



# Greater Manchester 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.<sup>1</sup> 77 women were killed by their partners or ex-partners in 2012/13.<sup>2</sup> In the UK, one in four young people aged 10 to 24 reported that they experienced domestic violence and abuse during their childhood.<sup>3</sup> Forces told us that crime relating to domestic abuse constitutes some 8 percent of all recorded crime in their area, and one third of their recorded assaults with injury. On average the police receive an emergency call relating to domestic abuse every 30 seconds.

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

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

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

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

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

*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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We inspected all police forces in England and Wales, interviewing senior and operational leads in forces, holding focus groups with frontline staff and partners, and carrying out visits to police stations (which were unannounced) to test the reality of each force's approach with frontline officers. Our inspection teams were supplemented by expert peers, which included public protection 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 Greater Manchester 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.<sup>6</sup> A glossary of frequently used terms also appears at the end of the report.

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

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

# Domestic abuse in Greater Manchester<sup>7</sup>

## Calls for assistance



In Greater Manchester, domestic abuse accounts for 6% of calls to the police for assistance. Of these calls, 16% were from repeat victims.

## Crime

# 8%

Domestic abuse accounts for 8% of all recorded crime.

## Assault with intent

# 17%

Greater Manchester recorded 905 assaults with intent to cause serious harm, of these 154 were domestic abuse related. This is 17% of all assaults with intent to cause serious harm recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

## Assault with injury

# 35%

The force also recorded 12,953 assaults with injury, of these 4,478 were domestic abuse related. This is 35% of all assaults with injury recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

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

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

## Harassment

# 69%

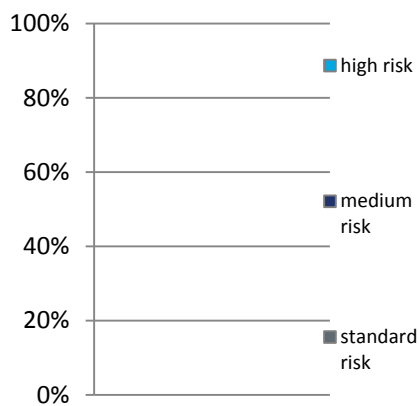
The force recorded 2,429 harassment offences, of these 1,667 were domestic abuse related. This is 69% of all harassment offences recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

## Sexual offences

# 12%

The force also recorded 2,959 sexual offences, of these 353 were domestic abuse related. This is 12% of all sexual offences recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

## Risk levels



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

## Arrests



The force was not able to provide the number of domestic abuse related arrests before the national data was finalised<sup>8</sup>. For most forces the number of domestic abuse related arrests is between 45 and 90 per 100 crimes with a domestic abuse marker for the 12 months to 31 August 2013.

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<sup>8</sup> While the force did not submit arrest data before the submission deadline, since then they have provided the required numbers. There were 72 domestic abuse related arrests per 100 crimes with a domestic abuse marker in Greater Manchester for the 12 months to 31 August 2013.

## Outcomes



Greater Manchester recorded 13,399 domestic abuse related crimes for the 12 months to the end of August 2013. Of these crimes, 44% resulted in a charge, 9% resulted in a caution and, 5% had an out of court disposal, for example, a fixed penalty notice for disorderly conduct.

## Executive summary

HMIC has significant concerns about the ability of Greater Manchester Police to deal consistently and appropriately with victims of domestic abuse and to reduce the risk of harm to them. Domestic abuse is a stated priority for both the police and crime commissioner (PCC) and the force and they continue to invest in skilled and experienced specialist domestic abuse teams. However, these teams deal only with the highest-risk victims who represent a small proportion of all victims. The remainder are dealt with by other police teams. HMIC found serious weaknesses in the understanding of staff about their role and in the processes and systems to manage the risk to victims and keep them safe. The focus is on dealing with the offenders and there is insufficient attention paid to safeguarding the victims.

Given the scale and the seriousness of the areas for improvement, HMIC has concluded that urgent action is needed by the force to address the risks identified in this report.

### Identifying victims

Most requests for police assistance in domestic abuse incidents are identified through calls to the force operational communications room (OCR). HMIC found that call handlers are confident and empathetic when dealing with victims of domestic abuse. However, both they and dispatchers have received only limited specific training in domestic abuse. All OCR staff understood that domestic abuse should be dealt with as a priority and victims should receive prompt police attendance. There was a lack of clarity over the definitions of repeat and vulnerable victims and how this might affect the priority given to the response. The force has systems within the OCR which identify repeat calls from the same address or telephone number, but the systems do not readily identify any history with either victim or offenders by name. This means that officers may be attending an incident without knowing the full history and this may lead them to inaccurately assess the risk faced by the victim.

### Keeping victims safe

Domestic abuse is a stated priority for the PCC and the force. However, HMIC found serious weaknesses in the way the force responds to victims and manages their safeguarding.

High-risk victims who are managed by the specialist domestic abuse team known as the public protection investigation unit (PPIU) get a good, comprehensive response from the police, and their safeguarding is well managed. However, for those victims who are assessed as at standard and medium risk, which represents around 90 percent of all cases, the force cannot be confident that all victims are getting a consistently good service. There is only limited supervision of the initial response to these incidents, training for staff in domestic abuse has been inconsistent and the focus of officers is on dealing with the perpetrator and not the victim.

HMIC is concerned that the current levels of service to black and minority ethnic victims is a weakness. The force needs to take urgent action to ensure that victims who need the service of an interpreter are not disadvantaged.

## **Management of risk**

Where the specialist domestic abuse team takes ownership of the investigation in high-risk cases, there is a robust and effective process for ensuring the victim is safeguarded but where investigations are led by other teams it is less robust. HMIC is concerned that due to the lack of clarity among officers about who is responsible for safeguarding victims assessed as standard and medium risk there is a gap in the level of safeguarding that is provided to victims and a serious risk that insufficient attention is paid by the police to either maintaining effective contact with these victims or planning and supporting their safety. Following the initial attendance at the scene, the focus remains on dealing with the perpetrator and there is insufficient attention paid to safeguarding the victims of domestic abuse.

The force works well in partnership through the multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) where agencies come together to discuss high-risk cases and agree a co-ordinated response to keeping victims safe. However, we found that consistently increasing numbers of referrals to some MARACs may mean that they become unsustainable. Partnerships are complex and challenging in such a large force area, and it does mean that there are inconsistencies in the range and quality of partnership services available to victims dependent upon where they live.

## **Organisational effectiveness at keeping people safe**

HMIC is concerned that there are weaknesses in the force's systems and processes which could mean that they fail to effectively manage risk and adequately safeguard victims. Although all victim risk assessments are reassessed by specialist domestic abuse officers, there can be a significant delay in reviewing the risk assessments in the domestic abuse team during peaks in workloads. This delay means that there is a risk that victims may not get police and partner help in their safeguarding when they need it.

With the exception of high-risk victims, there are no clear processes to ensure that contact is maintained with victims or that their risk is reviewed as the circumstances change. Whilst everyone is clear who is responsible for dealing with the offender, there is confusion among response officers and prisoner processing officers as to who has the responsibility for maintaining contact with the victim.

There are only very limited processes in place to manage serial and serious perpetrators of domestic abuse and their use is inconsistent across the force.

The force has seen an increase in the number of domestic homicides. While reviews have been carried out, the learning from them has not been systematically fed through to frontline officers and supervisors so that improvements in practice can take place.



The force monitors and collects some data on domestic abuse performance but we found little evidence that this data is used in any meaningful way to evaluate the outcomes for victims or to drive improvements in services.

Given the scale and extent of the areas for improvement identified, HMIC have concluded that immediate remedial action is required by the force to address the risks identified if victims of domestic abuse in Greater Manchester are to be properly safeguarded. The force has been asked to share with HMIC an action plan to address the identified risks. HMIC will re-inspect the force to review the progress made.

## Findings

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

Most requests for police assistance in domestic abuse incidents are identified through calls to the force operational communications room (OCR). HMIC found that call handlers are confident and empathetic when dealing with victims of domestic abuse. However, both they and dispatchers have received only limited specific training in domestic abuse. All OCR staff understood that domestic abuse should be dealt with as a priority and victims should receive prompt police attendance. There was a lack of clarity over the definitions of repeat and vulnerable victims and how this might affect the priority given to the response. The force has systems within the OCR which identify repeat calls from the same address or telephone number, but the systems do not readily identify any history with either victim or offenders by name. This means that officers may be attending an incident without knowing the full history and this may lead them to inaccurately assess the risk faced by the victim.

The majority of calls about domestic abuse reported to the force are received in the force's OCR. Identifying that a caller is reporting domestic abuse is the responsibility of the call handlers in the first instance. Through their questioning of the caller, and any further information on the police databases, they will assess the urgency of the police response needed and grade the call accordingly. The telephone system can also pinpoint the location of the caller by the number to aid the call handler. This is helpful in the event of the call being dropped before the caller has given their address. As the details of the call are entered onto the incident log, the police IT systems alert the call handler automatically to any previous recent police involvement with that address or calls from that telephone number. The system does not identify readily either the victim or the offender by name and therefore it may not be immediately apparent that the caller is a repeat victim if the previous incidents took place at a different address.

Having as full a picture of the incident and any background information can help the call handlers and dispatchers make an accurate assessment of the risk faced by the victim and the speed of police response that is needed. Gathering this information means it can also be relayed to the officers attending the incident so that they are prepared for what they might encounter at the scene. However, we found that relevant information can be stored on a number of different police databases and checking all of them during busy periods can be a challenge. We also found that during peak workloads neither the call handlers nor the dispatchers have the time to consistently check all of the systems, which means that officers are attending some incidents without knowing the full background.

There was a lack of clarity among call handlers as to the precise force definition of a repeat victim of domestic abuse. Although there was a consistent understanding that when a victim makes their first call for police help, they are likely to have been subjected to domestic abuse on numerous previous occasions, it was not clear that a repeat victim was given any greater priority.

There was also a lack of clarity about how a vulnerable victim may be identified and call handlers are not asking questions of the caller routinely to check if they are vulnerable and may need a particular response from police or partners.

Call handlers were clear that domestic abuse is a priority for the police and domestic abuse incidents are always graded as either Grade 1, an immediate response (attendance within 15 minutes) or Grade 2, a priority response (attendance within one hour). Only in exceptional circumstances should a domestic abuse victim receive a slower response. Most calls receive an immediate response. Downgrading a call, from an immediate response to a priority one, once it reaches the dispatch centre requires authorisation by a supervisor.

We found call handlers to be confident and empathetic in dealing with victims of domestic abuse. They are provided with a reminder card which sets out the type of information to be obtained from callers. During their initial training staff receive specific sessions on domestic abuse. However, subsequent training has been limited, as has training for dispatchers which primarily consisted of computer-based self-learning packages, which most staff did not feel was effective. Training for staff working in the dispatch centres has been centralised which has removed their dedicated trainers.

HMIC found that supervision of domestic abuse incidents within the dispatch centres is patchy. While there is some degree of supervisor oversight on the higher-risk incidents, those cases at standard or medium level are not assessed by first response line managers to review the risk assessments completed by their staff.

The police and crime commissioner (PCC) has recently provided funding to run a pilot scheme providing domestic abuse specialists to work in the accident and emergency departments of five Greater Manchester hospitals. Their role will be to identify and counsel victims who are presenting themselves for treatment for injuries caused as a result of domestic abuse. The role will further raise awareness among other health professionals of the need to identify and support victims to report abuse to the police. The scheme had only just been launched during the inspection so it is not possible to evaluate the outcomes at this stage.

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

Domestic abuse is a stated priority for the PCC and the force. However, HMIC found serious weaknesses in the way the force responds to victims and manages their safeguarding.

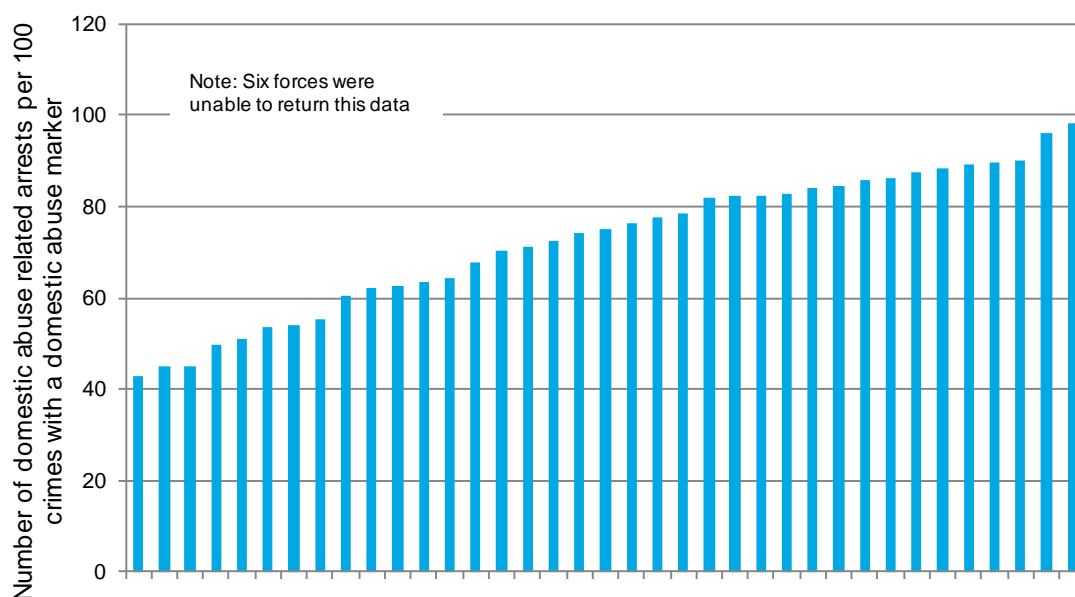
High-risk victims who are managed by the specialist domestic abuse team known as the public protection investigation unit (PPIU) get a good, comprehensive response from the police, and their safeguarding is well managed. However, for those victims who are assessed as at standard and medium risk, which represents around 90 percent of all cases, the force cannot be confident that all victims are getting a consistently good service. There is only limited supervision of the initial response to these incidents, training for

staff in domestic abuse has been inconsistent and the focus of officers is on dealing with the perpetrator and not the victim.

HMIC is concerned that the current levels of service to black and minority ethnic victims is a weakness. The force needs to take urgent action to ensure that victims who need the service of an interpreter are not disadvantaged.

The force was not able to provide the number of domestic abuse related arrests before the national data was finalised<sup>9</sup> and is therefore not included in the following chart. For most forces the number of domestic abuse related arrests is between 45 and 90 per 100 crimes with a domestic abuse marker.

**Figure 1: Number of domestic abuse related arrests per 100 crimes with a domestic abuse marker for the 12 months to 31 August 2013<sup>10</sup>**



Source: HMIC data collection

Tackling domestic abuse is a clear priority for Greater Manchester Police and it is one of the strategic priorities in the PCC's police and crime plan, with a focus on protecting victims and intervening earlier to prevent the escalation of risk. As part of its change programme, the force has set up a project group with the

<sup>9</sup> While the force did not submit arrest data before the submission deadline, since then they have provided the required numbers. There were 72 domestic abuse related arrests per 100 crimes with a domestic abuse marker in Greater Manchester for the 12 months to 31 August 2013.

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

specific remit to review and improve services to victims of domestic abuse. However, HMIC found serious weaknesses in the police's current response to victims and their management of the risks they face.

Domestic abuse incidents are attended in the first instance by response officers working from each of the force's divisions. They are required to carry out a formal risk assessment using the nationally recognised domestic abuse, stalking and harassment (DASH) risk assessment tool at every incident. They are expected to use their professional judgement in reducing the immediate risk to the victim. HMIC found that response officers are clear that the force policy is to take 'positive action' in responding to domestic abuse; this usually takes the form of arresting the perpetrator where it is appropriate to do so. Officers grade their assessment of the risk posed to the victim as standard, medium or high. There is no supervision of the risk assessment or the safeguarding actions taken at this first attendance. Response officers submit the DASH risk assessment to the specialist domestic abuse team for their reassessment. HMIC found a general view among officers that they perceive that risk assessment and victim support is done by the domestic abuse team and the responsibility for safeguarding the victim passes to the public protection investigation unit (PPIU) along with the DASH form. Supervisors review the incident and sign off for closure without seeing the DASH risk assessment or any safety planning. This means that the force cannot be confident that victims are consistently getting the response they need to keep them safe.

At times of high demand for services and when response officers are sent on their own to attend domestic abuse incidents, it becomes difficult for them in the immediate aftermath to speak to the victim, the alleged abuser and any witnesses separately to gather their separate accounts of the incident. Officers are aware of the impact that domestic abuse has on children. They stated they would try to speak to children present, however, if they were on their own in attending, they found it difficult to speak to the children separately. They do record the details of the children on the risk assessment form and the PPIU refer cases to the local authority children's services where a child reports an incident, or any children present are under the age of five, the victim is pregnant and all cases deemed as high risk where children are present. Out-of-hours access to children's social services varied across the force, with some divisions having access to full facilities of social services and others having none.

Standard and medium risk cases (which represent over 90 percent of all domestic abuse in Greater Manchester) where a crime has been committed and an arrest made are dealt with the prisoner processing units (PPU). The PPU have responsibility for completing both the safety and the investigation plans and for keeping the victim updated. We found that the response to dealing with perpetrators was effective and handovers between response officers and PPU teams of those perpetrators arrested for offences relating to domestic abuse received a proactive and timely follow up. However, the response to victims was much more variable; some victims may have not been contacted at all or may be contacted by numerous different officers regarding the progression of their cases. Standard-risk victims may receive no follow up at all other than a standard letter directing them to voluntary sector support services sent out from the domestic abuse team following their review some days later.

The majority of high-risk cases are investigated by specialist domestic abuse investigators in the PPIU. We found these staff to be experienced and have good investigative abilities to progress cases to a good standard. They work alongside independent domestic violence advisers (IDVAs) and ensure victims are informed and maintain contact whilst cases progress through the criminal justice process.

Staff involved in investigations and building prosecution cases recognise the enormous value in gaining good quality video evidence of the initial attendance at an incident. Officers in Greater Manchester are provided body-worn video cameras and the force has excellent examples of this type of evidence leading to convictions without the need for a victim to give evidence against their abuser. However, despite their availability and their effectiveness, they are seldom used by officers and there is no force policy to mandate their use. HMIC found good use of body-worn cameras in North Manchester but this was not consistent across the force area.

There are weaknesses in the force's approach to training. Training for specialist domestic abuse staff is good and highly regarded. However, HMIC found that training for all other staff, including call handlers, dispatch officers, response officers and integrated neighbourhood policing teams (INPTs) varied across the force. Some staff were unable to recall any training in domestic abuse beyond the computer-based self-learning packages which staff see as being of limited value. HMIC is recommending that in the future domestic abuse training should be face to face, rather than on-line.

With the exception of specialist domestic abuse staff, frontline staff had limited understanding of the broad spectrum of domestic abuse including stalking, harassment, coercive control, forced marriage and so-called honour-based violence. There has been no comprehensive training needs assessment and no evaluation of training has taken place to establish its effectiveness.

During November 2013, the PCC ran a 'Domestic Violence Awareness week' with a series of events and campaigns to promote public awareness. This included a number of meetings to obtain victims' views of the services to safeguard and support them. In addition, the force has produced a range of communications material such as posters and leaflets. Internally these are aimed at increasing staff awareness, and externally, to encourage more reporting of domestic abuse. Specific campaigns have been aimed at groups who have traditionally been less confident at reporting domestic abuse.

The force is aware that there is a significant amount of domestic abuse that goes unreported in some minority communities and more work needs to be done by the police to gain the confidence of victims from some black and minority ethnic (BME) communities. Given the very diverse nature of the force's area, HMIC was concerned to hear from victim support partners that there are significant weaknesses in the services currently available to domestic abuse victims from BME communities in Greater Manchester, particularly for interpreter services. We were given recent examples including one where the 13-year-old daughter of a female victim was used by the attending officer to interpret her mother's account of abuse suffered at the hands of the child's father. We were also told of another example where a local male community

leader was asked by the police officer to interpret for another female victim; the victim revealed subsequently to Women's Aid that the community leader knew the family and he had tried to persuade the victim to remain with her abusive husband. It is vital that the force use skilled, professional and independent interpreter services so that victims can be confident that they will get the service they need from the police.

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

Where the specialist domestic abuse team takes ownership of the investigation in high-risk cases, there is a robust and effective process for ensuring the victim is safeguarded but where investigations are led by other teams it is less robust. HMIC is concerned that due to the lack of clarity among officers about who is responsible for safeguarding victims assessed as standard and medium risk there is a gap in the level of safeguarding that is provided to victims and a serious risk that insufficient attention is paid by the police to either maintaining effective contact with these victims or planning and supporting their safety. Following the initial attendance at the scene, the focus remains on dealing with the perpetrator and there is insufficient attention paid to safeguarding the victims of domestic abuse.

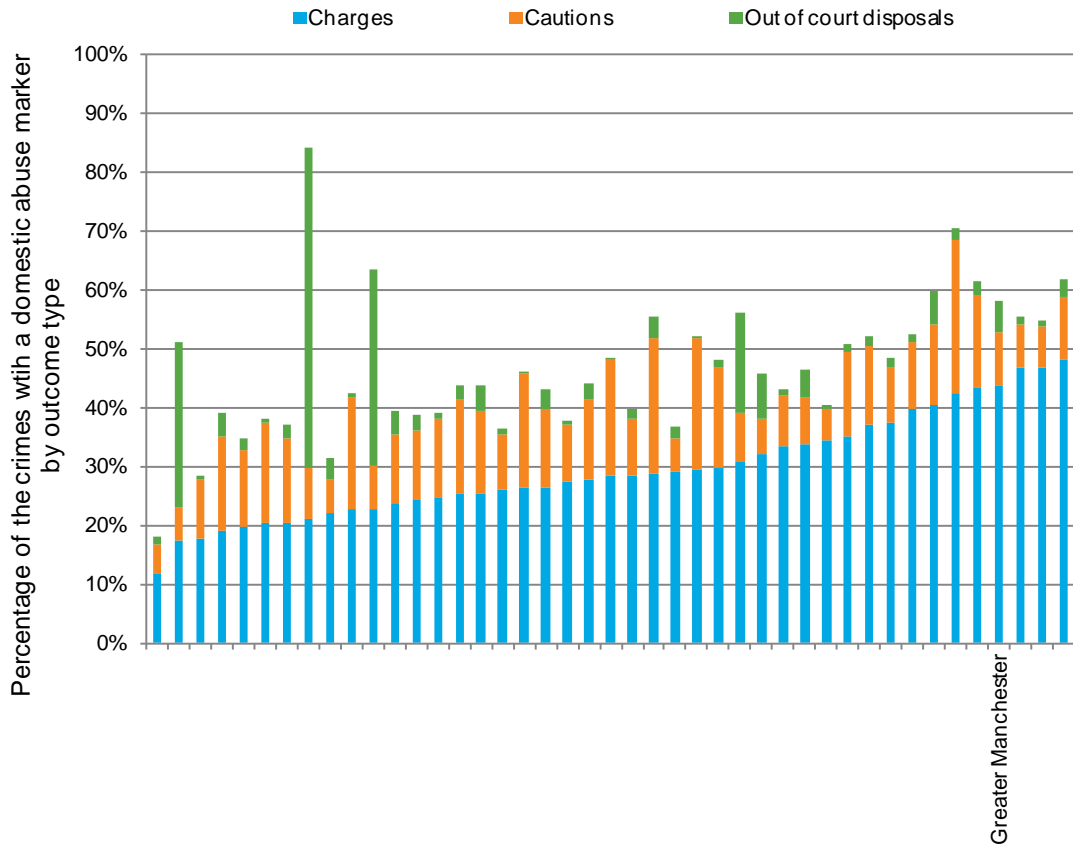
The force works well in partnership through the multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) where agencies come together to discuss high-risk cases and agree a co-ordinated response to keeping victims safe. However, we found that consistently increasing numbers of referrals to some MARACs may mean that they become unsustainable. Partnerships are complex and challenging in such a large force area, and it does mean that there are inconsistencies in the range and quality of partnership services available to victims dependent upon where they live.

Greater Manchester recorded 13,399 domestic abuse related crimes for the 12 months to the end of August 2013<sup>11</sup>. Of these crimes 44 percent resulted in a charge, 9 percent resulted in a caution and, 5 percent had an out of court disposal, for example a fixed penalty notice for disorderly conduct.

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

**Figure 2: Percentage of different outcome types used for crimes with a domestic abuse marker for the 12 months to 31 August 2013<sup>12</sup>**



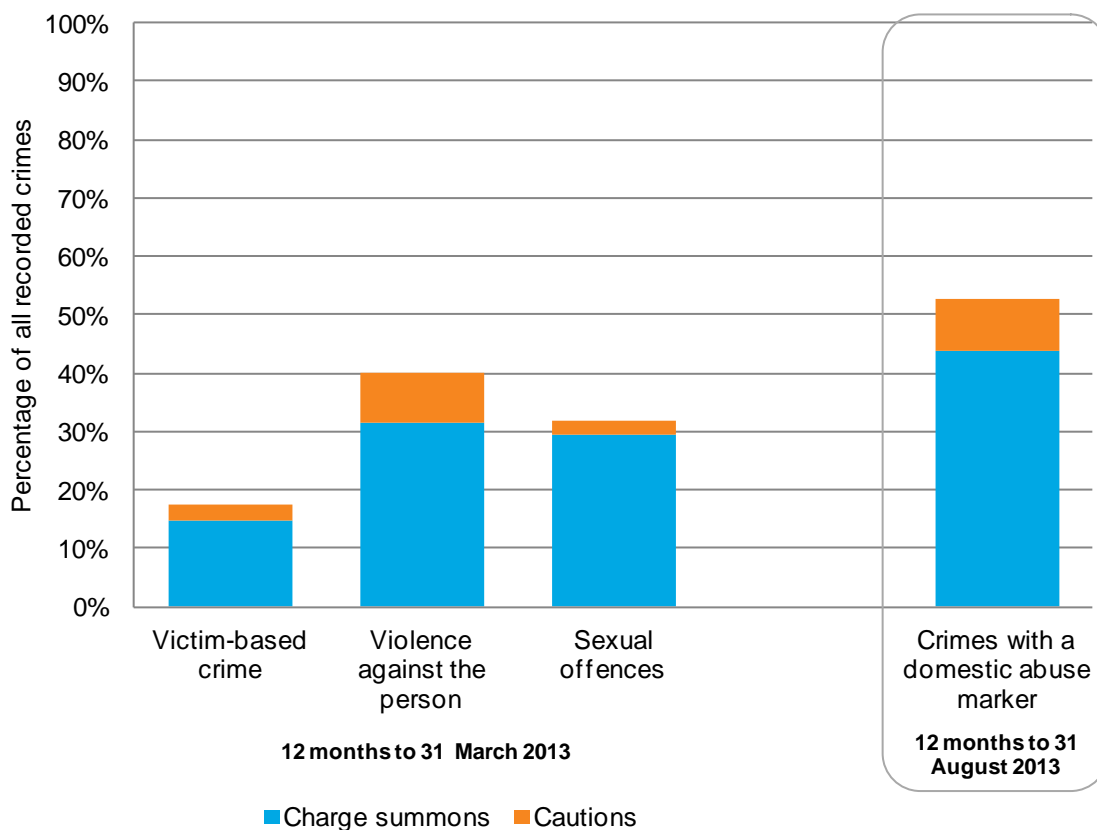
Source: HMIC data collection

Greater Manchester 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.

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



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



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

HMIC found a lack of clarity over roles and responsibilities between domestic abuse specialists and response staff. The view of a response officer is that dealing with domestic abuse incidents is now simple and straightforward because the decision-making about subsequent action has been taken from them. They submit a DASH risk assessment and the responsibility for the victim then passes to a specialist team and the response team are no longer accountable for the victims' safety. In reality, the specialist team deals only with the investigation and safeguarding for high-risk victims. It has no direct involvement with either developing or overseeing the safety planning for standard or medium risk victims. It is likely that a victim assessed as standard risk will get no continuing safety planning, even if the offender is prosecuted. Where the offender is not arrested, the victim may have no further contact at all from the police, beyond a standard letter being sent out to them from the PPIU some days after the incident providing contact detail for victim support services. The PPIU officers admitted to sending these letters out even where the victim

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

was still living with the perpetrator, when there is a risk that this may inflame the situation, placing the victim at greater risk from further abuse. We found that levels of risk are not routinely reassessed and any safety measures needed by the victim are not reviewed as the circumstances change throughout the process; for example, as a court date approaches, stress levels and risk can increase and when an offender is released from custody. HMIC is concerned that there is a real risk that standard and medium risk victims may not be adequately safeguarded by the police.

HMIC found that the PPIU specialist staff work well with partners in dealing with high risk victims. There is some good, purposeful work with partners to safeguard and support victims of domestic abuse. Partnership working across a large force area can be challenging for the police. Greater Manchester Police deals with ten different local authorities, each with different administrations and organisational structures to deal with domestic abuse. For example, we found IDVA provision to be patchy across the force area, with some areas having much less provision than others and all having very fragile and uncertain funding arrangements. For example, there is a waiting list for victims to receive support from an IDVA in Manchester, whereas in Tameside they are immediately available.

The MARAC process is effective and well regarded by partner agencies, and the force plays an active and constructive role in chairing and facilitating MARACs. However, HMIC found that there has been a consistent increase in referrals over the last three years. Some of the busier districts have over 60 high-risk cases discussed at a MARAC meeting each month and are finding it difficult to cope with the volume and still continue to provide a quality response to this level of referrals.

There are robust information-sharing protocols, with all agencies submitting the same DASH assessment form to refer cases to the MARACs. These are put onto the multi-agency platform which allows easy access for police and partners to share real-time information and enable swift action to reduce the risk to victims and protect them and their children.

HMIC found that there were some weaknesses in working across the criminal justice system in supporting victims through the process. For example, staff told us that the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) formerly employed dedicated domestic abuse lawyers, who had specialist expertise; however, they have moved and have not been replaced. In addition, the court services are not routinely providing timely information on outcomes of cases, which means offenders often are released on bail without PPIUs or other staff being advised early enough to review the risk assessments for victims. We found little evidence of special measures being offered to victims to help them deal with, what can be, a very traumatic court appearance. These special measures can include, for example, being able to give evidence by video link or behind a screen and can sometimes prevent a court case failing because a victim is unable to deal with the trauma of giving evidence.

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

HMIC is concerned that there are weaknesses in the force's systems and processes which could mean that they fail to effectively manage risk and adequately safeguard victims. Although all victim risk assessments are reassessed by specialist domestic abuse officers, there can be a significant delay in reviewing the risk assessments in the domestic abuse team during peaks in workloads. This delay means that there is a risk that victims may not get police and partner help in their safeguarding when they need it.

With the exception of high-risk victims, there are no clear processes to ensure that contact is maintained with victims or that their risk is reviewed as the circumstances change. Whilst everyone is clear who is responsible for dealing with the offender, there is confusion among response officers and prisoner processing officers as to who has the responsibility for maintaining contact with the victim.

There are only very limited processes in place to manage serial and serious perpetrators of domestic abuse and their use is inconsistent across the force.

The force has seen an increase in the number of domestic homicides. While reviews have been carried out, the learning from them has not been systematically fed through to frontline officers and supervisors so that improvements in practice can take place.

The force monitors and collects some data on domestic abuse performance but we found little evidence that this data is used in any meaningful way to evaluate the outcomes for victims or to drive improvements in services.

Given the scale and extent of the areas for improvement identified, HMIC have concluded that immediate remedial action is required by the force to address the risks identified if victims of domestic abuse in Greater Manchester are to be properly safeguarded. The force has been asked to share with HMIC an action plan to address the identified risks. HMIC will re-inspect the force to review the progress made.

DASH risk assessments are submitted to the PPIU teams within each division where every risk assessment is reviewed by a specialist officer who can decide to change the risk rating either upwards or downwards following this reassessment. There can be a significant delay in reviewing the risk assessments in the PPIU during peaks in workloads. Although the officer will prioritise the high-risk victims to be reviewed first, there is a risk that a high-risk victim may have been wrongly assessed in the first instance as standard or medium and may subsequently be waiting in a backlog for up to a week without any police follow up or safeguarding.

Where PPIU takes ownership of the investigation in high-risk cases, there is a robust and effective process for ensuring the victim is safeguarded but where investigations are led by response, INPT or prisoner processing units (PPU) it is less robust. There is a strong focus on positive action in terms of arresting a

perpetrator, but there is less clarity around who is responsible for follow-up action with victims or who owns the safeguarding responsibility for the victims. While everyone is clear who is responsible for dealing with the offender, there is confusion among response officers and PPU officers as to who has the responsibility for maintaining contact with the victim. As a result a victim may not be contacted at all, thus increasing their risk, or may be contacted by numerous different officers from different teams. In either case, this is likely to reduce a victim's confidence in the police and may make them more likely not to support a prosecution or not to report a future incident.

HMIC is concerned that there are no clear processes in place to ensure that victims are updated when a perpetrator is released from custody. There is also a lack of understanding about who is responsible for reviewing ongoing risk for medium and standard risk victims following the initial attendance and action to deal with the offender. There are no systems in place to ensure that the risk posed to a victim will be reviewed at all and there is limited supervision of any safety planning that has taken place so the force cannot be confident that these victims are adequately safeguarded.

HMIC found that there is no routine follow up with victims who are no longer contacting the police. Where there have been no further calls from victims who historically have been victims on a number of occasions there is no mechanism to understand why they have stopped calling.

There is limited involvement from neighbourhood teams in keeping domestic abuse victims safe. We found that neighbourhood officers are not routinely made aware of who their high-risk victims are or who the serious and serial perpetrators are in their areas. There is a function within their IT system to interrogate this, but it is seldom used. There are no systems for managing serial domestic abuse perpetrators actively within the neighbourhood teams, unlike serial burglars for example, where there are robust systems in place to involve neighbourhood officers in activities to reduce reoffending.

Some integrated offender management teams across the force include details of domestic abuse offenders in their management programmes. We found good practice in Tameside and Oldham where the most serious repeat domestic abuse offenders are proactively managed by police and partners together to reduce their offending and risk to victims; however, this was not consistent across the force area.

Greater Manchester Police has demonstrated a willingness to improve and innovate in its services to domestic abuse victims. It has been one of the four forces nationally involved in the pilot of 'Clare's Law', which enables the police to disclose someone's criminal record to their partner where the information might help them to make a decision to leave a potentially dangerous situation. People who suspect their partner may have been involved in domestic abuse of previous partners have a 'right to ask' the police to disclose any relevant records. The police also proactively inform someone that their partner has a history of domestic abuse. A number of disclosures have been made regarding high-risk perpetrators and vulnerable victims. The pilot outcomes were considered to be positive by staff, although there was a view that it was overly bureaucratic. Partners were less positive, raising concerns that the disclosure

powers had not been well communicated to frontline staff and once again there were inconsistencies in practice across the force. They gave us recent examples where police officers, when asked, had not been able to provide any information to victims as to the process.

Greater Manchester has also been one of the national pilot forces for a new police power to deal with domestic abuse known as domestic violence protection notices (DVPNs). The police can issue and apply to the court for a domestic violence protection order (DVPO) against a perpetrator and can, for example, prohibit them from going to the home of the victim for up to 28 days. These are to provide emergency protection for victims and to give them an opportunity to have the time to seek help and support in making them and their family safer and deciding on their future options. It also gives an opportunity to ensure that a co-ordinated approach across partner agencies is agreed for the protection of victims and the management of offenders.

Police and partners welcomed the use of the notices and orders, however, their use was inconsistent across the force. Third-sector partners were particularly enthusiastic about their potential contribution to victim support, but were concerned that again staff at the frontline did not know enough about the process. We found a mixed picture of knowledge and understanding among staff; some had some understanding but they described the application process as being complex and bureaucratic and others were not aware of the process or what was required of them. A full evaluation of both pilot schemes has been undertaken by the Home Office.

The force is also working with Manchester City Council as part of the government's troubled families programme which aims to help the most troubled families turn their lives around and provide their children with a better future. While domestic abuse is a key feature within many of these families, the police focus has tended to be on those involved in committing serious and acquisitive crime.

The force has seen an increase in the number of domestic murders over recent years. In each case a domestic homicide review (DHR) will be conducted to ensure that the police and all partners learn any lessons for the future and improve the way they work separately and in partnership. The force has a serious case review team within the public protection division responsible for managing the response, assessment and recommendations from DHRs and other serious case reviews. However, we found that although there are learning points and actions they are not fed down to all staff systematically. The force has recognised that more needs to be done; on 02 December 2013, the force hosted a domestic homicide review conference which included bringing partners together to develop a better approach to learning from reviews including lessons learned from multi-agency approaches and planning for the future.

The force monitors and collects some data on domestic abuse performance but we found little evidence that this data is used in any meaningful way to evaluate the outcomes for victims or to drive improvements in services.

## 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 HMIC's national report on domestic abuse.

1. The force should review force processes at first point of contact to ensure all relevant information on previous incidents is easily accessible and to inform the assessment of risk. In addition, to clarify and apply definitions of 'repeat victim' and 'vulnerable victim' to ensure that they can better identify those most at risk and provide an appropriate response.
2. The force should clarify roles and responsibilities of the various teams involved in dealing with domestic abuse, particularly where victims are assessed as at medium and standard risk, in relation to:
  - investigation;
  - safety planning;
  - keeping victims updated; and
  - on-going monitoring and reassessment of risk.
3. The force should ensure that independent, professional interpreter services are available for domestic abuse victims and offenders and that all frontline officers and supervisors have an understanding of when and how they should be used.
4. The force should review the supervision by first-line managers of all domestic abuse incidents, to ensure that there is appropriate oversight and quality control of the risk assessment and safety planning at the initial attendance and that the quality of initial evidence gathering and handover can be assured.
5. The force should conduct a training needs analysis and develop a training development plan to include all those involved in dealing with domestic abuse. It should ensure that all relevant staff and officers are equipped with the skills and knowledge to identify domestic abuse in all its forms, undertake risk assessments, manage offenders and safeguard victims.
6. The force should work closely with the PCC to support the commissioning arrangements for victim services, in particular, to ensure the consistent and sustainable provision of the IDVA service across the Greater Manchester area.
7. The force should work with partners to review the current workloads of the MARACs across the force area, and consider alternative meeting cycles to limit the number of referrals to each conference and ensure the process remains effective.

8. The force should establish an effective mechanism to ensure that the lessons learned from domestic homicide reviews and other serious case reviews can be systematically communicated throughout the force, and that there are robust systems in place to ensure that where improvements in process and practice are needed they are planned, implemented and monitored.
9. The force should ensure that all performance monitoring information is provided to managers and partners in a way that can be clearly understood and used to drive improvements in end results.

## Glossary

### **Bail conditions**

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

### **Body worn camera**

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

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

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

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

### **CCTV**

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

### **Clare's Law**

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



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

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

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

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

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

### **Coercive control**

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

## **Control room**

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

## **Counter-allegation**

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

## **Crime Scene Investigator**

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

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

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

## **Domestic Homicide Review**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Frontline**

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

### **Golden hour**

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

### **Harassment**

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

## **House-to- house**

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

## **High risk**

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

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

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

## **Incident**

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

## **Intimate Partner Violence**

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

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

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

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

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

## **Medium risk**

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

## **National Domestic Abuse helpline**

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

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

## **Partnership**

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

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

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

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

## **Positive action**

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

## **Problem-solving**

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

## **Refuge**

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

## **Risk assessment**

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

## **Safeguarding**

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

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

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

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

## **Standard Risk**

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

## **Victim Personal Statement**

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

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

## **Vulnerable**

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

## **What Works Centre for Crime Reduction**

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

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