaviour of the most serious domestic abuse perpetrators is important and Cleveland Police has recognised that it needs to do more of this. Although it is in the early stages of development, there are initiatives underway to tackle this.

Findings

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

Call handlers and dispatchers have received some training in recognising domestic abuse and there are good systems in place to enable them to check for previous history when a call is received. HMIC found a lack of knowledge among call handlers as to the definitions of a repeat or a vulnerable victim although there was an understanding that these factors were important in risk assessing a victim. The force prioritises domestic abuse so that victims get a prompt attendance by a police officer, although we found that it is not always the nearest officer who is sent, which means that the victim may not get as quick a response as is possible. Supervision is good and the force regularly assesses the quality of this initial response.

The majority of calls about domestic abuse are received in the force control room based at headquarters. Call handlers are responsible for identifying that a caller is a victim of domestic abuse based on the information provided. They then go on to assess the urgency of the police response that is needed and grade the call accordingly. All incidents relating to domestic abuse are graded as either priority '0', (requiring immediate attendance) or priority '1' (requiring attendance as soon as possible but within 60 minutes).

Victims who are especially vulnerable in some way or who have been subjected to previous domestic abuse incidents can face the greatest risk and it is important that the force is aware of any previous history or special circumstances relating to the victim. The force 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. They begin checking the information systems while the caller is still on the line to get as much information as they can about previous police involvement and knowledge of the victim or the perpetrator. In addition, they will probe callers to ensure they gather as much relevant information as possible. Where a victim is identified as a vulnerable or repeat victim, this should be recorded on the force systems in a way that will highlight the issue for future calls. However, HMIC found a lack of knowledge by some staff regarding the force definitions, relying instead on their experience and professional judgement to assess whether the incident involves a repeat or vulnerable victim. The force cannot be certain that it is identifying repeat and vulnerable victims of domestic abuse consistently and therefore responding appropriately to those most at risk.

The speed with which the force responds to an incident, particularly where there is a high risk to the victim, can make a big difference to both the safety of the

victim and the likelihood of obtaining good evidence to ensure effective action can be taken to prosecute an offender. Once graded, the incident is passed to a dispatcher who locates and deploys the most appropriate and timely police resource to the incident. The dispatcher will carry out additional checks on the force's IT systems and has responsibility for relaying the background information to attending officers. HMIC found that in the case of incidents requiring an immediate response, dispatchers are not consistently making sure that the nearest and most appropriate resource is deployed. The force has recognised this as an area for improvement and has a new software update planned for early in 2014 to assist the control room staff to efficiently and effectively manage resources.

Most staff had received appropriate training to enable them to effectively fulfil their role. However, there has been little recent training provided; most had not received any additional training since their initial input 18 months ago. The force is planning to deliver a training programme to staff between January and March 2014 which will include domestic abuse.

Supervisors and the staff who close incidents on the system once it has been dealt with, and who actively track and monitor domestic abuse incidents within the control room to ensure the correct timely response, make sure that sufficient detail is recorded on the incident log and it is appropriately closed. In addition, all incidents are overseen by the domestic violence investigation team (DVIT) to ensure the incidents are appropriately managed at a local level and all necessary actions have been taken prior to finalisation, especially in the case of those involving high risk victims. Staff also carry out searches of the force's incident management IT system, using key words relating to domestic abuse, to ensure all incidents are correctly categorised to ensure the appropriate level of scrutiny.

Supervisors ensure their officers submit all the necessary documentation relating to the incident prior to its finalisation by supervisors in the control room. HMIC looked at a sample of previous incident records and found that a timely response had been provided to incidents. In the majority of cases, a comprehensive record of the actions taken was added to the log prior to finalisation.

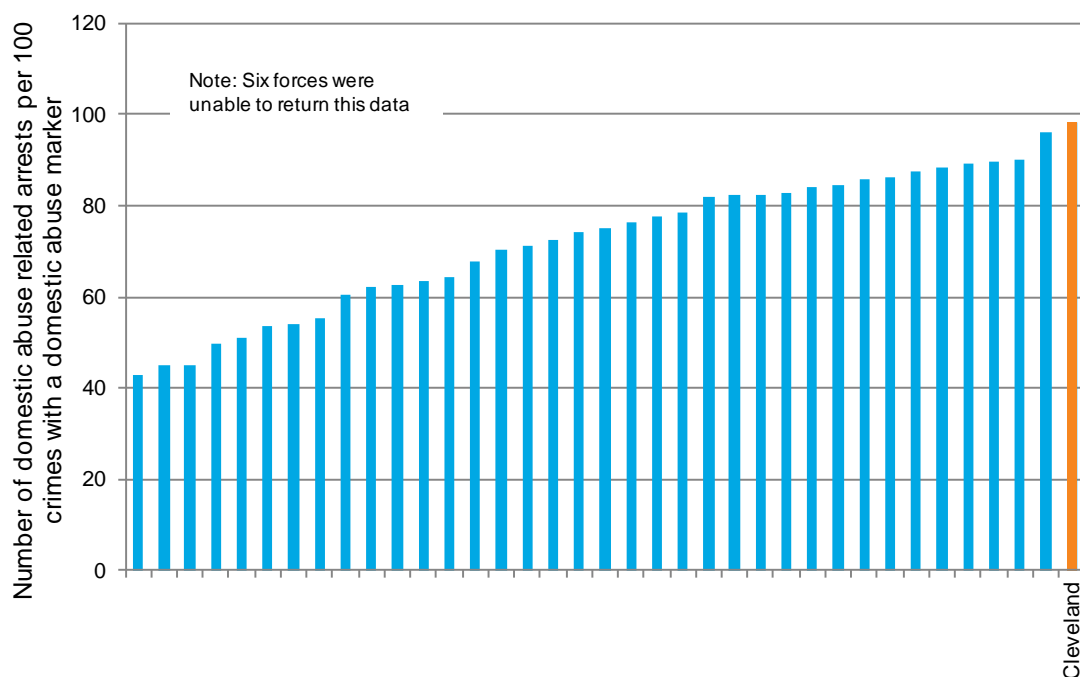
Regular and robust quality assurance processes are in place for staff within the control room. For example, supervisors review a sample of all incidents, including those relating to domestic abuse, in order to quality assure the skills of the call handlers and dispatchers to ensure the incident was given the appropriate response and managed correctly. Findings from these checks are recorded and feedback regularly provided to staff to ensure any development issues are addressed.

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

Tackling domestic abuse is a clear priority in Cleveland; there is strong leadership and management of services from the police and the Police and crime commissioner (PCC). Staff are committed to providing an effective response and there is a proportionate approach based on the risks faced by victims. There is room for improvement in the training provided to staff and some officers lack a full understanding of the complex issues and variety of forms that abuse can take. More domestic abuse prosecutions fail to achieve a conviction in Cleveland than in other areas of the country, and the force is working to understand and improve this situation.

For every 100 domestic abuse crimes recorded there were 98 arrests in Cleveland. For most forces the number is between 45 and 90.⁸

Figure 1: Number of domestic abuse related arrests per 100 crimes with a domestic abuse marker for the 12 months to 31 August 2013⁹



Source: HMIC data collection

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

⁹ Based on forces' own definition of domestic abuse and use of a domestic abuse marker on IT systems.

Tackling domestic abuse is a clear priority for Cleveland Police with both the PCC and Chief constable providing strong leadership on the issue. This is reinforced in the PCC's 2013–17 police and crime plan and the force's strategic plans.

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 is for each objective within the strategy to have an action plan to ensure improvements are delivered in a co-ordinated and timely way.

There is good high-level leadership and management of domestic abuse in Cleveland police. The PCC and Chief constable monitor progress against the police and crime plan and other force plans on a monthly basis; this includes high level measures of performance in tackling domestic abuse. The assistant chief constable with strategic responsibility for tackling domestic abuse chairs a group of senior managers from across the force operations, which meets quarterly with a specific remit for public protection. The group considers best practice and ensures that there is a corporate approach to the delivery of domestic abuse services across the force area. This group has also compiled an action plan to improve areas such as investigation, victim support and the management of risk. The plan is used to ensure actions are progressed and those responsible for completing them are held to account.

Domestic abuse has been raised as an issue with the public through various media campaigns and initiatives. For example, in March 2013 the PCC in partnership with the force launched a domestic violence campaign to mark 'International Women's Day'. The campaign involved the force working with support agencies to encourage victims to report domestic abuse and send a message to perpetrators about the harm domestic abuse causes. The campaign included the hosting of events in each of the four local policing areas (LPAs) of Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland, and Stockton. In addition, up to 100 victims were visited to follow up on recent domestic abuse incidents and offer support.

Staff readily identify tackling domestic abuse as a force priority and are clear about how they contribute to delivering the aims of the force's plans. They described how chief officers and senior managers have provided bulletins and briefings to ensure the issue is viewed by staff as a priority. The force ensures staff are given clear direction regarding how they should tackle domestic abuse by publishing 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.

Although training has been provided, there is still a lack of awareness among some staff of the complexities involved in domestic abuse. Training has been predominantly provided using e-learning (learning provided electronically) enhanced by training from specialist staff and partner agencies. The packages include stalking and harassment and so-called honour-based violence. Interviews with officers and staff dealing with victims showed they had undertaken training, but there remained some lack of understanding regarding the variety of forms that abuse can take, such as coercive control, and of the overall psychological effects of abuse. HMIC found that all officers in immediate response teams (IRTs) and integrated neighbourhood teams (INT) have received training in using the domestic abuse, stalking and harassment (DASH) risk assessment tool used to assess all victims of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse has been part of probationer and detective training for a number of years with the aims, objectives and contents changing over time to reflect legislation and best practice.

Front enquiry 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 staff have received little or no training on domestic abuse. Currently they use their professional judgement, taking sufficient details to enable the control room to arrange for the appropriate response.

Domestic abuse incidents are risk assessed using the DASH risk assessment tool. This is completed by the officer at the scene of the incident, based on information provided by the victim. Details are recorded predominantly on the officer's mobile data device called the Cleveland universal police information device (CUPID). Although the DASH includes 27 questions, officers can use their discretion as to which questions they ask a victim. The process also takes full account of risks to any children in the house, irrespective of whether the children are present at the time of the incident.

Once the DASH form is completed the officer uses their professional judgement to grade the level of risk to the victim as high, medium or standard, depending on their assessment. The information will then be quality assured by risk assessment and risk assessment and safety planning officers (RASPO) working within the DVIT. In those cases involving children, they will also refer details to other agencies, such as children's services, for assessment and any necessary intervention.

Staff we spoke to during our inspection showed a good understanding of the risk assessment tool and confirmed their ability to apply discretion and professional judgement at any stage of the process. They provided examples of instances where they had taken positive action to remove children from

potentially high-risk situations when dealing with incidents relating to domestic abuse.

All incidents relating to domestic abuse are graded as either priority '0', requiring immediate attendance or graded priority '1' requiring attendance as soon as possible but within 60 minutes. The majority of incidents are attended by officers from the IRTs. 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, background checks will be made and victims will usually be provided with advice and the contact details of DVIT and other support agencies.

For those assessed to be at medium risk, they will usually be supported by the RASPOs or other staff working in DVIT. In cases where the perpetrator has been arrested, staff from the prisoner handling team (PHT) will usually take responsibility for the investigation supported by staff in DVIT. Staff will have responsibility for completing investigation and safety plans for the victim, and both of these will be recorded on the force IT systems.

Victims assessed as being at high risk will be dealt with by staff in the DVIT who will complete and manage investigation and safety plans. These victims will also be referred to an independent domestic violence adviser (IDVA). They 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. IDVA support will continue throughout any court process.

Reality-testing showed how the response to domestic abuse incidents, the risk assessments and safety plans are monitored and managed predominantly by supervisors in IRTs and the DVIT. However, we found IRT staff have limited options available to them regarding the immediate safety measures they were able to put in place to safeguard victims, especially in cases where the perpetrator had left the scene of the incident and was wanted for arrest. The force is currently addressing this issue and has secured additional funding for the purchase of mobile phones to leave with a victim so that they can easily call for police help in any future incident. There is also a business plan in place to increase the availability of personal alarm systems.

On a daily basis, incidents of domestic abuse are subject to additional scrutiny through the force's 'pacesetter' meetings. These are attended by senior managers including representatives from each of the force's four LPAs. The meeting includes a specific focus on domestic abuse incidents in terms of actions, victim safety planning and perpetrators wanted for arrest.

Officers conduct an investigation to a satisfactory standard and keep victims updated. Contact with the victim is recorded on the force's IT system and regularly reviewed by the officer and their supervisors. 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 a perpetrator wanted in connection with the incident. To ensure further improvements are made regarding the quality of investigations, the force is providing additional training to officers in IRTs and INTs in early 2014.

We found some evidence of prosecutions being pursued even if the victim was not willing to support proceedings (often due to the victim being too frightened) by capturing other evidence to support the investigation, for example by using body-worn cameras or taking photographs using CUPID to ensure all possible evidence is secured, reducing the need to rely solely on witness evidence from the victim. However, the availability of body-worn cameras is limited and the force is exploring opportunities to improve the current equipment and increase the number issued to staff.

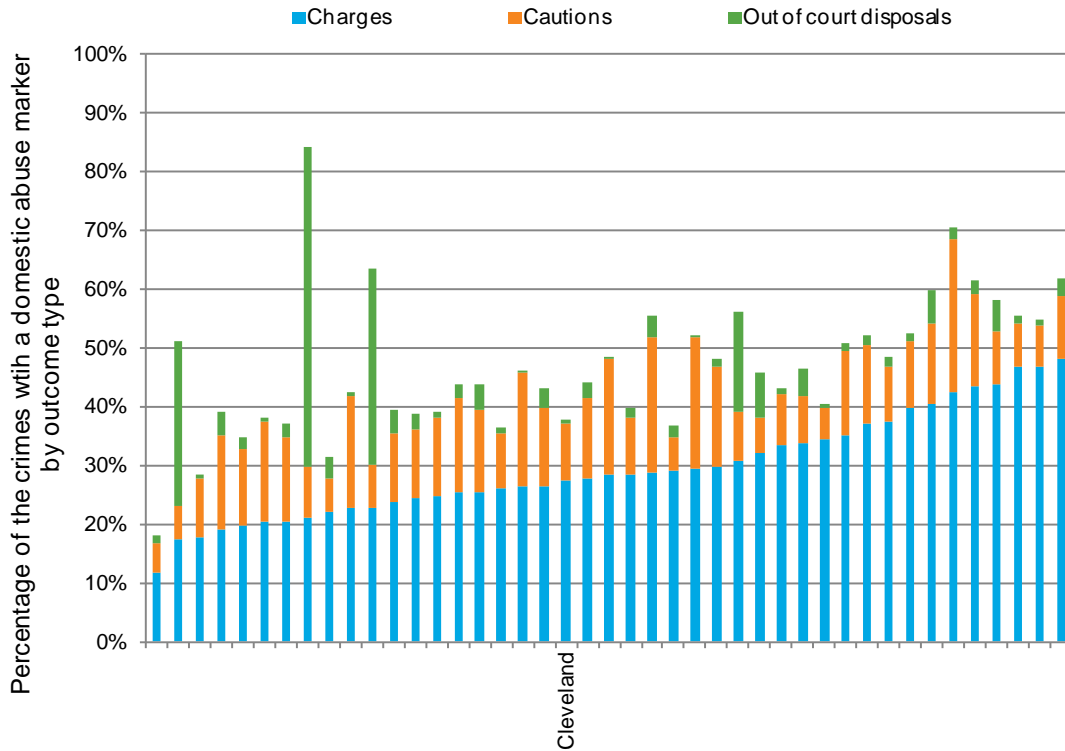
There have been increases in the number of such prosecutions. However, the force has a higher-than-the-national-average discontinued-court-case rate for domestic abuse cases and continues to work with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the special domestic violence court groups to reduce the number of court cases that fail. To formally support these arrangements, 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 improve the number of successful prosecutions that do not rely on the victim being able and willing to give evidence.

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

HMIC found that the specialist team in Cleveland is providing effective services to high-risk and some medium-risk victims of domestic abuse. It oversees and checks the risk assessments and safety plans of other police officers and staff dealing with lower-risk victims. Assessment of risk is well managed and all officers and staff throughout the force are clear about their responsibilities for keeping victims safe. However, there is scope to tighten the continuing review of risk for medium-risk victims and in some of the response teams there was a lack of awareness of the support that was available to victims. The force works well in partnership with other agencies to reduce the risk to victims.

Cleveland recorded 3,168 domestic abuse related crimes¹⁰ for the 12 months to the end of August 2013. Of these crimes 28 percent resulted in a charge, 10 percent resulted in a caution and, 1 percent had an out of court disposal, for example a fixed penalty notice for disorderly conduct.

Figure 2: Percentage of different outcome types used for crimes with a domestic abuse marker for the 12 months to 31 August 2013¹¹



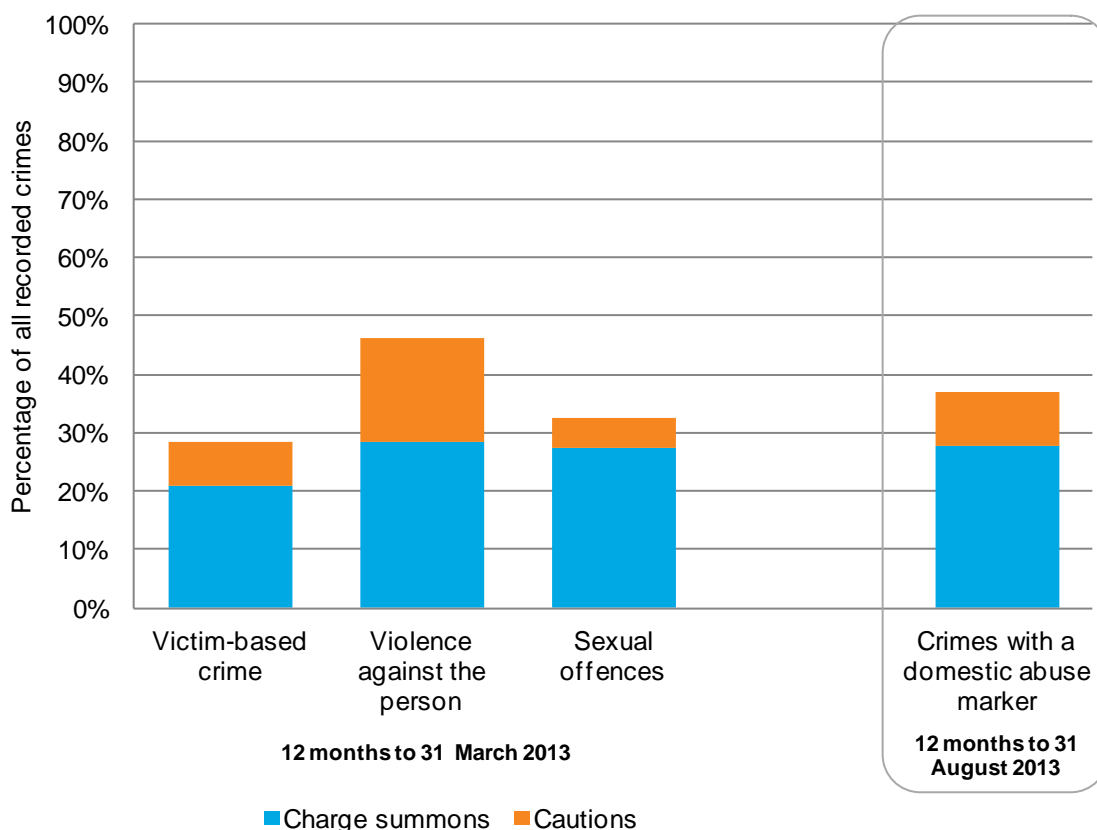
Source: HMIC data collection

Cleveland police 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.

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

¹¹ 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 marker¹²



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

The force is divided into a number of functional commands, one of them being the crime and justice command led by a detective chief superintendent. Within this command is the area of business called ‘protecting vulnerable people’; this is led by a detective chief inspector. It has responsibility for a number of business areas including domestic abuse and vulnerable adults. These business areas have two dedicated teams each managed by a detective inspector, one team for domestic violence and vulnerable adults and the other team with responsibility for child abuse investigation. In September 2013, as a

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

result of force reorganisation, these resources were centralised into one location. This has brought about a more consistent approach in dealing with domestic abuse and has ensured resources are better aligned to demand. The DVIT is made up of 17 detective constables and is led by three detective sergeants.

Every victim of domestic abuse is assessed by the officer who attends to identify the level of risk they face. This initial assessment is then reassessed by a RASPO in order to ensure consistency and quality of the service. RASPOs are part of the specialist DVIT and work closely with partner agencies, such as social services and health services; they are therefore able to share information and seek specialist advice to ensure that all factors have been considered in the risk assessment.

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.

All those working in the DVIT are fully trained detectives or in the process of completing their ICIDP (initial crime investigators development programme). All specialist staff have received specific domestic abuse training as well as working through a personal portfolio to develop skills and awareness. RASPOs have also received specific training for their role and have substantial knowledge and experience having performed the role for a number of years. Staff we spoke to during the inspection felt they had received sufficient training in respect of fulfilling their role.

Currently, DVIT staff deal with suspects in cases of all offences committed against victims considered at high-risk and also some at medium-risk, depending on the circumstances. PHTs deal with suspects for most offences against victims considered at standard and medium risk.

The force recognises the importance of working with partner agencies to tackle domestic abuse. We found numerous examples of specialist staff working constructively in partnership with INTs, local authorities, social services, probation, health and the voluntary sector to reduce the risk to victims.

Partners were positive in terms of their engagement with the force to tackle domestic abuse especially to reduce the risk to victims. There are four unitary local authorities, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland, and

Stockton. Each has a community safety partnership (CSP) with a strategy in place for tackling domestic abuse. Delivery of the strategy is monitored and managed by a domestic violence strategy group, one for each of the CSPs. The groups are attended by representatives from all agencies dealing with domestic abuse including from the force. Whilst there is good engagement from partners at a strategic level, it is the activities of the RASPOs and DVIT which predominantly drive partnership activity to reduce risks to victims and their children, and manage perpetrators.

The force is currently working with partner agencies to explore the feasibility of introducing a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) structure which would improve partnership working and provide police and partner agencies services in the same location for vulnerable victims, including those suffering domestic abuse. However, there are no firm timescales for these proposals.

Further support is provided to victims through the independent domestic violence adviser (IDVA) services. There are eight IDVAs working across the force area managed and located with outreach services or housing associations. All victims assessed as being at high-risk and some at medium-risk are referred to an IDVA for extra help and support.

The IDVA plays a key role if a victim's case is referred to a multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC).¹³ 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 constantly monitor and help manage the assessment of risk for the victim and any special requirements regarding any court process. Once the court case and MARAC has taken place the adviser's role will usually cease. The IDVA will signpost the victim to other relevant agencies throughout their engagement with them, to ensure when their role ends the victim will still have access to other avenues of support.

¹³ A multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) is a meeting that brings together representatives from a number of agencies in the area (both statutory and voluntary) to talk about the safety, health and well-being of people experiencing domestic abuse (and their children) and draw up an action plan to make them safer.

There was evidence of the level of risk to victims being regularly reviewed using the DASH assessment. This process will depend on the level of risk but is carried out predominantly by the RASPOs and staff in the DVIT. However, reality testing found a lack of clarity regarding this process for medium-risk victims following the initial risk assessment by the first attending officer and quality assurance by the RASPOs.

There are clear roles and responsibilities regarding who deals with victims of domestic abuse with RASPOs and DVIT managing high and most medium risk victims and IRTs and INTs managing those assessed as standard-risk. However, our reality testing found a lack of knowledge regarding the availability of support services for victims of domestic abuse by IRTs in some areas of the force.

Safety plans for high and medium risk victims are completed and reviewed by RASPOs and other staff in the DVIT with support and advice provided by IDVAs.

Additional support for implementing safety plans is provided by crime prevention officers based within the four LPAs. They will fit alarms and arrange for additional locks and other safety measures. Their work is seen as vital by IDVAs and outreach services, in supporting victims and making them feel safe. However, we found a lack of oversight and scrutiny, by the force, of safety planning arrangements once cases had been referred to IDVAs and outreach services.

Four MARACs operate in the force area, aligned to each local authority. They meet every three weeks and are chaired by the detective inspector with responsibility for domestic abuse and vulnerable adults, ensuring consistency of approach and decision making. All victims assessed by the police or partner agencies as high-risk (and some medium-risk depending on the circumstances) are discussed at the conferences. In addition, victims who suffer a further episode of violence within 12 months from the date of the MARAC, are also discussed. Overall governance and oversight of their performance is provided by the CSP for their local authority area.

The MARACs are well established, information is shared effectively, actions are agreed and those responsible for delivering them are held to account. The agendas, minutes and action logs are completed by three MARAC co-ordinators. They also act as 'gatekeepers' and screen all MARAC referrals which include police referrals (high-risk and some medium-risk) and other agency referrals where the abuse is deemed high risk.

Representatives from the MARACs we spoke to as part of this inspection, described attendance as good and the case load of the meetings as

manageable and appropriate. The conferences are seen as well organised, with information being shared effectively. Decisions and actions are recorded and those responsible for delivering them are held to account. They are seen to be effective in reducing the risk to victims.

Although MARACs are considered to be effective, further improvements are expected when their arrangements are assessed early in 2014 by Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA), a national charity which provides help and support to professionals and organisations working with victims of domestic abuse.

We found that staff throughout the force take responsibility for making victims safe. During inspection, we spoke to numerous staff and this commitment to improve the safety of victims was evident throughout. This was the case whether staff worked in the control room, front enquiry offices, IRTs, INTs, PHTs or the DVIT. For example, in Hartlepool, all victims involved in two incidents of domestic abuse will receive a visit from a member of their INT and a representative from Harbour outreach services. This provides an opportunity to reassure victims, review safety measures and implement longer term problem-solving solutions. A similar scheme is currently being piloted in the Stockton LPA.

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

The force has effective systems and understanding to manage domestic abuse and the risks to victims, although there is still room for improvement. The force recognises the importance of maintaining contact with the victim whilst the offender is imprisoned and recognises that the level of risk and safeguarding of the victim needs to be reassessed when a perpetrator is released from prison. In most cases this happens, although there are some weaknesses in the systems for ensuring the police's prisoner handling team routinely keep victims updated when a perpetrator is released without charge following an initial arrest. Tackling the behaviour of the most serious domestic abuse perpetrators is important and Cleveland Police has recognised that it needs to do more of this. Although it is in the early stages of development, there are initiatives underway to tackle this.

The force has processes in place to ensure contact is maintained with the victim in cases where a perpetrator is imprisoned to guarantee victims are kept informed about release dates. The force's intelligence unit receives notification of prison releases usually from the probation service. The unit will inform DVIT

who ensure the risk level to the victim is reviewed and safety plans are put in place.

The force is currently running a project called 'VOICE' in partnership with a local prison to control the opportunities a perpetrator has for contact with a victim, via letters and phone calls, to reduce the risk of threats being made to victims of domestic abuse.

Where a perpetrator is being released on bail, the risk level to the victim would usually be reviewed by the DVIT depending on the risk posed to the victim. Staff liaise with the courts to ensure the victim is updated on bail decisions at the earliest opportunity. However, we found a lack of clarity regarding how the risk level to victims is reviewed when those perpetrators, dealt with by PHTs, are bailed by the court. In addition, there was little evidence of the risk level to victims being reviewed when perpetrators were released without charge from police custody, often following their arrest to prevent a breach of the peace.

There is some limited evidence of serial and serious perpetrators being identified and managed by the force, although it acknowledges this as an area for improvement. The force has some processes in place supported by the force IT systems to identify repeat perpetrators. We found some evidence of plans being put in place to reduce their offending, often by adopting a multi-agency problem-solving approach. However, this approach was not consistently applied across the force.

There are other opportunities available to manage perpetrators' behaviour, as there are perpetrator programmes run in each of the four local authority areas. However, these schemes are reliant on self referrals, are often oversubscribed and receive limited funding.

Following a detailed analysis of the force's serial and serious domestic abuse perpetrators, an initiative has recently been introduced to address the behaviour of those individuals who have committed domestic abuse against five or more partners. The force has ensured those identified are not currently being managed by any other schemes, such as MARAC. There are currently four individuals nominated for this initiative with officers from the DVIT given responsibility for formulating and managing plans to reduce their offending behaviour. It is hoped over the next few months that this initiative will be extended, bringing about further improvements in the way the force and partner agencies identify and manage serial and serious perpetrators.

Repeat victims are reviewed by the DVIT where there have been no further calls. Supervisors will check that all actions associated with victim safety plans have been completed.

Most 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, pacesetter 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 working in most areas of the force. However, this was not found to be the case in all areas.

The force has had involvement with two domestic homicide reviews. The reviews have been managed by the relevant community safety partnership. The force has processes in place to ensure corporate learning is captured and turned into positive action. Recommendations for improvements are incorporated into the force's domestic abuse action plan with progress monitored and managed at the public protection gold group.

Domestic abuse is embedded in the force's performance management processes. Scrutiny and accountability for performance relating to domestic abuse is evident at various levels of the force, with a particular focus on increasing the reporting of domestic abuse and reducing the number of repeat victims. The force itself reviews performance in tackling domestic abuse through a wide range of forums including the monthly strategic performance group, tactical support group and force tasking and co-ordination group meetings, chaired by chief officers and attended by senior managers. The current performance management regime is enhanced by the force's IT system, team performance accountability mechanism (TPAM) which provides performance data relating to domestic abuse at both a force and LPA level.

At LPA level, chief officers conduct performance meetings with local commanders and their senior management teams where performance relating to domestic abuse is managed. This influences the performance meetings senior management teams hold with sergeants and inspectors. On a daily basis the LPAs hold meetings, attended by senior managers, supervisors and detectives, prior to the force pacesetter meeting, to co-ordinate police activity to tackle domestic abuse. They 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 tasking of resources to arrest perpetrators. Reality testing included attendance by HMIC staff at one of the force's pacesetter meetings; this provided evidence of the high level of scrutiny and management applied to domestic abuse related issues and the coordination of resources to tackle them.

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.

The force should:

1. ensure all staff in the control room are aware of the definitions of a repeat and vulnerable victim to ensure identification at the earliest opportunity;
2. ensure staff are using new software, due to be introduced early 2014, to efficiently and effectively manage resources;
3. ensure training on domestic abuse includes the psychological effects and the different types, such as coercive control;
4. provide domestic abuse training to front enquiry office staff;
5. extend the types of safety measures immediately available to IRT staff to enable them to increase the security of victims;
6. clarify how the risk assessment process for medium-risk victims is reviewed, following the initial risk assessment by the first attending officer and quality assurance by the RASPOs;
7. address its lack of oversight and scrutiny of safety planning arrangements once cases have been referred to IDVAs and outreach services;
8. improve the knowledge of IRT staff regarding the support services available for victims of domestic abuse;
9. review how the risk level to victims is reassessed when those perpetrators, dealt with by PHTs, are bailed by the court;
10. review how the risk level to victims is reassessed when perpetrators are released without charge from police custody;
11. continue to improve the way serial and serious perpetrators of domestic abuse are identified and managed; and
12. ensure the understanding of local officers and commanders, as to which families are at greatest risk of domestic abuse in their area, is consistent across the force.

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.

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.