



Gwent Police's approach to tackling domestic abuse

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Introduction

The extent and nature of domestic abuse remains shocking. A core part of the policing mission is to prevent crime and disorder. Domestic abuse causes both serious harm and constitutes a considerable proportion of overall crime. It costs society an estimated £15.7 billion a year.¹ 77 women were killed by their partners or ex-partners in 2012/13.² In the UK, one in four young people aged 10 to 24 reported that they experienced domestic violence and abuse during their childhood.³ Forces told us that crime relating to domestic abuse constitutes some 8 percent of all recorded crime in their area, and one third of their recorded assaults with injury. On average the police receive an emergency call relating to domestic abuse every 30 seconds.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁴ All definitions are taken from www.gov.uk/domestic-violence-and-abuse

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 Gwent and at the end of the report we set out some recommendations. These recommendations should be considered in conjunction with the recommendations for all forces made in the national report.⁶ A glossary of frequently used terms also appears at the end of the report.

⁶ There is a requirement under section 55(5) and section 55(6) of the 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 Gwent⁷

Calls for assistance



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

Crime

11%

Domestic abuse accounts for 11% of all recorded crime.

Assault with intent

23%

Gwent recorded 277 assaults with intent to cause serious harm, of these 65 were domestic abuse related. This is 23% of all assaults with intent to cause serious harm recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

Assault with injury

41%

The force also recorded 3,172 assaults with injury, of these 1,311 were domestic abuse related. This is 41% of all assaults with injury recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

⁷ Based on forces' own definition of domestic abuse and the use of a domestic abuse marker on the IT recording systems.

Harassment

45%

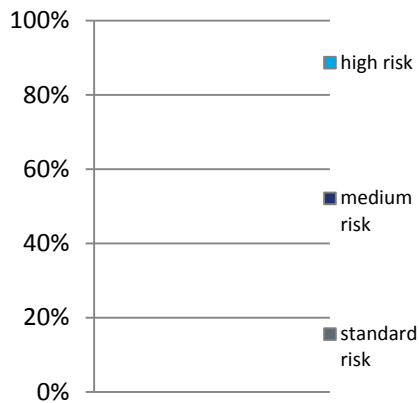
The force recorded 703 harassment offences, of these 313 were domestic abuse related. This is 45% of all harassment offences recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

Sexual offences

15%

The force also recorded 518 sexual offences, of these 78 were domestic abuse related. This is 15% of all sexual offences recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

Risk levels



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

Arrests



For every 100 domestic abuse crimes recorded, there were 60 arrests in Gwent. For most forces the number is between 45 and 90.

Outcomes



Gwent recorded 3,828 domestic abuse related crimes for the 12 months to the end of August 2013. Of these crimes, 23% resulted in a charge, 7% resulted in a caution and, 33% had an out of court disposal, for example, a fixed penalty notice for disorderly conduct.

Executive summary

Domestic abuse is a priority for the police and crime commissioner (PCC) and senior officers. However, the absence of processes and systems to ensure that this commitment translates into effective practice is impacting on the force's ability to manage and minimise risk to domestic abuse victims. HMIC found significant concerns regarding how the force responded to some victims of domestic abuse in Gwent. Risk assessments are not consistently applied, and an absence of supervisory input or oversight results in victims not being given the same level of service across the force.

The domestic abuse conference call (DACC) which provides early responses from both the police and other agencies to safeguarding victims, is a good example of innovative practice. Sharing information to identify the most appropriate response and agreeing a plan to deal with risks on a daily basis ensures victim's needs are assessed in those cases referred to the DACC.

Identifying victims

HMIC found risks in the way the force manages the initial reporting of domestic abuse. There are no robust procedures in place to ensure that repeat and vulnerable victims can be consistently identified. While there is a good system in place within the specialist team to quickly pick up domestic abuse incidents; share information with partners; and arrange for timely support to victims through the daily conference calls, there is no consistent approach to ensure that they are made aware of all incidents. Supervision in the control room lacks rigour. As a result the force cannot be confident that all victims of domestic abuse get the best available service at the earliest opportunity.

Keeping victims safe

The force has produced a violent crime and domestic abuse first responder booklet. This provides comprehensive guidance and appropriate forms to assist officers in investigating and safety planning at domestic abuse incidents. However, HMIC found inconsistency in the approach to assessing the risks posed to victims, with some officers perceiving the formal risk assessment tool as a bureaucratic process. This means that some victims may not get the level of service they need. This risk increases in the absence of intrusive supervision and oversight of risk assessments.

Delivery of effective training is not consistent across the force. In particular, we found that some staff lack understanding of the range of domestic abuse they are required to deal with.

Management of risk

The force has made a significant investment in specialist resources to investigate domestic abuse incidents and safeguard victims. The innovative approach to sharing information on victims and perpetrators through daily conference calls is highly regarded by partners and provides an excellent model to enable prompt and co-ordinated action to support victims and mitigate risks. However, as we've described, the value is undermined by weaknesses in the initial identification of domestic abuse incidents in the control room, resulting in some victims not benefitting from this approach.

High-risk victims of domestic abuse are provided with additional support from specialist officers and partner agencies working together. However the high workload within the specialist team means that not all cases are dealt with by the specialist investigators and victim support staff. There is a lack of clarity as to which cases they deal with, and in what the role of local teams is in supporting victims, which leads to less cohesive and more varied provision of service to standard and medium risk victims. Even some high-risk victims may not be getting the level of service they need.

Organisational effectiveness for keeping people safe

There is good high-level oversight and management of high-risk domestic abuse offenders; although there has been very limited work done to date to manage serious or serial perpetrators in a structured, systematic way.

Domestic abuse outcomes are not currently embedded in the force performance management systems. The poor quality of data regarding reported incidents of domestic abuse inhibits the force from identifying and understanding the vulnerability of victims and the police efforts to intervene and prevent future offending.

Findings

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

HMIC found risks in the way the force manages the initial reporting of domestic abuse. There are no robust procedures in place to ensure that repeat and vulnerable victims can be consistently identified. While there is a good system in place within the specialist team to quickly pick up domestic abuse incidents; share information with partners; and arrange for timely support to victims through the daily conference calls, there is no consistent approach to ensure that they are made aware of all incidents. Supervision in the control room lacks rigour. As a result the force cannot be confident that all victims of domestic abuse get the best available service at the earliest opportunity.

Most incidents of domestic abuse are reported to the police via the force control room. Call handlers receiving the calls enter the details as they are speaking with the caller onto a live-time incident recording system known as ORIS. The system will recognise the address and flag up to the call handler any previous contact with the police for that address; it does not identify previous contact with the caller by name alone. Thus, if the caller had previously been a victim at a different address this would not be evident to the police at this stage.

When a call is received, it is important that the call handler gets as much relevant information as possible to give them a full picture of the risk faced by the victim so that they can ensure that they send the appropriate police response as quickly as needed to the incident. They can then relay as much information as possible to the officers attending before they arrive at the scene. For example, whether there are any children present, whether the victim is particularly vulnerable in any way, or whether any weapons are involved. The ORIS system does not provide the call handler with a menu of questions for domestic abuse incidents; instead the force relies on the skills and expertise of each call handler in recognising domestic abuse and asking the right questions. The force has produced a paper-based checklist document, 'dealing with reports of domestic violence', which correlates to a previous recommendation made by the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC). This document provides guidance on what information should be obtained during a call to establish the nature of the incident and any risks associated with the deployment of officers. HMIC found that this was not widely used; that not all staff were aware of the availability of a checklist; and that its use was inconsistent.

There is no specific force policy for grading the response to domestic abuse incidents. Each call is individually risk assessed by the operator based on the

information from the caller and any information available on force intelligence systems; they are usually graded as either emergency or priority. There is a lack of consistency and understanding by staff about how calls should be graded. A policy may assist in providing some necessary clarity for those working in the control room.

The current system used by the force will identify a previous caller through the use of location details, but cannot consistently identify repeat or vulnerable victims. Officers are able to add a marker to the address, known as an 'operational entry' (OE) marker, so that in the event of any future calls, the marker will alert the call handler to a vulnerable person or a high-risk victim. In the absence of an OE marker, the call taker needs to check other information systems to ensure that they get the full information available. The rigour of checks is dependent upon the capacity of the call taker and is not mandatory. This means that the initial risk assessment may not be based on full information and the victim may not get the level of response they need. A small number of calls were listened to by HMIC and the majority did not receive a risk assessment.

HMIC found evidence of confusion among staff about the force's definition of a repeat victim. This has resulted in officers using their own interpretation, leading to inconsistencies in service and lost opportunities to deliver appropriate plans to deal with the identified risk, and to provide necessary support to victims. The force defines a repeat victim as; 'a victim who has been abused by the same alleged perpetrator on two or more occasions in the last 12 months'. This needs to be properly communicated to staff to improve understanding and application.

The force does not have a specific domestic abuse policy or procedural guidance in relation to the identification and response to incidents of domestic abuse. The implementation of a specific policy would provide clarity, understanding and consistency in how the force responds to domestic abuse reports. It would also provide relevant data in support of the force plan to reduce repeat victims,

It does have a domestic abuse workplace policy to deal with employees who are either perpetrators or victims of such incidents.

HMIC found weaknesses in the supervision of incidents. Cases identified as high risk are required to be brought to the attention of the duty 'silver' commander in the control room (chief inspector level), to ensure appropriate responses are provided in accordance with the identified level of risk. It was not clear from records that this notification had taken place or if it had happened, it had not been recorded. Any such delay has an impact on the ability of the duty silver commander to provide an immediate oversight of initial actions taken and

to review safety plans implemented to manage any immediate threat or risk to the victim. Bronze commanders (inspector level) raised concerns regarding a lack of communication, resulting in them not being made aware of high risk cases. This significantly affects their ability to adequately supervise, monitor and where necessary, direct those incidents.

The force has a dedicated IT system for all domestic abuse incidents, the domestic abuse management system (DAMS), which enables information on incidents to be transferred automatically from the control room to the specialist domestic abuse team. Incidents that are categorised as domestic abuse are manually 'tagged' with a marker, known as a +IDI by the call handler. This marker is then picked up by DAMS where a domestic abuse record is created. This system records relevant information created following a reported incident, such as a completed risk assessment form. Those incidents that are marked with the +IDI tag are then processed and dealt with by the specialist domestic abuse officers and staff. Once an incident is tagged as +IDI it is picked up by the specialist teams, risk is reassessed and all incidents are shared with partners at an innovative daily domestic abuse conference call (DACC) where multi-agency action to support victims can be discussed in a very timely way. However, it was evident that in spite of the requirement to tag all domestic abuse incidents with a +IDI marker, this is not happening consistently, a significant proportion of the randomly selected domestic abuse cases we looked at were not +IDI tagged. Those not tagged do not get picked up on the DAMS system and do not have the benefit of this specialist police or early partner involvement through the DACC process. This inconsistency is likely to mean that some victims are not receiving the best service they could from police or partners.

Once an incident has been responded to and police action is underway, the original incident log needs to be checked and closed. The log closure team, based within the control room, are responsible for oversight of all incidents, and will identify any remedial action required prior to closure. If as a result of this review they identify any omission or further action needed they communicate this directly back to the officer. This final check in the process could pick up the absence of a +IDI marker. However, once again there was a lack of clarity, and there was evidence that the closure team does not always identify the lack of +IDI markers on relevant incidents.

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

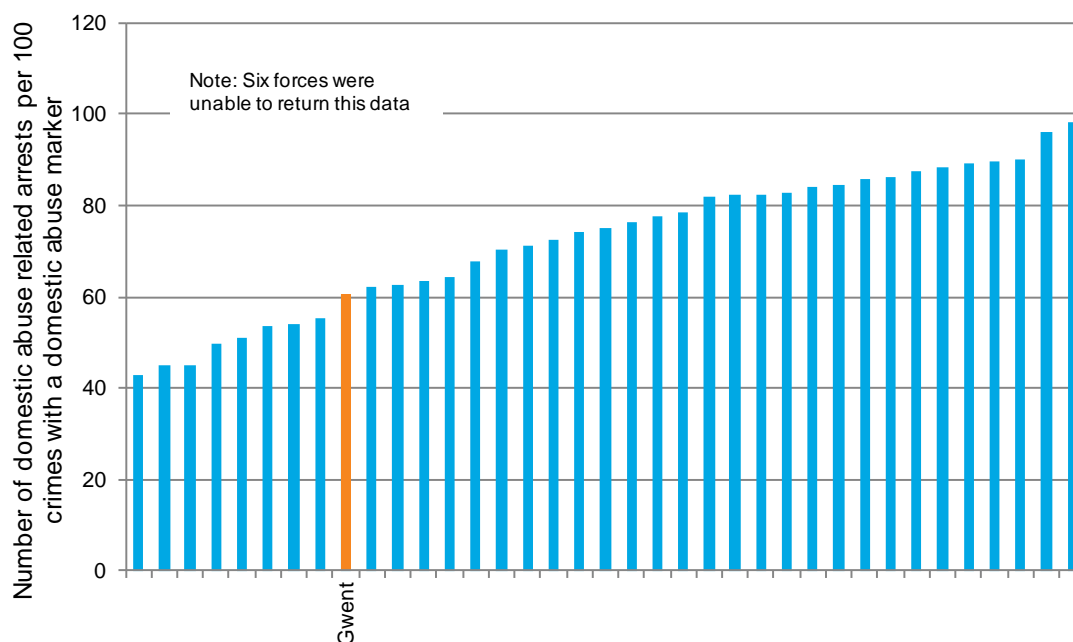
The force has produced a violent crime and domestic abuse first responder booklet. This provides comprehensive guidance and appropriate forms to assist officers in investigating and safety planning at domestic abuse incidents. However, HMIC found inconsistency in the approach to assessing the risks posed to victims, with some officers perceiving the formal risk assessment tool as a bureaucratic process. This means that some victims may not get the level of service they need. This risk increases in the absence of intrusive supervision and oversight of risk assessments.

Delivery of effective training is not consistent across the force. In particular, we found that some staff lack understanding of the range of domestic abuse they are required to deal with.

For every 100 domestic abuse crimes recorded there were 60⁸ arrests in Gwent. For most forces this number is between 45 and 90. The low arrest rate compared to other forces indicates that this is an issue the force may want to review.

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

Figure 1: Number of domestic abuse related arrests per 100 crimes with a domestic abuse marker for the 12 months to 31 August 2013



Source: HMIC data collection

Domestic abuse is a clear priority for the police and crime commissioner (PCC) and the force. The police and crime plan includes among its objectives; ‘To protect people from serious harm’; one of the measures being to increase the proportion of offenders brought to justice for domestic abuse offences. This is underpinned by the force domestic abuse strategy which aims to protect and reassure victims of domestic abuse, with a particular focus on reducing repeat victimisation.

The PCC and deputy chief constable have launched the PCC’s *Victim’s Charter*⁹ which has established a set of minimum standards to support all victims of crime. This has provided a clear explanation for both the force and public in how officers respond to the needs of victims.

Chief officers and senior managers within the public protection division provide visible leadership on domestic abuse with regular communications through the force intranet site ‘guardian’. Chief officers also undertake ‘time to listen’ visits across the force during which they use the opportunity to disseminate

⁹ <http://www.gwent.pcc.police.uk/engagement/victims/victims-charter/>

expectations to staff around matters such as domestic abuse. However, HMIC found that the importance given to domestic abuse is not replicated at all levels within the force. This is partly due to an absence of clear policies and processes to translate the strategic commitment into effective practice by those dealing directly with reported incidents of domestic abuse. The force does not have a domestic abuse policy, and therefore clarity regarding definitions, ownership of cases, supervision and oversight is not available to officers in a single reference document. This has led to inconsistencies of process and a lack of clarity regarding force procedures and expectations.

The DAIU, who provide cover 24 hours a day offering specialist support and guidance to staff dealing with complex and serious incidents, is valued by LPU supervisors who have established strong relationships with the DAIU officers.

The initial attendance to reported incidents is by LPU 'response' officers. These officers use their professional judgement to undertake an assessment of risk to the victim, supported by completion of the nationally recognised domestic abuse stalking and harassment (DASH) risk assessment tool and the risk management framework known as RARA (remove, avoid, reduce, accept).

HMIC found that there is a lack of clarity and some confusion around when and why to use the DASH risk assessment process. Formerly there was a direction that a DASH risk assessment was completed in all cases. More recently there has been a change in the mandate to complete and document a DASH risk assessment in every case. Guidance now directs officers to use their professional judgement to provide an assessment of risk in all cases, where the domestic abuse incident involves intimate partners. In those cases where a DASH form is not completed, the supporting reasons behind that decision must be recorded on the incident log. HMIC found a perception among staff and supervisors that they see completion of the form as bureaucratic and a 'process to be complied with' rather than a safeguarding tool, creating a risk that some victims will be missed or incorrectly assessed, in particular those who are reluctant to engage.

Some officers do not see the importance and benefits of following the DASH process for reducing future demand and improving service to victims, with evidence of many officers allocating an enhanced level of risk to ensure the case is dealt with by the DAIU. The impact is that this artificially inflates the number of cases being heard by the multi-agency referral assessment conference (MARAC), and creates increased demand on finite resources such as independent domestic violence advisers (IDVAs), who support high risk victims.

In those cases, when a DASH form is either not completed or has insufficient detail, the opportunity to engage partner agency support and expertise (specifically third party consent referral) is missed. This also reduces the effectiveness of the DACC process, where cases are discussed across agencies, as without the necessary consent to share information with other organisations, contact cannot be made. In such cases, the force will share information with partner agencies where there are child protection issues or crime prevention priorities involved.

Officers at the scene of an incident have the benefit of using the violent crime and domestic abuse first responder booklet. This provides comprehensive guidance and appropriate forms to assist officers in their investigation and support safety planning to reduce identified risks for victims. Consistency of use needs to be reinforced by supervisors.

If there are children within the household, officers confirmed that they would physically check on them and submit a referral to the appropriate social services department. This referral applies in all cases of domestic abuse where children are connected to the household, whether present or not.

All cases assessed as high risk are reviewed by the DAIU. Supervision and oversight of risk assessment and investigations, particularly for medium and standard cases is not consistent in application.

The number of domestic abuse prosecution cases that fail to result in a conviction is high and increasing in Gwent. HMIC found that the standard of investigation and file preparation for prosecutions is inconsistent. The disparity in quality is not between the DAIU and LPU staff, but is apparent across the force. The proposed introduction of qualified gate-keepers to oversee files will be pivotal in improving this situation.

There is no training-needs analysis for domestic abuse on a force-wide basis, with staff stating that training for domestic abuse had been limited. This correlates with a previous recommendation made by the IPCC. Officers have been trained to risk assess according to the DASH principles, however they have not received appropriate training to properly understand the complex range of domestic abuse which they are being expected to risk assess.

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

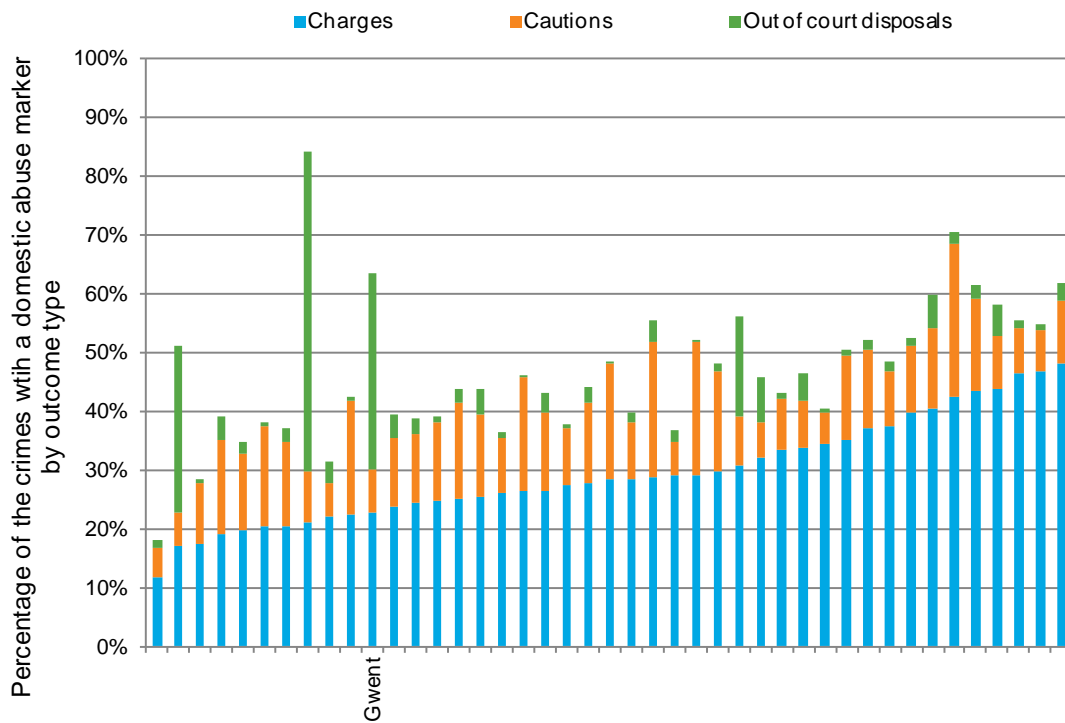
The force has made a significant investment in specialist resources to investigate domestic abuse incidents and safeguard victims. The innovative approach to sharing information on victims and perpetrators through daily conference calls is highly regarded by partners and provides an excellent model to enable prompt and co-ordinated action to support victims and mitigate risks. However, as we've described, the value is undermined by weaknesses in the initial identification of domestic abuse incidents in the control room, resulting in some victims not benefitting from this approach.

High-risk victims of domestic abuse are provided with additional support from specialist officers and partner agencies working together. However the high workload within the specialist team means that not all cases are dealt with by the specialist investigators and victim support staff. There is a lack of clarity as to which cases they deal with, and in what the role of local teams is in supporting victims, which leads to less cohesive and more varied provision of service to standard and medium risk victims. Even some high-risk victims may not be getting the level of service they need.

Gwent recorded 3,828¹⁰ domestic abuse related crimes for the 12 months to the end of August 2013. Of these crimes, 23% resulted in a charge, 7% resulted in a caution and, 33% had an out of court disposal, for example, a fixed penalty notice for disorderly conduct.

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

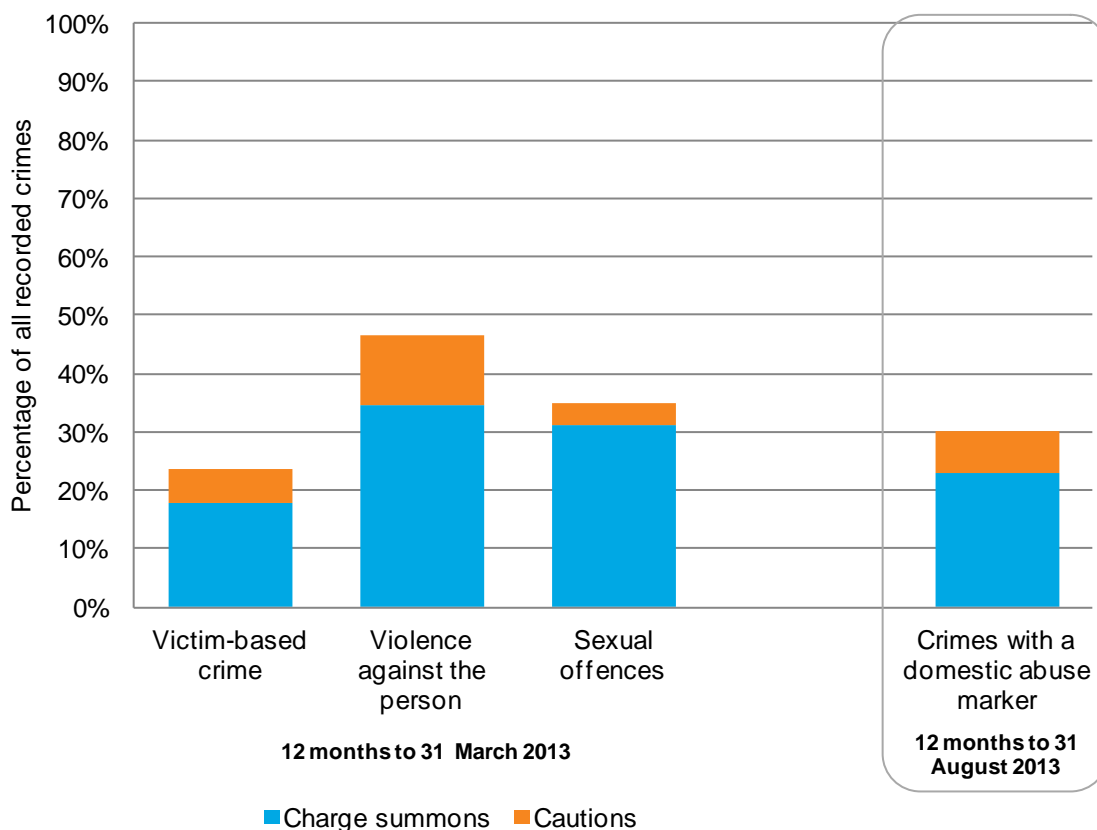
Figure 2: Percentage of different outcome types used for crimes with a domestic abuse marker for the 12 months to 31 August 2013



Source: HMIC data collection

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

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 marker¹¹



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

In November 2012, the force invested significant resource into a new structure which set up a dedicated domestic abuse investigation unit (DAIU). The aspiration was for the unit to manage ALL domestic abuse incidents reported to the force, providing specialist officers for all levels of risk. However, from the outset, the workload of this new team was unmanageable and quickly resulted in the DAIU officers becoming overwhelmed by the volume of daily demand. As a consequence, during peak workload periods, a large number of incidents are instead dealt with by the local policing teams. This creates a disparity in levels of service to victims, with instances of local officers investigating high-risk cases due to a lack of available specialist staff from within the DAIU. This means that victims dealt with by the LPU may not be afforded the same level of

¹¹ Based on forces' own definition of domestic abuse and the use of a domestic abuse marker on the IT recording systems.

investigative skills provided by specialist staff and effective engagement with specialist support.

A review undertaken by the force has identified that the original intention of the DAIU is not achievable with the available resources. Dealing with the volume of offenders has impacted on the quality of the service, leading to instances where the focus on the victim “got lost” within the structure. The current role of the DAIU and its responsibilities is unclear to most within the force. This presents an ongoing risk to the force in terms of victim care and effective management and oversight.

HMIC found that the force puts significant effort into working constructively and positively in partnerships across the five local authorities in Gwent. The complexity of working across five different local partnerships leads to some fragmentation. The daily domestic abuse conference call (DACC) and MARAC structures are effective, although there are issues to be refined to improve consistency and capacity. Partners commented during the inspection that the daily DACC can be resource intensive but is worth the investment because it enables an early discussion of risk and sharing of information which is critical for victim care. The relationship between police, in particular the DACC Team and DAIU, and partners is excellent with information sharing highlighted as good practice.

The DACC enables relevant information to be effectively shared while identifying those most at risk and agreeing what support is required. Each domestic abuse incident is discussed during the relevant daily telephone conference call initiated by the police. Partners are able to share all relevant information each have about the victim, the perpetrator and any children who may be affected. The partners involved in the DACC are police; social services; housing; health services; and the third sector including women’s aid. Education services have access to the database and are able to see which cases are being discussed but do not routinely participate in the conference call. Some of the main principles underpinning this process are homicide prevention; the early mobilisation of resources; enabling joined-up intervention from partners to reduce risks faced by victims and their families; and preventing the escalation of risk and repeat victimisation.

The DACC also enables the MARAC to be more productive. Some cases to be considered will have already been discussed at the conference call reducing the need for in depth discussion. This creates more time for discussion of other cases including assessment and appropriate safety planning.

Resilience of the MARAC is challenging due to the volume of high-risk cases, an issue identified by the force, caused by incorrect assessments. One officer

referred to the process as “the MARAC conveyor belt”. There is a review of each risk level by the DAIU, but staff were unclear if the level is ever amended. There is no coherent process to inform officers if a risk level had been amended unless they remain involved with the investigation or it is returned for further enquiries.

All cases are considered through the DACC process. LPU officers were not clear who was responsible for ongoing safeguarding in these cases after the initial safety plan. The level of resource available determines which cases are retained by the DAIU and which are returned to the LPU for investigation. This unstructured approach causes confusion with officers.

A pilot initiative is being launched in one area that has a high proportion of black and minority ethnic communities. Funding from the local authority has enabled the production and distribution of cards purporting to invite attendance at an innocuous local group activity. The cards in reality include details of the times and venues of drop-in advice sessions. The target group is women suffering abuse who traditionally do not contact the police and who would feel unable to take a leaflet which had any obvious connection with the police or other agencies. The sessions provide an opportunity to meet with a PCSO for advice and signposting to support agencies. This initiative provides a significant opportunity to support and build trust with women who are reluctant to report, and could provide the force with the opportunity to gain a greater understanding of abuse within those communities.

As a result of Gwent having made a significant investment in specialist resources for dealing with domestic abuse, the force together with partners made a successful bid to the Welsh Government to secure funding to enable a fundamental review of the pan-Gwent partnership arrangements for co-ordinating services for the victims of domestic abuse. As a result the pan-Gwent domestic abuse pathfinder project commenced in April 2013 by the Welsh Assembly Government. It is a 12 month project that aims to introduce a coherent governance framework across all relevant agencies involved in domestic abuse. It is mapping agencies’ roles and responsibilities to try and join up services. The project has six work streams:

1. Leadership, governance and accountability.
2. Holistic service provision (victims, perpetrators, children and families).
3. Collaborative information sharing, risk management and safeguarding.
4. Performance management framework and data collection.
5. Early intervention and prevention, public awareness, workforce development/training.

6. Offender and perpetrator management.

Each work stream has a relevant agency lead and task and finish group. The project is due to report in March 2014 with a view to providing the footprint for the rest of Wales to follow. The force needs to review its current processes of delivery, and should not delay this until the pathfinder project reports.

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

There is good high-level oversight and management of high-risk domestic abuse offenders; although there has been very limited work done to date to manage serious or serial perpetrators in a structured, systematic way.

Domestic abuse outcomes are not currently embedded in the force performance management systems. The poor quality of data regarding reported incidents of domestic abuse inhibits the force from identifying and understanding the vulnerability of victims and the police efforts to intervene and prevent future offending.

The force's daily management meeting provides oversight of high-risk domestic abuse offenders and outstanding arrests. HMIC found the process to be well structured and managed. This process is not routinely replicated for cases of standard and medium risk.

Serial and serious perpetrators are not currently identified and managed in a structured way other than those who enter the multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) and MARAC processes. The force has recognised that it needs to do more work on managing these high-risk offenders and a process of identification has begun with ten individuals identified across the force.

Dedicated ownership is within the DAIU who are responsible for the management of these perpetrators. This process now requires further development to ensure LPU staff are briefed and involved in the process. It is important that local teams understand who these individuals are, how they are being managed and to identify any potential victims at risk.

Officers in the DAIU have identified a weakness in the process to obtain timely information from the courts, regarding court outcomes. This affects the ability of officers to update the victim, and review the requirement for additional safety planning. The current solution they have implemented is to allocate an officer to attend the courts to relay the outcomes to the DAIU. This is resource intensive and does not provide an effective and reliable process to review any change in circumstances affecting a victim.

Gwent Police is one of four forces piloting the domestic violence disclosure scheme known as Clare's Law. This scheme provides the opportunity for individuals who may have concerns about a partner who they are in an intimate relationship with to approach the police and ask for disclosure of relevant information. The force also has the opportunity to make a proactive disclosure to an individual called 'right to know'.

Although the force promoted the scheme both internally and externally they have experienced low numbers of applicants, however this is consistent with some of the other forces. A current assessment of the pilot is being undertaken by the Home Office. Officers advised they were not aware of the processes involved and how disclosures were undertaken. An evaluation by the force to establish if the public understand how to make an application and the purpose of the scheme may provide a greater insight into why the numbers are so small.

The force uses publications and findings from domestic homicide and serious case reviews, both locally and nationally to inform organisational learning. The PCC requests updates from the chief constable in relation to recommendations arising from these cases. The learning that is identified is held by corporate services. The challenge is to establish a process to ensure such learning is shared in a timely way across the force and to assess the delivery of recommendations for impact and improvement in service provision.

There has been no recent detailed analysis of the scale and nature of domestic abuse across the force area (known as a problem profile). The production of a profile would assist the force in gaining a greater understanding of prevalence and areas of under reporting. It could be used by the force to develop and improve its approach to domestic abuse and could be used in discussions with partners to assist their commissioning arrangements.

Domestic abuse outcomes are not currently embedded in performance management processes within Gwent Police. The poor quality of the performance data is a significant issue which will continue to frustrate any meaningful attempt to analyse performance information at all levels, strategic and tactical. Only limited data is provided to the assistant chief constable's monthly performance and tasking meeting covering volume of domestic abuse crimes (violent and non-violent) and MARAC referrals. This information is only discussed where there is need and not as a matter of course. There is no meaningful interpretation of the data held on victim, location or offender at either force or local levels. It is not clear how any of the information collected is used to drive improvements in outcomes.

The force uses a performance management system (Qlikview) which is populated directly from the command and control system as well as the crime

recording database. The system can produce crime mapping and tasking. It also contains some detailed information around domestic abuse but this generally is regarded by staff as inaccurate.

Sergeants within the DAIU advised that they do not receive any routine performance monitoring information for their area of responsibility. They were not aware of what the detection or attrition rates were for cases within their unit.

HMIC found risks in the way the force manage the initial reporting of domestic abuse. There are no robust procedures in place to ensure that repeat and vulnerable victims can be consistently identified. While there is a good system in place within the specialist team to quickly pick up domestic abuse incidents and share information with partners and arrange for timely support to victims through the daily conference calls, there is no consistent approach to ensure that they are made aware of all incidents. Supervision in the control room lacks rigour. As a consequence the force cannot be confident that all victims of domestic abuse get the best available service at the earliest opportunity.

Some of the themes identified during this inspection have previously been highlighted by the IPCC in two domestic-related investigations in 2009 and 2011, and are referred to within this report. Specifically, the need to conduct a training needs analysis; call handlers to have an aide memoire; log closure team to ensure correct identification of domestic abuse related incidents; and the development of a policy outlining who is responsible for overseeing domestic abuse investigations. While an aide memoire for call handlers has been produced, its use is inconsistent.

In conclusion, the issues identified within this inspection have the potential to impact on the confidence that the public and victims of abuse can have on the force's current ability to identify, manage and minimise risk in cases of domestic abuse.

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 the use of paper-based checklists by control room staff. A mandated electronic version would provide consistency in eliciting relevant information from the caller regarding vulnerability and identification of repeat victims.
2. The force should implement appropriate systems to identify repeat and vulnerable victims.
3. The force should introduce a specific domestic abuse policy to provide clarity of process and procedure to be undertaken in response to domestic abuse incidents.
4. The force should require the use of the +IDI flagging system for all domestic abuse incidents. Currently there is a risk that victims could be missed from the DACC process; mandatory use of the +IDI marker will mitigate this risk.
5. The force should clarify and communicate the role and responsibilities of the DAIU and LPU staff in managing domestic abuse cases.
6. The force should provide clarity when a DASH form must be completed and emphasise its importance and benefits in supporting the identification of risk and the opportunity to access partner agency support.
7. The force should improve supervision of DASH forms and domestic abuse investigation files to provide consistency and accountability. All cases of domestic related investigations must be reviewed by a supervisor with DASH forms and files countersigned to that effect.
8. The force should review domestic abuse training for all staff, to ensure that those dealing with domestic abuse from point of contact to finalisation receive appropriate guidance and support.
9. The force should review their approach to domestic abuse against the work streams identified in the Gwent pathfinder project.

10. The force should properly embed domestic abuse in force tasking and performance processes. The quality of data must be addressed and meaningful information properly integrated into established force processes at a strategic and local level.

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.