



Inspecting policing  
in the public interest

# Humberside 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”.*

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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)

*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.<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.

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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)

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 Humberside 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>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 Humberside<sup>7</sup>

### Calls for assistance



In Humberside, domestic abuse accounts for 12% of calls to the police for assistance. Of these calls, 15% were from repeat victims.

### Crime

# 6%

Domestic abuse accounts for 6% of all recorded crime.

### Assault with intent

# 16%

Humberside recorded 432 assaults with intent to cause serious harm, of these 69 were domestic abuse related. This is 16% of all assaults with intent to cause serious harm recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

### Assault with injury

# 26%

The force also recorded 6,209 assaults with injury, of these 1,585 were domestic abuse related. This is 26% 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

# 54%

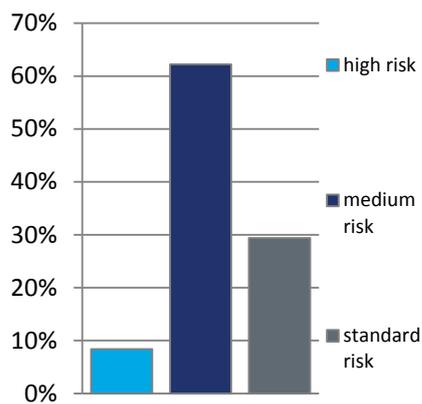
The force recorded 639 harassment offences, of these 346 were domestic abuse related. This is 54% of all harassment offences recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

## Sexual offences

# 8%

The force also recorded 1,260 sexual offences, of these 105 were domestic abuse related. This is 8% of all sexual offences recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

## Risk levels



On, 31 August 2013 Humberside had 14,672 active domestic abuse cases; 8% were high risk, 62% were medium risk, and 29% were standard risk.

## Arrests



For every 100 domestic abuse crimes recorded, there were 62 arrests in Humberside for the 12 months to 31 August 2013. For most forces the number is between 45 and 90.

## Outcomes



Humberside recorded 4,014 domestic abuse related crimes for the 12 months to the end of August 2013. Of these crimes, 18% resulted in a charge, 10% resulted in a caution and, 1% had an out of court disposal, for example, a fixed penalty notice for disorderly conduct.

## Executive summary

HMIC found that, although domestic abuse is a priority for Humberside, there is a fragmented and inconsistent approach across the force and victims may not receive the level of support they need.

High risk cases are generally dealt with well but HMIC is concerned about standard and medium risk cases, particularly repeat cases when the true level of risk may not be understood. There are examples of good partnership work to tackle domestic abuse but again this varies across the force. This report outlines a number of areas where they could improve their service.

### Identifying victims

HMIC found that staff in the force control centre have had varying amounts of training about domestic abuse, which means their understanding and ability to identify domestic abuse is inconsistent. Most domestic abuse victims contact the force by telephone and speak to staff in the control centre. These staff research computer systems that are able to identify whether a victim has reported domestic abuse before or whether they have previously been assessed as vulnerable; although there is no force definition for vulnerability. However this information is not always passed to officers attending the incident. Once this information has been obtained from the caller, there is a prompt response, sending officers to the scene quickly and appropriately.

HMIC were concerned that staff who work in front enquiry offices have generally not received any training about domestic abuse and may not be able to recognise certain types of abuse or know how to deal with victims.

### Keeping victims safe

Domestic abuse is a priority in the police and crime plan produced by the police and crime commissioner (PCC); however, because the force covers four local authority areas, it does not work towards the priority in similar ways across the county. This means that victims of domestic abuse do not receive a consistent service across the force area. In 2012, the force changed their definition of domestic abuse from the one that had been nationally agreed. Currently, incidents involving family members are not defined as domestic abuse. HMIC are concerned that this change means that incidents of domestic abuse are not identified and victims do not receive the level of support they need. The force is currently using two models of risk assessment; this means that there is no consistent approach to assessing risk across the area. Staff who deal with domestic abuse were not given additional training when this change to force policy was made and partner agencies were not consulted.

HMIC found that the service provided to victims of domestic abuse and the ability to make them safer varied across the force area. There are differing structures and processes in divisions, and backlogs in the specialist review of risk assessments mean that a true understanding of risk to victims is not achieved in a timely way.

HMIC found a lack of clarity and understanding among staff about who was responsible for dealing with medium and standard risk cases. They are concerned that repeated incidents of domestic abuse may be dealt with in isolation and the true level of risk never understood, meaning that victims do not receive the level of support they need.

## **Management of risk**

High risk cases are referred to monthly Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) and victims and children receive necessary support and safety planning. However, HMIC are concerned that, with medium and standard risk cases, the process is less clear and backlogs in transferring the information onto a single force register could mean that repeat victims are missed and true levels of risk not understood.

There are different levels of service across the force area for both victims and offenders, determined by where they live. Some work is being done to understand the needs of victims in emerging communities in one area within the force, which is developing important links to them.

## **Organisational effectiveness for keeping people safe**

HMIC found that the processes in place across the force to ensure that victims are updated and their level of risk re-assessed when a perpetrator is released from prison are inconsistent. This means that the level of risk to some victims may not be understood and properly managed.

In some parts of the force, local neighbourhood officers are involved in providing support to victims of domestic abuse, but this is not the case across the whole force area.

There is no performance management framework which includes information about domestic abuse. This means that the force do not fully understand the scale and nature of domestic abuse and whether the work they do to tackle domestic abuse is effective. This framework is being developed and should be in place early in 2014.

## Findings

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

HMIC found that staff in the force control centre have had varying amounts of training about domestic abuse, which means their understanding and ability to identify domestic abuse is inconsistent. Most domestic abuse victims contact the force by telephone and speak to staff in the control centre. These staff research computer systems that are able to identify whether a victim has reported domestic abuse before or whether they have previously been assessed as vulnerable; although there is no force definition for vulnerability. However this information is not always passed to officers attending the incident. Once this information has been obtained from the caller, there is a prompt response, sending officers to the scene quickly and appropriately.

HMIC were concerned that staff who work in front enquiry offices have generally not received any training about domestic abuse and may not be able to recognise certain types of abuse or know how to deal with victims.

Most domestic abuse victims contact the force by telephone and speak to call handlers in the force control centre. Call handlers research computer systems to help them to identify callers who have contacted the force previously by using their telephone number or address. Once the call handler has determined that it is a domestic abuse incident, they can use computer-generated checklists to ask questions to determine risk and the level of response required. Call handlers then grade the call as requiring an immediate police response (within ten minutes) or one when a patrol will attend within one hour, if it is felt to be less urgent. HMIC found that staff within the control centre have been trained to identify risk and how to prioritise incidents. They grade calls for domestic abuse correctly, meaning that officers are deployed in a timely manner to ensure the safety of the victim.

The computer systems help the staff in the control centre identify repeat victims of domestic abuse so that people who have called the force at least once in the previous 12 months receive a response that is appropriate to their needs. The identification of vulnerable victims of domestic abuse is less clear because staff do not know of a force definition for vulnerability and so tend to take their own view of what 'vulnerable' means. This lack of clarity can mean that callers to the force may receive an inconsistent response dependent on which member of the force they speak to. If someone is regarded vulnerable, then the computer system can 'flag' them by adding a special note that can be seen by the staff in the control centre. This means they are able to inform officers attending any incident of domestic abuse. The staff in the control centre said that, when a

caller is identified as a repeat victim of domestic abuse or is thought to be vulnerable, they would pass this information on to the officer attending the incident. However, HMIC found that information and intelligence from police systems is not routinely being passed to the attending officers until they specifically ask for it. Officers stated that this is an issue during busy times in the control centre. It is important that as much information as possible is relayed to the attending officer so that they are prepared when they arrive at the scene and can make an informed assessment of the situation and level of risk to the victim.

The training provided to staff involved in domestic abuse incidents is inconsistent across the force area. Staff who work in the control centres have regular training and domestic abuse has featured within these training sessions. However, it is not clear whether these staff fully understand the information available to them on the computer systems and understand the value of it to help inform risk assessment. They initially assess calls from victims of domestic abuse based on the information they are given by the caller, and other staff send officers to the scene of the incident. Sometimes, therefore, no-one checks the force computer systems before officers attend the incident. Some officers recalled some specific training on domestic abuse in the past two years. However, since the force changed the definition of domestic abuse that it uses, to exclude interfamilial abuse, there has been no specific training provided, despite its having a major effect on the way such incidents are dealt with.

Staff who work in the front enquiry offices dealing with members of the public who attend police stations have not received domestic abuse training. They create an incident log on the force computer system that informs control centre staff or they contact the specialist public protection unit (PPU) staff directly who will then deal with the victim at the station if this is appropriate.

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

Domestic abuse is a priority in the police and crime plan produced by the police and crime commissioner (PCC); however, because the force covers four local authority areas, it does not work towards the priority in similar ways across the county. This means that victims of domestic abuse do not receive a consistent service across the force area. In 2012, the force changed their definition of domestic abuse from the one that had been nationally agreed. Currently, incidents involving family members are not defined as domestic abuse. HMIC are concerned that this change means that incidents of domestic abuse are not identified and victims do not receive the level of support they need. The force is currently using two models of risk assessment; this means that there is no consistent approach to assessing risk across the area. Staff who deal with domestic abuse were not given additional training when this change to force policy was made and partner agencies were not consulted.

HMIC found that the service provided to victims of domestic abuse and the ability to make them safer varied across the force area. There are differing structures and processes in divisions, and backlogs in the specialist review of risk assessments mean that a true understanding of risk to victims is not achieved in a timely way.

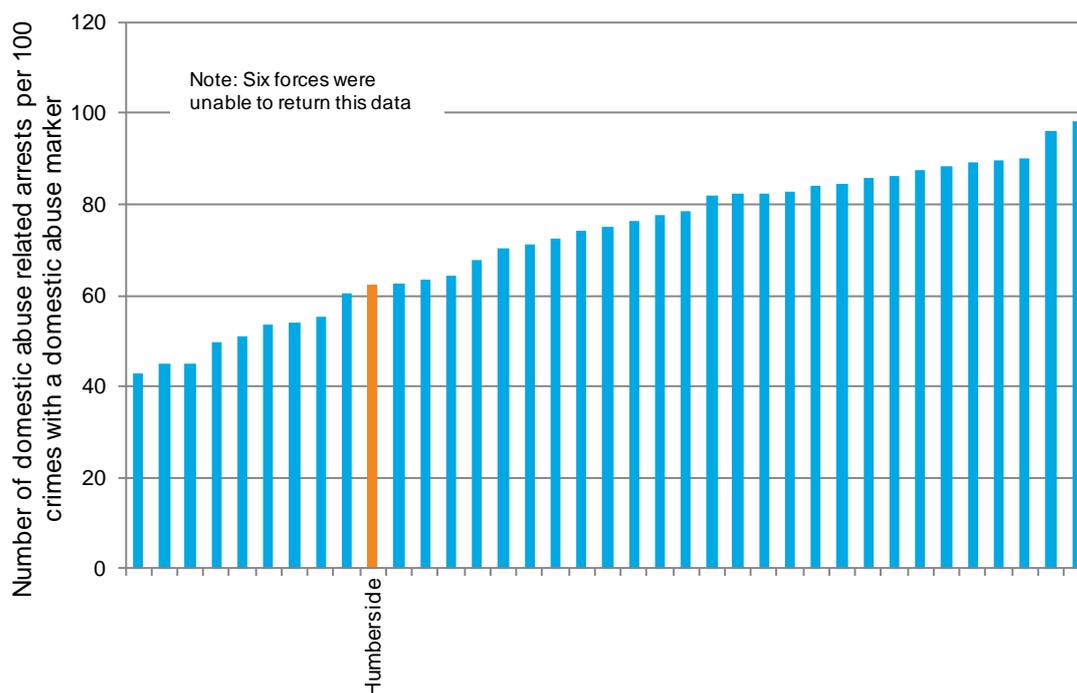
HMIC found a lack of clarity and understanding among staff about who was responsible for dealing with medium and standard risk cases. They are concerned that repeated incidents of domestic abuse may be dealt with in isolation and the true level of risk never understood, meaning that victims do not receive the level of support they need.

For every 100 domestic abuse crimes recorded there were 62<sup>8</sup> arrests in Humberside. For most forces the number is between 45 and 90.

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<sup>8</sup> 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 clearly a priority for the force and features strongly in the police and crime plan produced by the PCC. The assistant chief constable (Operations Support) chairs the Protecting Vulnerable People Steering Group, which meets to discuss, direct and manage a range of issues including domestic abuse. The force area consists of four local authority areas: the City of the Kingston upon Hull, East Riding of Yorkshire, North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire. These four areas define the police divisions of Hull, East Riding and a recently merged South Bank, which has brought together the two council areas on the south side of the river Humber. HMIC found that the delivery of the force priority was hindered by the frequent inconsistency across the police divisions. Many of the processes to ensure domestic abuse victims are kept safe are different in each division despite the intention that a single process should operate across the force area.

Once an officer has been sent to an incident of domestic abuse, control centre staff question them to ensure that action has been taken to safeguard the victim and deal with the perpetrator. Officers carry out a risk assessment if the people involved are or have been intimate partners. In the South Bank division, staff are completing the DASH (domestic abuse, stalking and honour-based violence) form while in Hull and the East Riding divisions they continue to

complete the older SPECSS (separation, potential, escalation, children, suicidal, sexual assault) form. Two divisions started using the DASH form in January 2014. The risk assessment forms provide a consistent way in which the attending officer can assess the risk to the victim as high, medium or standard. Currently there is no consistency.

This assessment will determine if there is a high, medium or standard risk to the victim. This helps to inform what support they might need from the police and other partners such as Women's Aid, Child Social Care or the other agencies that operate across the force area. If the risk to the victim is assessed as high, then a supervisor, usually a sergeant, is informed of the incident to ensure that the officer takes appropriate action to protect the victim and deal with the perpetrator. If the incident has been assessed as medium or standard risk, then the level of supervision is not as strong and relies on supervisors to monitor incidents by listening to the radio.

Officers are required to take 'positive action' when they attend incidents of domestic abuse. HMIC found that this generally meant the arrest of a perpetrator when a criminal offence had been committed and it was lawful to do so. The needs of victims and support for them are secondary to that arrest. However, HMIC found good examples of victim care by officers who had put appropriate safety plans in place to help protect them.

High risk cases are dealt with by PPU staff but the process for medium risk cases is less clear. Each division has its own process to deal with these. HMIC echoed the concern expressed by specialist officers and partner agencies that a series of incidents, each assessed as medium risk in isolation, could escalate to a high risk situation without being identified and opportunities to prevent harm being missed. This is a risk for the force. The lack of a corporate, force wide way of dealing with medium risk cases also means that the service provided to victims is inconsistent.

The level of supervision of medium and low risk incidents when an arrest has taken place is inconsistent across the force. HMIC found examples of minimal evidence being gathered and little explanatory documentation being provided by response officers to investigators who were tasked with dealing with prisoners. This is unacceptable. It is essential that officers attending incidents of domestic violence gather as much evidence as possible – for example, statements from neighbours, photographic evidence of injuries, and their own statements describing the demeanour of all present including children, as well as what they saw and heard. This can then be used to build a case and secure convictions against perpetrators. Much of this evidence can be lost if not collected at the time the first officer arrives at an incident.

In December 2012, the force took a decision to alter its definition of domestic abuse. This meant that interfamilial domestic abuse – for example, between siblings was excluded from the definition. HMIC found that staff were concerned that they were not formally risk assessing domestic incidents involving family members. Officers described a range of alternative actions they could take including the submission of an intelligence forms, contacting the social service emergency duty team and in some cases completing the risk assessment form (form 913) that went against force guidance. Moreover, the PPU's who receive all these forms described how they continue to process and act on them even if they concern interfamilial domestic abuse.

Officers had not received training about the new definition or given guidance about what they should do when attending incidents of interfamilial abuse. In consequence, officers are uncertain of what they should do and reluctant to walk away if no criminal offence is reported.

While the force has not experienced a domestic homicide for the past three years, there has been a recent incident of a family member seriously assaulting a grandparent, which was not risk assessed by the force following the change in definition. The family were discussed at the multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) by a partner agency because of the serious nature of the incident. Statutory and voluntary partners – for example, the local authority and Women's Aid – expressed concern about the force change in definition of domestic abuse. They stated that neither they nor the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) had followed suit, nor had they been consulted before the change, merely informed that it was going to happen. HMIC are concerned that such a change in definition means that some victims of domestic abuse are not identified or risk assessed and do not receive the support they need from the police and other agencies.

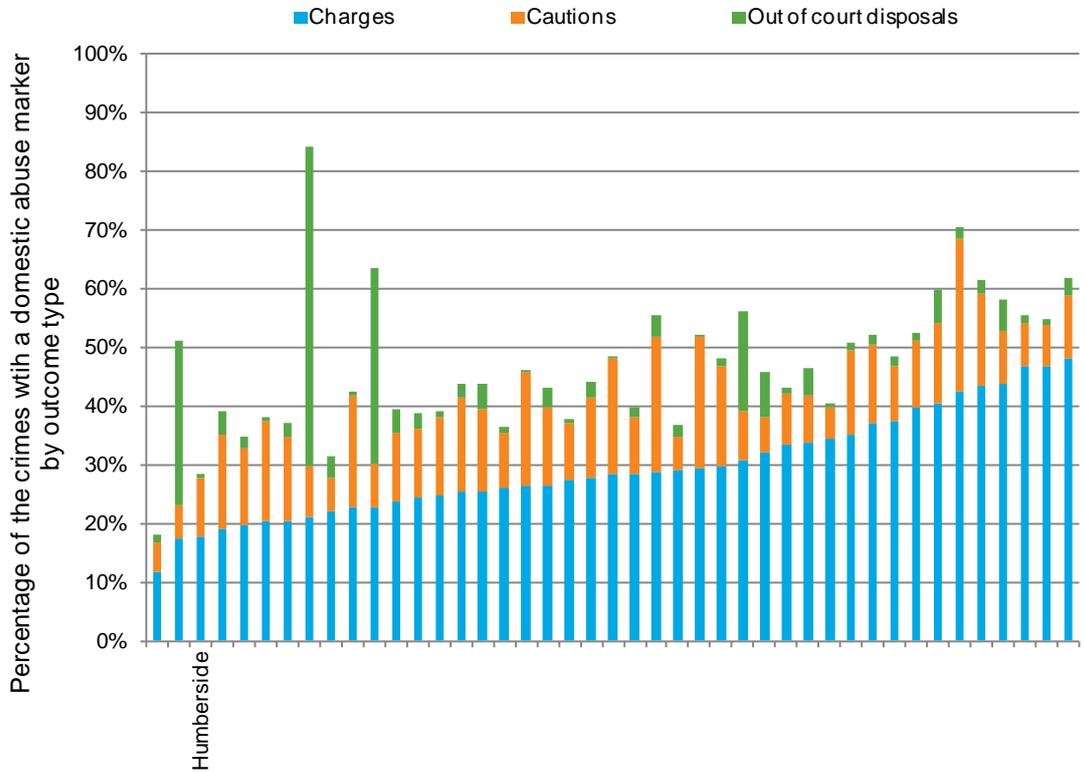
## **How are victims of domestic abuse made safer as a result of the police response and subsequent action?**

High risk cases are referred to monthly multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) and victims and children receive necessary support and safety planning. However, HMIC are concerned that, with medium and standard risk cases, the process is less clear and backlogs in transferring the information onto a single force register could mean that repeat victims are missed and true levels of risk not understood.

There are different levels of service across the force area for both victims and offenders, determined by where they live. Some work is being done to understand the needs of victims in emerging communities in one area within the force, which is developing important links to them.

Humberside recorded 4,014<sup>9</sup> domestic abuse related crimes for the 12 months to the end of August 2013. Of these crimes 18% resulted in a charge, 10% resulted in a caution and, 1% had an out of court disposal, for example a fixed penalty notice for disorderly conduct.

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

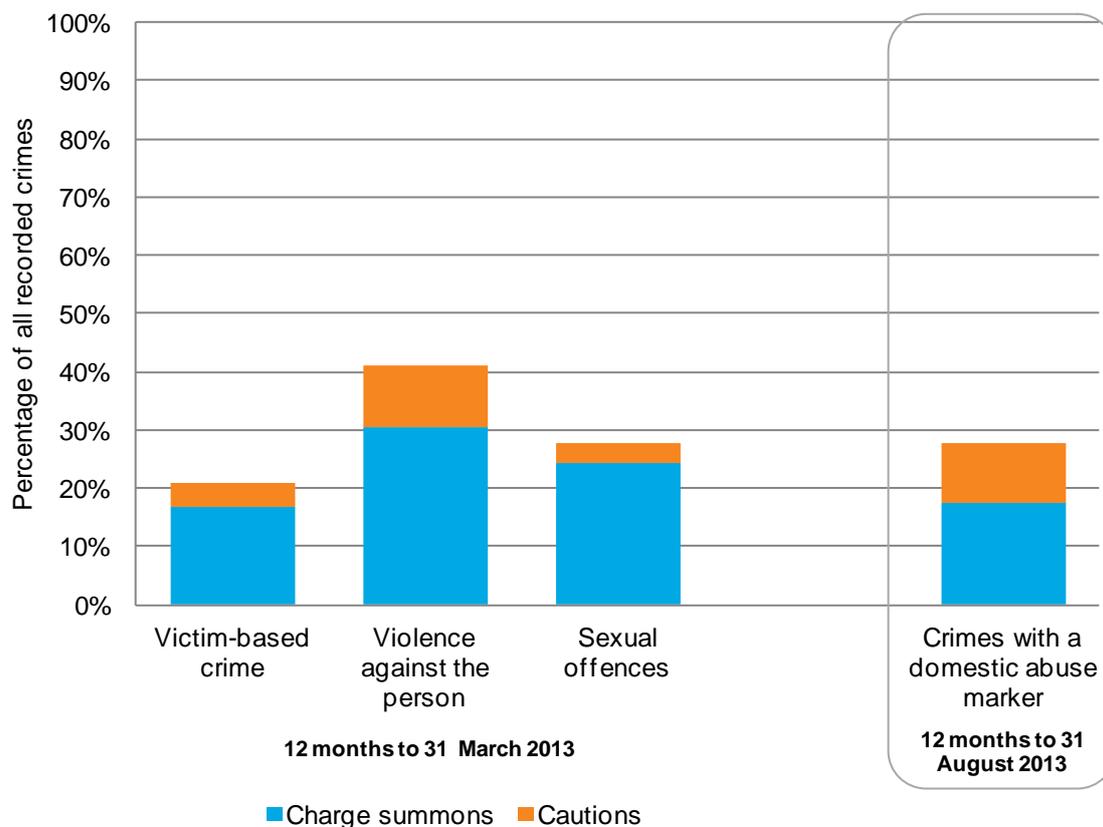


Source: HMIC data collection

Humberside charge a charge a similar proportion of crimes with a domestic abuse marker than recorded victim-based crime.

<sup>9</sup> Based on forces' own definition of domestic abuse and the use of a domestic abuse marker on the IT recording 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>10</sup>**



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

Risk assessments completed by officers are sent electronically to the PPU. The domestic violence coordinator (DVC) carries out secondary assessments using additional information held on the domestic violence register (DVR) and information held by statutory and voluntary agencies about victims, any children or perpetrators. However, backlogs of forms have built up. This means that victims may not have their cases reassessed and their true level of risk identified in a timely way, leaving them without necessary safety measures. The DVCs try to identify high risk cases and deal with these as a priority. Once identified, actions are taken to safeguard victims, which include forwarding the case to a MARAC. Medium and standard risk cases will remain in a queue to be recorded on the DVR once all the high risk cases have been processed. While

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

each division attempts to manage these backlogs by regularly checking for any missed high risk cases, HMIC are concerned that repeat victims regularly assessed as standard or medium risk may not have their true level of risk identified. Efforts are being made in each division to reduce the backlogs by moving staff from other activities to process the forms. HMIC are concerned that insufficient priority is being given to this important task and victims are not receiving necessary support and safeguarding.

HMIC found a lack of consistency in the way medium and standard risk cases are managed across the three divisions. The arrangements in Hull appear to be the most comprehensive with the co-located team providing a service for all cases, not just those identified as high risk. There is a review taking place in Grimsby that will try and improve the handling of medium and standard risk investigations that are currently managed by response staff rather than dedicated PPU officers.

Specialist staff within the divisional PPUs are given additional training when they start working on the teams. They have a good understanding of stalking, harassment, and coercive and controlling behaviour. HMIC found them to be enthusiastic, committed and passionate about their role in delivering domestic abuse services. The delivery of continuous training for DVCs varied across the divisions and would benefit from consistency.

Each local authority area provides independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs) for their area. This means there is a provision in Hull and East Riding police divisions and two groups of IDVAs for the South Bank division. There is also a MARAC for each local authority area. These are held monthly. With four different local authorities involved in the provision of staff and buildings, multi-agency working is inconsistent across the area.

Hull has a multi-agency co-located team based in a new police station, which is able to deliver a good service to victims of domestic abuse. The divisional commander has recognised the important work the team can do and has increased the number of officers and staff. Other agencies including the local authority and Women's Aid have also provided staff. With a number of agencies working together, information is shared about victims, their children and perpetrators to build a clear picture of risk and ensure necessary safety planning is completed. This model is not replicated in the other areas in the county, which means that victims receive an inconsistent level of service depending on where they live.

Hull also contributes to the Strength for Change programme that supports offenders in Hull. The Hull partnership arrangements have produced a one-day domestic abuse training course for officers in Humberside Police. This would

help improve officers' understanding and awareness of all aspects of domestic abuse. The partnership has undertaken three sets of victim satisfaction surveys asking victims specifically about officers' response to incidents of domestic abuse. The results of the surveys showed that, while PPU staff provide a very good service, the attitudes of attending officers are often poor and need attention. The use of free training for the force's frontline staff may improve the service they provide to domestic abuse victims.

In Grimsby within the South Bank division, there is a domestic violence liaison worker who manages the medium and standard risk cases. The post is funded by the police but only for work in the Grimsby area (not Scunthorpe, which is in the same division). There is no such provision in the Hull or East Riding divisions. Within the Safer Neighbourhoods Partnership in Grimsby, the community cohesion officer works with minority communities, in particular the women. The aim of the work is to develop trust, dispel myths, encourage reporting of domestic abuse and reduce isolation. Also included is work to understand these emerging communities. There is close working with the Communities Advisory Centre (which began as specific to the Polish community and has since developed) where the officer is involved in an integration programme for children that typically include exchange visits to countries of origin. In schools, work is currently ongoing to increase knowledge about knife crime, violence, drinking, driving and healthy relationships. However, there is no similar provision for the other parts of the force area.

East Riding division has taken steps to improve multi agency working but they are still some way from achieving the comprehensive service delivered in Hull. High risk cases of domestic abuse are managed by the PPUs although on occasions, on the South Bank, divisional investigators from the CID are required to conduct domestic abuse investigations even though they have not received any additional training. This again illustrates the level of inconsistency in service to victims of domestic abuse.

HMIC found that statutory and voluntary partners were impressed by the way in which the PCC has consulted about commissioning arrangements for victims services, which take effect in April 2014.

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

HMIC found that the processes in place across the force to ensure that victims are updated and their level of risk re-assessed when a perpetrator is released from prison are inconsistent. This means that the level of risk to some victims may not be understood and properly managed.

In some parts of the force, local neighbourhood officers are involved in providing support to victims of domestic abuse, but this is not the case across the whole force area.

There is no performance management framework which includes information about domestic abuse. This means that the force do not fully understand the scale and nature of domestic abuse and whether the work they do to tackle domestic abuse is effective. This framework is being developed and should be in place early in 2014.

IDVAs take responsibility for maintaining contact with victims of domestic abuse while perpetrators are in prison. Once the release date for a prisoner is known, it is passed through to the divisional intelligence unit who inform the appropriate PPU. HMIC found that, while this process is clear in Hull and the Grimsby part of the South Bank division, it is not as clear in East Riding or Scunthorpe. In Hull, the PPU and the domestic abuse partnership (DAP), who work together in the police station, share this information to ensure the risk level to the victim is reviewed and appropriate actions put in place. Multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) meetings are also held depending on the level of risk posed by the perpetrator. These meetings involve police, the national probation service and the prison service. Information about prison releases, including details of the released prisoner and victim, are then placed on the computerised briefing system to inform local patrolling officers.

During the inspection, a case was examined involving threats of a serious nature made by a serving prisoner against the victim. The action taken by the staff in Grimsby did not appear to react swiftly to this emerging threat. HMIC brought this case to the attention of local supervisors and ensured it was dealt with appropriately.

Serial and serious perpetrators are identified through the MAPPA meetings and decisions are taken about the level of disclosure of information to the victim to ensure they remain safe. Hull has the Strength to Change programme, which offers a self-referral opportunity to offenders in the area. This has reported good results with 80% of those who have completed the full course not re-offending (based on the programme's own data). Similar provision is not available in other parts of the force area with limited or no funding available for convicted or non-convicted perpetrators to participate in similar programmes.

HMIC found there was no process to maintain contact with repeat victims if they no longer make calls to the police.

Safer neighbourhood teams in the city of Hull do not generally become involved in dealing with domestic abuse incidents. However, the teams are involved in secondary actions requested through the local MARAC. This has included

leafleting homes and neighbours where possible domestic abuse is occurring. This has been done several times and revealed antisocial behaviour, allowing officers and partners to work with families where there is domestic abuse. This is not replicated in other parts of the force.

The most frequent ten perpetrators and victims are placed on the intranet to improve officer awareness. However, the families at the greatest risk will not always form part of these ten and there does not appear to be any measure or governance or consistency applied to this practice. There has not been any evaluation of the effectiveness of the approach and whether officers are more aware of high risk families as a result.

The force has had not had a domestic homicide in the past three years but is confident that it has a process to learn from reviews of such incidents should they occur in the future.

While domestic abuse is a clear priority for the force, it does not have a performance management framework to monitor the effectiveness of its activity and policies beyond a count of the number of domestic violence incidents and the number of repeat victims the force deals with. The force is reviewing the way in which it manages performance currently and it intends to include comprehensive information about domestic abuse. It believes this will assist with delivery of its priorities. Within the divisions, some data are gathered and provided to staff about domestic abuse. The data includes the number of incidents, whether a risk assessment form is completed or not, the number of arrests and the outcome rate showing the type of detection used, together with the number of repeat victims of domestic abuse.

The force undertakes a full assessment of the risks it faces each year, referred to as the 'strategic assessment'. It then compiles a 'control strategy' as the way in which it will minimise those identified risks; however, each police division produces its own control strategy, which means that each division may have different priorities. Each division has an intelligence unit that gathers information from patrolling officers, the public and partner agencies to create intelligence for the force to act upon. However, HMIC found that the intelligence units were much more likely to produce work about shoplifting and other crimes than domestic abuse. This is a concern because the intelligence teams are clearly not working to achieve the priorities set by the PCC for domestic abuse, and valuable opportunities to understand the extent of domestic abuse offending are being missed.

## 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. Front enquiry staff and those working within the incident handling units (IHUs) would benefit from training and awareness to help them identify domestic abuse in its various forms and understand the information held on various computer systems in the force.
2. Information about the nature and history of a domestic abuse call should always be provided to first responders by IHU staff.
3. While the PCC has clearly made domestic abuse a priority for the force, it needs to ensure that a single process throughout the four local authority areas operates to the benefit of victims in Humberside.
4. Divisional intelligence bureaux (DIBs) need to support the priority of domestic abuse in addition to their work currently focused on volume crime like shoplifting.
5. Divisional investigators who are called upon to manage certain categories of domestic abuse must receive mandatory training to support their capability to deal with high risk cases.
6. The force should review its decision to change the national definition of domestic abuse by removing interfamilial abuse, which is not understood or followed by frontline and specialist staff. This would be supported by partner agencies that are unclear of the benefits of the decision and feel that risks are raised as a consequence of it.
7. The force should train and support staff to ensure that the needs of the victim are considered the primary concern when dealing with domestic abuse, and that dealing with the perpetrator is part of that process but not the main issue to be dealt with during their attendance.
8. Supervision of domestic abuse incidents and the submission of the risk assessment form should be improved so that each case receives the appropriate level of scrutiny.

9. PPU staff manage high risk domestic abuse victims but the extent to which medium and standard risk cases are managed either in PPU or elsewhere is patchy, inconsistent and provides a level of concern that should be addressed.
10. The force should ensure that it has a comprehensive and consistent approach to dealing with the release of domestic abuse offenders from prison, so as to make sure that the victim receives care and the offender is managed appropriately in every case.

## 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.