



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

North Wales Police's approach to tackling domestic abuse

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Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We inspected all police forces in England and Wales, interviewing senior and operational leads in forces, holding focus groups with frontline staff and partners, and carrying out visits to police stations (which were unannounced) to test the reality of each force's approach with frontline officers. Our inspection teams were supplemented by expert peers, which included public protection experts from over 15 forces and those working with victims of

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

domestic abuse in voluntary and community sector organisations.

This report details what HMIC found in North Wales 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 report⁶. A glossary of frequently used terms also appears at the end of the report.

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

Domestic abuse in North Wales⁷

Calls for assistance



In North Wales, domestic abuse accounts for 5% of calls to the police for assistance. Of these calls 29% were from repeat victims.

Crime

11%

Domestic abuse accounts for 11% of all recorded crime.

Assault with intent

25%

North Wales recorded 240 assaults with intent to cause serious harm, of these 59 were domestic abuse related. This is 25% of all assaults with intent to cause serious harm recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

Assault with injury

36%

The force also recorded 3,748 assaults with injury, of these 1,367 were domestic abuse related. This is 36% 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

66%

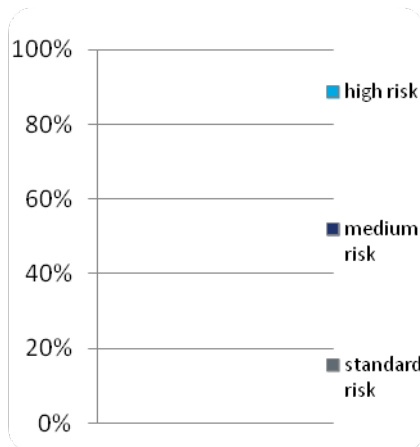
The force recorded 558 harassment offences, of these 367 were domestic abuse related. This is 66% of all harassment offences recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

Sexual offences

14%

The force also recorded 868 sexual offences, of these 119 were domestic abuse related. This is 14% of all sexual offences recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

Risk levels



North Wales Police was unable 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 62 arrests in North Wales. For most forces the number is between 45 and 90.

Outcomes



North Wales recorded 3,922 domestic abuse related crimes for the 12 months to the end of August 2013. Of these crimes 29% resulted in a charge, 6% resulted in a caution and, 2% had an out of court disposal, for example a fixed penalty notice for disorderly conduct.

Executive summary

HMIC found that although domestic abuse is a clear priority for North Wales Police and that this is recognised by staff at all levels; there are risks that some victims of domestic abuse may not be getting the response or the quality of service they need. The force responds well to the victims facing the highest risks, however for those assessed as at less risk the service is not as good. The force is committed to continuing to work with partners to tackle domestic abuse and protect victims. The service provided to victims is currently inconsistent and the force cannot be confident that all victims are getting the service they need in terms of both investigating offences and safeguarding victims.

Identifying victims

HMIC found key risks in the way the force manages the initial reporting of domestic abuse. There are no robust procedures in place to make sure that repeat and vulnerable victims can be identified consistently. Therefore some victims may not get the right level of police response at the earliest opportunity that they need it, and there will be instances when the attending officers are not in possession of all pertinent information held by the force when assessing and categorising the level of risk to the victim.

Keeping victims safe

Responding to domestic abuse and safeguarding victims is important to the force, but this does not translate consistently into what happens at the scene of an incident or crime. Officers understand the need to take positive action and assess the welfare and potential impact on children present at domestic abuse incidents. They will take immediate actions to ensure the safety and protection of victims and children, but do not recognise the value in undertaking a formal risk assessment in every case, particularly for repeat callers. The force's response to dealing with such incidents will vary dependent upon the seriousness of the crime, rather than the level of risk to a victim. The majority of cases are dealt with by local officers who have not received any additional specialist investigation or domestic abuse training. The force cannot be confident that the risk to victims is consistently managed in all cases, which means that some victims may not be getting the service they need.

Management of risk

All risk levels for domestic abuse victims are reviewed on a daily basis by specialist officers; however the ongoing safety planning for medium and standard cases is not as consistent and clear as it is for high risk. The current capacity of the multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) and their

ability to discuss all cases where the risk to victims has been identified as high is a concern. Some high risk victims are currently not being discussed at a MARAC because of limited capacity. The force has requested an independent review of the MARAC process to identify areas for improvement.

Operational effectiveness for keeping people safe

The force is aware of areas for improvement in its processes. It has embarked on implementing a new process of identifying a list of repeat perpetrators of domestic abuse. The purpose is to provide a focus for local officers to target and intervene in an individual's offending behaviour and ultimately reduce the risk posed to a victim. The list currently is generated by identifying the volume or frequency of calls received by the force rather than the threat or risk the individual presents to a victim. Local PCSOs are involved in safeguarding high risk victims in their areas.

The force does not routinely undertake reviews of safety plans for victims to determine what works and what could be improved for the future.

Findings

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

HMIC found key risks in the way the force manages the initial reporting of domestic abuse. There are no robust procedures in place to make sure that repeat and vulnerable victims can be identified consistently. Therefore some victims may not get the right level of police response at the earliest opportunity that they need it, and there will be instances when the attending officers are not in possession of all pertinent information held by the force when assessing and categorising the level of risk to the victim.

Most domestic abuse incidents are reported to the police via telephone calls into the force control room. Call handlers enter the details of the call into the computer-aided dispatch system, which will automatically identify any previous police contact with that address and telephone number. The system is unable to identify any previous history with the victim or the offender by name. This means that the call handler would not be aware if either the victim or the perpetrator had been involved in other domestic abuse incidents, if they had taken place at a different address. The force does hold this information but it is on a different system. Call handlers can access this system to carry out further checks but this is not consistently undertaken and will depend on how busy they are.

Within the control room there is a small team of intelligence officers who can support call handlers in carrying out further background checks when requested, but again their capacity is limited and they may be busy managing other critical incidents. This means that the initial checks may not always be carried out. It is important that the force has as full a picture as possible of the incident and any background information, in order that the call handler can make an informed decision about the likely risk facing the victim so that the right level of police response can be sent. They also need to relay as much available information as possible to the officer attending so that they are fully prepared before they arrive at the scene.

There is no accepted or consistent process for control room staff to follow which would ensure that victims of domestic abuse can be identified consistently at the first point of contact. There is a grading policy for the speed of response which is based on the call handler's assessment of the threat, harm, risk and vulnerability of the caller. The effectiveness of identifying domestic abuse and assessing the risk to the victim is wholly reliant on the skills, experience and professional judgement of each call handler in questioning callers to obtain history and context, for example, whether weapons are involved and children

are present. The force does not provide any form of prompts to aid call handlers in obtaining the right information (as it does for other types of crime, for example, rape).

Ninety-five percent of staff in the control room are bi-lingual, speaking both Welsh and English. This provides callers with the confidence in reporting and in a choice of language. Although a relatively small proportion of callers prefer to speak in Welsh, the force feels this is particularly valued by elderly victims and those in more rural communities.

Domestic abuse calls will always lead to an officer being sent to the incident, although the inspection team were told of some instances when police community support officers (PCSOs) are sent to deal with such reports. The type of response allocated is dependent on the reported circumstances. If there has been violence and an offender is still present, an immediate response is provided (within 20 minutes), if violence has been used but the offender has left, it is classed as a 'priority one response' (within one hour). Verbal-only arguments are graded as 'priority two', which has a slower response time agreed with the caller.

Staff in the control room receive specific training in domestic abuse from specialists as part of their initial training; this is complemented by the use of a mentor system for a two week induction period, prior to handling calls independently. There is good routine quality control within the control room. Monitoring of call handling and dispatch is undertaken on individuals and on the overall department by supervisors listening to a sample of calls being dealt with. The findings of these assessments are fed back on an individual and a team basis and are used to identify areas for improvement.

The force has defined repeat victimisation as more than one incident reported in a rolling 12 month period. However, HMIC found that not all staff properly understood the definition. This has resulted in differences in how those victims are recognised by the force, with officers applying their own interpretation.

There was a lack of clarity as to the definition of a domestic abuse incident. The force has adopted the nationally recognised definition which now includes abuse involving adults aged over 16 years. Prior to April 2013 it only included adults aged over 18 years. However, in a sample of cases we looked at, incidents involving children younger than 16 years old were categorised as domestic abuse.

Incidents of domestic abuse managed within the control room are reviewed at the point of closure by a supervisor and quality checked by the investigation support team, who received additional training from public protection officers. Any calls that have had their response grading changed need to be supported

by a rationale to inform reviewing supervisors. There was a view held by control room staff that they were more likely to 'over code' incidents as domestic related, rather than risk failing to correctly identify them. Inappropriate coding will affect resource deployment, and will provide an inaccurate picture of domestic abuse calls being managed within the control room.

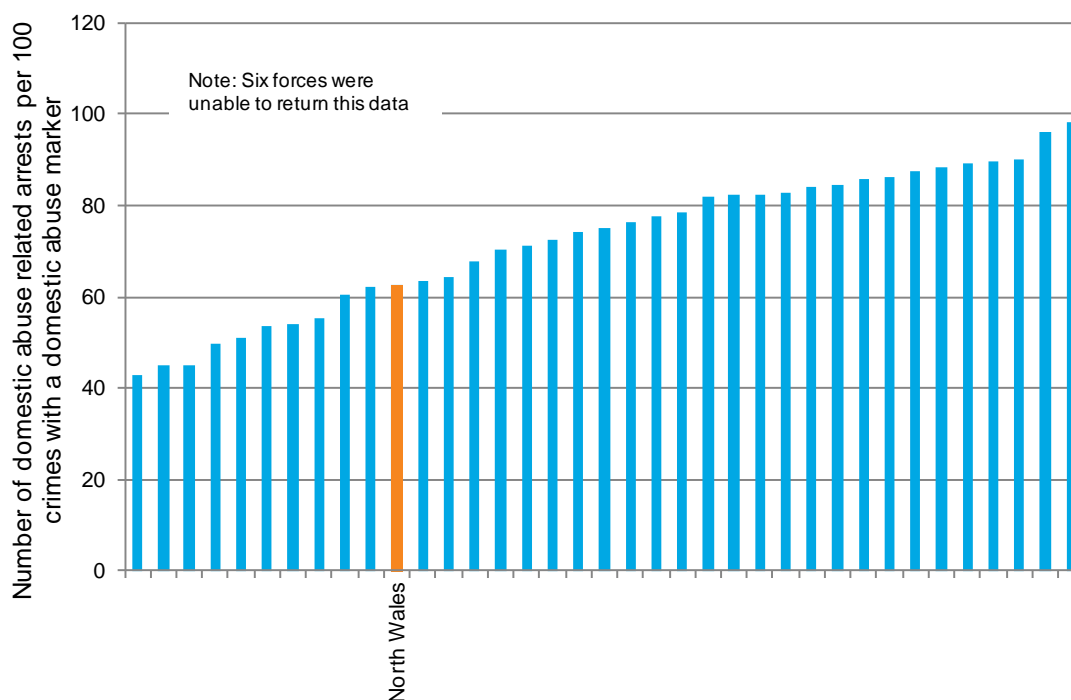
How does the force respond to victims of domestic abuse? This includes initial action, including risk assessment

Responding to domestic abuse and safeguarding victims is important to the force, but this does not translate consistently into what happens at the scene of an incident or crime. Officers understand the need to take positive action and assess the welfare and potential impact on children present at domestic abuse incidents. They will take immediate actions to ensure the safety and protection of victims and children, but do not recognise the value in undertaking a formal risk assessment in every case, particularly for repeat callers. The force's response to dealing with such incidents will vary dependent upon the seriousness of the crime, rather than the level of risk to a victim. The majority of cases are dealt with by local officers who have not received any additional specialist investigation or domestic abuse training. The force cannot be confident that the risk to victims is consistently managed in all cases, which means that some victims may not be getting the service they need.

For every 100 domestic abuse crimes recorded there were 62 arrests⁸ in North Wales in the 12 months to 31 August 2013. For most forces this number is between 45 and 90.

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 force which is reflected in their strategic plans. The police and crime commissioner’s (PCCs) police and crime plan makes specific reference to domestic abuse under the strategic objective ‘protect people and reduce harm’. There is also a further commitment to pilot a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) which will bring together partner agencies into a single location to work together to safeguard children and vulnerable adults. The force also has a specific domestic abuse response plan within their most recent crime and anti-social behaviour reduction strategy. The targets include increasing the arrest and conviction rate, for domestic abuse related crimes while reducing the number of repeat victims.

Officers cited a significant change in culture over the past few years in the force with a strong focus on domestic abuse. While at a senior level the commitment is clear, how this translates into activity at an operational level is fragmented and sometimes confused, although officers do recognise the requirement to take positive action such as arrest at domestic abuse incidents.

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

Officers attending domestic abuse incidents are expected to carry out a risk assessment using the nationally recognised domestic abuse, stalking and harassment (DASH) risk assessment tool. Not all officers have received training on how and why they complete the DASH risk assessment forms. Officers with a greater length of service stated they relied on their experience and had not received specific domestic abuse training. Probationer and criminal investigation department (CID) training includes domestic abuse and stalking and harassment inputs from a sergeant from the public protection unit. PCSOs had received no training, but can be expected to support the safeguarding of high risk victims who have been the subject of a multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC). The force has a training matrix but it does not feature domestic abuse, however a needs analysis is currently being undertaken to identify training requirements.

The initial response to reported incidents is by officers from locally based policing teams. These officers use either the number of ticks completed in the 'yes' box on the DASH form, in response to their questions, or professional judgement if there is insufficient information being disclosed, to make an assessment of risk to the victim.

Completion of a DASH risk assessment form is mandatory at all domestic abuse incidents together with a local referral form. However, since the force stopped routinely auditing the level of compliance of officers in completing the DASH forms, recent data is showing a corresponding reduction in their completion rates. Some officers did demonstrate a good understanding of the need for completion of a DASH form, and of the need to identify any escalation of abuse and its significance in relation to serious harm and homicide; however, this was not consistent. We also found other officers seeing the DASH risk assessment as a 'tick box process to be complied with', rather than providing opportunities to properly evaluate risk, increase safety and access extra support for victims through referrals to other agencies.

A senior officer stated that some staff do what they think the system requires them to do, and another commented that, in the past, the message had been "to just get the form in" – a culture they are working to overcome. This inconsistent approach and lack of understanding of the risk assessment process means that the force cannot be confident that all victims are being assessed accurately and getting the service they need in terms of their future safety.

Those officers dealing with domestic abuse incidents recognised the importance of considering and checking on the welfare of children as part of their response. There was an awareness of the referral to partner agencies by public protection staff as part of safeguarding, and the links between domestic abuse and child

protection. Where necessary, contact with emergency social services duty teams is also made to discuss concerns.

The management of immediate safeguarding and risk is the responsibility of the attending officer. The initial action, primarily, is the arrest where a crime has been committed, or the removal of, the perpetrator, providing the opportunity for officers to engage with the victim and commence an investigation.

The force has a number of domestic violence officers (DVOs), also referred to as domestic abuse co-ordinators (DACs). These specialist officers do not undertake investigations, but provide advice to officers and develop safety plans together with partner agencies to support victims. Local officers are unclear as to the role of these specialists, in particular which victims they are involved with and who has the ongoing responsibility for reviews of risks and victim contact.

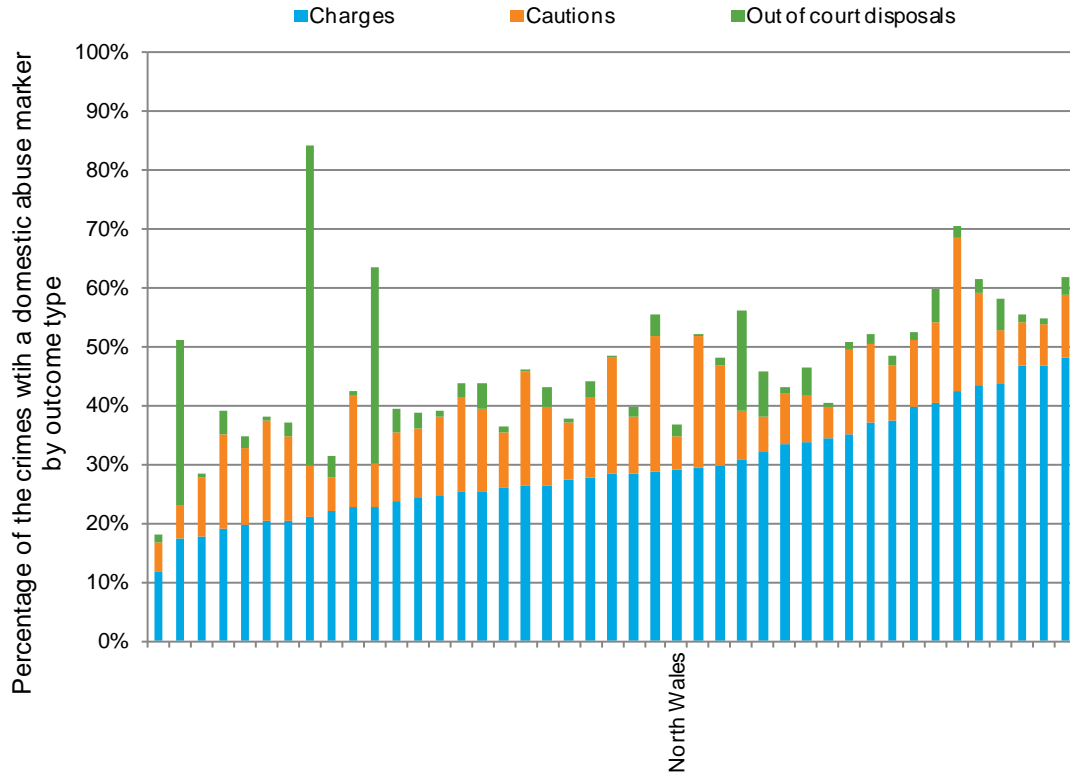
The majority of investigations, irrespective of risk level, are undertaken by local officers. These officers have access to an aide-memoire, identifying priority actions to be undertaken. CID officers may deal with domestic abuse cases involving a serious crime; however these are not allocated according to threat or risk to the victim, but on the basis of the severity of injury or crime type. This means there is a disparity in the level of investigative expertise allocated to a case, with victims identified as 'high' risk having suffered a minor crime, potentially being dealt with by an officer with limited skills and experience, which has an impact on the opportunities to achieve the best outcome for a victim.

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

All risk levels for domestic abuse victims are reviewed on a daily basis by specialist officers; however the ongoing safety planning for medium and standard cases is not as consistent and clear as it is for high risk. The current capacity of the multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) and their ability to discuss all cases where the risk to victims has been identified as high is a concern. Some high risk victims are currently not being discussed at a MARAC because of limited capacity. The force has requested an independent review of the MARAC process to identify areas for improvement.

North Wales recorded 3,922¹⁰ domestic abuse related crimes for the 12 months to the end of August 2013. Of these crimes 29% resulted in a charge, 6% resulted in a caution and, 2% had an out of court disposal, for example a fixed penalty notice for disorderly conduct.

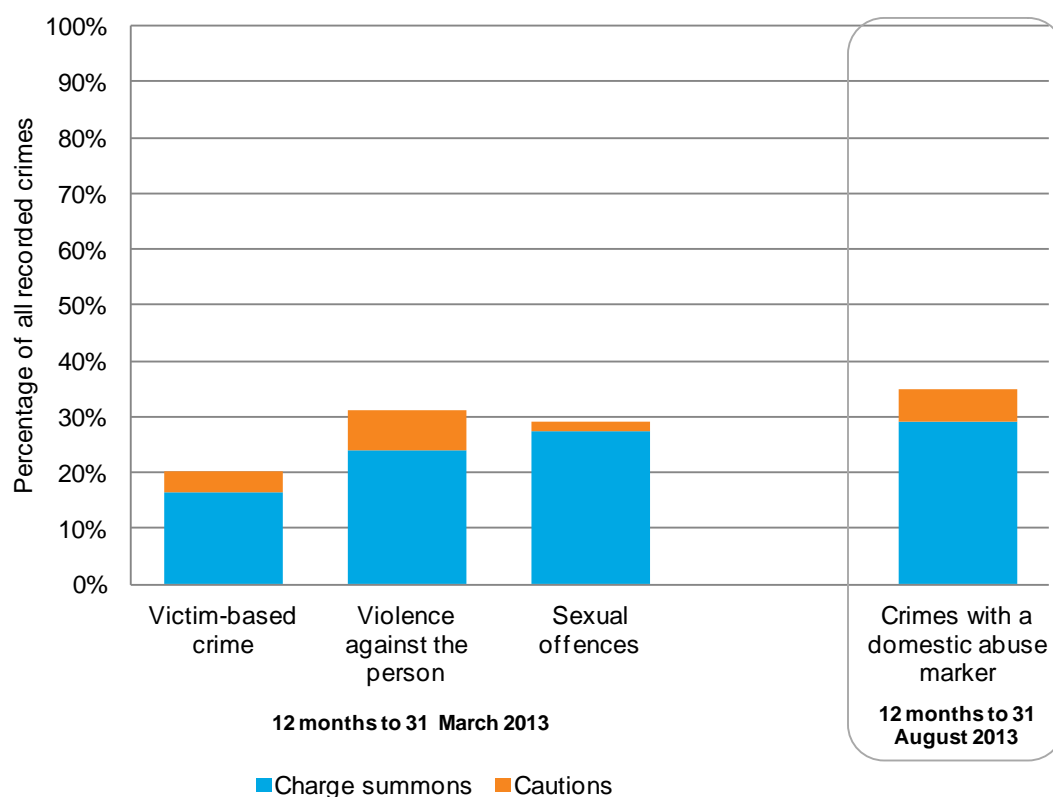
Figure 2: Percentage of different outcome types used for crimes with a domestic abuse marker for the 12 months to 31 August 2013



North Wales 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.

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

Figure 3: Percentage of charge summons and cautions used for victim-based crime, violence against the person, sexual offences and all crimes with a domestic abuse marker ¹¹



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

The specialist public protection staff (PPU) review all DASH risk assessments submitted to them on a daily basis. This, in some cases, may be the first time a supervisor or specialist has examined the document and assessed the information and level of risk. The review considers not only the answers to the DASH risk assessment questions but also additional information that may be held within the police information systems. The reason for this is that the information held within the police systems may not have always been checked and used by the officer during their assessment of risk. The potential effect of this is that the initial identification of risk by the attending officer will, in some cases, be made on limited information and, for example, may have been made without a full understanding of any previous history of abuse. Any judgement

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

made in these circumstances may fail to highlight an escalation of risk or a more significant threat of harm.

Following this review of the risk assessment, the specialist staff, in some cases will amend the original risk rating either to escalate or reduce. These changes are recorded within the force record, but are not routinely shared with the officer or the victim. This can lead to confusion as to what level of risk a victim is perceived to be facing by local officers and there is no clarity as to who is responsible for reviewing the safety plan if the level of risk has been changed, this means that a victim may be left with safety measures in place that are not commensurate with the risk they face.

Ongoing ownership and responsibility of a case following the initial attendance by an officer at a domestic abuse incident is unclear. In particular, it is unclear who is responsible for reviewing risks and safety plans to ensure they are appropriate and reflect any change in circumstance, such as a change in bail conditions, or release from prison of a perpetrator. This means that the level of risk to victims may not be reviewed at critical times in the criminal justice process.

Partner agencies such as health services, women's aid, probation and social care valued the effective professional relationship they have with the force, and in particular the ability to share appropriate information on domestic abuse cases to manage risk through the MARAC process.

Capacity within the MARACs is a current concern and has led to a request for an independent review to be carried out. Because of the large numbers of cases being referred to the MARACs the force has introduced a pre-assessment process which reviews all referrals and determines which cases are heard and which are not. Those that do not go forward to a MARAC are managed by locally based officers. Bearing in mind that only high risk cases are referred in the first place to a MARAC, this means that some high risk victims are being denied the opportunity for multi-agency collaboration in their safeguarding. This inevitably leads to differing levels of service provision and opportunities to access partner agency support and interventions for high risk victims. This should be examined as part of the review to ensure it is not being influenced by the volume of cases and that victims are not being disadvantaged through such a process.

The MARACs are viewed by partners and practitioners as positive for those high risk victim cases discussed. There was considered to be good engagement and attendance at the right level by those agencies represented. At a strategic level, concerns were raised about the effectiveness of the process to reduce the levels of risk. Currently there is no process in place to manage actions

effectively or hold owners accountable at the MARAC if actions are not completed or timely. In addition, there is no formal structure to review the effectiveness of safety plans that do not reach the MARAC.

In two areas of the force there are local partnership panels which are convened outside of the MARAC process to discuss both high and medium risk cases, and provide dynamic interventions in the period between reporting and the MARAC. Those high risk cases will still be heard at the MARAC, irrespective of actions undertaken by the agencies who attended the panel, potentially duplicating activity and creating unnecessary strain on agency resources.

The PPU generates a weekly report identifying licensed firearms holders involved in domestic abuse incidents that is sent to the firearms licensing department to review and consider revocation of certificates. This process has seen an increase in the number of licences being removed from holders, as a direct result of domestic abuse related incidents, demonstrating the opportunities to intervene early and safeguard victims.

A joint agreement on the handling of domestic abuse cases within the criminal justice system has been established between the force and the crown prosecution service (CPS). This agreement ensures that where bail is granted or varied by a court the CPS will contact the victim directly to update them, if contact is not achieved the investigation support team will be notified and ensure contact is made. Further tasks to engage with the victim regarding bail are managed through the control room and graded as a priority visit by an officer. All witness contacts within the criminal justice system and updates are recorded on the witness care management system. It is not clear that, beyond providing an update to a victim, the victim's safety plan would be reviewed and updated to deal with any escalation in risk that the change in bail circumstances presented. Nor is it clear who would be responsible to undertake that assessment and ensure safety measures were in place to manage the risk.

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

The force is aware of areas for improvement in its processes. It has embarked on implementing a new process of identifying a list of repeat perpetrators of domestic abuse. The purpose is to provide a focus for local officers to target and intervene in an individual's offending behaviour and ultimately reduce the risk posed to a victim. The list currently is generated by identifying the volume or frequency of calls received by the force rather than the threat or risk the individual presents to a victim. Local PCSOs are involved in safeguarding high risk victims in their areas.

The force does not routinely undertake reviews of safety plans for victims to determine what works and what could be improved for the future.

The force supports the Welsh Assembly Government '10,000 safer lives' project and is assessing itself against the 11 minimum standards. Standards one and two refer to completion of risk assessments upon first contact and consistency of approach, in which the force has graded itself as amber. It has supported the recent production of a multi-agency DVD in both the Welsh and English language, highlighting five key steps for all public service agencies to take in responding to domestic abuse. Step three makes reference to completing a DASH risk assessment and preparing a safety plan to make the individual safer.

In support of early intervention and future risk, all school liaison officers across the force have attended a two day domestic abuse and sexual violence training seminar. This event provided support for those officers involved in the delivery of the domestic abuse and sexual violence syllabus being taught in schools, to raise understanding and awareness of domestic abuse amongst young people.

The force does not have a definition for serial perpetrators, but has recently begun to identify a list of prevalent perpetrators of domestic abuse with a view to intervening and addressing their offending. This is managed and monitored through the force tasking and co-ordination group, with a local policing inspector responsible for taking action. The current process identifies perpetrators through the volumes of calls the force has received, rather than the threat, harm or risk they pose to their victims.

MARACs are attended by local PCSOs to raise their awareness of high risk victims and their perpetrators resident within local communities. They will also take actions to deliver support for victim safety measures and engage in reassurance patrols around the homes of high risk victims. This provides a good opportunity to ensure local officers are engaged and provided with appropriate information to enable them to support the multi-agency response to domestic abuse cases in their areas.

The force does not review the interventions that have been put in place to mitigate risk to victims, to establish if they have provided appropriate safeguarding and achieved the initial intention. Such a process would allow the force to understand what works and evaluate whether such activity is appropriate and whether it can deliver the outcome intended.

The force has developed a comprehensive process to capture any lessons learned from domestic homicide reviews and other serious case reviews, both local and nationally. The reviews are assessed and a matrix developed of any improvements that need to be incorporated into the force approaches. These are monitored through the force operations meeting which is chaired by the

assistant chief constable. Where necessary, recommendations of a significant nature are recorded and managed through the force risk register.

Information about force performance in relation to domestic abuse is monitored and available to all staff by accessing the performance dashboard on the force intranet. This provides data both at a local level as well as at force level.

Although the head of PPU is accountable from a strategic perspective for performance, area commanders stated they were also responsible as they had ownership of the resources deployed to deal with crimes and incidents, which is monitored by the assistant chief constable at the force performance meeting.

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 implement an appropriate system that will assist in identifying repeat and vulnerable victims at point of initial contact.
2. The force should consider implementing an electronic prompt, to assist call handlers in eliciting relevant information at initial contact regarding victims' vulnerability or repeated calls.
3. The provision of a specific domestic abuse policy for the force would provide more clarity of the definitions, processes and procedure to be undertaken in response to domestic abuse incidents.
4. The force to review its domestic abuse training. The force should identify those staff involved in dealing with domestic abuse and ensure they receive appropriate training.
5. The force to review the use of two titles for the domestic abuse co-ordinator (DAC) and domestic violence officer (DVO), and provide clarity for the roles.
6. The force to review the allocation of investigations against levels of threat, risk and harm to a victim.
7. The force to review responsibility and ownership for safety plans and reviews of risk.
8. The force to improve supervision of DASH forms and domestic abuse investigation files to provide consistency and accountability. All cases of domestic related investigations must be reviewed by a supervisor with DASH forms and files signed to that effect.
9. The force to review the current MARAC and local domestic violence forum meeting structures.
10. The force to review the identification process for perpetrators using threat, harm and risk to inform assessments.

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.