



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Cumbria 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 protection

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

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

This report details what HMIC found in Cumbria 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.

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 Cumbria⁷

Calls for assistance



In Cumbria, domestic abuse accounts for 2% of calls to the police for assistance. Of these calls 45% were from repeat victims

Crime

10%

Domestic abuse accounts for 10% of all recorded crime.

Assault with intent

25%

Cumbria recorded 116 assaults with intent to cause serious harm, of these 29 were domestic abuse related. This is 25% of all assaults with intent to cause serious harm recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

Assault with injury

32%

The constabulary also recorded 2,272 assaults with injury, of these 717 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

55%

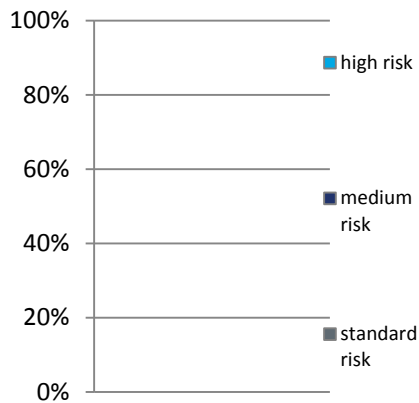
The constabulary recorded 343 harassment offences, of these 190 were domestic abuse related. This is 55% of all harassment offences recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

Sexual offences

5%

The constabulary also recorded 403 sexual offences, of these 20 were domestic abuse related. This is 5% of all sexual offences recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

Risk levels



The constabulary was unable to provide data relating to the number of high, medium and standard risk cases they had active on 31 August 2013.

Arrests



For every 100 domestic abuse crimes recorded there were 89 arrests in Cumbria. For most forces the number is between 45 and 90.

Outcomes



Cumbria recorded 2,308 domestic abuse related crimes for the 12 months to the end of August 2013. Of these crimes 40% resulted in a charge, 11% 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 in Cumbria, there are several areas for improvement which the constabulary needs to address before it can be confident that a consistently good service is provided to victims of domestic abuse across the whole constabulary area. Tackling domestic abuse is a priority for the constabulary and staff demonstrated a high level of commitment and awareness, they exercised appropriate discretion and worked well with partners. This report outlines a number of areas where the constabulary could further strengthen its response.

Identifying victims

The constabulary has good systems to identify repeat callers. Staff are trained, and question callers, to collect as much relevant information as possible so they can establish risk levels before deciding the most appropriate response. They also routinely research police databases to gather available information about a caller, perpetrator, family or address to help officers attending the incident to assess the threat of harm to a victim and their children. However, dispatchers are not always sending the nearest and most appropriate resource and attending officers are not routinely being given sufficient background information. The constabulary has defined what makes a victim of domestic abuse a repeat or vulnerable victim. Call handlers use these definitions to identify vulnerable and repeat victims at the first point of contact, which informs how the call is managed, the initial risk assessment and the level of scrutiny given to the incident by supervisors. To ensure all actions have been completed prior to finalisation, these types of incident can only be closed by supervisors in the communication centres.

Keeping victims safe

Tackling domestic abuse is a clear priority for the constabulary with direction provided to staff in guidance documents. The constabulary has also invested in poster campaigns, bulletins and briefings from chief officers and senior managers to ensure that staff understand this. The constabulary has also run media campaigns to ensure the public are aware of the issue of domestic abuse. Training has been provided to most staff. However, there was a lack of understanding regarding the different types of abuse and potential psychological effects. Training has not been provided for staff working on the front enquiry desk in police stations. All officers in 24/7 response and neighbourhood policing teams (NPT) have received training in the domestic abuse, stalking and harassment (DASH) risk assessment process but many lacked understanding regarding the reasons for certain questions being asked

of the victim. Officers attending incidents involving domestic abuse are mindful of the need to ensure the safety of the victim and children with the necessary measures put in place to protect them. Details of children are passed to a unit consisting of co-located partner agencies for assessment and any necessary intervention. The constabulary has also been running an initiative with some schools to alert them when a child has been involved in an incident of domestic abuse. Investigations are allocated to staff based on the level of risk to the victim and are regularly reviewed by supervisors to ensure positive action has been taken.

Management of risk

All cases assessed as high, medium or standard risk using DASH are reviewed by specialist staff. They work closely with partner agencies to ensure the risk assessment process is based on all available information. However, these quality assurance processes were inconsistent across the constabulary. Currently, specialist staff deal with all high-risk victims and some medium-risk. The custody investigation teams deal with most other victims and perpetrators. Safety plans for high risk victims are managed by staff in the public protection units and custody investigation teams mainly deal with plans for medium and standard-risk victims, where an arrest has been made. The three multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) are regarded as working well and there are good relationships with partners which means that information is exchanged promptly and risk assessed, and safety plans are put in place to reduce risk. Staff throughout the constabulary take responsibility for making victims safe. However, the knowledge of frontline staff regarding the support services available for victims of domestic abuse was inconsistent across the constabulary.

Organisational effectiveness for keeping people safe

The constabulary has effective processes in place to ensure contact is maintained with the victim in cases where a perpetrator is imprisoned, to ensure they are informed about release dates. In the case of a perpetrator being released from court or police bail the constabulary ensures the victim is updated at the earliest opportunity, the risk reassessed and safety plans updated. There was some evidence of serial and serious perpetrators being identified and managed, often by adopting a multi-agency problem-solving approach. However, this approach was not consistently applied across the constabulary. There is only one other partnership-led perpetrator programme. The majority of local officers and commanders understand which families are at greatest risk of domestic abuse in their area but this was not the case in all areas of the constabulary.

The constabulary has processes in place to ensure corporate learning from domestic homicide reviews is turned into positive action, for example through a review of constabulary policies and procedures or by providing additional training. Domestic abuse is embedded in the constabulary's performance management processes.

Findings

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

The constabulary has good systems to identify repeat callers. Staff are trained, and question callers, to collect as much relevant information as possible so they can establish risk levels before deciding the most appropriate response. They also routinely research police databases to gather available information about a caller, perpetrator, family or address to help officers attending the incident to assess the threat of harm to a victim and their children. However, dispatchers are not always sending the nearest and most appropriate resource and attending officers are not routinely being given sufficient background information. The constabulary has defined what makes a victim of domestic abuse a repeat or vulnerable victim. Call handlers use these definitions to identify vulnerable and repeat victims at the first point of contact, which informs how the call is managed, the initial risk assessment and the level of scrutiny given to the incident by supervisors. To ensure all actions have been completed prior to finalisation, these types of incident can only be closed by supervisors in the communication centres.

The majority of calls about domestic abuse are received in the constabulary control rooms. The identification of victims of domestic abuse is the responsibility of the call handlers who will assess the urgency of the response and grade the call accordingly.

Call handlers are assisted in deciding the most appropriate response by using an automated checking mechanism which searches the constabulary IT systems, using the address at which the incident occurred and telephone number. This search provides details of any previous incidents or warnings and may include a response plan advising officers attending the scene of what actions they need to consider when dealing with the incident. These checks will highlight if a victim has already been identified as a vulnerable or repeat victim and will assist in determining the appropriate initial response and risk assessment.

Call handlers assess domestic abuse incidents that are 'happening now' as a grade 1 response (attendance within ten minutes in urban areas, 20 minutes in rural areas). Otherwise the incident is given a grade 2 response (attendance as soon as possible but within 60 minutes).

The constabulary has defined what makes a victim of domestic abuse a repeat or vulnerable victim. Call handlers use these definitions to identify vulnerable and repeat victims at the first point of contact. To assist them, they will question

callers to ensure they gather all relevant information about the incident, victim and previous history (unless the need for an urgent response makes this unrealistic). In the case of a caller being identified as a vulnerable or repeat victim, this is recorded on the constabulary systems in a way that will highlight the issue should the caller contact the police in the future.

Once graded, the incident is passed to a dispatcher. They will use an IT system and GPS to identify and deploy the most appropriate and timely resource to the incident. The dispatcher will carry out additional checks on the constabulary's IT systems and has responsibility for providing background information to attending officers.

In the communication centre based at HQ and with response staff, HMIC found that in the case of incidents requiring an immediate response, dispatchers are not managing resources consistently to ensure the nearest and most appropriate resource is deployed. In addition, when the communication centre is busy, background information is not always provided in sufficient detail to attending officers. This means that officers may take longer than necessary to attend an incident and may not have all available information on which to make the most accurate assessment of risk. This does not help safeguard victims.

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

Supervisors within the communication centres actively track and monitor domestic abuse incidents to ensure the response is correct and timely; that sufficient detail is recorded on the incident log; and that it is appropriately closed. In addition, all incidents are overseen by the public protection units (PPU) based in each of the three (north, south and west) territorial policing areas (TPA) to ensure the incidents are appropriately managed at a local level.

By talking to staff and a review of incident logs, HMIC found a timely response had been provided to incidents. In the majority of cases a comprehensive update of the actions taken had been recorded on the log prior to it being closed. This was supported by checking mechanisms at a local level where supervisors ensure their officers submit all the necessary documentation relating to the incident. To ensure all actions have been completed prior to finalisation, these types of incident can only be closed by supervisors in the communication centres.

Regular and robust quality assurance processes are in place for staff within the two communication centres. These processes include supervisors reviewing a sample of domestic abuse incidents 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 constabulary respond to victims of domestic abuse? This includes initial action, including risk assessment

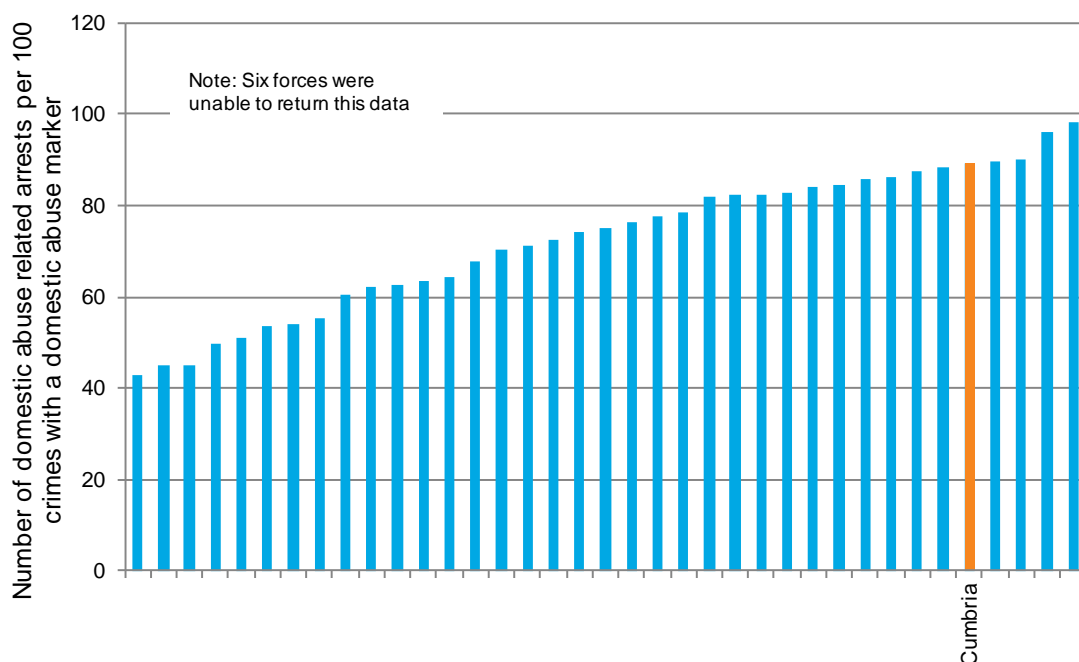
Tackling domestic abuse is a clear priority for the constabulary with direction provided to staff in guidance documents. The constabulary has also invested in poster campaigns, bulletins and briefings from chief officers and senior managers to ensure that staff understand this. The constabulary has also run media campaigns to ensure the public are aware of the issue of domestic abuse.

Training has been provided to most staff. However, there was a lack of understanding regarding the different types of abuse and potential psychological effects. Training has not been provided for staff working on the front enquiry desk in police stations. All officers in 24/7 response and neighbourhood policing teams (NPT) have received training in the domestic abuse, stalking and harassment (DASH) risk assessment process but many lacked understanding regarding the reasons for certain questions being asked of the victim.

Officers attending incidents involving domestic abuse are mindful of the need to ensure the safety of the victim and children with the necessary measures put in place to protect them. Details of children are passed to a unit consisting of co-located partner agencies for assessment and any necessary intervention. The constabulary has also been running an initiative with some schools to alert them when a child has been involved in an incident of domestic abuse. Investigations are allocated to staff based on the level of risk to the victim and are regularly reviewed by supervisors to ensure positive action has been taken.

For every 100 domestic abuse crimes recorded there were 89 arrests in Cumbria. For most forces the number is between 45 and 90.

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



Source: HMIC data collection

Tackling domestic abuse is a clear priority for Cumbria Constabulary with both the police and crime commissioner (PCC) and chief officers providing strong leadership on the issue. This is reinforced in the PCC’s Police and crime plan 2013–17 and the constabulary’s strategic plans.

In the summer of 2013 the PCC commissioned a review of how domestic abuse is tackled across the county by both the police and partner agencies. The review has recently been completed and the PCC aims to put in place multi-agency plans to address the findings. His overall aim is to increase the reporting of domestic abuse and reduce the number of repeat victims, incidents and perpetrators.

Progress against the police and crime plan and other constabulary plans is predominantly monitored and managed through performance development conferences (PDC). These are held on a quarterly basis and chaired by chief officers.

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

Domestic abuse has also been raised as an issue with the public through various media campaigns, with the aim of encouraging victims to report domestic abuse and send a message to perpetrators about the harm domestic abuse causes. The campaigns are run at times when the constabulary has seen historic rises in such abuse, for example, at Christmas, New Year and during high-profile football tournaments such as the World Cup.

HMIC found that staff identified tackling domestic abuse as a constabulary priority and were clear about how they contributed to delivering the aims of the constabulary's plans. They described how the constabulary has invested in poster campaigns, bulletins and briefings to staff from chief officers and senior managers to ensure the issue is reinforced as a priority.

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

The constabulary has made an investment in training staff in domestic abuse including coercive control, stalking, harassment and so-called honour-based violence. Training has been predominantly provided using e-learning (training provided electronically) enhanced by inputs from specialist staff and partner agencies. Interviews with officers and staff dealing with victims showed this to be the case. However, there was a lack of understanding regarding the different types of abuse, such as coercive control and of the overall psychological effects of abuse. This is an issue for the constabulary as staff may not recognise and understand less obvious types of abuse and therefore miss opportunities to make victims safer.

Enquiry staff working in police stations are a first point of contact for victims reporting incidents of domestic abuse. However, HMIC found the majority of staff have received little or no training in domestic abuse. Currently they use their professional judgement, taking sufficient details to enable the communication centres to create an incident log and arrange for the appropriate response. This means that victims do not receive a consistent level of response when they first contact the police.

All officers in 24/7 response and neighbourhood policing teams have received training in DASH. Interviews with staff from 24/7 response, NPTs, and their supervisors confirmed training had been provided and understood. Domestic abuse has been part of student officer and detective training for a number of years with the aims, objectives and contents changing over time to reflect legislation and good practice.

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. 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. DASH is designed to assess risk when all questions are asked and the result viewed in its entirety. Not to ask all the questions may mean that officers are not able to properly assess risk.

The DASH form is entered onto the constabulary IT systems and officers use professional judgement to grade the level of risk to the victim as high, medium or standard. The information and grading is then quality assured by staff in the PPU's.

In cases involving children, staff must also complete full details on the IT system under the section marked 'Vulnerable Child'. This enables details to be referred to the county's triage unit (consisting of co-located representatives from the constabulary, children's services and health services) for assessment and any necessary intervention thus ensuring the safety of children.

To improve the way any risks to children are managed the constabulary has been running an initiative with schools in the south of the county. For those cases involving children, graded as medium and high risk, the constabulary will make contact with a nominated person at the child's school to alert them of the child's involvement and any associated risks. This initiative is currently being introduced across the rest of the constabulary area. Such sharing of information improves partners' ability to protect children who are in families where domestic abuse is occurring.

Staff spoken to by HMIC confirmed their ability to apply discretion and professional judgement at any stage of the risk assessment process. However, many lacked understanding regarding the DASH process, specifically the reasons for certain questions being asked of the victim. In addition, there was a lack of supervision when the questions were being asked of the victim, to ensure they were asked appropriately. This lack of understanding is an issue for the constabulary, as staff may not recognise some types of domestic abuse and may therefore not make necessary arrangements to improve victim safety.

Domestic abuse incidents given a grade 1 response will usually be attended by 24/7 response officers and grade 2 incidents attended by 24/7 response or neighbourhood policing teams (NPT), if available. Their initial and immediate action is to reduce the risk to the victim by improving their safety and where necessary arrest the perpetrator. HMIC reviewed 12 domestic abuse cases and

found in almost every case an arrest was made, where the perpetrator was present at the scene of the incident when police arrived.

In cases where the level of risk to the victim is assessed as standard, background checks will be made and they will usually be provided with advice and the contact details of PPU's and other support agencies. For those assessed to be at medium risk, they will usually be supported by staff from either response or PPU's. In cases where the perpetrator has been arrested, staff from the custody investigation team (CIT) will usually take responsibility for victim care. Staff will have responsibility for completing investigation and safety plans for the victim, both of these will be recorded on the constabulary IT systems.

Victims assessed as being at high risk will be dealt with by PPU's who will complete and manage investigations and safety plans. These victims and those assessed as medium risk 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. This support will continue throughout any court process.

HMIC reviewed the response to domestic abuse incidents and how risk assessments and safety plans are monitored and managed predominantly by supervisors in CIT and PPU's. On a daily basis the senior management teams in each of the constabulary's three TPAs, hold a management meeting. As part of this meeting they will scrutinise domestic abuse incidents in terms of actions; victim safety planning; and perpetrators wanted for arrest, to ensure that each has been properly completed.

HMIC found that officers conduct an investigation to a satisfactory standard and keep victims updated. The majority of cases are investigated by staff in either PPU's or CITs. Our review of 12 cases found in the majority of investigations that the quality of evidence collected was of a reasonable standard. Victims are asked for their preferences regarding how contact is made with them by officers. This will include details of the method of contact and frequency and will be recorded on the constabulary's IT system. All contact with the victim is recorded and updated accordingly. This is regularly reviewed by the officer and their supervisors to ensure ongoing compliance with the victim's wishes. This is positive as it is essential that victims are updated throughout the criminal justice process in order that they are aware of and understand what stage their case has reached, and what this means.

Investigation plans which detail what an officer needs to do to complete an investigation, 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. Our review of cases found 10 of the 12 cases had an investigation plan in place.

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 cams (cameras worn by staff on their clothing) to ensure all possible evidence is secured without relying solely on evidence from the victim. There have been increases in the number of such prosecutions but the constabulary continues to work with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to ensure further progress. The use of body cams is a recent initiative in some parts of the constabulary and there have been issues regarding the quality of footage being captured by the cameras. This is being addressed as staff get used to operating the equipment. It is essential that the constabulary continues to develop the opportunities for such evidence-based prosecutions.

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

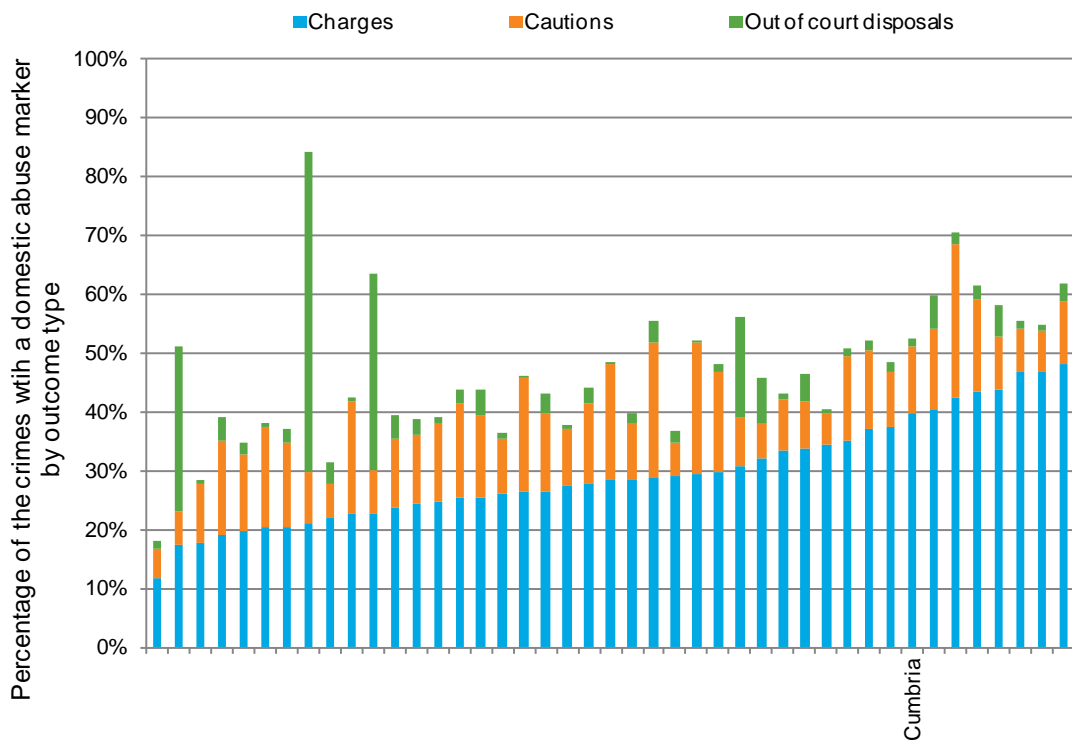
All cases assessed as high, medium or standard risk using DASH are reviewed by specialist staff. They work closely with partner agencies to ensure the risk assessment process is based on all available information. However, these quality assurance processes were inconsistent across the constabulary. Currently, specialist staff deal with all high-risk victims and some medium-risk. The custody investigation teams deal with most other victims and perpetrators. Safety plans for high risk victims are managed by staff in the public protection units and custody investigation teams mainly deal with plans for medium and standard-risk victims, where an arrest has been made.

The three multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) are regarded as working well and there are good relationships with partners which means that information is exchanged promptly and risk assessed, and safety plans are put in place to reduce risk.

Staff throughout the constabulary take responsibility for making victims safe. However, the knowledge of frontline staff regarding the support services available for victims of domestic abuse was inconsistent across the constabulary.

Cumbria recorded 2,308 domestic abuse related crimes for the 12 months to the end of August 2013. Of these crimes 40 percent resulted in a charge, 11 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 2013⁹

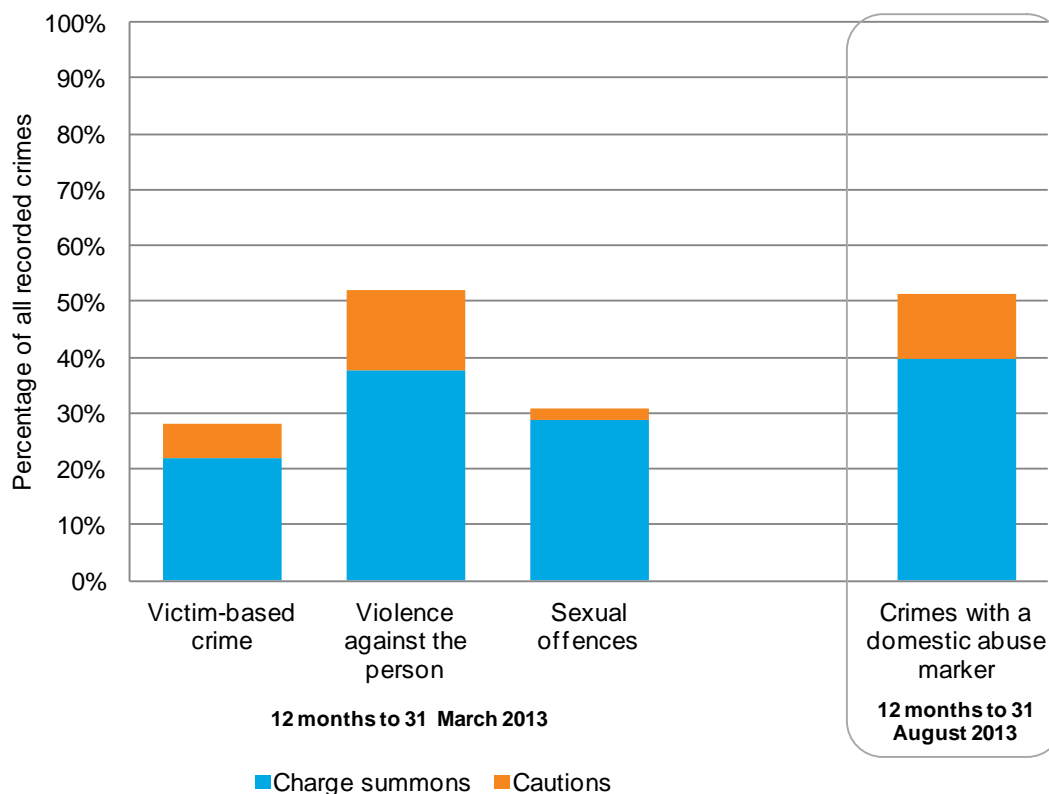


Source: HMIC data collection

Cumbria Constabulary charge 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 constabulary delivers policing services with two operational commands – crime and territorial policing, each led by a chief superintendent. Within crime command is the area of business called ‘protecting vulnerable people’ (PVP), this is led by a detective superintendent. They have strategic responsibility for domestic abuse supported by a detective chief inspector (DCI) with operational responsibility for three public protection units (PPUs), each led by a detective inspector. Although the PPU are managed centrally, one is based in each of the three TPAs with local responsibility for public protection issues (including domestic abuse). Each team is made up of nine detective constables and is led by a detective sergeant.

As part of the constabulary’s change programme it has recently reviewed the capacity and capability within the crime command. This has included an

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

assessment of whether their resourcing meets demand. In response to the findings of this review staffing in the PPU's has been aligned to a shift pattern which now provides cover in the units 8.00am to 10.00pm for seven days a week. However, at the time of this inspection there were a small number of staff vacancies in the units and staff felt this had the potential to impact negatively on the new working arrangements as there were insufficient staff available to deal with demand. The inspection team are satisfied that the constabulary is aware of the issues, with plans in place to address them as soon as possible.

As detailed earlier in this report, every victim of domestic abuse is subject of the risk-assessment process, devised to identify the level of risk to victims. Staff within the PPU's carry out the risk-assessment quality-assurance process after the initial assessment has been completed by the officer in the case.

The risk assessment process has three objectives:

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

The PPU's work closely with staff from partner agencies, such as social services (adult and child) and health services and are therefore able to seek specialist advice to ensure the risk assessment process is based on all available information. However, HMIC found that quality assurance processes were inconsistent across the constabulary with differing levels of scrutiny being applied to the risk assessment. This is a concern, as what is acceptable in one part of the constabulary may not be acceptable in another, and this may mean that victims will receive a variable service.

The majority of those working in PPU's and CITs are fully trained detectives. Most staff have received specific domestic abuse training as well as working through a personal portfolio to develop skills and awareness. PPU and CIT officers spoken to by HMIC felt they had received sufficient training in respect of fulfilling their role.

Currently PPU staff deal with suspects in cases of all offences committed against victims considered at high risk and some at medium risk depending on the circumstances. CITs deal with suspects for most offences against victims considered to be of standard and medium risk.

The constabulary recognises the importance of working with partner agencies to tackle domestic abuse. Evidence of this is provided by the work of the triage

unit. They have improved the safety of children by providing a joined-up approach which has been further enhanced by having agencies co-located. In addition HMIC was provided with numerous examples of PPU, CITs and NPTs working in partnership with local authorities; the crown prosecution service (CPS); probation; health; and the voluntary sector to reduce the risk to victims. There are detailed plans in place to extend the current arrangements for the triage unit to include education and adult services. The timescales for this are April 2014 with the intention of centralising a number of processes relating to the management of domestic abuse cases. This will mean that information about victims of domestic abuse and their families is shared quickly and a full picture of risk developed as soon as possible.

The constabulary is also represented on the local strategic partnership called 'Safer Cumbria'. This consists of representatives from partner agencies with responsibility for developing and implementing strategies to tackle crime and disorder. The partnership has various strategies in place including one for domestic and sexual violence. The strategy is monitored and managed by 'Safer Cumbria' and delivered at a practitioner level by the domestic violence operational group chaired by the detective chief inspector (DCI) PVP. The group is attended by representatives from all agencies dealing with domestic abuse.

Minutes from these various partnership forums show how the constabulary works with partners to tackle domestic abuse. However, on a day-to-day basis it is the activities of the PPUs and triage unit which drives partnership activity to reduce risks to victims and children and manage perpetrators.

Further support is provided to victims through the IDVA services. There are seven IDVAs working across the constabulary area. They are co-located with Impact Housing Association and managed by their outreach service, 'Let Go'. They are predominantly funded locally through various funding streams and their contracts are managed by Cumbria County Council. All victims assessed as being at high and medium risk are referred to an IDVA. The IDVA plays a key role if a victim's case is referred to a multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC). This brings together relevant agencies to share information and provide a co-ordinated response to victims of domestic abuse. The IDVAs 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 the risk to a victim and any special requirements regarding any court process. Once the court case and MARAC meeting has taken place the adviser's role will 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.

HMIC spoke to representatives from partner agencies. They were very positive in terms of their engagement with the constabulary to tackle domestic abuse especially to reduce the risk to victims.

The level of risk to a victim will be regularly reviewed using the DASH assessment and constabulary IT systems updated. This process will depend on the level of risk but is usually carried out by staff in the PPU, CITs or 24/7 response. For high-risk victims the risk assessment is reviewed after 14 days and for medium risk after 28 days, unless there are further incidents, in which case they will be reviewed in line with the new incident.

There are clear roles and responsibilities regarding who deals with victims of domestic abuse with PPU managing high risk victims, and CITs or 24/7 predominantly dealing with those at medium and standard risk.

Safety plans for high risk victims are completed and reviewed by staff in the PPU with support and advice provided by IDVAs. Plans for medium and standard risk victims, where a perpetrator has been arrested, are usually developed and reviewed by the CITs supported by the PPU and in the case of medium risk victims, by IDVAs. Additional support for putting safety plans in place is provided by crime prevention officers based within the three TPAs (two per TPA). They will fit alarms and arrange for additional locks and other safety measures. In the 12 cases reviewed by HMIC there was evidence that victim safety measures had been considered, applied and recorded.

Three MARACs operate in the constabulary area, one for each TPA. They meet monthly and are chaired by the PPU detective inspector for the respective policing area, 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. Governance and oversight of their performance is provided by the MARAC and IDVA Steering Group chaired by the DCI (PVP). 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 two full time MARAC co-ordinators. Since the recent loss of a researcher post in PVP, detectives working in the PPU are currently being used to research and prepare police reports for cases going to MARAC. This is a time-consuming process and is not an appropriate use of a specialist resource.

Representatives from the MARACs and MARAC and IDVA steering group, spoken to as part of this inspection, described attendance as good and the caseload of the meetings as manageable and appropriate. The conferences are seen as well established with information being shared effectively. Decisions and actions are recorded with those responsible for delivering them held to account. They are seen to be effective in reducing the risk to victims but currently have limited options in the management of perpetrators. Although MARACs are considered to be effective there is currently an action plan in place to bring about further improvements. Delivery of the plan is ongoing and is expected to deliver more integrated and dynamic structures and processes.

We found that staff throughout the constabulary take responsibility for making victims safe. HMIC spoke to numerous staff and the commitment to improve the safety of victims was evident throughout. This was the case whether staff worked in the communication centres, front enquiry offices, 24/7 response, NPT, CIT or the PPU.

For example in Carlisle, NPTs work closely with their local PPU, to provide additional support to high risk victims of domestic abuse. They carry out reassurance visits; assist with implementing safety planning and longer term problem solving measures. This is positive and is an indication of how all staff recognise their role in tackling domestic abuse. However, HMIC also found a lack of knowledge regarding the availability of support services for victims of domestic abuse by frontline staff in some areas of the constabulary.

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

The constabulary has effective processes in place to ensure contact is maintained with the victim in cases where a perpetrator is imprisoned, to ensure they are informed about release dates. In the case of a perpetrator being released from court or police bail the constabulary ensures the victim is updated at the earliest opportunity, the risk reassessed and safety plans updated. There was some evidence of serial and serious perpetrators being identified and managed, often by adopting a multi-agency problem-solving approach. However, this approach was not consistently applied across the constabulary. There is only one other partnership-led perpetrator programme. The majority of local officers and commanders understand which families are at greatest risk of domestic abuse in their area but this was not the case in all areas of the constabulary.

The constabulary has processes in place to ensure corporate learning from domestic homicide reviews is turned into positive action, for example through a

review of constabulary policies and procedures or by providing additional training. Domestic abuse is embedded in the constabulary's performance management processes.

The constabulary has effective processes in place to ensure contact is maintained with the victim in cases where a perpetrator is imprisoned to ensure victims are kept informed about release dates. The constabulary's intelligence unit receive notification of prison releases usually from the probation service. They will inform PPU's who ensure the risk level to the victim is reviewed and safety plans are put in place. This is positive as it is essential that victims are informed when perpetrators are released from prison and their level of risk assessed and managed.

In relation to a perpetrator being released from bail the risk level to the victim is reviewed by either the PPU's or the CITs depending on the risk posed to the victim. Staff liaise with the courts to ensure the victim is updated of bail decisions at the earliest opportunity. Safety plans will be updated to reflect any changes in circumstances and risk.

There is some evidence of serial and serious perpetrators being identified and managed by the constabulary, although it acknowledges this as an area for improvement.

The constabulary has some processes in place supported by the constabulary 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 applied consistently across the constabulary. While embryonic in Cumbria, the constabulary recognises the need to develop further perpetrator management.

In relation to other opportunities to manage perpetrators' behaviour, there is only one domestic abuse perpetrator programme in the constabulary area. This is run in the west of the county and called the 'Freedom Project'. However, this is reliant on self-referrals, is often oversubscribed and receives limited funding. It is hoped further improvements regarding how the constabulary and partner agencies identify and manage serial and serious perpetrators will be brought about in response to the findings from the PCC's review of domestic abuse.

Repeat victims are reviewed where there have been no further calls by the PPU's. Supervisors will check that all actions associated with victim safety plans have been completed. This is important as victims can stop calling the police for a variety of reasons not only because the abuse has stopped.

The majority of local officers and commanders understand which families are at greatest risk in their area. Information is brought to their attention in various

ways such as through local briefings, daily management meetings and regular meetings with partner agencies, for example the local authority housing departments. HMIC confirmed this to be the case with staff working in most but not all areas of the constabulary.

The constabulary currently has two ongoing domestic homicide reviews. Reviews are managed by the relevant community safety partnership. The constabulary has processes in place to ensure corporate learning is captured and turned into positive action. A decision will be made regarding the most appropriate way to bring about any changes, for example through a review of constabulary policies and procedures or by providing additional training through forums such as the constabulary's 'continual professional development days'.

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

The constabulary reviews performance in tackling domestic abuse through a range of forums including performance development conferences which are held on a quarterly basis and chaired by a chief officer. Data relating to domestic abuse will be scrutinised in terms of the volume of incidents and any patterns or trends including repeat locations, victims and perpetrators. The current performance management regime is enhanced by the constabulary's IT systems which provide performance data at a constabulary level down to data relating to an individual officer's performance.

At TPA level the 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 TPAs hold meetings to co-ordinate police activity to tackle domestic abuse, which are attended by senior managers, supervisors and detectives. 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. HMIC staff attended one of these meetings and noted evidence of the 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 constabulary specific recommendations should be considered in conjunction with recommendations to all forces set out in the national report.

1. The constabulary should review working practices in the communication centres to improve the way dispatchers manage resources.
2. The constabulary should review procedures in the communication centres to ensure officers attending all incidents of domestic abuse are provided with sufficient background information prior to their attendance.
3. The constabulary should ensure training on domestic abuse includes the psychological effects and the different types of abuse, such as coercive control.
4. The constabulary should provide domestic abuse training to front enquiry desk staff.
5. The constabulary should ensure staff completing the DASH risk assessment process understand the process, specifically the reasons for certain questions being asked of the victim.
6. Supervisors need to ensure staff are able to effectively complete the DASH process with a victim.
7. The quality assurance processes applied to the DASH risk assessment process by the PPUs need to be consistent across the constabulary.
8. The constabulary needs to improve the knowledge frontline staff have of support services for victims of domestic abuse.
9. The constabulary needs to improve the way serial and serious perpetrators of domestic abuse are identified and managed.
10. The constabulary needs to 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 constabulary.

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.