



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Lincolnshire Police's approach to tackling domestic abuse

© HMIC 2014

ISBN: 978-1-78246-358-0

www.hmic.gov.uk

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 Lincolnshire Police and at the end of the report we set out some recommendations. These recommendations should be considered in conjunction with the recommendations for all forces made in the national report.⁶

A glossary of frequently used terms also appears at the end of the report.

⁶ There is a requirement under section 55(5) and section 55(6) of the Police Act 1996 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 Lincolnshire⁷

Calls for assistance



In Lincolnshire, domestic abuse accounts for 2% of calls to the police for assistance. The force was unable to provide the number of these calls that were from repeat victims.

Crime

7%

Domestic abuse accounts for 7% of all recorded crime.

Assault with intent

12%

Lincolnshire recorded 131 assaults with intent to cause serious harm, of these 16 were domestic abuse related. This is 12% of all assaults with intent to cause serious harm recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

Assault with injury

34%

The force also recorded 2,783 assaults with injury, of these 941 were domestic abuse related. This is 34% of all assaults with injury recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

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

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

Harassment

38%

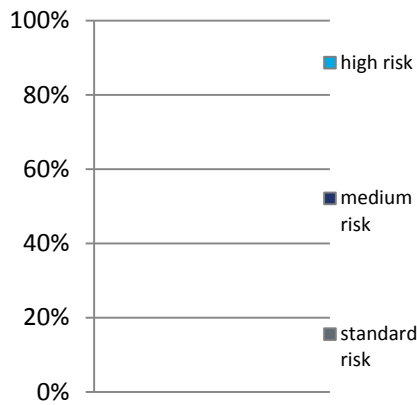
The force recorded 399 harassment offences, of these 153 were domestic abuse related. This is 38% of all harassment offences recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

Sexual offences

8%

The force also recorded 595 sexual offences, of these 48 were domestic abuse related. This is 8% of all sexual offences recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

Risk levels



Lincolnshire Police 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 71 arrests in Lincolnshire for the 12 months to end of August 2013. For most forces the number is between 45 and 90.

Outcomes



Lincolnshire recorded 2,726 domestic abuse related crimes for the 12 months to the end of August 2013. Of these crimes, 21% resulted in a charge, 9% resulted in a caution and, 54% had an out of court disposal, for example, a fixed penalty notice for disorderly conduct.

Executive summary

Lincolnshire Police is generally effective at tackling domestic abuse, however, there are some areas that require further improvement before there is confidence that the police are working as well as they should to help keep victims of domestic abuse safe.

Tackling domestic abuse is a priority for the police and crime commissioner (PCC) and the chief constable. Staff demonstrate a high level of commitment and support to victims to help make them safe. There are dedicated domestic abuse officers and experienced detectives to investigate crimes.

However there are some inconsistent practices across the force, and gaps in the service that the police provide to some victims. For those victims who are assessed as medium or standard risk, the force needs to improve both its supervision of these cases, as well as how and when the risk is reviewed, so that it is clear who is responsible for keeping these victims safe. There are also inconsistencies about how victims are updated if a perpetrator is released from custody, and about how the force ensures that the risk assessment is reviewed at this critical time.

The force has developed strong links with partner agencies in delivering a more co-ordinated response to domestic abuse.

This report outlines a number of areas where the force could further strengthen its response.

Identifying victims

In Lincolnshire, police call handlers are well trained in identifying domestic abuse and have a good understanding of risk assessment. There are competent and experienced staff in the control room, who deal with calls effectively, and oversight and supervision of the initial response is good.

Building as full a picture as possible of the risks faced by a victim of domestic abuse is vital to ensuring the right level of response. Staff understand the importance of identifying repeat victims but they do not always ask the right questions to establish whether they have been a victim before, or whether the victim is particularly vulnerable. The force has a number of different databases, which also hampers the process of checking previous history.

Keeping victims safe

Domestic abuse is a priority for the PCC and the force. Officers have a good understanding of their important role in dealing with perpetrators; safeguarding victims; and in exercising professional judgement appropriately.

Officers have received basic domestic abuse risk assessment training, and most have had additional training covering coercive control, stalking, harassment and so-called honour-based violence.

Supervision is robust and effective for high risk cases of domestic abuse (those at high risk of serious harm or murder). However, less effective supervisory processes are in place for medium and standard risk victims.

Domestic abuse investigations are allocated according to the seriousness of the crime, rather than the level of continuing risk to the victim. This means that inexperienced officers could deal with a higher risk case. As cases are passed between teams and departments within the force, there is a risk that victims may not be contacted, or may be contacted by a number of different people, which can be equally concerning (as victims may lose confidence in the police response if they are repeatedly asked similar questions by different staff).

Management of risk

The force works hard to make victims safer from the first point of contact. All cases assessed using the domestic abuse, stalking and harassment (DASH) risk assessment, are reviewed by specialist officers. The force control room, and frontline officers and staff, display a good understanding of how important their role is to make victims safer, and that this is their responsibility.

Domestic abuse officers take a proactive approach to managing the continuing risk to high-risk victims as their cases progress through the police and court processes.

However, there is limited supervision and management for those victims who are assessed as being standard or medium risk of further harm, and there is no systematic method of reviewing continuing risk for standard or medium risk victims.

There is good and effective partnership working to support and safeguard victims. Multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) are multi-agency meetings where statutory and voluntary agency representatives share information about high-risk victims of domestic abuse in order to produce a co-ordinated action plan to increase victim safety. The MARAC process in the county is regarded as working well; information is exchanged promptly, risk assessed and safety plans put in place to reduce risk. There is strong evidence

that the police work with partners to reduce the risk to victims and as a result make them safer.

Organisational effectiveness for keeping people safe

Although the force has a comprehensive approach to managing victim safety, there are areas which it could strengthen to improve its service to victims of domestic abuse.

The PCC is keen to improve services for domestic abuse victims and is working with police and partners to do this.

High risk victims are well served by the police and partners; however, for medium and standard risk victims it is not always clear who is responsible for updating victims when perpetrators are released from custody, and who will re-assess risk as a result of this. This could result in a victim being contacted by a number of people or not contacted at all, and the force and partner agencies being unaware of increased risk.

Local neighbourhood police officers are generally unaware of domestic abuse victims in their area, and there is limited access to briefing material to improve their understanding.

The force has started to develop plans to better manage its worst domestic abuse perpetrators in order to prevent reoffending. It now understands its current profile of known serial and serious domestic abuse perpetrators but so far there has been limited progress, in part due to lack of resources.

Findings

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

In Lincolnshire, police call handlers are well trained in identifying domestic abuse and have a good understanding of risk assessment. There are competent and experienced staff in the control room, who deal with calls effectively, and oversight and supervision of the initial response is good.

Building as full a picture as possible of the risks faced by a victim of domestic abuse is vital to ensuring the right level of response. Staff understand the importance of identifying repeat victims but they do not always ask the right questions to establish whether they have been a victim before, or whether the victim is particularly vulnerable. The force has a number of different databases, which also hampers the process of checking previous history.

Domestic abuse incidents are reported in different ways. A victim may attend a police station or may be referred from other agencies, such as the health service or social care, through MARAC. For the police, it is more common for a telephone call to come in via the force command and control room.

Staff within the force control room are trained to ask questions of callers to identify whether or not they are at immediate risk. The safety of the caller is important and the call handler may give advice to them, for example, go into another room away from the perpetrator and close the door. Where callers do not speak English the operator has easy access to interpreters through a quick dial process to a language line. HMIC listened to a sample number of calls and found call takers asked questions which established whether the caller or any other person, for example a child, was at immediate risk of harm. However, this information was not always recorded on the incident log.

Call takers do not always identify whether the caller is a repeat victim of domestic abuse. The force relies on the information system automatically alerting them to previous police involvement at a particular address or the phone number. This means that if a victim or an offender had previous history of abuse but at a different address, the police would not be aware of it at this stage unless the caller referred to it. Call takers did not routinely ask about previous domestic abuse incidents. There is a structured set of questions for domestic abuse, but staff do not always refer to it when taking calls from those reporting domestic abuse. This is of concern.

When a call is received the call handler checks the force's systems to see whether there is any information available which will help the call taker and officers who attend the incident establish the levels of risk the caller faces. The force systems hold information, such as previous calls to the address; information about the caller and alleged perpetrator; information held relating to the children in the house, who may be at risk; and whether anyone at the address holds a firearm. However, the force's command and control system is not directly linked, and cannot automatically update the force's crime management system or a separate force database where information on domestic abuse victims is held. This means that providing information to attending officers is inefficient and does always not provide the whole picture.

The force is aware of these issues and is working on a solution to improve connectivity between these systems, but this will not be in place until summer 2014. The force has provided access for control room staff to all the databases to try and improve intelligence and information transfer and better identify repeat victims, but this access is not force wide.

The information that can be readily gathered by the call handler is passed to attending officers in most cases. In Lincolnshire, all domestic abuse incidents are allocated either an urgent or priority response. Urgent calls require a deployment within two minutes from the call being taken. In some calls reviewed by HMIC, this appears to limit the gathering of information from the caller and force systems. This could mean that officers may not have the most complete information available when they attend an incident. Additional checks are carried out should the officers request further information, but this seldom happens, as the first priority of the responding officer is to react rapidly to protect the victim from harm.

Supervisors and managers working in the control room check those calls graded as urgent, and ensure the right action is being taken. The information gathered is passed to officers over the radio as they travel to the incident. Officers are sent either immediately, where there is believed to be a risk to life or safety, or, when the victim is thought to be safe, officers will visit them within six hours. The decision on how quickly officers have to attend is based on the assessment of harm, threat and risk faced by the victim. The control room will always send more than one officer to incidents of domestic abuse where this is possible, so that when they arrive they can separate those involved in the incident, to ensure each is able to give their separate account of what has happened, and victim safety issues can be properly addressed. However, due to the large force area, a second officer may be some distance away, and the first officer arriving at the incident may have to deal with a difficult situation on their own for some time.

Supervision of domestic abuse incidents is overseen by control room supervisors, and they also use their professional judgement on whether to bring incidents to the attention of response supervisors. This means that frontline supervisors do not always know that their officers are attending an incident of domestic abuse. Although the response supervisor should be made aware by the control room when an officer is attending a high risk victim, this is not necessarily so for standard and medium risk victims. This may mean that an officer could be developing a safeguarding plan without supervisory oversight at the time.

Staff within the control room receive training as part of their initial course when they start working for the police, and an element of this is specifically about domestic abuse. In the last two years, they have also received an additional day's classroom-based domestic abuse training, which included stalking, harassment, coercive control and so-called honour-based violence. The training focused on how to recognise these types of domestic abuse, and how best to deal with a call where they suspect this may be an issue. Staff were found to be confident and empathetic when dealing with callers who were experiencing domestic abuse.

The force has a definition of repeat victimisation, and staff have a clear understanding that any case where the victim has reported domestic abuse to the police or another agency, or where the victim states they have been subjected to abuse in the past, is a repeat case. This will influence the risk assessment that is made. There is a good understanding among those who deal with victims, and they are prioritised by both investigators and the domestic abuse team.

Repeat victims are automatically identified by the computer system on which the force record calls for assistance, if they call from the same address or telephone number as previously. This means that when a call is received the call handler can look at previous calls for assistance and better understand the risk that may be present. If someone at the address or phone number has also previously been identified as vulnerable, then this is also made clear to the call handler, and again this can help them manage the risk posed to the caller and help them prioritise cases. However, if the marker does not appear on the address or telephone number, then call handlers do not always ask the caller if they have been subject to a previous domestic abuse incident.

There is good management and supervision in the control room. Where incidents of domestic abuse are identified as being high risk prior to police arrival, these are monitored by control room supervisors to ensure that immediate and appropriate action is taken. The force sets out to supervise all domestic abuse calls, but this is not always possible. Supervisors in the control room listen to their teams' calls and dip sample up to five calls per month (although these may not always be domestic abuse related) to ensure that they are asking the right questions to establish that risk is being accurately assessed.

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

Domestic abuse is a priority for the PCC and the force. Officers have a good understanding of their important role in dealing with perpetrators; safeguarding victims; and in exercising professional judgement appropriately.

Officers have received basic domestic abuse risk assessment training, and most have had additional training covering coercive control, stalking, harassment and so-called honour-based violence.

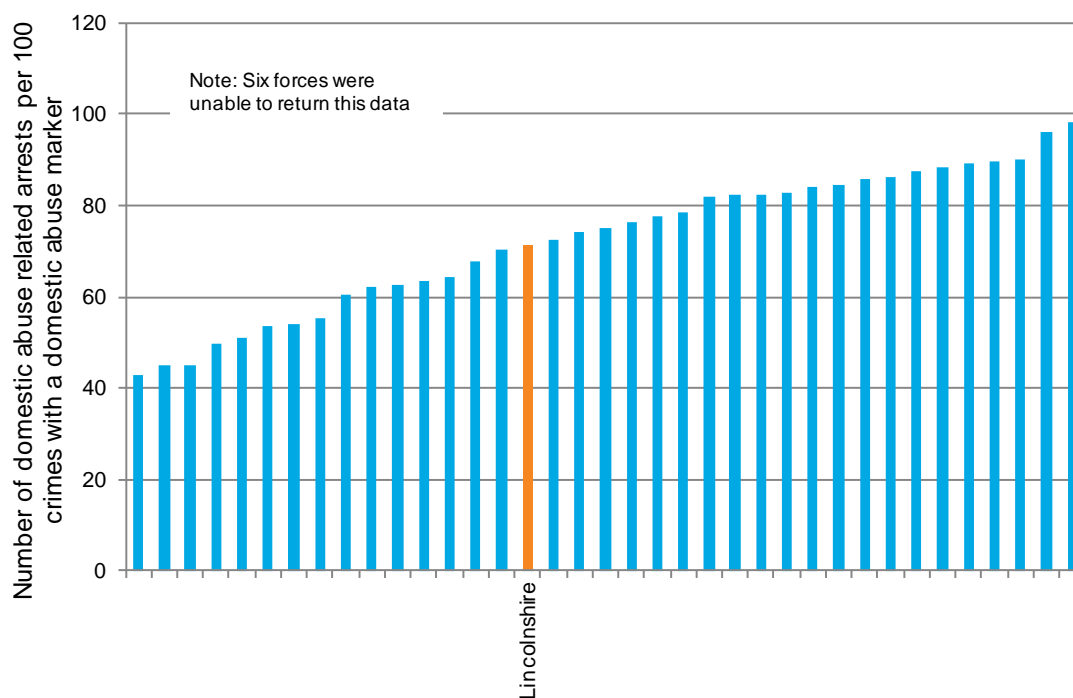
Supervision is robust and effective for high risk cases of domestic abuse (those at high risk of serious harm or murder). However, less effective supervisory processes are in place for medium and standard risk victims.

Domestic abuse investigations are allocated according to the seriousness of the crime, rather than the level of continuing risk to the victim. This means that inexperienced officers could deal with a higher risk case. As cases are passed between teams and departments within the force, there is a risk that victims may not be contacted, or may be contacted by a number of different people, which can be equally concerning (as victims may lose confidence in the police response if they are repeatedly asked similar questions by different staff).

For every 100 domestic abuse crimes recorded there were 71 arrests in Lincolnshire for the 12 months to end of August 2013. For most forces the number is between 45 and 90.⁸

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

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



Source: HMIC data collection

Domestic abuse is a priority for the PCC and the force. The community safety partnership identifies domestic abuse as one of the county’s top five priorities. A strategic direction and clear ambition has been set by the PCC, with a target to reduce repeat victimisation. The PCC’s police and crime plan has a strong domestic abuse focus, which is supported by the force’s operational delivery plan and Operation NOVA (Say No to Violence and Abuse) which is a force-wide initiative to tackle domestic abuse.

The force is working to improve co-ordination across the police and partners to improve support for victims, and there is a clear and strong emphasis on taking positive action. This might mean making an arrest, but officers are also clear that this includes taking steps to ensure victims are made safer, for example, by improving security in the victim’s home. Officers responding to domestic abuse incidents understand the importance of their role in properly assessing threat, harm and risk at each incident they attend.

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

Officers attending domestic abuse incidents have received training which gives them some understanding of domestic abuse. The force requires officers to carry out an initial assessment of the risk faced by domestic abuse victims using the nationally recognised domestic abuse, stalking and harassment (DASH) risk assessment tool. There has been DASH risk assessment training in the past two years. More recently, training has been delivered to help staff better understand the full spectrum of abuse, including coercive control, stalking, harassment and so-called honour-based violence, so that officers can recognise these, and understand how they should deal with victims of these types of abuse. This training is almost complete across the force. Staff displayed a good understanding of domestic abuse, coercive control, stalking and harassment.

Officers and staff who complete the DASH risk assessment understand why they are asking the questions on the form. Officers also have the DASH checklist on personal issue BlackBerrys® as a useful reminder. They are able to increase the assessed level of risk using their own professional judgement, should they feel that a victim is at greater risk than the assessment score has indicated. In addition, officers are also able to use their discretion and refer a victim who has been assessed as medium risk to the MARAC, if they think the circumstances warrant it. Officers may not reduce the assessed risk based on their own judgement. A supervisor can change the officer's original assessment, but the rationale for doing so is recorded, and professional judgement is used appropriately.

Officers attending domestic abuse incidents have a good understanding of how they need to establish the threat, harm and risk to victims, and that their role is to do whatever they are able to reduce this and keep the victim safe. The force dip samples up to 60 DASH risk assessments per month to monitor the quality of risk management, and it uses the findings to improve the overall standard of risk assessments. The force has led on extensive domestic abuse campaigns, especially in the east of the county, and has translated domestic abuse literature, including DASH forms, into four different languages, which facilitates their completion when using interpreters. This initiative is based on knowledge and analysis of the emerging communities who live there. There has been wide-ranging engagement to build confidence and trust in these communities, and there is a strong drive to increase reporting from victims.

There is a clear commitment displayed by staff at each stage in the process from the control room, to attending officers and domestic abuse specialists, to understanding the risk to everyone connected to domestic abuse incidents, in particular children and any vulnerable adults. Where a child is part of a family where there has been domestic abuse, the local authority's children's social care are automatically informed through a referral process in the force control room. When children are in a family where there is a high risk of violence, then

the case will be discussed with social workers in order to properly protect them. Officers attending a domestic abuse incident where children have been present in the past, or where children have been identified as being at risk, are informed of this. This helps them establish the current level of risk, ensure the children are safe and well at the incident, and take any action necessary to protect them.

Wherever possible, two officers are sent to incidents of domestic abuse. This means that they are able to speak to each party separately, and gain an understanding of what has taken place. Their main priority is the safety of the victim, and anyone else who may be at risk. They are expected to make an arrest where an offence has been committed, and take action to ensure the safety of those present. Officers are expected to complete safety planning to make victims safer before they leave an incident.

The management of the immediate risk is the responsibility of the attending officer until the case is passed to the investigating officer or to domestic abuse specialist officers. Domestic abuse officers will monitor high-risk cases. They are located in each of the seven local authority districts and have an excellent knowledge of their area and the victims living there.

At the time of inspection, capacity was stretched. Due to sickness, a small number of officers were covering for other areas and there is reduced weekend coverage, which the force recognises is not an ideal situation in managing workloads effectively.

The domestic abuse officer will review every DASH risk assessment form; re-assess risk if appropriate; and identify any repeat victims against the force's database, if not already done so during initial attendance. High risk victims will be referred to the MARAC for further safeguarding actions to be discussed with partners. Medium risk victims, after the initial actions have been put in place by the attending officer, will receive a call from a member of victim support services, who re-assesses risk and puts in place any other actions. Those victims of domestic abuse who are risk assessed as standard, will receive no further follow-up.

Supervisors review all officers' completed risk assessment forms for completeness and accuracy. Immediate action taken by officers is supervised by their sergeants and inspectors; however, supervisors cannot monitor or attend every domestic abuse call, so there needs to be a level of reliance on the action of individual attending officers. There is a policy within the force that officers will take positive action at every domestic abuse incident. This may be by arresting the perpetrator if appropriate, or another action to make victims safer; for example speaking with neighbours to ask them to call the police if they see the perpetrator near the house or hear any concerning noise from the

address. Positive action is understood by all staff as being wide-ranging, and includes making an arrest where a crime has been committed.

There is scope to improve how domestic abuse cases are investigated. The investigation process starts when the response officer attends the scene. Overall the initial collection of evidence at the scene of domestic abuse is good, with officers using most opportunities to gather all potential evidence. After an arrest has been made the case is dealt with according to whether or not an assault has taken place, rather than cases allocated based on continuing threat and risk to the victim. All incidents of domestic abuse involving an assault are investigated by officers from the criminal investigation department (CID). This means that a case where no assault has occurred, but where the risk to a victim is high may be dealt with by an inexperienced officer who may not have the skills or confidence to achieve the best possible outcome for a victim. This is of concern.

Due to cases being investigated by different teams to those giving support to victims, there are issues with victims being contacted by too many people, too frequently. This slightly fragmented approach could make victims lose confidence, and decide they do not want to support the police investigation further.

Detective sergeants review all domestic abuse cases, including those where no further action is being taken. If the investigation is of poor quality, the officer who completed the investigation will receive feedback and instructions about improving the thoroughness of the investigation. HMIC reviewed a small number of files and found that in most cases, lines of enquiry were followed up effectively.

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

The force works hard to make victims safer from the first point of contact. All cases assessed using the domestic abuse, stalking and harassment (DASH) risk assessment, are reviewed by specialist officers. The force control room, and frontline officers and staff, display a good understanding of how important their role is to make victims safer, and that this is their responsibility.

Domestic abuse officers take a proactive approach to managing the continuing risk to high-risk victims as their cases progress through the police and court processes.

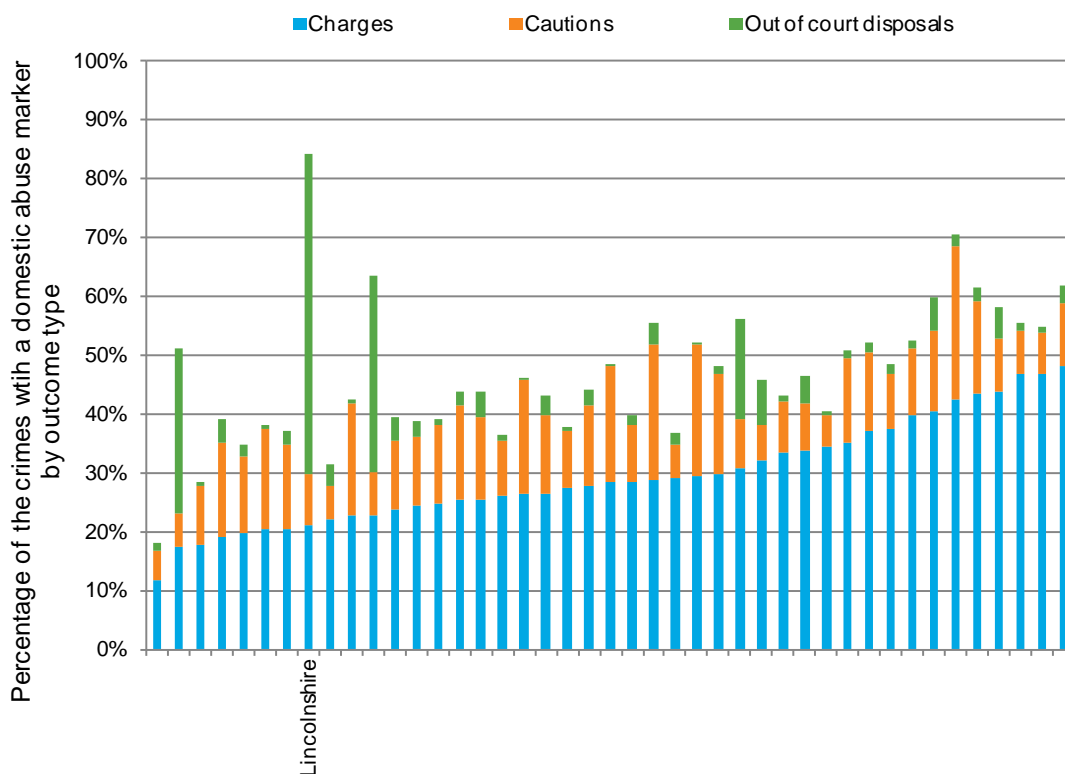
However, there is limited supervision and management for those victims who are assessed as being standard or medium risk of further harm, and there is no systematic method of reviewing continuing risk for standard or medium risk victims.

There is good and effective partnership working to support and safeguard victims. Multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) are multi-agency meetings where statutory and voluntary agency representatives share information about high-risk victims of domestic abuse in order to produce a co-ordinated action plan to increase victim safety. The MARAC process in the county is regarded as working well; information is exchanged promptly, risk assessed and safety plans put in place to reduce risk. There is strong evidence that the police work with partners to reduce the risk to victims and as a result make them safer.

Lincolnshire recorded 2,726¹⁰ domestic abuse related crimes for the 12 months to the end of August 2013. Of these crimes 21 percent resulted in a charge, 9 percent resulted in a caution and 54 percent 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 use of a domestic abuse marker on IT systems.

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

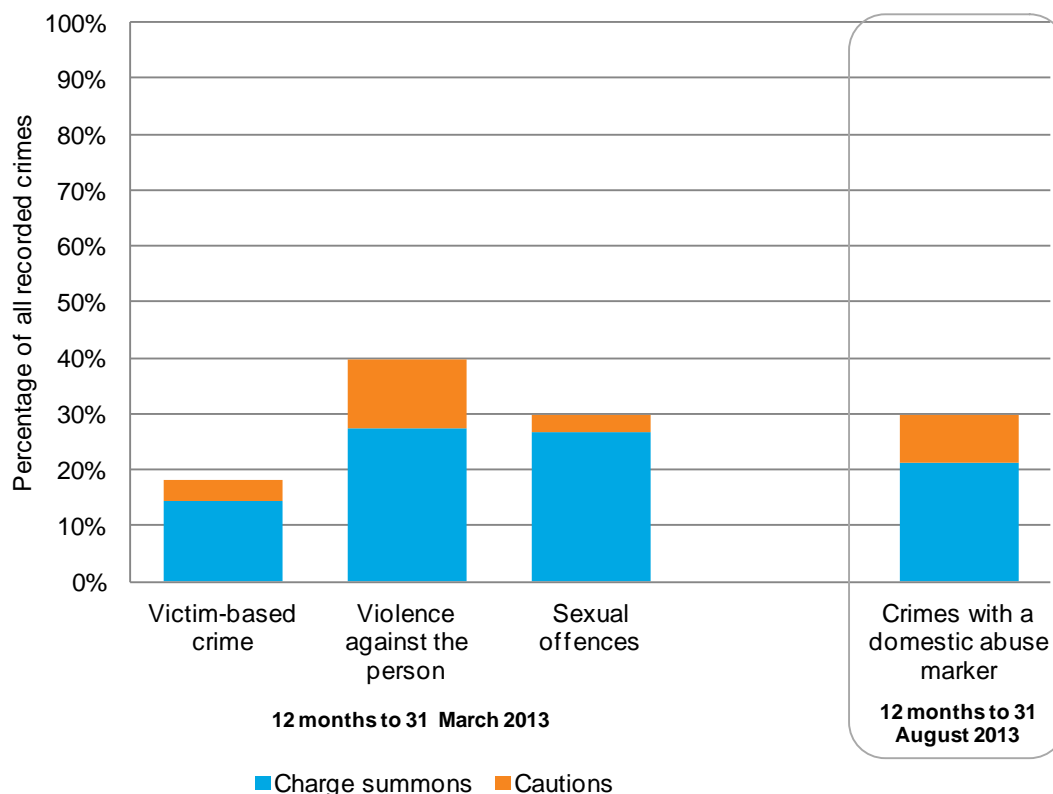


Source: HMIC data collection

Lincolnshire 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.

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

Figure 3: Percentage of charge summons and cautions used for victim-based crime, violence against the person, sexual offences and all crimes with a domestic abuse marker¹²



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

The domestic abuse officers review all DASH risk assessments that have been undertaken by attending officers, and use additional information from partner agencies to help them develop a more complete picture of the risk a victim may be facing. This means that a victim facing higher levels of risk should receive appropriate support and actions to reduce risk, for example, help to have locks changed or a mobile phone to contact the police in an emergency. Specialist domestic abuse officers are based in local areas and have developed knowledge of the high risk victims and serious offenders in their areas. By reviewing all assessments, they can identify escalation in patterns of abuse, assign a higher risk rating to these victims, and update force systems to send necessary warning signals to the attending officers.

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

However, beyond this one review by the domestic abuse officer, there is limited supervision and management for those victims who are assessed as being at standard or medium risk of further harm. There is also no formalised method of reviewing and reassessing risk for standard or medium risk victims. These cases are often investigated by response officers. They are clear that their responsibility is to take positive action and to make victims safer, there is, however, no continuing review of risk.

The force conducts a monthly audit of DASH risk assessment forms, reviewing up to 60 at any one time. This has identified some common themes and these are communicated to officers through the public protection website, a safeguarding matters bulletin or directly to the officer and their supervisor where there is an identified recurring issue. However, it is disappointing that the force has not yet seen an overall improvement in the quality of DASH risk assessments submitted by officers.

Domestic abuse officers take a proactive approach to risk re-assessment of high risk victims, and they are co-located with independent domestic violence advisers (IDVAs). Together, they carry out face-to-face visits with these victims, and force systems are updated with new information. If a further incident happens, or there is new information, then the case will be re-opened and the risk reviewed. At the time of inspection, due to sickness levels among domestic abuse officers, this service was only provided during office hours, Monday to Friday. Outside of these times, risk is managed through the neighbourhood and duty inspectors.

Domestic abuse officers have had recent training including stalking and harassment and so-called honour-based violence. CID officers do not receive any additional training about domestic abuse. A number of the domestic abuse officers are very experienced and have been working in the domestic abuse area for a number of years. They are responsible for providing support to victims, and helping to make them safer through safety planning and partnership working. Unfortunately, uniformed officers do not really understand what the specialist teams do. This means that they make inaccurate assumptions about who will make sure a victim is updated about their case, and victims may, as a result, not be contacted. There is some lack of clarity about who is dealing with the victims of domestic abuse throughout the investigation and criminal justice process. The role of the domestic abuse team is unclear to many staff who did not understand whether they would take statements or concentrate solely on victim care.

The force can provide mobile phones, to enable victims to have an easy way of contacting the police in an emergency, and it will install alarms in victims' houses. Officers attending incidents produce a fast action response plan to

reduce risk to victims, and this might include ensuring that any call to an address is treated as an emergency by marking police systems to show this. For high risk victims any change in circumstances, for example, where a perpetrator is released from police custody, should be updated by the officer who is dealing with the case. However, where the victim is a medium or standard risk, there was no evidence to show who has responsibility to make sure a victim is aware that this had happened. In such a situation it is also not certain that a safety plan will be reviewed and updated to deal with any changes in risk. This is a concern and needs to be addressed.

There are good working relationships between the force and its partners, including health services, housing and local authorities. This means the force is able to share information effectively and gain a more complete picture around risk levels. There are two MARACs being held across the force area and both meet fortnightly. The MARAC process in Lincolnshire is regarded as working well. The meetings are well run and there is good attendance by partners, including the voluntary sector. The meeting works well, through reviewing the level of risk allocated, and in ensuring each organisation takes appropriate responsibility for relevant actions. The police rotate the responsibility to chair the meeting with other agencies, and there is a common IT system which shares information effectively and securely among partners. Domestic abuse training has been provided to all agencies and there is a high level of referrals from other agencies (over 65 percent). This demonstrates the strength of multi-agency understanding of domestic abuse issues and there is evidence to show there is timely activity to make victims safer. There has not yet been any formal evaluation work to understand how well the MARAC works.

There is a goal for both the force and partners to work towards creating a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH), which will all agencies bring together in one location to share information and work together to protect children and vulnerable adults, including victims of domestic abuse. However, due to the geography of Lincolnshire, identifying a suitable central location is proving difficult.

There are good working relationships with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), and decisions about domestic abuse cases can be challenged if officers disagree with the CPS on particular cases. Officers are seldom able to speak to a lawyer who has specialist understanding of domestic abuse, as they generally deal with CPS Direct which does not have this additional knowledge.

There are no specialist domestic violence courts, and the force have identified potential gaps in file quality and submission, and is working with a re-structured CPS to improve this, which they envisage will lead to improved conviction rates. There is information sharing on force performance in successfully building

cases that lead to convictions. The force's domestic abuse co-ordinator meets with the domestic abuse detective inspector and the CPS domestic abuse co-ordinator to dip sample cases, routinely checking the implementation of the local service level agreement, and reviewing recent successful and unsuccessful outcomes to develop learning.

Staff and officers across Lincolnshire Police display a commitment to reducing threat, harm and risk to victims of domestic abuse. Each understands their role in this, although, as mentioned earlier, there is some lack of clarity about what the specialist team is responsible for. Some domestic abuse perpetrators that present a high risk to victims, have their presence in a neighbourhood highlighted to neighbourhood inspectors and their teams by the domestic abuse officers. Local police staff can then become involved in managing the risks to victims, for example, carrying out more visible patrols in the areas in which they live.

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

Although the force has a comprehensive approach to managing victim safety, there are areas which it could strengthen to improve its service to victims of domestic abuse.

The PCC is keen to improve services for domestic abuse victims and is working with police and partners to do this.

High risk victims are well served by the police and partners; however, for medium and standard risk victims it is not always clear who is responsible for updating victims when perpetrators are released from custody, and who will re-assess risk as a result of this. This could result in a victim being contacted by a number of people or not contacted at all, and the force and partner agencies being unaware of increased risk.

Local neighbourhood police officers are generally unaware of domestic abuse victims in their area, and there is limited access to briefing material to improve their understanding.

The force has started to develop plans to better manage its worst domestic abuse perpetrators in order to prevent reoffending. It now understands its current profile of known serial and serious domestic abuse perpetrators but so far there has been limited progress, in part due to lack of resources.

While the force has a comprehensive approach to managing victim safety there are areas that it could strengthen to better keep victims safe. The first relates to

assessing changes in level of risk to the victim when a perpetrator is released from prison. There is a lack of clarity about who is responsible for informing a victim when a perpetrator is released from prison having served a sentence. It is essential that victims are updated prior to a release from prison, and the level of risk they face re-assessed in light of this. For high risk cases contact is maintained with the victim by the domestic abuse officer and the IDVA. The victim will receive timely updates on the release of the perpetrator from police custody and any bail conditions imposed. If the perpetrator is imprisoned, then their release date will also trigger a re-assessment of risk.

Police attend court cases, and this means that the results of the cases are quickly communicated to the victim. However, for medium and standard risk cases, the officer who dealt with the case may do this, but it is not clear that this happens routinely. This means that some victims may not be updated before a perpetrator is released and a true understanding of their risk established. Because of this lack of clarity a victim might also be contacted by a number of people, which could again be an issue for them.

The second area is a routine follow-up with victims who are no longer contacting the police. Where there have been no further calls from victims, who have historically been victims on a number of occasions, there is no arrangement in place to understand why they have stopped calling.

Other than perpetrators of domestic abuse convicted of a domestic abuse offence and given an order by the court to complete the independent domestic abuse programme (IDAP) with the probation service, there has been little work carried out by the force to manage perpetrators to reduce offending and prevent re-offending. The force completed a comprehensive analysis, known as a problem profile, on serial and serious perpetrators in April 2013, and an analysis of MARAC cases shows that there are perpetrators who have abused multiple victims living within the force area. The force has an improvement plan to look at managing serial and serious perpetrators of domestic abuse. The PCC has funded a voluntary domestic abuse perpetrator programme, but at the time of inspection it was too early to assess its effectiveness.

Knowledge of where victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse live is poorly understood by frontline officers. The MARAC list of high risk victims is made available to neighbourhood inspectors, but it was not widely communicated beyond this. Overall, neighbourhood teams are not clear on who their vulnerable families are or where they live. When beat managers start their duty, they spent considerable time conducting their own research as to what incidents and crimes had occurred in their area. It was suggested on many occasions that the force's SENTINEL system, currently used for anti-social behaviour, and the vulnerability matrix they receive, could be expanded to include domestic abuse.

The force has a tasking and resource management (TARM) system and this is used to ensure a relentless pursuit of any outstanding perpetrators who need to be found and arrested. The duty inspector has a rolling 24 hour briefing, where domestic abuse actions are followed up. However, domestic abuse is not routinely included in briefing slides, and, due to the size of the county, there are significant geographical barriers to face-to-face team briefings. Information on domestic abuse victims and perpetrators is inconsistent and limited, with few pictures and proactive safeguarding actions. Frontline officers do feel strongly it is their responsibility to make victims safe, but they reported they felt hampered by a lack of good intelligence, and information on where victims and their perpetrators live, and how they can proactively help with longer-term safeguarding.

Following a recent domestic murder in the county, there has been a domestic homicide review, and the force and partners are currently working through the recommendations, to ensure that lessons are learned, and improvements made, if necessary. The force has a comprehensive public protection intranet site that contains guidance and lessons learnt, as well as other domestic abuse campaign literature. At the time of inspection, a 'safeguarding matters' newsletter had begun to be used to communicate recommendations, provide guidance to officers and staff, and give legislative updates. This is a recent development, and it will take time to become established and more widely-read.

The PCC's target for reducing repeat victimisation for domestic abuse is part of the performance management processes within the force. The force publishes performance dashboards on violence, with domestic abuse being an important element. Domestic abuse is a standing agenda item on daily management meetings, area performance meetings and monthly force meetings chaired by a chief officer. However, it is not clear what analytical products have been made available to operational staff in relation to repeat victims and perpetrators. There has been a significant increase in the reporting of domestic incidents, partly due to the definition change but also as a result of force-wide communication campaigns. This is viewed as a positive but due to the problems of recording and highlighting domestic abuse incidents on the command and control system (which is separate from, and cannot automatically update the crime management system), it is difficult to determine what success looks like for the force.

An important measure for the police is how victims feel about the service they receive, but providing the opportunity for the victims' voice to be heard is very difficult to achieve. The force recognises that it needs to do more, and has

worked with partners to set up a live electronic 'survivors survey'¹³ which is hosted on Lincolnshire County Council's partnership domestic abuse website.¹⁴ The police website also provides a link to the survey. Although still developing, it is providing opportunities for victims to provide feedback on their experiences. It is envisaged that the information provided by victims on how they feel about the service will improve performance.

¹³ www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/domestic-abuse/about-domestic-abuse/have-your-say/117186.article

¹⁴ www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/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 better identify repeat victims of domestic abuse, and develop and implement a question set in the control room, which includes asking the caller about their domestic abuse history and previous contact with the police.
2. The force should review the deployment time from call received in the control room to the deployment of an officer.
3. The force should implement a system where response supervisors are informed by radio of all domestic abuse incidents as soon as possible, and this action is then recorded on the incident log.
4. The force should review the intelligence on domestic abuse held on different IT systems, and implement appropriate interventions in order to better share this intelligence, especially with frontline officers.
5. The force should review the allocation of investigations in order that the most experienced and best equipped investigators are assigned the investigations with the highest risk of harm, rather than just the most serious crimes.
6. The force should improve supervision and the reviewing of risk for those who are assessed as being at standard or medium risk, so that it is clear who is responsible for keeping these victims safe.
7. The force should review the contact officers and staff have with victims, throughout their involvement with the police, to give one single point of contact who is able to update them and not duplicate contact.
8. The force should review the means by which victims are updated if a perpetrator is released from custody, and ensure that risk assessments are reviewed at this stage.
9. The force should improve intelligence sharing for frontline officers on high, medium and standard risk domestic abuse victims and offenders in their area. They should consider implementing a similar system to, or further develop the force's SENTINEL system for anti-social behaviour.

10. The force should publicise the role of the specialist team in order that all staff understand what they do and how they can help make victims safer.

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.