



Norfolk Constabulary's approach to tackling domestic abuse

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Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 Norfolk⁷

Calls for assistance



In Norfolk, domestic abuse accounts for 5% of calls to the police for assistance. The force was unable to provide the number of these calls that were from a repeat victim.

Crime

9%

Domestic abuse accounts for 9% of all recorded crime.

Assault with intent

5%

Norfolk recorded 41 assaults with intent to cause serious harm, of these 2 were domestic abuse related. This is 5% 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 3,837 assaults with injury, of these 1,307 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.

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

Harassment

49%

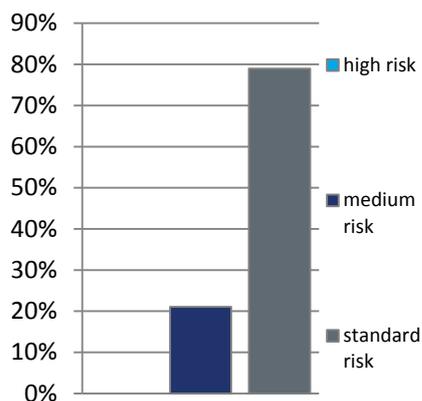
The force recorded 377 harassment offences, of these 185 were domestic abuse related. This is 49% of all harassment offences recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

Sexual offences

8%

The force also recorded 823 sexual offences, of these 67 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 Norfolk had 19 active domestic abuse cases; 0% were high risk, 21% were medium risk, and 79% were standard risk.

Arrests



For every 100 domestic abuse crimes recorded, there were 84 arrests in Norfolk. For most forces the number is between 45 and 90.

Outcomes



Norfolk recorded 3,277 domestic abuse related crimes for the 12 months to the end of August 2013. Of these crimes, 30% resulted in a charge, 17% resulted in a caution and, 1% had an out of court disposal, for example, a fixed penalty notice for disorderly conduct.

Executive summary

The public in Norfolk can have confidence that, generally the police provide a good service to victims of domestic abuse and in doing so, help to keep them safe.

Domestic abuse is a clear priority for the force and this is understood by staff at all levels, who have received messages from the chief constable reinforcing this. There has been a significant focus on domestic abuse by the police and crime commissioner, who has recently appointed a member of staff who has responsibility for co-ordinating a countywide response to domestic abuse. The police and crime plan also has a strong focus on domestic abuse.

The force has a well-developed and effective response to high-risk victims of domestic abuse (those at high risk of serious harm or murder) and staff work well with partners.

This report also outlines areas where the force could further strengthen its response to victims of domestic abuse.

Identifying victims

In Norfolk, staff 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. Oversight and supervision of how call takers deal with the call for assistance, is good.

Building as full a picture as possible of the risks faced by the victim is vital to ensuring the right level of response. Staff understand the importance of identifying repeat victims. The force has good systems within its control room and an automated search facility identifies repeat victims through either their name address or telephone number. The force has also recently introduced a checklist of questions for the call taker to ask. However, this does not include a question to establish whether the victim has been subject to domestic abuse previously or whether the victim is particularly vulnerable, but does include questions to establish if the caller is at immediate risk of harm.

Keeping victims safe

Domestic abuse is a clear priority for Norfolk Constabulary with the chief constable demonstrating strong personal leadership and commitment to keeping victims of domestic abuse safe. The force has invested in domestic abuse training for officers and staff to ensure they understand how to respond effectively. The force also has domestic abuse champions, who are officers and

staff acting as a point of contact to provide advice, specialist knowledge and support to others on domestic abuse issues.

Most officers have received domestic abuse risk assessment training and some have had additional training covering coercive control, stalking, harassment and so-called honour-based violence forms of abuse. The force recently trained inspectors with the intention that they would then share the knowledge they had gained with staff of lower ranks. At the time of inspection there was little evidence of this being delivered.

Supervision is robust and effective throughout the response to domestic abuse and 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 a supervisor.

Control room and front line staff display a good understanding of how important their role is to make victims safer, and that this is their responsibility. Officers who attend a domestic abuse incident take immediate action to reduce risk and it is clear that the force supports and encourages staff to take 'positive action'. Investigations are generally well managed. However, as cases are passed between teams and departments 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

There is good and effective partnership working to support and safeguard victims. The force supports a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) where police officers and staff from other partnership organisations are permanently located and where they work alongside one another to manage safeguarding actions for all victims. They also provide support and advice to both victims and staff on all aspects of domestic abuse. The MASH benefits from sharing information between partner agencies, including health and social services, which means a better response for the victim.

There is a countywide multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) which allows partner agencies to exchange information promptly and put in place safety plans to protect victims who are assessed as high risk. Not all partner agencies are involved in the MARAC, with the majority of referrals being made by the police. There is also evidence that actions from previous MARAC meetings are not always reported back, which means it is more difficult to evaluate their effectiveness on how victims are made safer.

Organisational effectiveness for keeping people safe

Local officers are generally aware of domestic abuse victims in their area and they have good access to briefing material to improve their understanding, especially for high risk families whose safety will be discussed in daily and weekly tasking and performance meetings.

The police and crime commissioner (PCC) is determined to improve services for domestic abuse victims and is working with police and partners to do this. The force has started to develop plans to better manage its worst domestic abuse perpetrators to prevent reoffending. Their efforts to engage with other agencies who can provide perpetrator management and counselling shows that the force is trying to tackle the problem of domestic abuse in a holistic way. However, it needs to better understand its current profile of known serial and serious domestic abuse perpetrators and to have a process to identify and monitor perpetrators who commit offences against more than one victim.

Findings

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

In Norfolk, staff 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. Oversight and supervision of how call takers deal with the call for assistance, is good.

Building as full a picture as possible of the risks faced by the victim is vital to ensuring the right level of response. Staff understand the importance of identifying repeat victims. The force has good systems within its control room and an automated search facility identifies repeat victims through either their name address or telephone number. The force has also recently introduced a checklist of questions for the call taker to ask. However, this does not include a question to establish whether the victim has been subject to domestic abuse previously or whether the victim is particularly vulnerable, but does include questions to establish if the caller is at immediate risk of harm.

When a victim of domestic abuse contacts Norfolk Constabulary's contact and control room (CCR) an incident record is created on the force's systems. Staff within the control room are well trained to identify whether the caller is at immediate risk of harm, and software can identify whether the caller has previously contacted the police, automatically searching previous incidents and matching them against the name, address or telephone number of the caller. The system will prompt the call taker to look at these previous incidents. This helps them to determine if the person concerned is a repeat victim. The force has recently introduced a checklist of questions for the call taker, which will be asked of the caller. However, the list does not include a question about whether the victim has previously suffered domestic abuse. This means the attending officer may not have information about earlier incidents, which are not recorded on Norfolk systems. For example, if they have occurred out of the county or the victim has not reported them to the police when they first arrive.

HMIC listened to some calls reporting domestic abuse and found that call takers were professional and helpful when dealing with victims.

When a call is received, the call taker checks the force intelligence systems to see whether there is any information available which will help the call taker and officers who attend the incident, establish the level 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 relating to any children in the house, who may be at risk; and whether anyone at the address

holds a firearm. The information is then passed to the attending officer in all cases.

Supervisors and managers working in the control room check the calls and ensure the right action is being taken. The information gathered is passed to officers over the radio as they travel to the incident. In Norfolk there is a policy of attending every allegation of reported crime, and there is a clearly defined policy for attending incidents of domestic abuse. Where there is believed to be a risk to life or safety, officers are sent immediately on a blue light emergency response. The force has a target of attending incidents assessed as Category A, as immediate (within 15 minutes in towns) and Category B (within 20 minutes in rural areas). Where the victim is thought to be safe, officers will visit them within an hour.

The decision on how quickly police officers will attend is based on the assessment of harm, threat and risk faced by the victim. Recently, and just prior to the HMIC inspection, the force changed its attendance policy for its third fastest response times. So-called 'Category C' incidents of domestic abuse previously required an officer to attend within 24 hours. This has now been changed to within 4 hours. This is a positive change as it means the welfare of the victim is checked sooner and also allows the police to secure evidence earlier. Although this is a new policy for the force, this was being rigidly applied, sometimes against the specific wishes of the victim. The decision to defer attendance beyond the four hours can be taken by a supervisor within the control room but supervisors would benefit from further guidance to ensure they can better balance the victim's wishes with any opportunities to investigate, secure evidence as soon as possible and physically check the welfare of the victim.

Staff within the control room receive training as part of their initial course when they start working for the police. An element of this is specifically about domestic abuse. Staff have a planned training day incorporated into their 10 week shift pattern, and recent presentations have included aspects of domestic abuse. Staff were confident and empathetic when dealing with callers who were experiencing domestic abuse.

A repeat victim is defined by the force as a person who has suffered domestic abuse more than once in the previous 12 months. Although the technical definition is not widely known among staff, staff do, in practice, take into account whether or not a victim has previously suffered domestic abuse. They have a good 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 rightly influence any risk assessment that is made. There is a good understanding

amongst those who deal with victims and they are prioritised by both investigators and the domestic abuse team.

There is good management and supervision in the control room. Supervisors in the control room listen to their teams' calls and conduct regular monthly audits of their response to victims of domestic abuse who contact the control room. The audits evaluate the quality of the interaction, and assess whether call takers are asking the right questions to establish that risk is being accurately identified. Supervisors within the control room also undertake assessments of staff to ensure they are professional and show appropriate empathy in the way they deal with victims.

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

Domestic abuse is a clear priority for Norfolk Constabulary with the chief constable demonstrating strong personal leadership and commitment to keeping victims of domestic abuse safe. The force has invested in domestic abuse training for officers and staff to ensure they understand how to respond effectively. The force also has domestic abuse champions, who are officers and staff acting as a point of contact to provide advice, specialist knowledge and support to others on domestic abuse issues.

Most officers have received domestic abuse risk assessment training and some have had additional training covering coercive control, stalking, harassment and so-called honour-based violence forms of abuse. The force recently trained inspectors with the intention that they would then share the knowledge they had gained with staff of lower ranks. At the time of inspection there was little evidence of this being delivered.

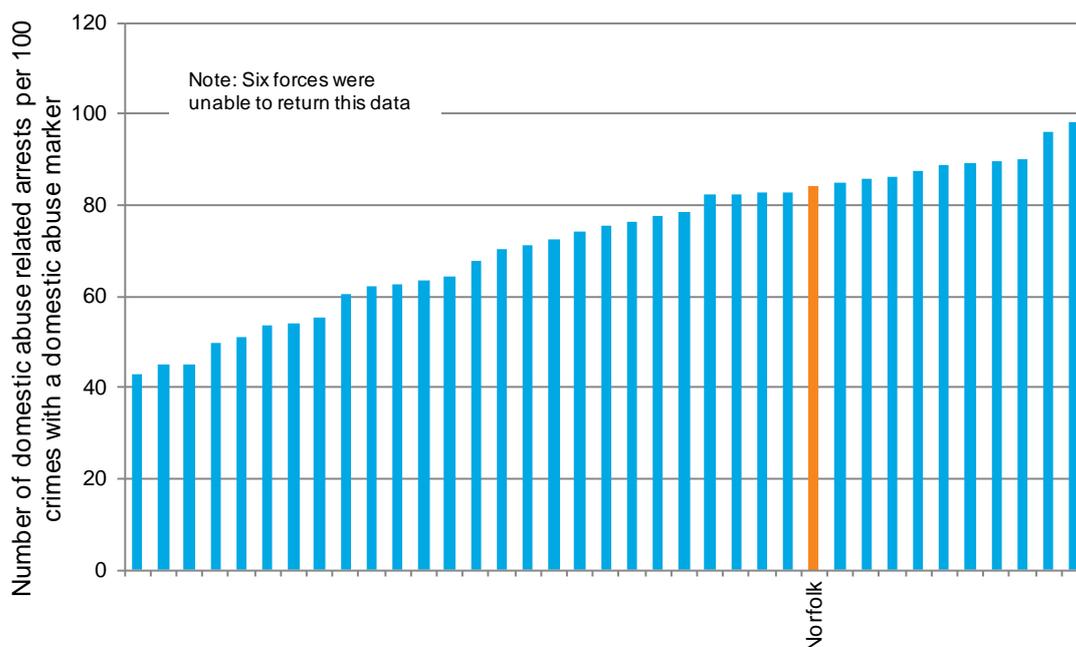
Supervision is robust and effective throughout the response to domestic abuse and the force works hard to make victims safer from the first point of contact. All cases assessed using the domestic abuse stalking and harassment (DASH) risk assessment are reviewed by a supervisor.

Control room and front line staff display a good understanding of how important their role is to make victims safer, and that this is their responsibility. Officers who attend a domestic abuse incident take immediate action to reduce risk and it is clear that the force supports and encourages staff to take 'positive action'. Investigations are generally well managed. However, as cases are passed between teams and departments 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 84⁸ arrests in Norfolk. For most forces the number is between 45 and 90.

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



Source: HMIC data collection

Domestic abuse is a clear priority for the PCC and a strategic direction and clear ambition has been set. Domestic abuse is one of the strategic priorities within the PCC’s police and crime plan with a focus on improving outcomes for victims and reducing vulnerability and improving support to victims. Responding to domestic abuse is a high priority for the force and chief officers have reinforced this, with strong leadership, and effective internal messages and

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

briefings to staff. The PCC has set the force a target of detecting⁹ 55 percent of all domestic related incidents. This is closely monitored by the force through its performance and tasking meetings which includes a daily assessment of risks relating to incidents of domestic abuse. The force is working to improve co-ordination across the police and partners to put in place better support for victims. There is a strong emphasis on taking positive action to make the victim safe which is well understood, and acted on, by frontline staff and officers who attend domestic abuse incidents.

Those officers attending domestic abuse incidents have some understanding of domestic abuse. They have received computer-based training which may have contributed to this knowledge, although HMIC is recommending that in the future domestic abuse training should be face-to-face, rather than online. Training to date has focused predominantly on staff understanding the impact of physical violence; most staff have only a limited understanding of the impact of coercive control or psychological abuse. Investment has been made in training staff about so-called honour-based violence.

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. A risk assessment is always completed when an officer attends an incident of domestic abuse. There is good knowledge and understanding of the assessment process, with officers using their professional judgement when considering the level of threat, risk and harm to the victim. Officers are clear about the benefits of completing a risk assessment, understanding that it is important if risk to the victim is to properly recognised and reduced.

Enhanced training on domestic abuse has been given to officers and police staff-equivalent at inspector rank. The training was tutor-led and included a presentation from the chief officer team, as well as advice on the initial response including achieving the best evidence from the start of the investigation. The intention was that this knowledge would be 'cascaded' to other staff, but, as yet, there was no evidence that this has happened.

The force places a requirement on officers who deal with domestic abuse to take positive action. Officers and staff are committed to providing support to the victim, which means taking immediate action to reduce any risk to them. Where

⁹ A sanction detection is a 'solved crime' where a suspect has been identified and notified as being responsible for committing that crime and what the full implications of this are, and has received an official sanction. Official sanctions include charges, cautions, penalty notices, offences taken into consideration (TICs) and cannabis warnings.

the officer can justify an arrest for a crime having been committed, then they should arrest the offender. When a decision is made to arrest a suspect for domestic abuse and their whereabouts are unknown, the force has put in a place a system to handover enquiries to trace the suspect. This is monitored through the daily management meeting and supports the force policy which is to actively pursue the offender.

There was a clear commitment displayed by staff across the constabulary to keeping victims of domestic abuse safe, including control room staff, attending officers and domestic abuse specialists. There is a good understanding of the importance of ensuring that everyone connected to domestic abuse incidents, in particular children and any vulnerable adults, are properly safeguarded. Where a child is part of a family where there has been domestic abuse, the local authority children's social care are informed through a referral process. A form is sent electronically to the MASH for assessment by partner agencies including children's services. When children are in a family where there is a high risk of violence, the case will be discussed with social workers, in order to ensure that they are properly protected. 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 to establish the current level of risk, ensure the children are safe and well at the incident and take any action necessary to protect them.

Officers' main priority is the safety of the victim and anyone else who may be at risk. 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. Supervisors have responsibility to monitor the actions taken by staff. The DASH risk assessment is always reviewed by a supervisor which is commendable. High risk incidents are also monitored by the control room inspector and sergeant to ensure that all appropriate action is taken.

When officers are requested by the control room to attend a call relating to domestic abuse they must complete a DASH risk assessment. The attending officer will assess the level of risk as high, medium or standard risk using their professional judgement and by completing the DASH risk assessment while they are with the victim. On return to the station it will be entered onto the force database and passed electronically to the MASH. The MASH is then responsible for doing a secondary risk assessment based on all the intelligence and information available. This secondary assessment is undertaken for all high and medium domestic abuse incidents as well as 10 percent of all standard risk.

There is scope to improve how domestic abuse cases are investigated. The investigation process starts when the responding officer attends the scene.

Overall, the initial collection of evidence at the scene is good with officers taking the opportunity to gather potential evidence, including photographic evidence, and identifying potential witnesses through house-to-house enquiries. After an arrest has been made the case is dealt with by the custody investigation unit who deal with the majority of domestic abuse cases. It is force policy that the criminal investigation department (CID) take responsibility for the highest risk cases. Cases tended not to be allocated according to risk but by the severity of the offence, which is of concern. There is the potential for high risk domestic abuse cases to be dealt with by an inexperienced officer, who may not have the skills or confidence to achieve the best possible outcome for a victim.

Victims' cases are being investigated by different teams to those giving support to them, so victims can find themselves being contacted by too many people, too frequently, often asking questions that the victim has answered before. This slightly fragmented approach could cause victims to lose confidence in how the police are dealing with their case, which in turn could lead to victims deciding that they no longer wish to continue to assist the investigation or engage with the police or other agencies who could provide support. The force is looking at how better to support the victims by providing them with a single point of contact.

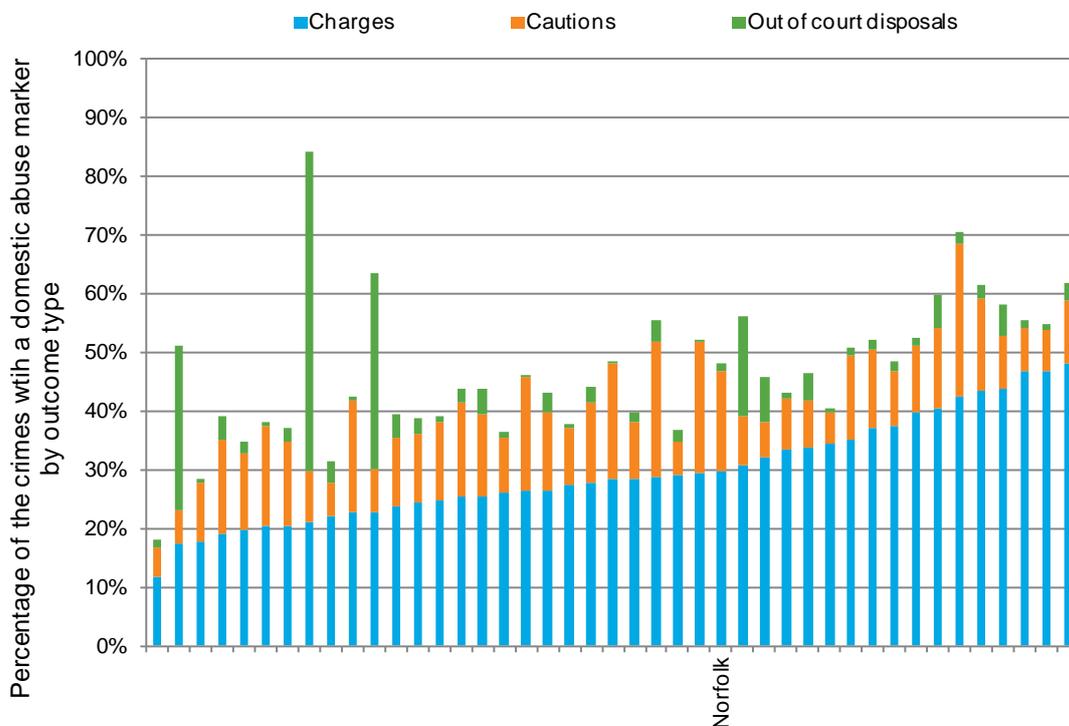
How are victims of domestic abuse made safer as a result of the police response and subsequent action?

There is good and effective partnership working to support and safeguard victims. The force supports a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) where police officers and staff from other partnership organisations are permanently located and where they work alongside one another to manage safeguarding actions for all victims. They also provide support and advice to both victims and staff on all aspects of domestic abuse. The MASH benefits from sharing information between partner agencies, including health and social services, which means a better response for the victim.

There is a countywide multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) which allows partner agencies to exchange information promptly and put in place safety plans to protect victims who are assessed as high risk. Not all partner agencies are involved in the MARAC, with the majority of referrals being made by the police. There is also evidence that actions from previous MARAC meetings are not always reported back, which means it is more difficult to evaluate their effectiveness on how victims are made safer.

Norfolk recorded 3,277 domestic abuse related crimes for the 12 months to the end of August 2013. Of these crimes 30 percent resulted in a charge, 17 percent resulted in a caution and 1 percent had an out-of-court disposal, for example, a fixed penalty notice for disorderly conduct.

Figure 2: Percentage of different outcome types used for crimes with a domestic abuse marker for the 12 months to 31 August¹⁰

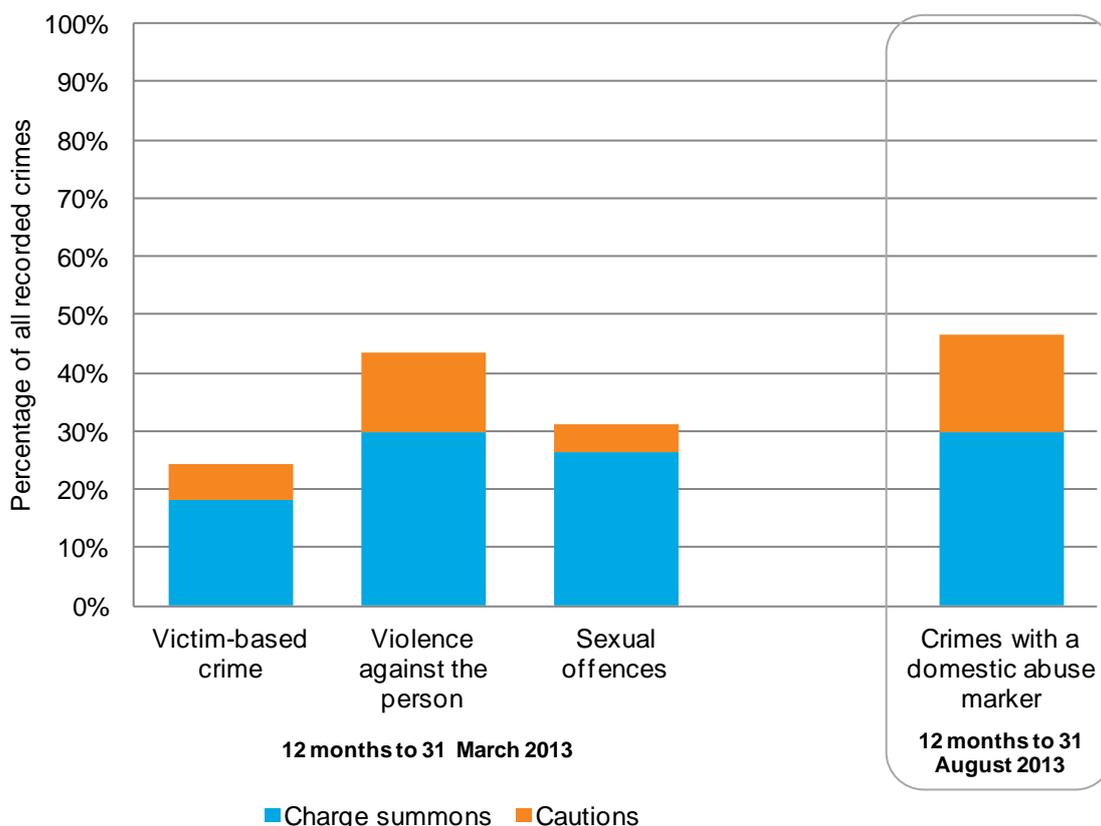


Source: HMIC data collection

Norfolk Constabulary 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.

¹⁰ 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 marker¹¹



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

Norfolk has a well-established multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) which incorporates the safeguarding of both children and adults. The MASH, which has been in place since June 2011, is designed to increase co-operation between partner agencies and currently has representatives from the police, children’s services, adult services, as well as from the community health team. The MASH benefits from all staff being located in the same office, which means that intelligence is shared rapidly and more effectively between the different agencies. Safeguarding decisions can be made based on the best available information, which leads to better support for victims. It also means that meetings with the partner agencies, designed to put in place safeguarding for vulnerable people, can be arranged more efficiently and effectively.

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

The force works with seven independent domestic violence advisers (IDVAs) who act as a point of contact providing support for victims of domestic abuse. The IDVAs have a target of supporting 95 percent of high risk victims of abuse – a target they are currently exceeding. Focus group discussions with officers and staff identified that IDVAs are seen as invaluable, positively developing trusted relationships with victims of domestic abuse. This helps to secure better engagement with, and empowerment of the victim, leading them to feel that they are taking a more active role in their own future. This is a positive step and indicates there are some good working relationships with partners, police and victims.

Staff from the MASH allocate and take responsibility for DASH risk assessments. This is completed once a day. This means that there is potential that a victim has to wait for up to 24 hours before they receive further support. However, victims assessed as being at high risk are referred immediately to the MASH until 10pm and after this to a detective sergeant who is on duty. On completion of a secondary risk assessment, MASH staff will put in place a safeguarding plan with victims who are deemed to be high, medium and standard risk. There is effective monitoring by the force where the risk is deemed to be high, with a constant review by MASH staff of whether the victim is safe. However, after the initial risk assessment, the majority of medium and standard risk domestic abuse crimes or incidents, do not have any further assessment of the risk to the victim or further evaluation of whether or not the safeguarding plan has been successful. This is a concern as it is difficult for the force and partners to know which actions are more effective than others in making victims safer.

There is confusion among staff within the constabulary about who retains responsibility for safeguarding the victim after the initial response by the attending officer. During interviews there was limited knowledge of the role of the MASH and its responsibilities. For example, neighbourhood response officers believe MASH staff take immediate responsibility for safeguarding, once the DASH booklet has been submitted. However, MASH staff only take responsibility once the DASH booklet has been re-assessed, and it has already been established that there may be some delay in this being achieved. This lack of clarity means victims could be left unsupported and at risk of harm.

Generally, the MASH is working well, however, the multi-agency partnership has recently appointed a project officer who will have responsibility to assess and improve the current performance of all agencies, as well as identifying other partners who can work in the MASH and improve victim care.

The force can provide mobile phones to ensure victims have an easy way of contacting the police in an emergency, and can install an alarm in a victim's

house. 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.

Sometimes, depending on the safeguarding actions required, the crime prevention officer (CPO) will be tasked, through the MASH, to attend the address of a victim of domestic abuse. The CPO will attend within 48 hours and will undertake a 'sanctuary survey' and, where appropriate, make recommendations which will improve the safety of the victim, for example, by fitting new door and window locks. However, the force has experienced a delay in the local authority funding being released, which means that safety measures are not being put in place as quickly as they should be.

There are good working relationships between the police and their partners including health services, housing and local authorities. This means the force is able to share information about victims and have a more complete picture around risk levels. The county has in place a multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC). The MARAC is set up to allow partner agencies to jointly develop and implement a risk management plan which will increase accountability, provide support for the victim and reduce risk of harm. The MARAC also monitors the highest risk perpetrators. Not all partner agencies are fully engaged in the MARAC process, with the majority of referrals still being made by the police. HMIC was concerned that actions from meetings are not always reported back to the MARAC. This means that the risk of harm is not re-assessed and consistently monitored, and the outcomes from previous conferences are not evaluated for effectiveness.

Each neighbourhood has a beat manager who is part of the safer neighbourhood team (SNT). The beat manager will, as part of their daily activity, assess domestic abuse crimes and incidents that have occurred in their neighbourhood. The intention is to identify any trends or patterns with a view to identifying opportunities for long-term problem solving. There is a named point of contact within the MASH for the SNT beat managers and the operational partnership teams and this helps the force manage long-term problem solving.

The force has recognised the opportunities to improve investigations and develop best evidence at the scene of a domestic abuse incident. This means that officers are focused on corroborating the victim's account from the outset. The attending officer will complete a briefing, which may include details of any further statements which may need to be taken from witnesses, and this package will be passed between each shift until the suspect is arrested. This means that the arrest of the offender will take place as soon as possible. However, the force should consider whether a single officer or member of staff should have responsibility to provide continuity and oversight of the arrest, particularly if it takes longer than anticipated.

All offences where a suspect is arrested will have a supervisor to review the investigation and make a decision about whether a prosecution is the best course of action to take. The force has put in place a process to prioritise investigations, the different levels of gold, silver and bronze being determined by risk. This includes a minimum standard at each of the three levels, as well as timescales for the investigating officer. The force policy is that domestic abuse incidents will receive a higher priority than other investigations.

The force does not currently have a formal policy or agreement with the Crown Prosecution Service for taking forward prosecutions where the victim is unwilling to give evidence, a so-called 'evidence-led prosecution'. In some cases, the victim may be unwilling through fear. The force would also benefit from reviewing any prosecutions which do not continue, as this would allow them to identify any opportunities to improve the service to victims, including seeking further evidence to support a prosecution.

During the inspection, staff raised concerns about their ability to deal with domestic abuse in new communities, particularly those from EU states. The force recognises that although there have been some good examples of engagement, they need to undertake more work to be able to better engage with these communities. An inspector has recently been appointed as a project lead in order initially to identify emerging communities and then develop strong relationships. While the force has recently undertaken an initiative to raise awareness of domestic abuse, the project will provide an opportunity to understand, raise awareness and prevent offences of domestic abuse in all communities.

All staff throughout Norfolk Constabulary displayed 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 the responsibilities of the MASH. Domestic abuse perpetrators that present a high risk to victims are highlighted to response and neighbourhood inspectors and their teams. Local police staff then become involved in managing the risks to victims, for example, by carrying out more visible patrols in the areas in which they live. This constitutes good practice.

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

Local officers are generally aware of domestic abuse victims in their area and they have good access to briefing material to improve their understanding, especially for high risk families whose safety will be discussed in daily and weekly tasking and performance meetings.

The police and crime commissioner (PCC) is determined to improve services for domestic abuse victims and is working with police and partners to do this. The force has started to develop plans to better manage its worst domestic abuse perpetrators to prevent reoffending. Their efforts to engage with other agencies who can provide perpetrator management and counselling shows that the force is trying to tackle the problem of domestic abuse in a holistic way. However, it needs to better understand its current profile of known serial and serious domestic abuse perpetrators and to have a process to identify and monitor perpetrators who commit offences against more than one victim.

The force has a good approach to managing victim safety, but there are some areas that it could strengthen, to better manage future risk. 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. The force has a process to put in place plans, when a domestic abuse perpetrator is released from prison and this includes notifying the victim, however a further risk assessment is not always completed, unless the perpetrator is being reviewed under MAPPA¹². 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 IDVA, but it is less clear how victims who are assessed as medium and standard risk are kept updated.

The victim will generally receive timely updates on the release of the perpetrator from police custody and any bail conditions imposed. However, this sometimes does not happen, which means that some victims may not be updated before a perpetrator is released, and a true understanding of their risk may not be established. Because of this lack of clarity on who is responsible, a victim

¹² Multi-agency public protection arrangement: The arrangements for statutory partners to monitor serious offenders.

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 help the constabulary to understand why they have stopped calling.

Externally, the force is engaged with various partner agencies across the county and is represented at the domestic abuse and sexual violence board (DASVB), which reports to the county community safety partnership board. The countywide domestic abuse strategy has been in draft format for over 12 months, and although the police have been working to the provisional objectives, there is potential that agencies across the county are not working together as efficiently as possible. The office of the police and crime commissioner (OPCC) has recently appointed a domestic abuse co-ordinator who has responsibility for developing policy across the county.

Internally, the force has recently moved responsibility for delivering the force response to domestic abuse, in order to align resources to partner agencies in Norfolk. The force response is now managed through the domestic abuse, rape and serious sexual offences (DARASSO) meeting. The force has in place action plans designed to improve performance; the progress of which, are all managed through the meeting structure. The force is proactive in improving the way it responds to domestic abuse.

Norfolk Constabulary has engaged with partners in order to develop a perpetrator programme where attendance is voluntary. However, although there are perpetrator programmes including 'Caring Dads' which targets male offenders, these do not cover the whole of the county. The force would benefit from an accredited countywide perpetrator programme which would provide a significant opportunity in reducing and preventing further offences. The force recognises this opportunity and is actively working with partners to achieve this.

Having knowledge about where victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse live is well understood by frontline officers. The force tasking and briefing system (TABS) alerts officers and staff about those victims who are at the highest risk from domestic abuse. The TABS allows any actions, which could include reassurance checks on the victim or visits to the suspect, to be monitored. The force identifies its highest risk offenders and ensures staff are made aware when patrolling locally. The force's daily management meeting ensures a relentless pursuit of any outstanding perpetrators who need to be found and arrested, and there is a rolling handover where domestic abuse actions,

including outstanding arrests, are followed up. Every month the assistant chief constable for local policing chairs a tasking and performance meeting where force performance is assessed against the targets set in the police and crime plan. This includes a review of the force performance against domestic abuse.

The use of information about domestic abuse in performance management is currently being developed by the force in conjunction with Suffolk Constabulary. Although the force currently monitors some areas of performance in respect of domestic abuse, it does not currently monitor the views of victims about the service they receive.

The force develops good practice and responds to recommendations from domestic homicide reviews through the Vulnerability and Partnerships Command and in conjunction with the Major Investigation Team. An example of the force changing its practice includes intelligence checks by call takers, to establish whether there is anybody at the address of a domestic abuse incident who holds a firearm certificate.

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 consider undertaking an analysis of the training available for officers and staff in domestic abuse. Staff have a good understanding of the risk assessment but, as HMIC has found with most forces, they have more limited knowledge about coercive behaviours, psychological control and the impact this can have on victims.
2. Control room supervisors should be given further guidance to support them in making decisions about the attendance policy, allowing them to better balance the needs of the victim, with securing evidence and victim welfare.
3. The force should review how it can best tackle serial domestic abuse offenders. The force does not currently have a process to identify and monitor perpetrators who commit offences against more than one victim.
4. The force should ensure that there is a clear understanding about who has responsibility for safeguarding the victim. There is a lack of clarity between the attending officer and the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) as to who has responsibility between the initial response and the secondary risk assessment.
5. The role of the MASH is not widely understood by officers and staff. The force would benefit from raising awareness of its role. This would help them understand how the MASH and multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) can contribute to making victims safe.
6. The force should consider how multiple contacts with victims, by different officers or police staff and other agencies, can be streamlined to provide a better service for the victim.
7. The force has a robust process to monitor high risk cases which may include using MARAC or MAPPA. However, after the initial safeguarding of victims, the force should develop a process to review or re-assess the level of risk for medium risk cases.
8. The county domestic abuse strategy – which partners agree to, and then work towards – has been in draft for 12 months. It would be beneficial for

the force for this to be finalised, and for all partners and agencies to be working towards the same objectives.

9. Although there are good examples of work being undertaken with emerging communities, the force would benefit from developing its response in this area in order to provide a better service for those communities.
10. The MARAC process would benefit from having wider partnership engagement, with a more robust process to reassess and review the effectiveness of actions in order that any risk can be monitored and reduced.
11. The force should undertake a review of its liaison with CPS in order to agree how best to undertake evidence-led prosecutions.
12. The force should consider how best to ensure the victim is updated about changes in bail or custody. When there is a change in the conditions of bail for an offender, there is not a process to ensure the victim is made aware and a further risk assessment undertaken.
13. A review of discontinued files would better enable the force to identify any lessons learnt and continue to achieve best evidence to support prosecutions.
14. The force would benefit by developing with partners a perpetrator programme aimed at breaking the cycle of offending.
15. The force should review how it allocates investigations so that the most experienced and best equipped investigators are assigned the investigations with the highest risk of harm rather than simply the most serious crimes.

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.