



North Yorkshire Police's approach to tackling domestic abuse

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Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁶ There is a requirement under Section 55(5) and Section 55(6) of the 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 Yorkshire⁷

Calls for assistance



In North Yorkshire, domestic abuse accounts for 4% of calls to the police for assistance. Of these calls, 3% were from repeat victims.

Crime

8%

Domestic abuse accounts for 8% of all recorded crime.

Assault with intent

19%

North Yorkshire recorded 129 assaults with intent to cause serious harm, of these 25 were domestic abuse related. This is 19% of all assaults with intent to cause serious harm recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

Assault with injury

30%

The force also recorded 3,387 assaults with injury, of these 1,024 were domestic abuse related. This is 30% 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

45%

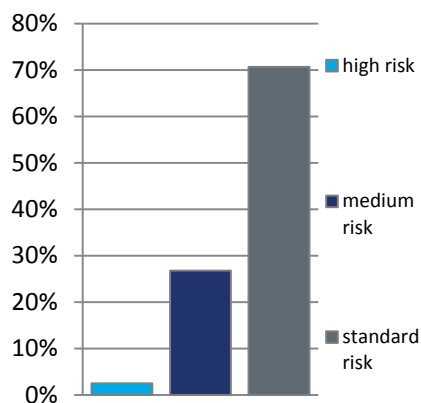
The force recorded 386 harassment offences, of these 172 were domestic abuse related. This is 45% of all harassment offences recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

Sexual offences

19%

The force also recorded 665 sexual offences, of these 125 were domestic abuse related. This is 19% of all sexual offences recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

Risk levels



On 27 October 2013 North Yorkshire had 11,619 active domestic abuse cases; 2% were high risk, 27% were medium risk, and 71% were standard risk.

Arrests



For every 100 domestic abuse crimes recorded, there were 72 arrests in North Yorkshire. For most forces the number is between 45 and 90.

Outcomes



North Yorkshire recorded 2,648 domestic abuse related crimes for the 12 months to the end of August 2013. Of these crimes, 34% resulted in a charge, 8% resulted in a caution and, 5% had an out of court disposal, for example, a fixed penalty notice for disorderly conduct.

Executive Summary

North Yorkshire Police has effective working practices where domestic abuse is concerned but there are still opportunities for further development.

Tackling domestic abuse is a priority for the police and crime commissioner and the force. Staff throughout the organisation understand that there is a need to make victims safer and deal properly with domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse incidents are, by default, marked as vulnerable by those taking the calls which ensures an adequate initial response. However, the type or nature of the vulnerability is not assessed or recorded fully.

The force's initial response to domestic abuse is effective, however after this there is an inconsistent approach to risk assessment which means that not all victims may receive the future support and access to services they need.

There is good use of police community safety officers to support victims of domestic abuse in the community.

There are no processes in place to identify serial perpetrators and no work to try to prevent future offending behaviour.

Identifying victims

HMIC found that North Yorkshire Police has a clear commitment to identifying victims of domestic abuse and ensuring that they get an appropriate police response, although there are some risks that victims may not consistently get the quality of service they need. Call handlers who deal with reports of domestic abuse are trained specially and understand their role. The force prioritises domestic abuse calls and the response is either an emergency or a priority attendance by an officer.

The force recognises the importance of identifying whether a victim has been subjected to repeated incidents of domestic abuse or whether they are vulnerable in some way. There are good systems in place to identify repeat victims when the domestic abuse call is made, and this information is given to the officers attending. However, HMIC found that the system for identifying vulnerability is weaker, in that call handlers are identifying almost all victims of domestic abuse as vulnerable by default. This means that the type or nature of the vulnerability for example, the victim is an older person or has mental health problems – is not assessed or recorded. The force plans to address this in early 2014 with the introduction of a new risk assessment process.

Keeping victims safe

Tackling domestic abuse and, in particular, protecting vulnerable victims is a clearly stated priority for the PCC and North Yorkshire Police. The force has produced clear and comprehensive guidance on dealing with all aspects of domestic abuse at each stage in the process, in order to provide staff with a clear understanding of their role and what is expected of them. However, in a number of areas, proper procedures are not being followed and the level of frontline supervision of domestic abuse incidents appeared not to be as strong as the policy requires. This is potentially placing victims at risk of further harm. Risk assessments are not consistently being undertaken at domestic abuse incidents. When they are being done, they are not always being submitted to the specialist referral unit for their review and specialist input to planning the safety of victims.

There are some areas of good practice in the way the police respond to domestic abuse and work with partners to deliver services that help to keep victims safer. There are also some areas for improvement. There is a good, comprehensive service to victims of domestic abuse who face the highest levels of risk. However the force needs to ensure those victims assessed as medium or standard risk receive similarly consistent good levels of service.

Management of risk

All high-risk cases are dealt with by specially trained detectives in the PVP unit. They manage the investigation and the safeguarding of the victim, and share information with partners to ensure that there is a good joined-up response to victims from a multi-agency approach. Standard and medium risk cases are reviewed by specialists and managed by the initial attending officer. The force has selected a number of police community support officers (PCSOs) from each neighbourhood team who have been specially trained to support domestic abuse victims; they are involved in the safety planning and provide follow-up visits to standard and medium risk victims, reporting to the specialist domestic abuse officers in the PVP unit.

HMIC found that the force works well in partnership with the probation service and a system is in place to ensure that contact is maintained with high-risk victims when the offender is in prison serving their sentence; a victim will be kept informed about an offender's release date, at which time the PVP unit will reassess the risk the victim faces from the release and put in place any new safety measures needed. It is less clear that medium and standard risk victims will receive this level of service.

Organisational effectiveness for keeping people safe

There has been limited work to identify and deal with the most serious and serial domestic abuse offenders in any systematic way. However, HMIC did find that, through local knowledge, neighbourhood staff tend to know who their most serious domestic abuse offenders are.

The force, together with community partners, has developed an award-winning scheme known as 'Making Safe'. This is an initiative to support the victims and children of domestic abuse, enabling them to remain in their home while re-housing perpetrators and working with them to manage their behaviour to prevent reoffending.

Findings

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

HMIC found that North Yorkshire Police has a clear commitment to identifying victims of domestic abuse and ensuring that they get an appropriate police response, although there are some risks that victims may not consistently get the quality of service they need. Call handlers who deal with reports of domestic abuse are trained specially and understand their role. The force prioritises domestic abuse calls and the response is either an emergency or a priority attendance by an officer.

The force recognises the importance of identifying whether a victim has been subjected to repeated incidents of domestic abuse or whether they are vulnerable in some way. There are good systems in place to identify repeat victims when the domestic abuse call is made, and this information is given to the officers attending. However, HMIC found that the system for identifying vulnerability is weaker, in that call handlers are identifying almost all victims of domestic abuse as vulnerable by default. This means that the type or nature of the vulnerability for example, the victim is an older person or has mental health problems – is not assessed or recorded. The force plans to address this in early 2014 with the introduction of a new risk assessment process.

Most calls about domestic abuse are received in the police control room. The identification of victims is the responsibility of the call handlers who, through a series of scripted questions, gather as much relevant information as possible from the caller to assess the urgency of the situation and decide on the appropriate police response. Domestic abuse calls are prioritised by the force and routinely given either an immediate response (attendance within 15 minutes) or a priority response (attendance within 60 minutes), in line with the force's call-grading policy.

The force recognises that victims who have been subjected to repeated incidents of abuse, and those who are vulnerable in some way, are at greater risk and should be dealt with accordingly. The call handlers routinely ask caller if there have been previous incidents and the police IT systems can also flag up to the call handler that there has been previous police involvement at the address, or with the victim, and if any warnings have been placed on the victim's record. If the person is identified as a repeat victim, this will help the dispatcher to determine the appropriate initial response. The information will also be passed to the officers attending so that they can have as full a picture as possible when they arrive at the scene.

The force has identified characteristics that define victims of domestic abuse who tend to become repeat or vulnerable victims. Call handlers are trained to use these definitions to identify vulnerable and repeat victims at the first point of contact. However, HMIC found that call handlers are identifying almost all victims of domestic abuse as vulnerable by way of default. This means that the type or nature of the vulnerability – for example, the victim is an older person or has mental health problems or an elderly victim – is not assessed or recorded. In these cases, the nature of the vulnerability of the victim is not being taken into account and some vulnerable people may not get the response they need because officers are not fully aware of their circumstances. The force plans to address this early in 2014 with the introduction of a new risk assessment process.

HMIC found that call handlers and their supervisors manage the resources well, ensuring that officers attending incidents of domestic abuse are given the relevant information and respond in a timely manner. Deployment managers in the control room monitor incidents and ensure that officers have followed the force procedures correctly before they close the incident log on the system.

Staff who work in the control room have received training and understand how to deal with domestic abuse incidents. Additional training has been provided on how to recognise and deal with stalking and harassment.

HMIC found that throughout the force most frontline staff have received effective training in dealing with domestic abuse and undertaking risk assessments of victims. The force has recently changed its approach to sending officers to attend incidents. They can now send the nearest available officer, even if that officer is a specialist – for example, a firearms or traffic officer. HMIC found that these specialist officers have not received any domestic abuse training because at the time the training was carried out they would not have been sent to domestic abuse incidents. There may not be many occasions when a specialist officer will attend an incident; nonetheless there is a risk that, although a victim may get a fast response, they may not get the same quality of response.

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

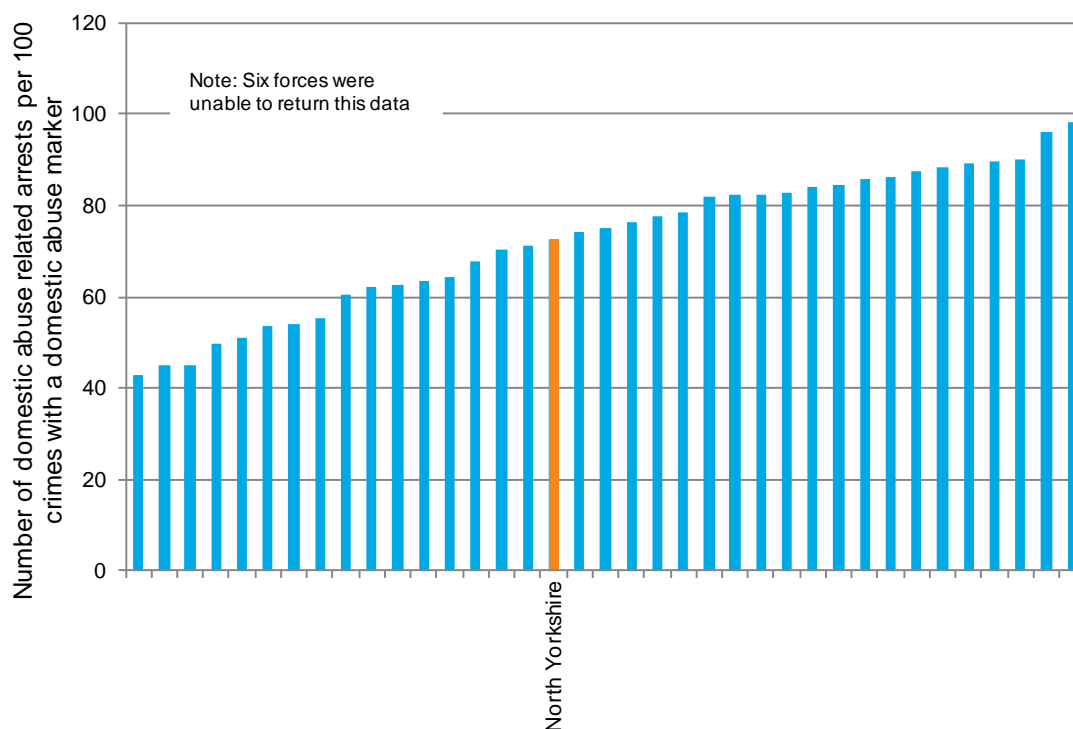
Tackling domestic abuse and, in particular, protecting vulnerable victims is a clearly stated priority for the PCC and North Yorkshire Police. The force has produced clear and comprehensive guidance on dealing with all aspects of domestic abuse at each stage in the process, in order to provide staff with a clear understanding of their role and what is expected of them. However, in a number of areas, proper procedures are not being followed and the level of frontline supervision of domestic abuse incidents appeared not to be as strong as the policy requires. This is potentially placing victims at risk of further harm. Risk assessments are not consistently being undertaken at domestic abuse incidents. When they are being done, they are not always being submitted to the specialist referral unit for their review and specialist input to planning the safety of victims.

There are some areas of good practice in the way the police respond to domestic abuse and work with partners to deliver services that help to keep victims safer. There are also some areas for improvement. There is a good, comprehensive service to victims of domestic abuse who face the highest levels of risk. However the force needs to ensure those victims assessed as medium or standard risk receive similarly consistent good levels of service.

For every 100 domestic abuse crimes recorded there were 72 arrests in North Yorkshire. For most forces the number is between 45 and 90.⁸

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

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



Source: HMIC data collection

Tackling domestic abuse is a clear priority for both the PCC and North Yorkshire Police. The PCC’s police and crime plan sets a priority to deliver ‘more effective services and support through the protecting vulnerable people (PVP) unit of North Yorkshire Police and effective working with key partners to develop better services and support for vulnerable people – including data sharing and practical problem-solving.’

This priority and the force’s commitment to dealing with domestic abuse are reflected in its strategic assessment document, and the homicide reduction strategy profiles domestic abuse as a factor leading to homicide. The force has continued to invest in specialist resources to deal with domestic abuse despite a period of severe financial constraint. The PVP unit has retained its staffing levels and the force has continued to invest in training and support for specialist staff during a period when other areas of the force have been experiencing staff reductions. The PVP unit is well resourced, led by a superintendent and deals

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

effectively with all issues affecting vulnerable people, including victims of domestic abuse.

The officer who makes the initial attendance takes ownership of the incident. HMIC found that the force has produced clear and comprehensive guidance setting out the procedures for dealing with domestic abuse incidents. This includes so-called honour-based violence, forced marriage, stalking, harassment and domestic abuse perpetrated by police officers.

Attending officers are required to undertake an assessment of the risks posed to the victim and to use the appropriate form to document their assessment. The risk to the victim is categorised as being high, medium or standard. The force policy states that supervisors manage all domestic violence incidents dealt with in their area or on their shift, and intervene when necessary to ensure that all are fully and professionally investigated. Supervisors are also required to review risk assessments to ensure that adequate risk control measures have been put in place for the safety of the victim and any family members. However, in the cases reviewed by HMIC Inspectors, the level of intrusive supervision of domestic abuse incidents was weak and did not follow the guidance. We found that risk assessments are not being completed in all cases. This means that the force cannot be confident that all victims are consistently getting the appropriate level of services from the police and partner agencies to keep them safe.

HMIC found that officers understand the risk assessment process and are comfortable with undertaking assessments and applying an appropriate level of professional judgement based on what they find at an incident. However, HMIC were concerned to find that officers are not consistently following the required process for submitting the risk assessment to the PVP for specialist officer review. The force has produced clear and comprehensive guidance on dealing with all aspects of domestic abuse at each stage in the process, in order to provide staff with a clear understanding of their role and what is expected of them. However, HMIC found that in a number of areas, proper procedures are not being followed and the level of supervision and oversight is not adequate. This is potentially placing victims at risk of further harm. Risk assessments are not consistently being undertaken at domestic abuse incidents. When they are being done, they are not always being submitted to the specialist referral unit for their review and specialist input to planning the safety of victims.

There are some areas of good practice in the way the police respond to domestic abuse and work with partners to deliver services that help to keep victims safer. There are also some areas for improvement. There is a good, comprehensive service to victims of domestic abuse who face the highest levels of risk. However, it is less clear that those victims assessed as medium or standard risk are getting a consistently good service. Officers are required to

scan a completed form into the computer system, which then generates an email notifying the central referral unit that it is there for their attention. We found that this is not being done consistently, with the result that a referral is not sent and instead sits in the system causing a delay in any action being considered. This could place a victim at risk of further harm. The force is aware of this problem and has taken steps to address this, although more needs to be done.

When a risk assessment and referral form is completed, it is submitted to specialist referral staff in the PVP who are experienced domestic abuse staff. They review and reassess all risk assessments and, when necessary, revise them to ensure that they accurately reflect the risks and appropriate safeguarding can be put in place. The risk assessment form also triggers a marker being placed on the police database; this shows that a person has been subjected to a domestic abuse incident, and will be apparent to a call handler if any future calls are received from that person.

HMIC found that staff accept that domestic abuse is a priority and it is their responsibility to minimise the risk to the victim at the initial attendance. They routinely remove the offender from the scene to protect the victim, although there is no performance data available to monitor how often this happens.

HMIC found that officers understand the impact on children in households where domestic abuse is taking place, and are clear that their role is to ensure that their safety and welfare are taken into account. The force guidance also includes clear direction about ensuring that the details of children present at incidents are recorded so that they can be referred to children's services for action. The initial risk assessment form follows national guidelines about the presence of children, and officers have been trained to ensure that all children who may be in the household are considered when completing the risk assessment. However the wording on the form is ambiguous and some officers only record when a child is present at the scene and witnessed the abuse; this may result in missed opportunities for the involvement of children's services.

The assistant chief constable monitors performance in this area of activity using a performance dashboard that includes domestic abuse incidents and domestic violence crimes. Data on repeat and vulnerable victims are not included in this report which would help the force to better understand the full picture of domestic abuse. The focus on domestic violence, and use of the terminology of violence, rather than the broader category of domestic abuse means that performance regarding all aspects of domestic abuse is not monitored at a senior level. HMIC found that staff accept domestic abuse is a priority and routinely remove the offender from the scene to protect the victim; however, no performance data are available to show how often this happens.

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

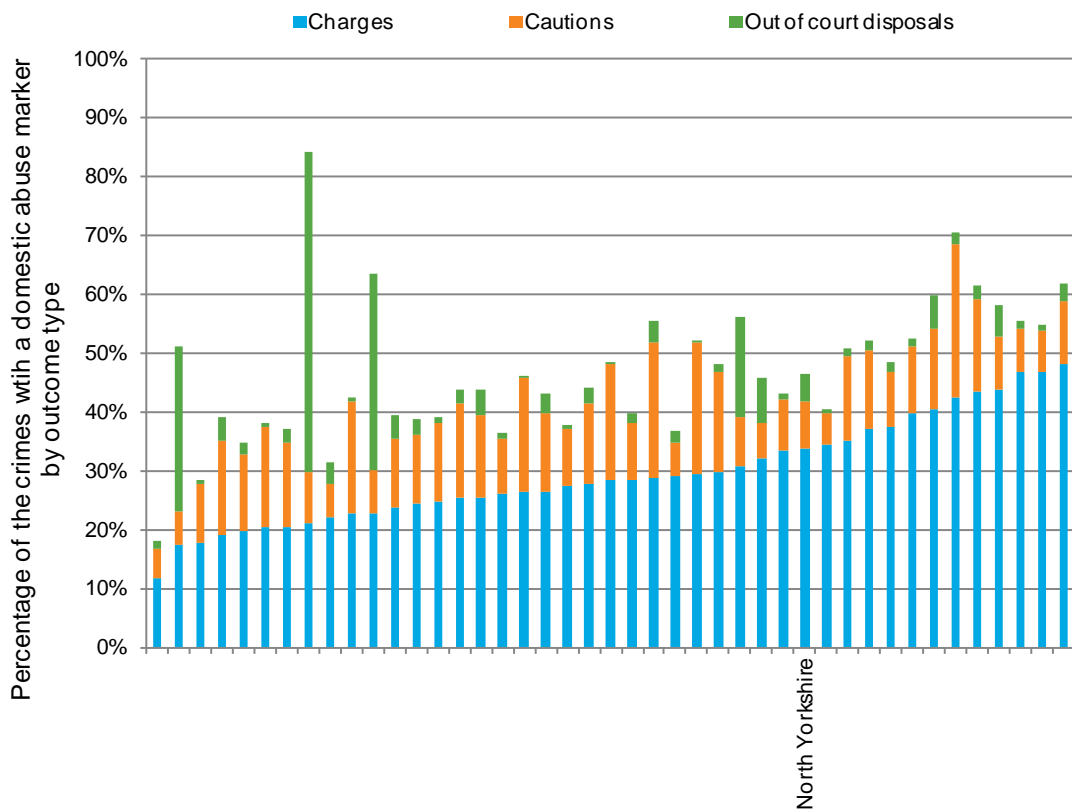
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North Yorkshire recorded 2,648 domestic abuse related crimes for the 12 months to the end of August 2013.¹⁰ Of these crimes 34 percent resulted in a charge, 8 percent resulted in a caution and, 5 percent had an out of court disposal, for example a fixed penalty notice for disorderly conduct.

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

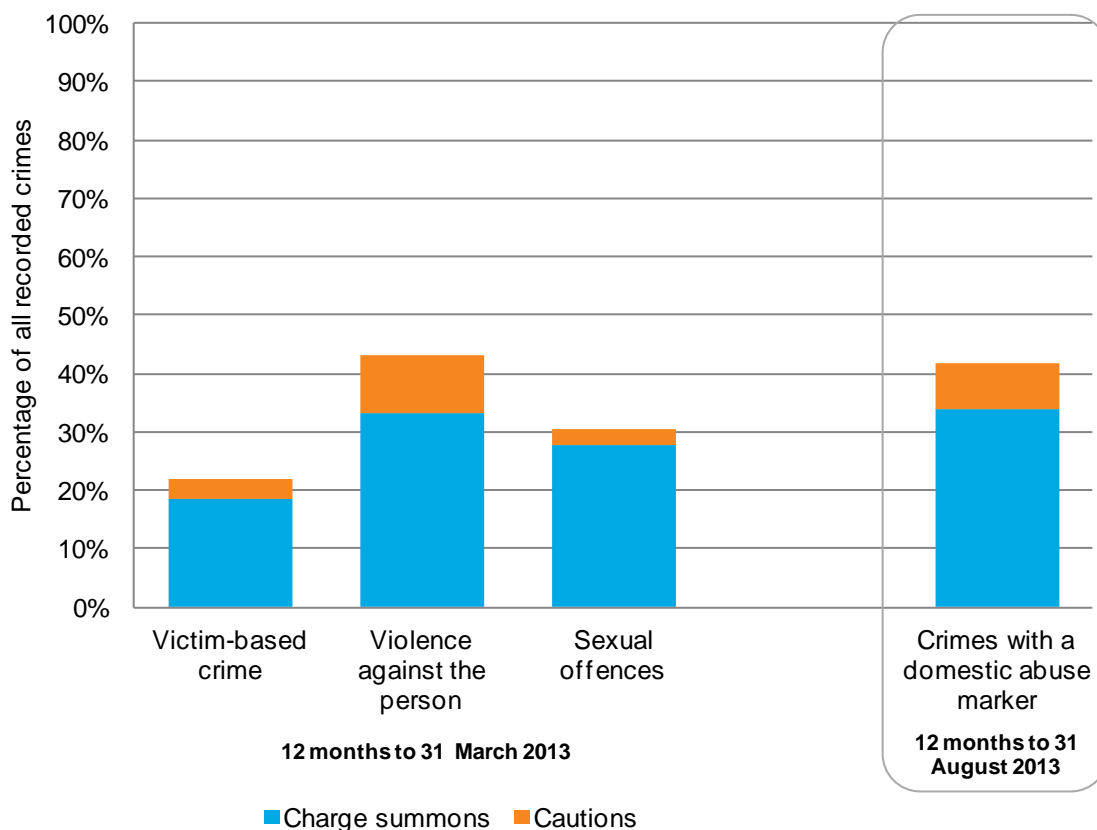
Figure 2: Percentage of different outcome types used for crimes with a domestic abuse marker for the 12 months to 31 August 2013



Source: HMIC data collection

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

Figure 3: Percentage of charge summons and cautions used for victim-based crime, violence against the person, sexual offences and all crimes with a domestic abuse marker¹¹



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

Every victim of domestic abuse is risk-assessed to identify the level of risk to them. There are clear roles and responsibilities regarding who deals with high, medium and standard risk victims of domestic abuse. The force’s operating model is currently under review and, as a result, this procedure may change in the future. HMIC found that staff are clear that they are all responsible for making victims safe.

The force has provided specialist domestic abuse training for a number of PCSOs in each neighbourhood team. Cases of domestic abuse assessed as standard or medium risk are followed up by these specially trained PCSOs. They support the development of safety plans for victims and are able to dedicate time and local knowledge to support the people concerned. They

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

report to the local domestic violence officer (DVO) with updates. All staff spoken to during the course of the inspection praised the work of the PCSOs in this area.

High-risk cases are dealt with by DVOs who form part of the PVP unit and are based in police force areas. They ensure appropriate safety planning is completed, support and advise victims of domestic abuse and are responsible for ensuring positive action is taken, including multi-agency work with partners such as health, social care and voluntary organisations. In addition, high-risk victims are referred to independent domestic abuse services (IDAS; DAS in Scarborough). These are organisations that provide specially trained staff known as independent domestic violence advisers (IDVAs) who work with victims to provide additional safeguarding and support services and help to keep them safe. They can also offer refuge and safety planning work, and access housing, social care and education services for victims. DVOs who deal with high-risk domestic abuse cases are trained detectives who have also received domestic abuse training. Officers we spoke to during the inspection felt that they had received sufficient training to carry out their roles and responsibilities. They ensure victims are kept informed by maintaining contact while cases progress through the criminal justice process.

North Yorkshire Police recognises the importance of working with partner agencies to investigate and manage the risk to domestic abuse victims. There is a joint co-ordination group where the overarching strategy for domestic abuse is agreed between all partners across the force area. This includes key partners from the statutory, voluntary and private sectors. The sub-commissioning group, which works to the joint co-ordination group, reviews and manages various funding streams for partnership activities. However, some partners raised concerns about the future of commissioning services as the PCC is yet to fully develop plans in this area and the future funding of some key services remains uncertain. The main concern raised was that the strengths of local service delivery might be diluted or lost.

There are currently four domestic violence co-ordinators (DVCs) across the force area. These are jointly-funded roles with North Yorkshire County Council although the funding, focus and line manager responsibilities are currently under review. The DVCs have provided training to staff across agencies, including multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) awareness raising, domestic abuse awareness and domestic abuse safety planning. They also co-ordinate 'making safe' activity and have a role in the MARAC process.

MARACs are well established within North Yorkshire and deliver effective communication and action planning between agencies. They enable police and their partners to meet to discuss high-risk domestic abuse cases; they share

information, jointly assess risk to victims and their families, and agree a co-ordinated joined-up approach to managing risk and keeping victims safe. In addition to the specialist police domestic abuse staff, they include local authority children's and adults' services, health services, housing, probation and IDVAs. Good relationships and accessibility between the agencies is supported by information-sharing protocols. HMIC found it is not clear what the desired overall outcome of a MARAC referred case was in terms of the outcome for victims and perpetrators. There is limited oversight of the MARAC process beyond the chair of the meetings and no peer review has been undertaken to ensure that the process is as effective as possible, drawing on the learning from others.

HMIC found that joint working is good and constructive and partners are positive in terms of their engagement with the police in dealing with domestic abuse, although the IDVAs (except for those from Scarborough) are given scant information from the force – often just a line from the incident log from the attending officer. In Scarborough, the IDVAs receive the completed risk assessment form to assist their response, which assists them in providing the most effective support.

Staff reported some difficulties with delays in reaching a decision as to whether to charge perpetrators; these can be as long as 12 weeks. The force and the Crown Prosecution Service are working to address this. However, when there are such delays the perpetrator is often on bail and can therefore be a continued risk to the victim.

Demand on North Yorkshire Police and its partners in relation to domestic abuse is likely to increase in the future due to the increasing population as a result of the significant increase in military personnel families and the new and emerging migrant communities in the area. Migrant communities typically under-report domestic abuse, because of a lack of confidence in the police. This presents a challenge for North Yorkshire Police and its partners in understanding the scale of abuse and ensuring that their services are promoted and accessible to those communities in that they understand the services available to both victims and offenders.

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

There has been limited work to identify and deal with the most serious and serial domestic abuse offenders in any systematic way. However, HMIC did find that, through local knowledge, neighbourhood staff tend to know who their most serious domestic abuse offenders are.

The force, together with community partners, has developed an award-winning scheme known as 'Making Safe'. This is an initiative to support the victims and children of domestic abuse, enabling them to remain in their home while re-housing perpetrators and working with them to manage their behaviour to prevent reoffending.

The force works well in partnership with the probation service and processes are in place to maintain contact with victims in cases where a perpetrator is imprisoned, and keeping them informed of release dates. When high-risk perpetrators are released from prison, information is passed through the intelligence unit to the PVP unit; this will review the risk assessment and put in place any safety measures needed for the victim, such as installing alarms or arranging reassurance patrols. The PVP unit, working with partners, keeps the victim informed of progress throughout. It is less clear that victims assessed as medium and standard risk receive quality of service is provided when an offender is released from prison.

A flagging system is used on the force's IT system to highlight repeat and high-risk victims. This flag is also used for high-risk domestic abuse offenders. These have recently been reviewed and reassessed to remove historic and out-of-date flags to ensure only current information is retained. The system allows previous and removed flags to be viewed if victims are subject of further incidents. The force is ensuring the integrity of the data on its system by reviewing these flags. However, there is no flag for serial offenders in medium or standard risk domestic abuse cases. The information about these is stored on the system, but the absence of a flag for this type of offender relies on control room staff and officers reading through several screens of information to establish whether an offender is serial. The force has recently established a victim and vulnerable people serious crime review panel, which has recently had its first meeting and will explore this issue to ensure that all serial and serious perpetrators can be easily identified in the future.

We found that frontline staff were familiar with the most serious domestic abuse cases in their area, particularly those that involved repeat locations, victims or offenders.

Making safe is North Yorkshire's award-winning scheme – a multi-agency initiative to support the victims and children of domestic abuse, enabling them to remain in their home while re-housing perpetrators and offering them support to manage their behaviour. It includes the police, IDAS/ DAS, probation, integrated offender management teams, social care and housing providers. There are currently 48 perpetrators on this scheme. Staff across the police force are aware of it and how it can be used to reduce re-offending.

The force has a system in place to ensure that any lessons learned through domestic homicide reviews are disseminated throughout the force so that actions can be taken to improve practices and procedures; partners in the community also are involved in this process. Domestic homicide and other serious case reviews elsewhere in the country are also assessed through the PVP unit to see if there are any areas that North Yorkshire can learn from; this learning is also shared with partners.

HMIC found that the level of focus on domestic abuse through force-wide performance management is limited. Domestic abuse does feature to an extent in the force's performance management processes. The focus tends to be on measuring numbers of prosecutions and incidents where domestic abuse results in a violent crime. There is little evaluation of the outcome of services from a victim's perspective. However, analysis of domestic abuse performance is still maturing and will be considered by the newly established victim and vulnerable people serious crime review panel. The performance dashboard that is currently used does not look at the experience of domestic abuse victims throughout the whole process from contacting the police through to the final outcome (such as the perpetrator being imprisoned). Scrutiny and accountability for performance relating to domestic abuse take place through a number of force meetings, including the monthly performance meeting and the force's tasking and operations board. At a local level, it was not clear to HMIC that domestic abuse is regarded as a priority at the local daily management meetings, although there was some evidence of repeat victims and offenders being discussed.

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.

The force should:

1. review the processes to identify vulnerable victims by staff in the force control room;
2. review and improve the supervision of domestic abuse risk assessments and investigations;
3. provide clarity about when a risk assessment should be completed and enforce the submission of completed risk assessments within a specified time frame;
4. provide clarity about who is responsible for updating victims assessed as medium and standard risk and who is responsible for reviewing their safety;
5. review the force's approach to dealing with serial perpetrators of domestic abuse, including how local officers can be made aware of the most high risk victims and perpetrators in their area and what they could do to deal with them.

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.