

A progress report on the police response to domestic abuse

November 2017

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Foreword

“I had a really good officer. I went in to report a threat to kill and he was very understanding. We did the DASH form and at this point I reported the rape and I wasn’t going to report that. I couldn’t have asked for a more kind or gentle officer. I felt really comfortable and it all spilled out.”

This report is the third in a series of thematic reports which consider the response the police service provides to victims of domestic abuse. We published our first report in this series¹ in March 2014, since when there have been considerable improvements in the service provided to victims of domestic abuse. Victims are now better supported and better protected.

In 2014, we found significant weaknesses in the police response to victims of domestic abuse. We called on forces to take urgent action to improve both their ways of working and to make their services more effective. In 2015, as part of our second inspection in this series,² we were pleased to find that the police service had come to see tackling domestic abuse as a priority – with domestic abuse increasingly becoming everyone’s business. But we concluded that there was still much more to be done.

This third report draws on our 2016 PEEL effectiveness inspection findings, and highlights continued improvement. Although many forces recognise that they still have further to go to provide the best possible service to victims of domestic abuse, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)³ is pleased with the progress being made.

In some forces there is still room for improvement in some areas including the consistent identification of risk, the application of positive action, the appropriate use of arrest and arrangements for building the case for the victim.

¹ *Everyone’s business: Improving the police response to domestic abuse*, HMIC, 2014. Available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/improving-the-police-response-to-domestic-abuse/

² *Increasingly everyone’s business: A progress report on the police response to domestic abuse*, HMIC, 2015. Available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/improving-the-police-response-to-domestic-abuse/

³ This inspection was carried out before 19 July 2017, when HMIC also took on responsibility for fire & rescue service inspections and was renamed HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services. The methodology underpinning our inspection findings is unaffected by this change. References to HMICFRS in this report may relate to an event that happened before 19 July 2017 when HMICFRS was HMIC. Citations of documents which HMIC published before 19 July 2017 will still cite HMIC as the publisher.

It is important to acknowledge the pressure that the significant increase in demand is placing on forces. Over the period of these three inspections, domestic abuse has continued to cause great damage to people's lives. Since the publication of HMICFRS' first thematic report on domestic abuse *Everyone's business* in March 2014, recorded crimes of domestic abuse have increased by 61 percent (12 months to 31 August 2013 compared to 12 months to 30 June 2016). Given this increase in demand and the continued problems which will be faced by the police and the organisations with which they work (such as children's social services, health, education and probation) in the coming years, it is critical that the police remain focused on improving the service they provide to some of the most vulnerable victims in our society.

I would, once again, like to thank the police leaders, officers and staff for the excellent work they have continued to do, often under very difficult circumstances, to better protect and support victims of domestic abuse. This report sets out three recommendations that build on those we made in *Increasingly everyone's business*.

Forces have worked hard to address the areas for improvement identified in our 2016 PEEL effectiveness inspection. As a result, the picture in some forces will already look very different. I look forward to seeing even more improvements in the police response to victims of domestic abuse when we publish the findings from our 2017 PEEL effectiveness inspection in March 2018.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Zoë Billingham". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

HMI Zoë Billingham

HM Inspector of Constabulary

Summary

In England and Wales, there is an unrelenting and increasing demand for the police to respond to incidents of domestic abuse. The total number of reported domestic abuse crimes has increased from 353,063 in the 12 months to March 2015, to 434,095 in the 12 months to June 2016. This represents a 23 percent increase in a year. For the 12 months to 30 June 2016, domestic abuse-related crime made up just over 11 percent of all recorded crime and represented 33 percent of all recorded crimes that involved assault with injury.

This is at a time when the police service is under a range of pressures across several crime types. The Crime Survey for England and Wales⁴ highlights that police-recorded sexual offences increased by 12 percent in the year ending September 2016 (although the proportion of adults who said that they had been a victim of such crimes in the crime survey itself remained relatively stable). Recorded sexual offences have doubled since 2013, and this is an extremely time-consuming and resource-intensive area of work for the police service. Managing the increase in demand, not just from domestic abuse and sexual offences, but across all areas, has presented significant problems to the police service.

Since the publication of *Everyone's business*, there have been considerable improvements in the overall police response to victims of domestic abuse. Police leaders prioritise tackling domestic abuse within the wider context of supporting vulnerable people and keeping them safe. However, there are still areas where improvements are required in some forces to ensure that victims of domestic abuse are better protected and supported, and to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable for the harm they are causing. Some police forces are still failing to assess the risk and respond appropriately at the first point of contact. Others are inconsistent in the way they use their powers to keep people safe. Some forces are still not doing enough to pursue positive outcomes, where perpetrators are charged with an offence and brought before a court.

During this inspection, we found seven out of 43 forces in England and Wales to have a 'cause of concern'⁵ in relation to their response to domestic abuse. We also

⁴ *Crime in England and Wales: year ending Sept 2016*, Office for National Statistics, 19 January 2017, section 9. Available at: www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingsept2016

⁵ If HMICFRS' inspection identifies a serious or critical shortcoming in a force's practice, policy or performance, it will be reported as a cause of concern. A cause of concern will always be accompanied by one or more recommendations.

found a total of 33 forces out of 43 which had ‘areas for improvement’⁶ in relation to domestic abuse.

During this inspection we found that throughout forces in England and Wales chief officer teams have a strong commitment to protecting those who are vulnerable. Staff numbers have increased in many of the safeguarding units, and people have been moved from other departments to provide more resilience in those teams with responsibility for domestic abuse. Forces are continuing to invest in public protection, with more officers allocated to undertake investigations into domestic abuse.

We have also seen that forces are continuing to work in partnership with other public services, such as children’s social services, health, education and probation. Police forces play an important role in these partnerships, and often ensure that they are set up and that they work effectively. Multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASHs) are well established in the majority of force areas. The police, children’s social services and health agencies are well represented in MASHs, but there is still room for increased involvement from other agencies. For example, housing agencies are only involved in 24 percent of MASHs. In response to a recommendation in our last domestic abuse thematic report *Increasingly everyone’s business*, the Home Office is leading work to develop some principles for multi-agency working in this area. A publication date has yet to be confirmed.

The level of domestic abuse recorded by the police has increased by over 60 percent in less than three years. As HMICFRS highlighted in our previous domestic abuse thematic report *Increasingly everyone’s business*, the Office for National Statistics (ONS)⁷ suggest this is due in part to police forces improving their recording of these incidents as crimes. As well as improvements in recording, ONS suggest another possible explanation for the rise is an increase in the reporting of domestic abuse. Forces have been actively encouraging victims to come forward to report crimes, and it may be that this is reflected in this increase.

Some forces are, in many cases, ensuring that staff are receiving training in relation to domestic abuse, particularly to improve frontline officers’ understanding of coercive control. As a result of significant investment in training, attitudes of frontline officers have started to improve, along with their understanding of the importance of dealing with victims in a supportive and sympathetic way. HMICFRS expects to see this good practice replicated across all forces.

⁶ If HMICFRS’ inspection identifies an aspect of a force’s practice, policy or performance that falls short of the expected standard, it will be reported as one or more area(s) for improvement.

⁷ *Part of Statistical Bulletin: Crime in England and Wales, year ending June 2015, Office for National Statistics, 2015.* Available from: www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/2015-10-15

HMICFRS understands that continuing to improve the response to victims of domestic abuse will require a change in the culture of many forces, and this will take time. Although many officers have positive, caring and empathetic attitudes towards victims, some still have a negative approach to those who are most vulnerable.

Despite the investment in training, some officers still do not understand the dynamics of domestic abuse and coercive control,⁸ and underestimate how manipulative perpetrators can be. We commend forces for starting to tackle these problems, but understand that there is no quick solution.

HMICFRS acknowledges the commitment and energy that the police service has put into improving the response to victims of domestic abuse. However, this inspection identified a number of areas where further improvement is required to ensure that victims of domestic abuse are better protected and supported, and ultimately made safer. The following section summarises these findings, but readers should refer to chapters 1 to 4 for our full findings.

The first area is the way in which some forces are responding to the increased demand from domestic abuse. As we reported in our PEEL effectiveness inspections,⁹ although the practice is not widespread some forces have been potentially suppressing demand. Examples include downgrading the severity of calls from domestic abuse victims to justify a slower emergency response, downgrading the assessment of the risk faced by some victims so that they do not get referred to multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs), and inappropriately conducting initial risk-assessments over the telephone. These practices, found in a small number of forces, might be putting those who are already vulnerable at further risk.

For a number of years, HMICFRS has been inspecting forces' responses to tackling domestic abuse. In 2014, we found that the initial stages of answering the telephone and sending a police officer to a victim were positive aspects of the victims' relationship with the police, and an area that HMICFRS recognised as generally working well. HMICFRS is concerned that some forces may be suppressing demand because they have insufficient officers available to respond to calls resulting in unnecessary delays and risk.

⁸ Coercive control 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 continuing 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 that such abuse can be psychological as well as physical. Coercive control is explicitly covered by the definition of domestic abuse.

⁹ *PEEL: Police effectiveness 2016 – A national overview*, HMIC, 2016. Available at: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/peel-police-effectiveness-2016.pdf

The second area of concern is the wide variation in how forces use their powers to keep victims safe and to pursue positive outcomes for victims and communities. We found:

- considerable variation between forces in the proportion of recorded crime flagged as relating to domestic abuse;
- an overall reduction in the proportion of domestic abuse crimes leading to arrest, and varying rates of arrest between forces;
- forces using powers such as Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs),¹⁰ and the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (also known as Clare’s Law)¹¹ to different extents. In some cases their use has decreased;
- variation in the extent to which criminal investigations are closed without offenders being charged and brought to justice. In one force nearly two-thirds of investigations into domestic abuse crimes did not proceed because of ‘evidential difficulties – victim does not support police action’ (although that force took quick and effective steps to work towards addressing this concern); and
- nationally, the number of cases that are referred to the Crown Prosecution Service to be charged and then prosecuted is falling, at different rates in different forces, (although seven forces have seen an increase in their rate of referrals per 100 domestic abuse crimes).

The police service generally has a poor understanding of why these variations exist. Some forces still do not collect reliable data relating to domestic abuse. Forces that do not have clear and reliable data struggle to understand the level of crime related to domestic abuse, their response to it, and how effective that response is.

¹⁰ DVPOs are a power that enables the police and magistrates’ courts to put in place protection in the immediate aftermath of a domestic abuse incident. Where there is insufficient evidence to charge a perpetrator and provide protection to a victim via bail conditions, a DVPO can prevent the perpetrator from returning to a residence and from having contact with the victim for up to 28 days. This gives the victim an opportunity to consider their options and get the support and guidance which he or she needs from a dedicated domestic abuse service.

¹¹ 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.

Poor-quality data on domestic abuse has been a continuing cause for concern for HMICFRS, and in our previous domestic abuse thematic report *Increasingly everyone's business* we proposed the development of a data set relating to domestic abuse to enable a more thorough analysis of how domestic abuse is addressed within a force area. In response to this recommendation, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) worked with a range of other government departments and agencies on a new domestic abuse publication, Domestic abuse in England and Wales: year ending March 2016.¹² The statistical bulletin and interactive data tool published in December 2016 was the first phase of this work, and included data held by ONS, the Home Office and the Crown Prosecution Service. Feedback was gathered from main interested parties on the first phase, and the scope of the second phase has been expanded to include new sources of data from the Ministry of Justice, SafeLives and Women's Aid. The second edition of the release will be published on 23 November 2017.

HMICFRS continues to have concerns about the falling levels of arrest in domestic abuse cases and the variation in the arrest rates from force to force. Many of the practices we identified, such as not arresting the perpetrators of domestic abuse and not charging them are contrary to force policies. For example, most forces have a positive action policy, which means that in general the force would support the arrest of a suspect, and any officer deciding not to arrest a suspect would need to justify that decision to a supervisor. This suggests that the actions of some frontline officers are not being adequately managed, monitored and supervised, with some not following the policies and practices set for them by police leaders.

Where officers are not arresting and attempting to charge perpetrators, domestic abuse victims are not being properly protected, and criminals are not being brought to justice. There are a number of reasons why officers may choose not to take positive action when dealing with a domestic abuse incident. In some cases it is done in order to manage demand, for example not arresting a perpetrator but asking them to attend a voluntary interview. The use of voluntary interviews will be explored in more detail as part of PEEL effectiveness 2017. In other cases the victim may not want the officer to arrest a perpetrator, or bring criminal charges (often because the victim is being controlled by the perpetrator), even though this might be the best way of keeping the victim or the community safe.

It is vital that police leaders take steps to understand the actions and activities of their frontline officers in these cases. Better data and more consistent supervision of officers will allow leaders to ensure that their stated intentions, policies and investment in training for staff are translating into a robust response to crimes and a high-quality service for all victims of domestic abuse.

¹² *Domestic abuse in England and Wales: year ending March 2016*, ONS, 2016. Available from: www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2016

In particular, improvement is required in all the following areas:

Areas for improvement

- **Risk assessment** – Although HMICFRS found that in general risk assessment is improving, forces still use a range of different and inconsistent practices when assessing risk, which potentially means that victims might receive different levels of service across England and Wales. HMICFRS has also raised concerns about the practice of conducting the initial risk assessment over the telephone. HMICFRS has been clear that forces should continue to use the Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and Honour-Based Violence risk identification, assessment and management model (DASH) until the College of Policing has completed its pilot on a national risk-assessment model for frontline officers.
- **Positive action and the role of arrest** – Despite very clear guidance in Authorised Professional Practice, there appears to be confusion about what positive action involves. Police officers have a duty to take positive action when dealing with domestic abuse incidents. Often this means making an arrest, provided that the grounds exist, and it is a necessary and proportionate response. The use of arrest is falling at an alarming rate, which can be explained in part by the misguided belief of some officers that their actions in not arresting the perpetrator are ‘victim-focused’. Officers need clear supervision and direction to ensure that all opportunities for an early arrest are taken. This is particularly true in relation to perpetrators of domestic abuse. It is crucial that such an approach is part of an effective process to protect victims and ensure their continuing safety.
- **Build the case for the victim** – HMICFRS accepts that domestic abuse victims are often reluctant to support a prosecution, given the financial, housing and family connections they might have with the perpetrator, or the level of control which they may be under. Despite this, there are opportunities for investigators to build a sound case against the perpetrator whether the victim supports a prosecution or not. It is important that police officers are clear about what constitutes an acceptable level of investigation in all cases of domestic abuse. Given the high and increasing number of cases that are closed due to ‘evidential difficulties – victim does not support police action’, it is vital that clear standards and expectations are set for building the best possible case for the victim (including working with specialist domestic abuse services), which increase the likelihood of a victim working with the criminal justice process and giving evidence at a trial.

- **A shared view with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) on referrals and prosecutions** – There is wide variation in the number of cases which police forces refer to the CPS. Referrals are declining and charge rates are falling year on year. Police forces and the CPS have been examining this matter in an attempt to understand the variation and reduction in the rate of referrals. During the period of this report, the CPS has also invested in training to ensure that its staff are building the case for the victim, even when the victim does not want to make a complaint. However, this cannot be done if the case is not presented to the CPS. To reverse the current trend, forces need to work closely with the CPS to understand when cases should be referred.
- **The elements of a thorough police response** – The overall response to domestic abuse has improved over the last three years, but the service provided for domestic abuse victims is not consistent across all 43 forces. Early and accurate identification of risk, followed by timely deployment, frontline officers who understand the dynamics of domestic abuse, early arrest and effective evidence-gathering at the scene are highly likely to provide the best chance of securing a conviction. Where a charge is not appropriate, forces need to consider the use of powers such as DVPNs/DVPOs and referrals to appropriate specialist domestic abuse organisations to protect and safeguard the victim. The investigation of the perpetrator, and continuing support for the victim (e.g. consistent and timely information and communication about the progress of the case) are equally critical. Some forces are better than others at each part of the response to domestic abuse. From the first point of contact, the police service needs to ensure that it understands each element of its response to domestic abuse to help ensure that its response is effective.
- **Consistent performance measures** – In our last domestic abuse thematic report *Increasingly everyone's business*, HMICFRS highlighted that some forces had still not completed comprehensive analysis to understand domestic abuse within their area. Throughout this inspection, we have worked with forces to analyse their data, and found that many forces still struggle to record and accurately reflect their performance through the data they collect. They are still unable to explain what is happening in terms of arrest and outcome data even where this is particularly high or low. This suggests that these forces are not monitoring their data for insight into what is changing (or not) in the policing of domestic abuse. Given the importance of the police response to domestic abuse, it is disappointing to see that forces still do not record their performance relating to domestic abuse in a consistent way. Force leaders should use force data more effectively in order to understand demand and monitor performance.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: National Oversight Group

- The National Oversight Group, chaired by the Home Secretary, has played a vitally important and successful role in improving the police response to domestic abuse through its public scrutiny of progress against each of HMICFRS' 2014 and 2015 national recommendations. The group was expanded in 2016 to include representatives from NHS England, Department for Education, Local Government and social care organisations, and in early 2017 the group's remit was broadened to cover so-called 'honour-based' violence, as well as stalking and harassment.
- The National Oversight Group should continue to monitor and report on the progress made in implementing this further set of recommendations, as well as those from previous reports that are outstanding.

Recommendation 2: National domestic abuse data monitoring

- The Office for National Statistics (ONS) published in 2016 a new statistical bulletin and data tool in relation to domestic abuse, bringing together certain data on domestic abuse at a force level. This has started to enable police and crime commissioners, chief police officers, crown prosecutors and other agencies within the criminal justice system to enhance their understanding of how domestic abuse is dealt with in their local areas, and improve the monitoring of performance and setting of priorities.
- The Home Office, the Ministry of Justice, the Crown Prosecution Service, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC), the College of Policing, HMICFRS and domestic abuse organisations should continue to work with the Office of National Statistics to expand this data set to enable a more thorough analysis of how domestic abuse is dealt with in a force area.

Recommendation 3: Update of forces' domestic abuse action plans

By April 2018, every police force in England and Wales should update its domestic abuse action plan, determine what more it can do to address the areas for further improvement highlighted in this report and specified below, and publish its revised action plan accordingly.

- **Recording.** There is considerable variation between forces in the proportion of recorded crime identified as relating to domestic abuse. Forces need to ensure that domestic abuse crime including coercive control is being correctly identified and recorded.
- **Assessing and responding to risk.** Forces should ensure arrangements for assessing and managing risk are well understood by officers and staff, especially at initial point of contact, and decision making about the grading of, and attendance at, domestic abuse incidents is supervised effectively.
- **Positive and preventative action.** Nationally, arrest rates for domestic abuse are falling, with large variations across forces. There are considerable variations in the use of preventative measures. Forces need monitoring processes, supported by accurate data, to ensure that they are taking positive action such as arrest, and are making effective use of powers, for example Domestic Violence Protection Orders and the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme. Where orders or bail conditions are breached, forces need to ensure that there are appropriately robust processes in place to take action.
- **Building the investigative case.** Forces need to ensure that there are clear standards and expectations, with effective supervision, for building the best possible case for the victims of domestic abuse whether victims support police action or not.
- **CPS referrals and prosecutions.** Nationally, referrals and charge rates are falling. Forces need to monitor the data and work closely with the CPS to understand whether improvement is required, and, if so, to effect change.

Chief officers in each police force should continue to oversee and ensure full implementation of these action plans and offer regular feedback on progress to their police and crime commissioners. This should be a personal responsibility of the chief constable in each case. The leadership task for the service now is to sustain the level of determination and commitment seen since the publication of Everyone's business to ensure that the police response to victims of domestic abuse continues to improve. HMICFRS will continue to monitor progress against force action plans as part of their PEEL inspection regime.

Domestic abuse in England and Wales in numbers

	12 months to 31 March 2015	12 months to June 2016	Change
Volume police business:			
Domestic abuse related crimes	353,063	434,905	Up 23%
Domestic abuse related sexual offences	11,153	13,515	Up 21%
Domestic abuse related assault with injury crimes	115,922	133,891	Up 16%
Domestic abuse related harassment crimes	41,506	64,670	Up 56%
Domestic abuse related crime is:			
of total recorded crime (excluding fraud)	10%	11%	Up 1 percentage point
of all recorded sexual offences	13%	13%	No change
of all recorded assault with injury crimes	33%	33%	No change
of all recorded harassment crimes	51%	37%	Down 14 percentage points

Source: HMICFRS data collection 2015 and Home Office domestic abuse data 2016

Introduction

PEEL effectiveness inspection

In 2014, HMICFRS started its annual all-force inspections, known as PEEL, which assess police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy. The effectiveness inspection assesses how well police forces prevent and investigate crime (including serious and organised crime) and how well they keep people safe. In 2014, HMICFRS also published the results of a thematic inspection of the police response to domestic abuse. We refined our methodology in 2015 to inspect how well forces supported vulnerable people, including a focus on domestic abuse. Our 2016 PEEL inspection also included a focus on domestic abuse.

Inspection methodology

Other agencies and partners share the responsibility for tackling domestic abuse and keeping victims safe, but the role of the police is crucial. This inspection focuses on the contribution the police make to reducing the risk that victims of domestic abuse might suffer further harm. Within the wider effectiveness inspection, the question we used for every force was:

How effective is the force at protecting those who are vulnerable from harm, and supporting victims?

Under this overarching question, the following three areas were the focus of our inspection:

- How effectively does the force identify those who are vulnerable and assess their level of risk and need?
- How effectively does the force initially respond to vulnerable victims?
- How effectively does the force investigate offences involving victims and work with external partners to keep victims safe?

We reviewed the findings of our 2014 and 2015 inspections, and assessed the progress that forces had made on implementing their action plans. As we have done in previous years, the majority of this year's inspection was devoted to carrying out 'reality testing' in forces. This process involved our inspection teams making unannounced visits to departments in police forces, including the control room, intelligence and response teams, investigation units, domestic abuse specialist teams and victim support arrangements. Our inspection teams were supplemented by experts in the field of domestic abuse. These included public protection specialists from police forces and domestic abuse practitioners from voluntary and community sector organisations.

HMICFRS has a domestic abuse reference group to advise on and inform our work relating to domestic abuse. This group includes representatives from the police service, police and crime commissioners, the College of Policing, the Home Office and the voluntary sector. A full membership list is in Annex B.

The specific areas that HMICFRS considered in this inspection included, but were not limited to:

- identification of repeat and vulnerable victims - how well the force systems and procedures enable officers to identify repeat and vulnerable victims, how well the force assesses and grades risk, and the nature of the victim's vulnerability, and how well the force responds to this at the first point of contact;
- risk assessment and safety planning procedures - how well officers and staff assess risk and vulnerabilities at the initial response and throughout the victim's experience, how well officers and staff take account of this and undertake immediate and longer-term safeguarding actions;
- training and support - how well the force trains its call handlers, first response/neighbourhood teams, investigators and domestic abuse specialists, particularly in relation to coercive and controlling behaviour;
- standard of investigations - how well the force investigates public protection offences and how effectively it supports vulnerable victims during the investigation; and
- working with other organisations and MARACs - how well the force works with external organisations to exchange information and safeguard victims and how it contributes to the effectiveness of the MARAC.

In addition, HMICFRS also used the following data sources:

- force data on domestic abuse incidents, crimes, disposals and cases, collected by HMICFRS;
- review of 2,701 case files, including 898 with a domestic abuse element;
- 6 focus groups attended by 37 victims of domestic abuse in 5 different force areas; and
- a survey of over 400 domestic abuse practitioners.¹³

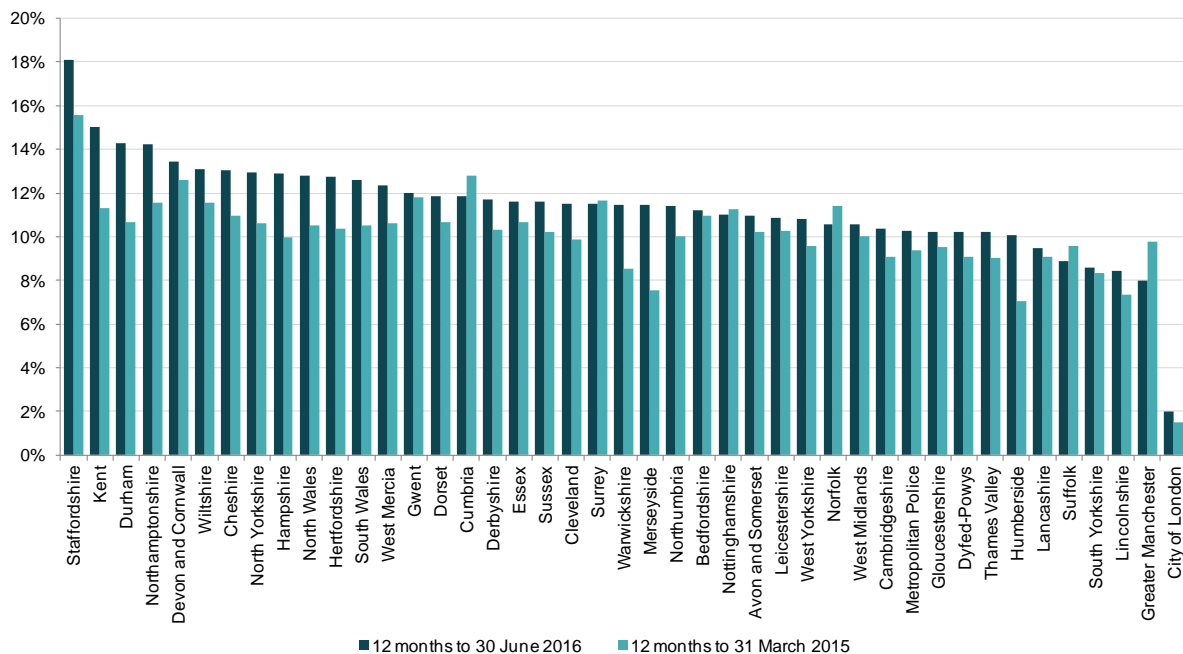
¹³ This is a generic term used throughout the report to refer to Independent Domestic Abuse Advisors (IDVAs), Domestic Abuse Prevention Advocates (DAPAs) and all other domestic abuse support workers who work with victims of domestic abuse.

The scale of domestic abuse in England and Wales

The 2015-2016 Crime Survey of England and Wales¹⁴ estimated that 1.8 million adults aged 16 to 59 experienced domestic abuse in the last year, that is, around six adults in every 100. Women were more likely to say they had experienced domestic abuse than men, with an estimated 1.2 million female victims compared to 651,000 male victims, according to the survey.

Published crime data shows that in the 12 months to 30 June 2016, there were over 3.9 million crimes recorded by police in England and Wales, compared to 3.5 million crimes recorded in the previous year. Domestic abuse related crime was 11 percent of total recorded crime in the 12 months to 30 June 2016. This is comparable to other volume crimes such as vehicle crime, which accounted for 9 percent of all crime, and burglary in a dwelling which accounted for 5 percent.

Figure 1: Percentage of police recorded crime (excluding fraud) with a domestic abuse marker, by force in the 12 months to 30 June 2016 compared with 12 months to 31 March 2015



Source: 2015 HMICFRS data collection, Home Office domestic abuse data 2016

¹⁴ Crime in England and Wales: year ending Sept 2016, ONS, 2016. Available at: www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/eaendingsept2016

Chapter 1 – Identifying victims of domestic abuse

Main findings

This chapter sets out our findings in relation to: how effective force IT systems are in supporting staff to be able to identify victims of domestic abuse and those who are repeat victims; how effectively call handlers assess and grade risk; and how well forces respond to risk and the victim's vulnerability at the initial point of contact.

- Some police forces are still failing to assess the risk and respond appropriately at the first point of contact. Most forces are now using the THRIVE (Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability and Engagement) decision model. Although this appears to be an effective way to identify vulnerability and safeguarding problems at an early stage, HMICFRS has concerns about the way that some forces are using the model to manage and potentially suppress demand.
- Supervision within control rooms is generally good and decision making is scrutinised to ensure that risk is managed appropriately.
- More forces are now using intelligence staff within control rooms to ensure that response officers have as much information as possible when they arrive at the scene of a domestic abuse incident.
- Some forces still find it difficult to identify repeat callers and victims because of limitations with their computer systems.

By the time that victims of domestic abuse contact the police, they may have already suffered months or years of abuse. Call handlers need to be able to recognise domestic abuse, reassure the victim, and advise the victim on how to stay safe until the police arrive. It is vital that these incidents are recorded appropriately on police systems to ensure that the correct resources are deployed in a timely manner to safeguard not only the victim but also any children who might be present. The officers who respond need to have detailed information about any previous incidents to ensure they are as well prepared as possible when they arrive at the scene.

Call-handler responses

The first point of contact with the police can be the most daunting time for a victim of domestic abuse; in many cases the victim has suffered over a period of years before deciding to contact the police for help. The importance of the quality of that first contact cannot be underestimated. An important first step is for the call to be answered. As one victim told us:

“You expect the ‘phone to be answered. We phoned 101 and 999 at the same time to try and get through. Sometimes 101 takes ages and you have to give up. At least with 999 you expect an answer, but sometimes they don’t answer that. You just want the police to help, sometimes our expectations may be too high but you just want help.”

Our 2017 inspection on police efficiency, which is due to be published in November 2017, will consider how well police forces respond to emergency and 101 calls. A number of the victims that we spoke to had contacted 101, but had struggled to get a response or felt that a 101 call did not reflect the severity of the situation:

“The problem with 101 in a domestic abuse situation is that you’re not in immediate danger so can’t use 999, but with domestic violence you’re always in danger, but you can’t ring 999 every ten minutes. With 101, it takes away the seriousness of what you’re trying to say; the danger gets watered down.”

“When I called 101 it took absolutely forever, and you sit there and think that I am going to give up in a minute.”

HMICFRS has concerns about the extent to which 101 is being used by victims of crime such as domestic abuse because they may not consider it to be an emergency if the abuse has been going on for some time. Victims who decide to report domestic abuse but whose call is not answered, might not try to contact the police again and will be at continuing risk. Given there is evidence that some vulnerable victims are currently using this service, it is vital that forces offer a timely response. It is also important that police forces use external communications to encourage victims of domestic abuse to call 999 in an emergency.

When a victim does get through to the police, the quality of the contact between the person answering the call and the victim is crucial. The victims we spoke to told us about the importance of being believed, reassured and taken seriously:

“I have phoned 999 and 101 and some experiences were fantastic. My ex threatened me in a public place, no-one was there and on that particular occasion I received an awful response. The woman on the phone talked down to me and ridiculed me and I got no response. I’ve had good experiences, but this one was bad and I had to turn to Women’s Aid. The next day the domestic violence team came round and couldn’t apologise enough but it was just too late. It just takes one person to ruin everything.”

In most forces, the emphasis on supporting call handlers to deal with domestic abuse incidents effectively has increased since our last inspection. Call handlers generally have a set list of questions to ask domestic abuse victims to ensure that relevant details are recorded at the earliest opportunity. Forces have invested in training for call handling staff about decision-making, and about identifying domestic abuse. In addition, enhanced availability of intelligence staff within the control rooms helps call handlers to identify domestic abuse effectively by providing quick-time searches of force systems for previous history. HMICFRS also saw examples of domestic abuse practitioners located in the control room to provide advice and appropriate support to victims of domestic abuse at the first point of contact. However, not all systems are operating effectively. For example, the data return indicated that four forces do not use domestic abuse flags on their command and control system, which can mean that staff need to search multiple systems to ensure that the risk to the victim or attending officers is fully understood.

West Yorkshire Police

West Yorkshire Police has standing policies in place for call takers to identify and assess the level of vulnerability of a caller when that person is a victim of domestic abuse. The force has produced a demand management policy which provides guidance on all aspects of this from the taking of the initial call to the completion of tasks following attendance at an incident. These include an assessment of the risk of further harm occurring to the victim or to children, previous and recent reported incidents, the known history of the perpetrator, the opportunity to secure and preserve evidence, and the victim's availability.

Supervision of call handlers' initial responses to domestic abuse is generally good. We found examples of supervisors in the control room constantly reviewing and assessing open domestic abuse incidents, using a domestic abuse checklist to ensure that the response to live domestic abuse incidents is of the right quality in order to manage risk. If it is proposed that an officer should not be sent immediately, the rationale is often checked by the supervisor to ensure there is no continuing risk to the victim. Unfortunately, this is not the case in every force. In a small number of forces we found that unallocated cases were left for excessive periods, and this is discussed later in this chapter.

Most forces use the THRIVE (Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability and Engagement) decision-making model. This process is used to help determine who should respond to the victim and how quickly they should do this, and the extent of any investigation. Rather than focusing on the crime type, this approach helps the decision-making process by assessing the threat, harm and risk to the victim and prioritising the response accordingly. HMICFRS considers the use of a THRIVE-based approach to be an effective way to identify vulnerability and safeguarding problems at the earliest possible opportunity. However, we have concerns about how

the THRIVE model is being used in some forces and the effect that this could have on victims. During this inspection, we found examples of:

- The model being used inappropriately to manage and suppress demand rather than identify risk by, for example, not sending a police officer to all standard risk domestic abuse calls. This is done to help manage incoming demand, but it means that safeguarding and investigative opportunities might be missed; an accurate assessment of risk is impossible without seeing the victim and other individuals within the household, including children, in person.
- Structured and rigorous approaches to call handling, while welcome, often mean that the initial contact is lengthy. In some cases, the decision to send an officer is not made until the end of a long conversation with the caller, and at times after waiting for intelligence checks to be completed. This could result in unnecessary delays and potentially put the victim at risk.
- There is too much emphasis on the presence of the perpetrator when deciding whether to send an officer. During fieldwork, inspection teams reviewed the handling of a number of incidents in control rooms and spoke to call handlers. Some suggested that if the perpetrator was no longer at the scene a response was not considered a priority. This is a very crude and potentially dangerous assessment that does not take into account the likelihood of the perpetrator returning, the needs and concerns of the victim and the opportunities to collect evidence at the scene to build the case for the victim.

When we published our first report on domestic abuse in 2014, we found that, in general, the initial contact with victims was positive and that forces would usually send an officer to a domestic abuse incident. In our subsequent inspections, we have noticed a worrying pattern of staff in some forces viewing the THRIVE model as a means of rationing police services and either delaying the deployment of officers to incidents or not sending them at all. This corresponds with an increase in demand for service.

Delay in the deployment of officers to a domestic abuse incident continues to be a concern for HMICFRS, because it is potentially placing victims of domestic abuse at increased risk. In some forces, systems that were designed to identify and respond to vulnerability are being used as tools for managing demand. This problem was also highlighted by the victims we spoke to:

“When I called, the police said that an officer would be with me by 10pm. No one came but they text me, and then arrived two days later.”

HMICFRS found that in a small number of forces, many domestic abuse calls were left unallocated, or were scheduled for attendance at a point in the future, resulting in unnecessary delays and risk. In one force, although vulnerability was identified well at the first point of contact, we identified some breakdown in processes which could leave vulnerable people at risk. This was most evident in cases where officers were unavailable to attend within a 24-hour period. Such incidents were automatically recorded as a crime and were forwarded to the local resolution officer (LRO) to process. At this point, if there were no active lines of enquiry, the incident might be closed without an officer ever attending.

It is important to note that our evidence does not suggest that this practice is widespread. We reviewed 898 case files containing a domestic abuse element and found that the time taken to attend had an adverse effect on the victim in 5 percent (46) of cases. However, there can be serious consequences for the victim if the response is delayed. Examples from several forces were extremely worrying:

- One force told HMICFRS that it regularly had around 130 unallocated¹⁵ incidents, which were described as lower-risk. However, during our fieldwork we found 247 unallocated incidents, none of which had been assessed to see if a crime needed to be recorded. Of these, 61 were domestic abuse incidents and when we examined them, we immediately brought 23 to the attention of the force because of serious concerns regarding welfare and safeguarding. There were significant delays in attending some of these incidents; one victim had still not been seen after four weeks.
- In another force, there were 77 domestic abuse incidents awaiting allocation, 37 of which were over 24 hours old. Some of these incidents had not been prioritised for immediate action even though there were clear indications of risk to victims.

A small number of forces are struggling to prioritise demand appropriately, based on risk. We found that the initial risk-assessments made by call handlers had been downgraded because of a lack of officers available to respond to calls immediately. Dip-sampling of unallocated incidents uncovered high levels of risk; some of these victims were waiting for days for a response, which is unacceptable.

HMICFRS recognises that demand suppression is not a deliberate policy – it is often inadvertent, with staff doing their best to align available resources with calls for assistance and risk. However, in reducing demand, it is important that forces do not simply suppress it, by which we mean fail to identify, acknowledge or deal with certain kinds of demand. Forces should ensure that arrangements for assessing and

¹⁵ These are incidents where a decision on whether a resource is to be sent and, if so, the timing of any deployment has yet to be made. Not all of these incidents will require an officer to attend immediately; some may be attended using an appointment arranged with the caller.

managing risk are well understood by officers and staff, especially at initial point of contact, and that there is effective supervision of decision-making about the grading of, and attendance at, domestic abuse incidents. This work should be included in the updated domestic abuse action plans covered by recommendation 3.

Northumbria Police

Before this inspection, Northumbria Police assessed 455 calls to establish whether THRIVE had been used correctly. This included the use of the grading policy, the recording of the rationale for decisions and the recording of vulnerability. Over 94 percent of these were found to be compliant with the THRIVE policy, which was in line with HMICFRS' finding during our inspection. More regularly, supervisors check three calls per member of staff for every block of duties to ensure ongoing compliance with the principles of THRIVE.

Quality assurance and supervisory arrangements are in place in the control rooms of most forces to ensure that the risk to victims is identified and managed effectively. This includes dip-sampling calls, reviewing activity after the call, a thorough check of what is recorded on the call log, or listening to 'live-time' calls and giving call handlers individual feedback. More forces are now using intelligence staff within control rooms to ensure that response officers have as much information as possible (for example any previous history of victims) when they arrive at the scene of a domestic abuse incident.

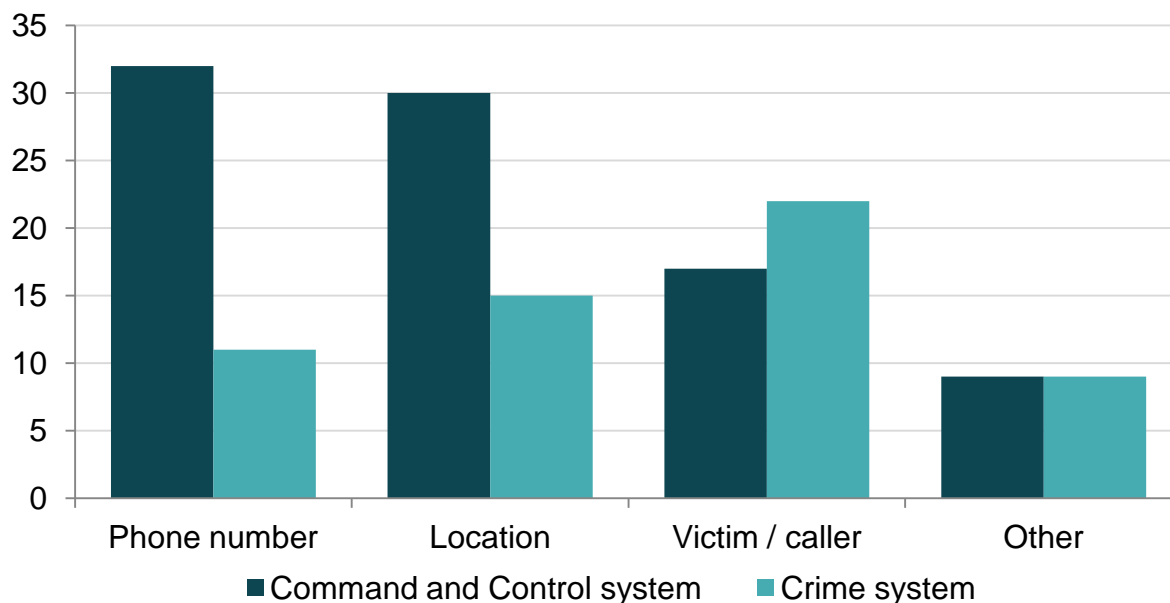
Identifying repeat victims

Victims of domestic abuse are more likely to experience repeat victimisation than any other victims of crime. It is crucial that repeat victims are identified at the earliest opportunity in order to spot patterns of abuse. It is particularly important in cases where a single incident or crime might not appear to be that serious, but where information about previous reports shows a pattern of behaviour, for example, coercive control or stalking and harassment. The majority of control rooms now use systems to identify whether a caller is a repeat victim.

Good forces have computer-aided despatch systems to identify if a call is received from the same address, telephone number or person as previous calls. Call handlers also ask supplementary questions to help them to identify repeat callers. In addition, intelligence staff within control rooms check relevant history on a number of systems and databases, and technology such as mobile devices helps to ensure that information is shared with responding officers in a timely way.

In most forces, only certain parts of this process are being used. As identified in figure 2 below, 32 forces can identify a repeat caller automatically by their telephone number, while only 17 forces can do this by using the victim's name.

Figure 2: The number of forces (out of 43) that are able to automatically identify repeat callers/victims (of all crime) by phone number/victim or caller/location/other methods, on their command and control and crime system



Source: HMICFRS data collection

We have raised concerns in previous domestic abuse inspections about the accurate identification of repeat victims. Unfortunately, despite improvements, there are still forces that are unable to identify repeat victims at an early stage, and might not provide an adequate response as a result.

In some forces the process for identifying repeat victims of domestic abuse is manual, inefficient and not reliable. For example, in one force we found a case in which a victim of domestic abuse had called from a telephone box and not from her home address or personal mobile number. She was not automatically identified as a repeat caller. As a result the call handler needed to review information in multiple systems in order to confirm that this was a repeat victim who was likely to be at greater risk.

The risk is reduced by call handlers using specific question sets for some crime types (not just domestic abuse) and by the use of a search on additional databases. It is vital that forces continue to invest in the training not only of call-handling staff, but also front-counter staff (who also take initial reports from victims of domestic abuse). The skills and knowledge of these members of staff are a vital part of correctly identifying the threat, harm and risk to a victim and providing an appropriate response.

Chapter 2 – Responding to victims of domestic abuse

Main findings

This chapter sets out our findings in relation to how well initial response staff identify and assess a victim's vulnerability and risk; and the effectiveness of the initial action taken by response staff to safeguard victims and respond to their needs.

- The attitudes and behaviour of frontline staff are continuing to improve, as a result of investment in training on domestic abuse.
- Body-worn video cameras are still not being used in all forces throughout the country, with ten forces stating that they are currently not using this.
- Many forces are still not using DVPOs as widely as they could, and opportunities to use them are continuing to be missed. Over half of the forces that were able to provide data on the use of DVPOs reported a decrease in the number of DVPOs granted per 100 domestic abuse related offences in the 12 months to 30 June 2016 compared to the 12 months to 31 March 2015. There continues to be a lack of action taken when civil orders or bail conditions are breached.
- The completion, supervision and accuracy of DASH forms is of concern in many forces, with 14 out of 43 forces requiring improvement in this area.
- There continues to be greater focus on protecting children; however increasing numbers of referrals are causing delays for police and partners in dealing with them.
- HMICFRS continues to have concerns about the falling levels of arrest in domestic abuse cases and the variation in the arrest rates from force to force. Some forces still have very little understanding of the reasons for this, which is extremely worrying.

The initial police response to a domestic abuse incident can be the first face-to-face contact the victim has had with the police. A negative experience can result in the victim losing trust in the police and failing to report future incidents, thereby potentially placing themselves and their children at further risk.

Response officers are expected to keep both the victim and any children safe at the scene, to assess future risk so that longer-term safety plans can be developed, to investigate the incident, and start to gather evidence to support a prosecution. Victims can be reluctant to support police action and might appear to be

uncooperative. This can be due to pressure from the perpetrator or the fear of reprisals, including reprisals against a victim's children.

Attendance and attitudes of officers

Many victims of domestic abuse are reluctant to contact the police, and when they do, they are often worried about what will happen next and the action that the police may take. To inform this inspection, HMICFRS held six focus groups, attended by 37 victims of domestic abuse in five force areas. Some of the victims we spoke to reported they had asked for a particular response, such as a specific location for a meeting with officers, or to meet a female officer because they felt more comfortable talking to another woman.

It may not always be possible to meet such requests and sometimes doing so could affect the timeliness of the response. The victims that we spoke to understood this, but said they would have appreciated having the option of receiving an explanation if it was not possible to meet their specific requests. Forces that do not have a flexible approach risk losing the support of victims at an early stage in the investigative process:

“My daughter wanted to call the police and we asked for a female officer. So we got a six foot tall bloke who told me he was going to be blunt and boy was he blunt. He said when he got the details he needed he could then pass them onto the right department. It was pretty horrendous, he was a uniformed officer. A couple of hours later a detective rang to tell me they were going into my daughter's school to interview her and would also be talking to my other daughter, I didn't have a choice. My daughters wouldn't disclose anything to them as they clammed up. I was told it's alright, they haven't been abused but they have.”

The victims that we spoke to described a mixed response from the police service. Some said it was clear that officers had recently received training and understood the dynamics of domestic abuse. There were some excellent examples of extremely caring and dedicated officers, but also examples of officers who seemed apprehensive about dealing with victims of domestic abuse:

“I've had some really good ones. One time my ex chucked all my garden furniture over the fence and an officer climbed over to get it all back. Other times they have said “It's your fault, you keep having him back”. I've had some really good and some bad.”

Of particular concern to HMICFRS, was the experience of some victims who reported that officers appeared to disbelieve them or downplayed the significance of the incident:

“I know he’s coming into my property, I’ve moved about 12 times and I’m refusing to move this time. He made threats to injure me. He threatened to cut my womb out with a pizza cutter. When I spoke to the police, they just laughed. I feel like it’s me that has to prove myself all the time.”

Training for frontline officers

Although work has started in forces to tackle negative attitudes, achieving a cultural change will take time. HMICFRS recognises that in some cases these attitudes may be a result of officers not understanding the dynamics of domestic abuse, and in particular the level of coercive control a perpetrator can have over a victim. HMICFRS is pleased to note that forces continue to invest in training covering these topics and that, in addition, our fieldwork did not reveal widespread evidence of negative attitudes among officers.

During our inspection, HMICFRS found that training for officers and staff is very well advanced, with mandatory and in-depth training provided face-to-face with staff and officers in some forces. Other forces are forging links with academic institutions, and victims are helping to ensure that the training is relevant and well-informed. Some forces also involve partner agencies in the development and/or provision of their training sessions.

However, there was also recognition that some officers still hold views that are judgmental and unsympathetic. The views and professionalism of experienced officers are critical in forming the mind-set and understanding of new recruits. It is therefore important that forces continue to reinforce training devised to challenge attitudes and thoughts, in order to prevent negative attitudes returning to the workplace.

As part of this inspection, HMICFRS completed a survey of over 400 domestic abuse practitioners (non-police staff who work closely with victims of domestic abuse) to gauge their views on the service provided to victims. This highlighted that, although the response and understanding of domestic abuse continues to improve, some frontline officers still have areas they need to develop in relation to their initial response and investigation of domestic abuse.

The survey identified that the area which required the most improvement among frontline officers and specialist officers/investigators is the same as in 2015, namely the understanding of victim/perpetrator dynamics (techniques of coercive and controlling behaviour). The main change from 2015 is that the use of DVPNs and

DVPOs is now the area with the second highest need for improvement. In 2015 it was ranked 13th for frontline officers and 25th for specialist officers. This result is consistent with the concerns that HMICFRS has regarding the declining use of DVPNs and DVPOs in many forces.

Figure 3: The top five competencies identified by domestic abuse practitioners as requiring improvement among frontline officers and specialist officers/investigators

Frontline officers	
2016	2015
1 Understanding of victim/perpetrator dynamics (techniques of coercive and controlling behaviour)	Understanding of victim/perpetrator dynamics (techniques of coercive and controlling behaviour)
2 Appropriate use of DVPNs and DVPOs	Comprehensive safety planning for victim (and children) based on understanding of risk
3 Information/increased awareness of support organisations and their services for victims	Initial evidence gathering from social media sites
4 Initial evidence gathering from social media sites	Awareness of victim questioning techniques (interviewing skills)
5 Awareness of victim questioning techniques (interviewing skills)	Understanding how the evidence gathered in such cases is used in court (and that all evidence is important to avoid the 'one person's word against another' situation)
Specialist officers/investigators	
2016	2015
1 Understanding of victim/perpetrator dynamics (techniques of coercive and controlling behaviour)	Understanding of victim/perpetrator dynamics (techniques of coercive and controlling behaviour)
2 Appropriate use of DVPNs and DVPOs	Initial evidence gathering from social media sites
3 Access to interpreters when English not victim's first language and not using family or friends to interpret	Access to interpreters when English not victim's first language and not using family or friends to interpret
4 Initial evidence gathering of social media sites	Initial evidence gathering of computer use and files
5 Initial evidence gathering of telephone calls and text messages AND Understanding that their primary concern should be victim's immediate and continuing safety	Comprehensive safety planning for victim (and children) based on understanding of risk

Source: HMICFRS domestic abuse practitioner's survey

Some forces are working to improve their response to victims of domestic abuse by increasing the knowledge and understanding of frontline officers, as illustrated by the example on the next page:

Durham Police

Durham Police, in conjunction with Durham University, have developed training for frontline officers to help improve their responses to domestic abuse and, in particular, coercive control. This was based on research by Durham University and consultation with local victims of domestic abuse about their experiences and their vulnerability. In 2016, after the training, the percentage of victims who said they would call the police again if faced with a similar situation rose from 75 percent to 91 percent.

It is important that forces continue to consider how best to ensure that, through training and learning and development activities, particularly in relation to coercive control, officers and staff are able to identify and understand the wide range of violence, behaviours and different perpetrators that fall into the definition of domestic abuse.

The College of Policing, working with Women's Aid and SafeLives has developed a new domestic abuse change programme: Domestic Abuse Matters. This programme includes classroom-based training for first responders. This is interactive and aims to improve the officers' knowledge and understanding of coercive control and their wider attitudes to responding to domestic abuse. It also includes the creation of champions to sustain the change, and to support responders, a health check and a senior managers' workshop to offer future-proofing. This training has been implemented in a number of forces and, anecdotally, was well-received by officers.

The frontline officer training has been evaluated in two forces and the results were published in September 2017. The evaluation showed that in the pilot forces the training improved officers' knowledge of coercive control, and supported their understanding of the reasons why victims do not leave an abusive partner. It also suggested that more interactive and self-reflective learning would help the programme improve officers' understanding of the potential risk factors beyond physical violence, and of why victims might not cooperate with the police. The evaluation found that female first responders had more positive attitudes during the training than their male counterparts.

Following the results of the evaluation, the training has been revised to ensure it is as effective as possible at providing a supportive and sympathetic approach to victims of domestic abuse. The new course has been provided in a number of forces and will be evaluated by the College of Policing in due course.

Quality of initial investigation: building the case for the victim

It is important that officers who attend the scene of a domestic abuse incident conduct a thorough and professional investigation. We discuss later in the report

how in some forces, a large number of investigations do not progress because the victim does not support police action. There are many reasons why victims might not cooperate with the police, including fear of the perpetrator (which also extends to fear for their children's safety), embarrassment or internalisation of blame for the abuse suffered, still being invested in the relationship, and fear about what the future might hold without their partner. For example, victims might be financially or emotionally dependent on their abuser. As a result, it is for the police to build the case for the victim, particularly in these instances where the victim is unable or unwilling to support the investigation.

This means that vital opportunities to gather evidence must be seized as early as possible. Our review of files considered the component parts of an effective investigation to ascertain whether this was happening. Examples include whether a statement was taken from a victim, whether an officer conducted house-to-house enquiries or whether photographic or video evidence of the victim or the scene was secured.

Our analysis showed that in around one quarter of cases where victims did not ultimately support police action, they were nonetheless supportive at the time that the police attended the incident and arrested the perpetrator (144 cases, out of 468 where the victim did not support the investigation).

In 84 percent of the cases we reviewed (756 of 898 cases), evidence was gathered in a timely fashion. During our fieldwork we found a small number of forces that were not attending domestic abuse incidents in a timely manner, with some incidents left outstanding for days. In these cases it is also highly likely that opportunities to gather evidence would have been lost, along with support from the victim.

We found particular problems in collecting some forms of evidence. In the cases reviewed, there was no evidence of body-worn video cameras having been used in 63 percent of applicable cases (147 of 234 cases). However, this includes forces where body-worn video cameras are not available to all officers, or where the victim refused to allow body-worn video cameras to be used. Also, in over half of the cases reviewed, there was no evidence of photographing of injuries (156 of 288 cases) or of gaining medical consent from the victim (169 of 308 cases).

The taking of photographs and the use of body-worn video cameras are areas where improvement is required and these will be covered later in this report. The Authorised Professional Practice on Domestic Abuse¹⁶ makes it clear that photographic evidence should be gathered and used proactively throughout a domestic abuse investigation and prosecution. Injury photographs taken at the scene

¹⁶ The ACPO *Guidance on Investigating Domestic Abuse*, 2008, was updated and reissued by the College of Policing in September 2015. It can be accessed via www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/domestic-abuse/

are crucial because they can support an evidence-led prosecution where the victim does not support action, can support an application for remand in custody, can demonstrate the degree of force used, and show the evolution of the injury. The table below illustrates the percentage of investigations where these and other investigative activities were undertaken.

Figure 4: Crime review of 898 files with a domestic abuse element

	Number of applicable cases (out of 898)	% of reviewed case files where activity was evidenced
Victim statement taken at an appropriate time	503	97% (486)
Photographs of injuries taken at the time of the incident	288	46% (132)
House to house enquiries completed	289	64% (184)
Comprehensive police officers statement, providing details of scene, injuries, demeanour of victim / suspect	565	53% (300)
Body worn camera used to capture evidence from the victim and scene	234	37% (87)
Initial log / 999 call and other force systems were used effectively to inform attending officers of risk / vulnerability	840	35% (296)
Initial log / 999 call was used to progress the investigation	898	37% (330)
Safety measures, beyond initial safeguarding, being considered and documented	874	46% (402)

Source: HMICFRS crime file review

Body-worn video cameras

As outlined in the Authorised Professional Practice on Domestic Abuse, officers should be prepared to gather evidence as soon as they arrive at the scene of an incident. Body-worn video camera recordings can provide excellent evidence, particularly in criminal proceedings, as they record the scene exactly, record the demeanour of the parties, and accurately record significant comments at the scene. There is some good evidence to show that where officers responding to domestic abuse are equipped with body-worn cameras, the proportion of sanctioned detections resulting in a criminal charge increases. The APP advises that forces may want to consider whether officers equipped with body-worn video cameras should be routinely assigned to domestic abuse incidents. If body-worn video equipment is available to officers responding to a domestic incident, its use should always be considered.

Body-worn video cameras have been available for a number of years now, but some forces are still only using them as part of a pilot scheme. Twenty-six forces use body-worn cameras force-wide, and an additional seven forces as part of a pilot. Ten forces said that they do not use body-worn video cameras at all. This has not changed significantly since our 2015 inspection, when nine forces reported that they did not use them. In our file review for this inspection, the use of body-worn video cameras to gather evidence from the victim and the scene was evidenced in 37 percent (87 of 234 cases) of applicable cases.

There is an emerging evidence base to support the use of body-worn video cameras. In 2014, the College of Policing carried out research in Essex which showed that if officers were issued with body-worn video cameras, this could be effective at increasing the rate of criminal charges and convictions. The officers we spoke to during this inspection frequently mentioned the evidence-gathering benefits of using body-worn cameras, particularly for capturing context, comments and emotion accurately.

In Sussex, we observed a case in which the victim of a domestic assault did not want to support a prosecution. Officers had gathered evidence of the injuries to the victim's body, and visible signs of a struggle in the family home (broken and upturned furniture) using a body-worn video camera. Despite the reluctance of the victim to support police action, the suspect was still charged, based on the evidence provided by the footage obtained at the scene.

The Crown Prosecution Service believes that effective use of body-worn video camera evidence is now proving helpful in securing convictions. It has conducted dip-samples of cases, which revealed an increase in cases where the victim has withdrawn support for a prosecution, but where, as a result of evidence gained from body-worn video cameras, the case has resulted in an early guilty plea or trial. The victims that we spoke to also saw the value of the body-worn cameras:

“Police came and he was puffing his chest out, it was all captured on their cameras. Another incident he was trying to grab my daughter, he was going crazy. They told me to be calm and explained why they were videoing it.”

“There was an incident with my mum and the camera was used, it was really good. It picks up the nature and the behaviour of the incident.”

Some forces have a clear policy on the use of body-worn video cameras. In forces where it is standard policy that officers use their body-worn video cameras at every domestic abuse incident they attend, there are excellent examples of securing

convictions, despite the victims not having supported prosecution. As a result, officers feel very positive about using body-worn video cameras, which in turn promotes their frequent use. When officers have a negative view about using body-worn video cameras, it is often because they are unclear about their use, the equipment is outdated or in disrepair, or the officers fail to see the positive outcomes arising from their use.

HMICFRS understands that investment is necessary to ensure that body-worn video cameras can be used effectively, but we are disappointed that their use is not more widespread given their proven benefits. Given our findings, we would encourage the College of Policing, working with the national policing lead on domestic abuse, to reiterate to forces the expectations about the use of body-worn video cameras at domestic abuse incidents.

Keeping the victim safe when attending the scene

A range of options is available to the police for safeguarding victims of domestic abuse at the first point of contact, and in the longer term. Victims say that many officers are aware of the support agencies and referral options which are available. In many cases, officers have the contact details for local support agencies, and can give leaflets to victims which explain how they can get support. Where possible, officers can support direct contact between victims and specialist domestic abuse organisations. Referring victims to specialist organisations, and giving them details of local refuges, outreach services and places of safety can help victims to feel secure in the knowledge that the police are not the only service that can support them.

In our 2015 survey of domestic abuse practitioners, comprehensive safety planning for victims (and children) on the basis of an understanding of risk by response officers was the area identified as requiring a lot of improvement by 32 percent of respondents (2nd highest area). It is encouraging that, although safety planning still featured in responses to this year's survey (7th highest area), it was ranked lower than in 2015.

During this inspection, we also found general improvement in the initial safeguarding actions taken by officers at the scene of an incident. Working practices and processes to assist frontline officers appear to be central to this improvement. For instance, many forces give their officers a list of support agencies to which the victim can be referred. Officers are also increasingly able to gain advice and support from specialist domestic abuse detectives or staff to help with the initial safeguarding.

Merseyside Police

Merseyside Police makes specialist advice on safeguarding and investigations available to officers 24 hours a day seven days a week. This helps officers to assess the vulnerability of domestic abuse victims in a consistent way, determine immediate safeguarding requirements such as panic alarms, provide advice and ongoing safeguarding support and enables support from independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs), independent sexual violence advisors (ISVAs), housing, social services and multi-agency safeguarding hubs.

Northumbria Police

Other forces are working with IDVAs on joint activity: in Northumbria Police, domestic violence workers accompany police officers on patrol to ensure that appropriate support is given to victims at the earliest opportunity.

Forces that excel at supporting victims of domestic abuse do not just provide high-quality services to victims considered to be at high risk, nor do they provide support solely through specialist units dedicated to domestic abuse.

Northumbria Police

In Northumbria, as in many forces, neighbourhood policing teams are involved, and receive domestic violence plans for all standard and medium-risk domestic abuse incidents. All domestic abuse plans have review dates, which prompt sergeants to review their officers' actions to support victims of domestic abuse. Neighbourhood officers contact victims and offer advice, guidance and practical support. The force gives victims information about their personal safety, and about the organisations that can support them.

In our victim focus groups, it was highlighted that officers generally understood which agencies were available to support and safeguard victims, and they often had a checklist of such agencies, or leaflets, available. Following initial safeguarding actions at the scene, continuing safeguarding work is often carried out by specialist officers and staff.

West Mercia Police and Warwickshire Police

West Mercia and Warwickshire now employs 25 domestic abuse risk officers, who work alongside domestic abuse professionals in local councils and other organisations to support and safeguard victims.

In some areas we found inconsistent practices, which mean that the service to the public could be improved in some cases. This is usually a result of inconsistent risk-assessment practices by attending officers at the initial point of contact.

In one force, we examined five cases in relation to safeguarding; three had appropriate safeguarding measures in place, but two did not. This was because the cases had been incorrectly assessed as standard risk, when safeguarding measures appropriate to medium and high risk should have been applied. Although specialist support in safeguarding may be highly effective, the correct cases need to be highlighted for action.

Domestic Violence Protection Orders

Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) enable the police and magistrates' courts to restrict the activities of a perpetrator in order to protect the victim from further harm. DVPNs can be issued by the police in the immediate aftermath of a domestic abuse incident, and an application for a DVPO is then heard by a magistrates' court within 48 hours

A DVPO can prevent the perpetrator from returning to a residence and from having contact with the victim for up to 28 days. Before DVPOs were fully implemented, their use was piloted and an evaluation was published in 2013.¹⁷ The evaluation found that DVPOs were associated with reduced levels of re-victimisation. However, our inspection found that forces are still not using DVPOs as widely as they could, and opportunities to use them are continuing to be missed. The use of DVPOs has not improved since our last inspection of forces. Many victims that HMICFRS spoke to were unaware of these orders, which is disappointing considering that they were introduced in 2014. We had expected that the use and knowledge of this important safeguarding tool would be more widespread by now.

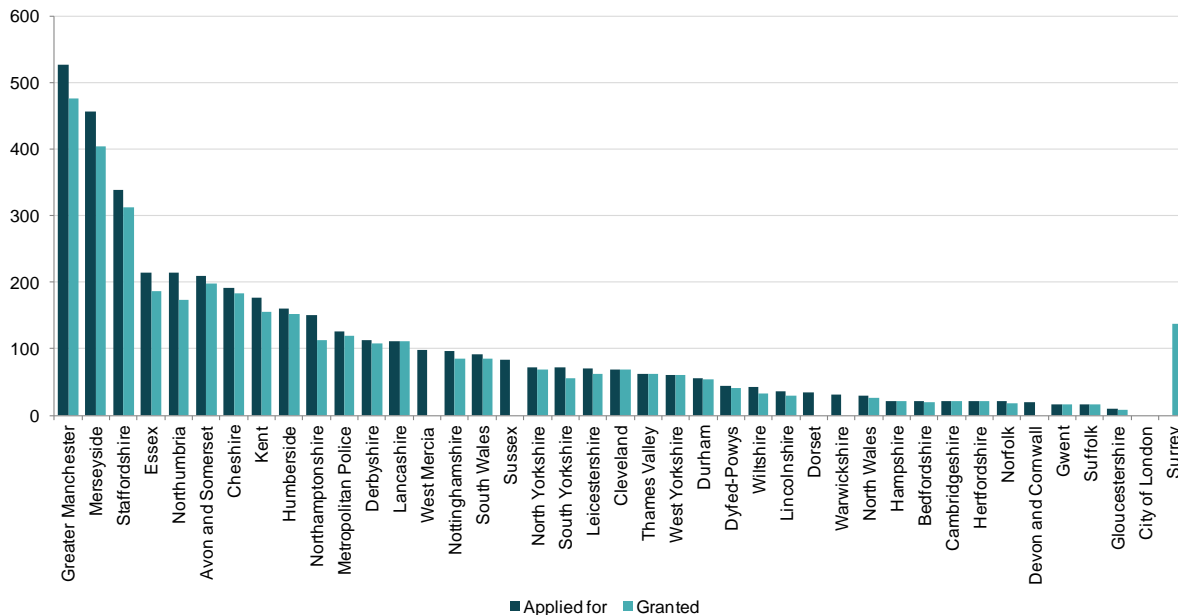
As with other areas of positive action and proactive safeguarding, the use of DVPOs continues to be extremely varied throughout England and Wales, an issue highlighted by HMICFRS in our last domestic abuse thematic report *Increasingly*

¹⁷ *Evaluation of the Pilot of Domestic Violence Protection Orders*, London Metropolitan University and Middlesex University, November 2013. L Kelly, JR Adler, M Horvath, J Lovett, M Coulson, D Kernohan and M Gray. Available at:

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/260897/horr76.pdf

everyone’s business. As a result of this inspection, nine out of the 43 forces were assessed as having an ‘area for improvement’ relating to their limited use of powers and were asked to review this to ensure they were making the best use of them to safeguard victims of domestic abuse.

Figure 5: Number of Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) applied for to court and granted by court, by force in the 12 months to 30 June 2016¹⁸

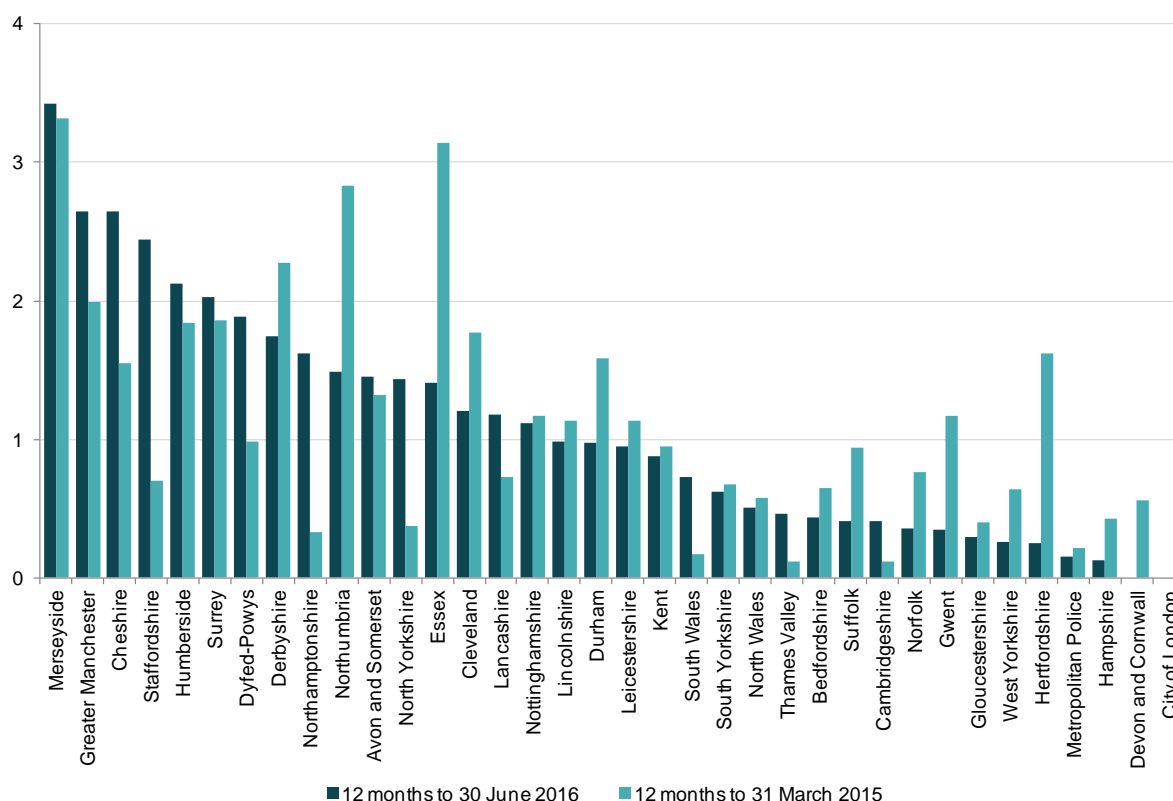


Source: HMICFRS data collection

Most worryingly, of the 35 forces that were able to provide data covering the last two inspection periods, 21 showed a decrease in the rate of DVPOs granted per 100 crimes related to domestic abuse. Given the protection that these orders can afford to victims and their children, HMICFRS recommends that forces review their use and application as a priority.

¹⁸ Cumbria and West Midlands were unable to provide data on the number of DVPOs applied for and granted so they have been excluded from this graph. Surrey was unable to provide data for the number of DVPOs applied for. Dorset, Sussex, and Warwickshire were unable to provide data for the number of DVPOs granted.

Figure 6: Number of Domestic Violence Prevention Orders granted per 100 domestic abuse-related crimes, by force in the 12 months to 31 March 2015 and 12 months to 30 June 2016¹⁹



Source: HMICFRS data collection

Some forces are developing an understanding of the factors contributing to this decline. When we asked about the low use of orders and notices during this inspection, the reasons cited included officers lacking experience in using them, and the orders being seen as too much work and being expensive. One force recognised that the system it had in place for the management of DVPNs and DVPOs was applied inconsistently and was not working effectively. It is the policy of another force to use these notices and orders in high-risk cases only. This means that victims in medium and standard-risk cases are potentially exposed to unnecessary harm. Forces should raise awareness of DVPNs and DVPOs, and promote their use where they are appropriate, through training and through force communications. It is extremely important that the benefits of DVPOs for victims are reinforced so that officers do not view them as yet another task to complete in parallel to the investigation process. The importance of DVPOs being underpinned by robust risk management processes and their applicability in all forms of domestic abuse (not just incidents of physical abuse) should also be reinforced during training. Forces need monitoring processes in place, supported by accurate data, to ensure that they

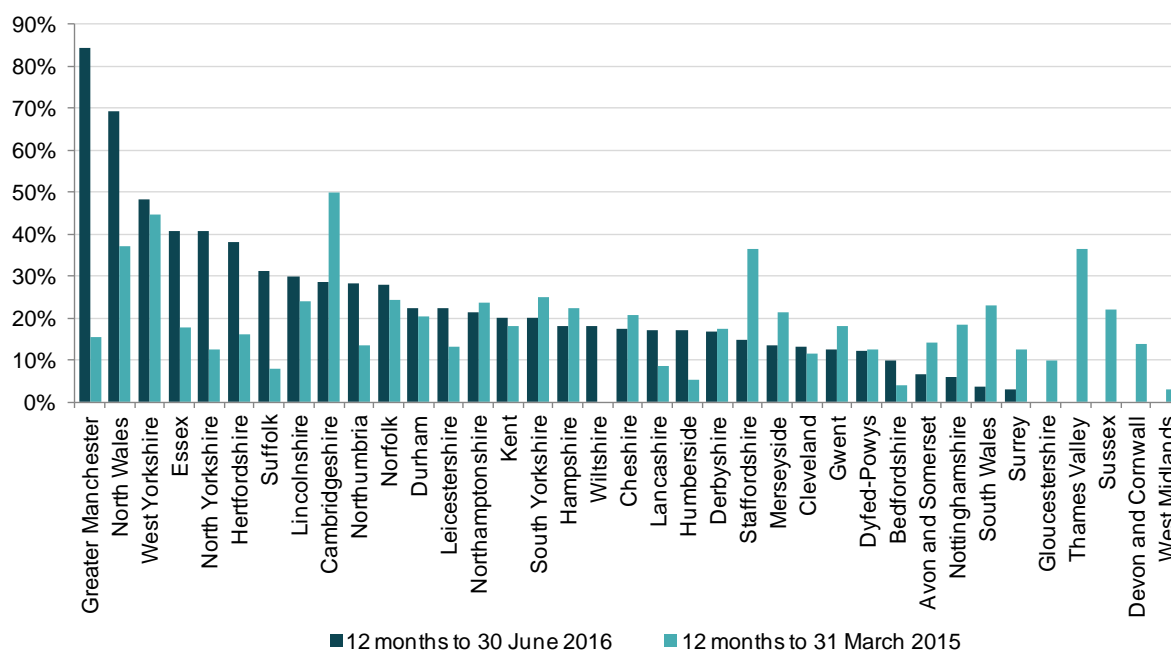
¹⁹ Cumbria, Dorset, Sussex, Warwickshire, West Mercia, West Midlands and Wiltshire were unable to provide comparable data; therefore, they have been excluded from the graph.

are making effective use of these powers. This work should be included in the updated domestic abuse actions plans proposed in Recommendation 3.

Breaches of DVPOs and other orders

There appears to be a wide variation across forces in the percentage of DVPO's breached (figure 4). Approximately half of the forces that could calculate this demonstrated an increase, so there does not appear to be a clear direction of travel for perpetrators' propensity to breach DVPOs.

Figure 7: Domestic Violence Prevention Order breach rate,²⁰ by force in the 12 months to 30 June 2016²¹



Source: HMICFRS data collection

Domestic abuse practitioners and victims expressed their disappointment at the lack of action taken when civil orders (e.g. non-molestation orders, occupation orders or restraining orders) or bail conditions were breached. A perpetrator who is granted bail may have to adhere to conditions such as living at a particular address, not

²⁰ The breach rate is calculated as the number of DVPOs breached in the 12 months to 30 June 2016, as a proportion of the number of DVPOs authorised in the same period. DVPOs breaches may not be directly related to the DVPOs authorised.

²¹ Cumbria, Dorset, Metropolitan Police and Thames Valley were unable to provide data for the number of DVPOs breached. Sussex, Warwickshire, West Mercia and West Midlands were unable to provide data for the number of DVPOs granted. Devon and Cornwall recorded no DVPOs granted and so a breach rate could not be calculated. Therefore, these forces have been excluded from the graph and from the England and Wales rate.

contacting certain people or having to sign in at a police station at agreed times. If perpetrators do not adhere to these conditions, they can be arrested again. In some cases, breaches were not responded to immediately, with officers waiting for the perpetrator to return on bail at a later date before the breach was dealt with. This practice is very high-risk and does nothing to safeguard victims. When the responses to breaches are ineffective or delayed, victims will lack confidence in the police and the criminal justice process:

“My non-molestation order – is that not on the police systems? When the officer came out to me, I’ve had to show him my copy. I’ve actually said to him, is this not on your systems by now? He had to take my copy to the station with him. One force had it on their system, but the other didn’t.”

It is concerning that there still appears to be a lack of appropriately robust action in enforcing breaches of DVPOs, as this was a problem HMICFRS raised in its last domestic abuse report *Increasing everyone’s business*. Breaches of DVPOs and other orders can increase the risk that the perpetrator poses, and affect the safety of the victim. If DVPOs and other orders are to be sought and obtained, then they need to be enforced.

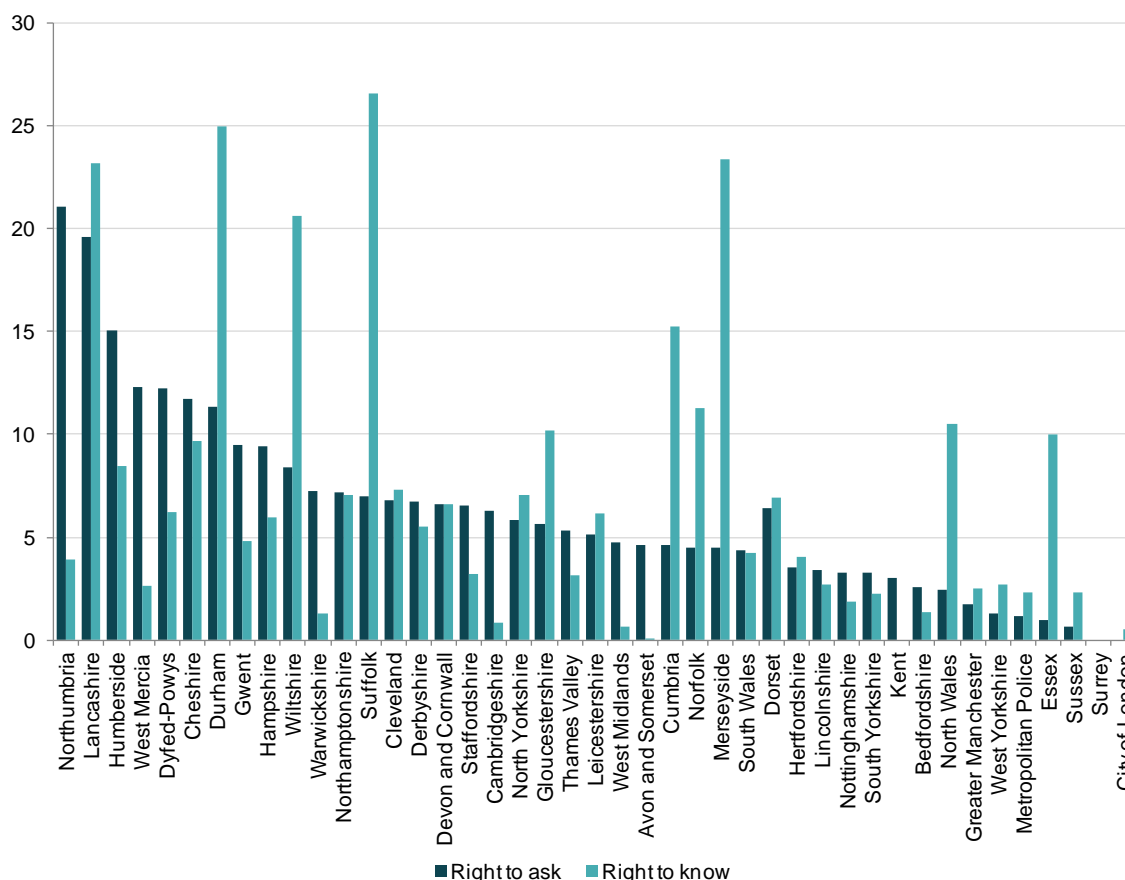
Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS), also known as Clare’s Law, was introduced in all 43 police forces in England and Wales on 8 March 2014. It enables the police to disclose information about a partner’s previous history of domestic violence or violent acts to victims or third parties in a position to help (Right to Know). Under the scheme, a person can ask police to check whether a new or existing partner has a violent past (Right to Ask).

During the focus groups we carried out with victims, it was clear that very few had heard about Clare’s Law. Data collected as part of the HMICFRS inspection shows that, despite increases in the number of domestic abuse related crimes recorded, the frequency of use of both Right to Ask and Right to Know per 100 domestic abuse-related crimes has decreased across many forces. Forces need to raise awareness of this safeguarding method and ensure that victims are linked into specialist domestic abuse organisations who can provide additional support and advice. If people do not know about Clare’s Law, then the numbers of requests to know whether a partner has a violent past will not increase.

In addition, the variation of use of ‘Right to Know’ and ‘Right to Ask’ across forces is extremely wide (figure 8). For example, Suffolk processes nearly four times as many ‘Right to Know’ as ‘Right to Ask’ applications per head of population. In Northumbria, the situation is reversed with over five times as many ‘Right to Ask’ applications being made.

Figure 8: Use of Right to Ask and Right to Know, per 100,000 population, by force in the 12 months to 30 June 2016



Source: HMICFRS data collection

We found unacceptable delays regarding the use of Clare’s Law in one force. In some ‘Right to Know’ cases, we were made aware of lengthy delays before the disclosure was made. The disclosure period in these cases, which are generally directly linked to a domestic abuse incident, should be as short as possible, as it often forms part of the safeguarding plan for the victim. We found information being disclosed to the victim some months after the original decision to disclose had been made. Many of these cases are high-risk and include cases where children are present in the family home. Opportunities are being missed to provide better support and protection to victims.

It is disappointing that despite an increase in the number of recorded domestic abuse related crimes, there does not appear to have been a corresponding increase in the use of Clare’s Law. It is important that both members of the public and officers are aware of the scheme’s purpose and the application process. Both external and internal force communications and awareness-raising activity are crucial here.

Harassment and stalking

In 2016/17, HMICFRS and Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Inspectorate (HMCPPI) carried out the first inspection into harassment and stalking. The report, *Living in fear – the police and CPS response to harassment and stalking*,²² was published in July 2017. The report contains several recommendations aimed at improving police and CPS practice, and therefore the service provided to victims.

Our PEEL effectiveness inspection did not scrutinise force's responses to harassment and stalking in depth, but it was evident that there was a lack of clarity and consistency, particularly with regard to Police Information Notices (PINs). After this inspection, our thematic inspection on harassment and stalking recommended that chief constables should stop the use of Police Information Notices and their equivalents immediately.

A PIN is issued by the police as a warning notice to individuals where there are allegations of harassment (the notices are sometimes called Harassment Warning Notices or Early Harassment Notices). The notices are not covered by legislation and do not constitute formal legal action. However, the police request that people sign these notices to help demonstrate in possible future legal proceedings that a suspect was aware that their behaviour has amounted to harassment.

From discussions in the focus groups with victims of domestic abuse, it was clear that some victims believe a PIN has some legal standing and that breach of the PIN is a criminal act which will result in arrest and positive action. However, when reporting breaches, victims did not receive the positive action they were expecting:

“My ex ignored the PIN. He didn't even read it. It doesn't have any legal bearing, no power of arrest.”

“As a worker I would always advise victims to go for a PIN. However when you use them you realise that the PIN is worth nothing at all. It is a total waste of time. Once we rang and said it is the ninth time it had been breached. But there was no record on the system. The officers had been taking notes in their notebook and not updating the system.”

We cover this issue in greater detail in our thematic inspection on harassment and stalking. However, it was clear from the victim focus groups and our observations in some forces that officers are issuing PINs where evidence already exists that would

²² *Living in fear – the police and CPS response to harassment and stalking*, HMIC and HMCPPI, 2017. Available at: www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/living-in-fear-the-police-and-cps-response-to-harassment-and-stalking.pdf

allow arrest for a substantive offence. HMICFRS observed decisions made to warn an offender when a victim has been suffering for months or even years. The warning takes the form of a PIN, but it is unlikely in these circumstances that a PIN is going to be an appropriate and positive response when the offender's behaviour is ingrained and fixated. Rather than issue a PIN, the perpetrator should have been arrested, and the matter recorded as a criminal allegation.

In the limited number of harassment and stalking cases we sampled as part of this inspection, we noted that the management of risk to the victim was not always considered, and some of the incidents leading to the issue of PINs were not properly recorded as criminal allegations.

Some forces had recognised this problem, and had already started to address it at the time of this inspection. In Cambridgeshire, the force's head of crime has withdrawn the use of PINs in all but exceptional circumstances, recognising that PINs had been issued inappropriately, creating risks for both the victim and the force.

There is clear misunderstanding among frontline officers about the use of risk-assessments in harassment and stalking cases. We found that risk-assessments were being completed for harassment and stalking victims in all cases where there is an existing context of domestic abuse between the parties concerned. However, in cases where there is no prior relationship between the stalker and the victim, risk-assessments were not being completed.

Risk identification and assessment in domestic abuse

Although overall there have been improvements in these areas since 2014, we still found some weaknesses which were similar to those found in 2015. Forces still use a range of different and inconsistent practices when assessing risk, potentially leading victims to receive different levels of service across England and Wales. Most forces use a model of risk identification, assessment and management known as DASH, which takes account of domestic abuse as well as stalking and harassment.

The Authorised Professional Practice on Domestic Abuse states that when attending a domestic abuse incident, it is the responsibility of the attending officer to carry out a primary risk-assessment at the first opportunity. Officers completing risk-assessments should have a thorough knowledge of the possible risk factors for domestic abuse, including those in relation to particular groups of victims, and be skilful in applying these factors to individual cases, by using professional judgment. The wider context of the relationship and any history of abuse must be taken into account, in addition to the nature of the specific incident. The initial risk identification and safety planning procedures should be followed even where no criminal offence appears to have been committed. The incident may form part of a pattern of controlling or coercive behaviour. Primary risk-assessment should underpin

immediate safety planning measures to protect the victim and any children, and should be integral to any police investigative response to domestic abuse.

During our inspection, HMICFRS found that frontline officers generally understand that they are required to follow a clear process when assessing risk and addressing the nature of a victim's vulnerability. Officers identify safeguarding measures through a DASH form, which they complete at domestic abuse incidents. The form also includes a record of any children within the household, to allow for suitable consideration of their needs as well. The forms should be subject to supervision and scrutiny to ensure accuracy and assessment of safeguarding options for the victim. We found that this scrutiny was not always taking place.

In some forces, we found a poor level of understanding among response officers about the importance of the risk-assessment and its purpose. In too many cases some forces are still not using the DASH risk assessments appropriately. It appears some staff still view it as a process to complete rather than an essential part of understanding risk and protecting the victim.

Deficiencies in risk assessment were fairly widespread, with 15 out of the 43 forces in England and Wales being assessed as having an 'area for improvement' in terms of their risk-assessment processes. These covered a range of areas including the completion rate, the quality and supervision of DASH forms and the lack of quality training provided on how to complete the forms.

Not all forces require the DASH form (or other force-specific risk-assessment) to be completed in all domestic abuse cases, for example incidents which do not involve a crime. Some forces allow officers to use their personal judgment about when the form is completed, which does not ensure that risks are identified appropriately. In some forces, DASH forms are regularly being submitted without all or any of the questions being answered, without the attending officer's observations or views, and without any additional commentary being recorded.

In one force, we observed that there was a noticeable variation in the circumstances in which the form was completed and in the quality of the completion, and that mistakes or concerns were not addressed by managers. An internal review showed that 20 percent of 300 domestic abuse incidents did not have a corresponding DASH record. This means that in 60 of these cases, the force cannot be assured that the right level of risk is being assessed by first responders, if risk is being assessed at all, which will inevitably have an effect on the initial response to victims of domestic abuse.

HMICFRS is concerned that in two forces, when the call-taker judged that there was not an immediate risk to the victim, domestic abuse risk-assessments were often conducted over the telephone in the force's resolution centre. This practice did not fully establish the risk that victims were facing, and sometimes led to ineffective investigations because the perpetrator might be present at the time of the call, which

could influence the victim's response. Although this practice has now stopped, it is a matter of concern that demand management appeared to have taken precedence over accurately assessing and responding to risk. As forces face increased demand for their services from vulnerable people, it is critical that this practice is not used by other forces.

In 2016, the College of Policing completed research to examine how the DASH risk model is currently operating in forces. Building on the findings of that research, the College has designed, and has tested in three forces, an alternative risk-assessment for frontline officers, one that seeks to place greater emphasis on identifying coercive control. The results are due to be published in early 2018. HMICFRS is concerned that any delay in publishing the findings of this work will result in forces failing to address shortcomings in their use of risk-assessment tools. In the meantime, it is critical that forces continue to use the risk-assessment tools currently available to them and ensure that the relevant forms are completed to the highest standard.

Pending completion of this work, forces should ensure that their arrangements for assessing risk are well understood by officers and staff across the force, are being put into practice and are supervised effectively. This work should be captured in the updated domestic abuse actions plans proposed in Recommendation 3.

Derbyshire Constabulary

Derbyshire Constabulary has introduced the 'Think Family' campaign. This involves the use of professional judgment to avoid reliance upon the standard scoring matrix in the domestic abuse, stalking and harassment (DASH) form. Officers are obliged to consider a wide set of implications for each incident and reflect the impact on the victim in their assessment of risk. The 'Think Family' campaign supports that approach by making officers explore the impact on other family members, such as by talking to children at the scene to ensure that their voice is heard at the assessment and safety planning stage.

Children at domestic abuse incidents

It is clear that officers are aware of their responsibility to identify the effect of incidents on children, and to undertake safeguarding activity, including talking to children if they are present at a domestic abuse incident or checking on them if officers are told that children are sleeping upstairs. As in previous inspections, we found that officers are asking all the right questions about the safety and well-being of children present at incidents, but often appear reluctant to check on them physically. HMICFRS believes that officers, at times, need to be more proactive

about establishing the safety of children and in considering the effect that witnessing a domestic abuse incident may have had on them:

“The police didn’t speak to the children after he barricaded himself in armed with a knife. He told the kids to turn the lights off and shut the door to make it look as if they were in bed. I’m certain the officers didn’t speak to the kids because of this.”

We are pleased to find that police referrals to children’s services of children who have been associated with domestic abuse continue to increase. We are aware that Ofsted has commented on the effect of increases in referrals in some of their recent inspections, and children’s services report that they are overwhelmed because of the increase in cases. It is difficult for the police to manage this delicate balance with partner agencies. In some areas the number of referrals is causing backlogs which prevent cases being processed and considered in a timely manner. For example, in one force we found a case in which the appropriate referral had waited up to four weeks before it was sent to children’s services, such was the backlog in processing. As highlighted in our 2015 thematic report *Increasingly everyone’s business*, the issue of the impact of referrals on partners needs to be considered by all. This requires detailed discussion between police and partner organisations at a local level to determine how best to manage this problem.

Operation Encompass is an excellent example of sharing information between agencies to protect vulnerable children, because it involves forces working in collaboration with local authorities and nominated ‘key adults’ or contacts in schools. At the start of the day, the relevant school is notified if the police have been called out in the last 24 hours to a domestic abuse incident where a child was present. Twenty-two forces use Operation Encompass or a similar scheme to help ensure that schools are able to address the welfare of the child appropriately.

Twenty-one forces stated that they did not have such a scheme in place, although many said that they had alternative processes which ensured that schools were aware of pupils who had been affected by domestic abuse incidents. HMICFRS is of the view that Operation Encompass or a similar scheme is a simple but effective method of promoting the welfare of a child in a domestic abuse situation, and recommends that the process of sharing information with schools is adopted by all forces without undue delay. HMICFRS will be considering the use of Operation Encompass and similar schemes as part of the 2017 PEEL effectiveness inspections and expects to see more widespread use.

Positive action and powers of arrest

Police officers have a duty to take positive action when they deal with domestic abuse incidents. Often this means making an arrest, provided that the grounds exist,

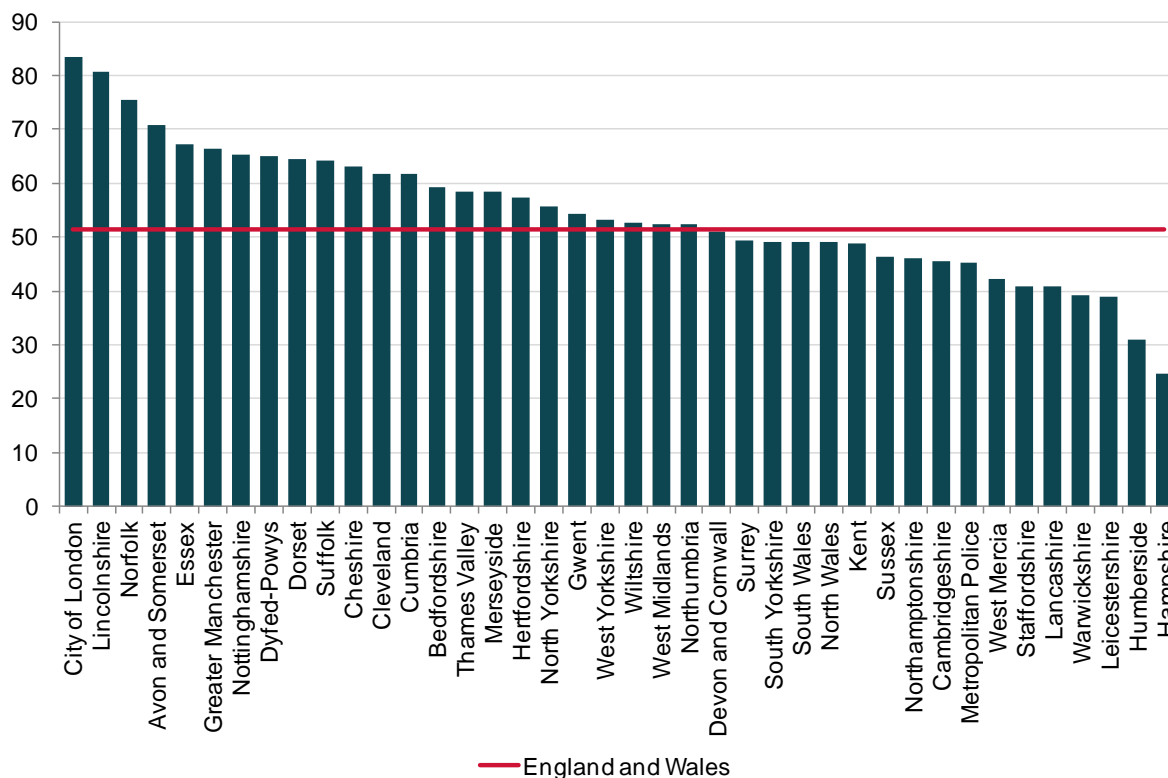
and that it is a necessary and proportionate response. Officers must be able to justify the decision not to arrest in these circumstances. In some situations other positive approaches may be more appropriate.

HMICFRS continues to have concerns about the falling levels of arrest in domestic abuse cases and the variation in arrest rates across forces. Despite the 23 percent increase in recorded domestic abuse offences, there has been a slight decrease in the number of domestic abuse arrests (35 forces provided comparable data).

Consequently, the domestic abuse arrest rate in England and Wales has fallen from 66 arrests per 100 domestic abuse-related offences in the 12 months to 31 March 2015, to 51 arrests per 100 domestic abuse-related offences in the 12 months to 30 June 2016. The force with the lowest domestic abuse arrest rate has seen a more dramatic decrease, falling from 66 arrests per 100 domestic abuse-related offences to 25 arrests per 100 domestic abuse-related offences for the same time period (it should be noted that this force took immediate steps to address this issue).

Some 15 forces reported a decrease in the actual number of domestic abuse arrests, despite 13 of these having recorded an increase in the number of domestic abuse offences recorded.

Figure 9: Number of domestic abuse arrests for every 100 domestic abuse-related crimes, by force in the 12 months to 30 June 2016²³



Source: HMICFRS data collection

Although 20 forces recorded an increase in the number of arrests for domestic abuse related offences, only three of these saw an increase in their arrest rate per 100 domestic abuse offences. This is because of larger increases in the number of recorded domestic abuse offences, than domestic abuse arrests. As discussed in *Increasingly everyone's business*, the increase in recorded domestic abuse offences might be the result of more accurate crime recording, as well as increased activity by forces to encourage victims of domestic abuse to report offences, rather than an actual upward trend in domestic abuse. The number of domestic abuse arrests has not increased proportionately with the increase in recorded domestic abuse offences. It is critical that forces understand the reasons for their decreasing domestic abuse arrest rates, and can reassure the public that the powers of arrest are still being used when necessary to keep victims safe and to bring perpetrators to justice.

HMICFRS continues to have concerns regarding the variation in domestic abuse arrest rates across forces. In *Increasingly everyone's business*, the rate of domestic abuse arrests ranged from 43 arrests per 100 domestic abuse crimes in Humberside to 93 arrests per 100 domestic abuse crimes in Lincolnshire. For the 12 months to 30 June 2016, the variance between forces has increased, with the rate of domestic

²³ Derbyshire, Durham and Gloucestershire were unable to provide domestic abuse arrest data. Therefore, they have been excluded from the graph and from the England and Wales rate.

abuse arrests per 100 domestic abuse crimes ranging from 83 in City of London to 25 in Hampshire. HMICFRS would expect to see far greater consistency in the rates of arrests across forces.

The rate of arrest for domestic abuse offences can provide an indication of a force's approach to handling domestic abuse offenders. It is crucial that such an approach is part of an effective process to protect victims, and to ensure their continuing safety. We have considered the arrest rate alongside other measures to understand how each force deals with domestic abuse overall.

Many forces rightly focused on the views of the victim. However, in some forces, officers are focusing on the victim's wishes at the expense of assessing the wider situation and taking safeguarding action. Some victims might not want the perpetrator arrested because of the control that this person exerts upon them or for fear of reprisals. It appears that in some forces, officers are using this as a reason not to exercise their power of arrest, with potentially unacceptable consequences for victims of domestic abuse. If forces are to implement a positive action policy effectively, then it is crucial that response officers fully understand the dynamics of domestic abuse, including coercive control.

In England and Wales, the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) makes provision about the use of many powers including the requirements for arrest (the necessity test). Our inspection found different interpretations in forces of when an arrest would be appropriate. Authorised Professional Practice on domestic abuse is clear about the relationship between positive action and the necessity test, and it is vital that police leaders reinforce this message:

“Where an offence has been committed in a domestic abuse case, arrest will normally be ‘necessary’ within the terms of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984²⁴ (PACE) to protect a child or vulnerable person, prevent the suspect causing injury or criminal damage and/or allow for the prompt and effective investigation of the offence.”

Authorised Professional Practice clearly articulates the benefits of arrest in domestic abuse cases, which include:

- giving the victim some time to feel safer and improve the likelihood of them working with the police and other services, i.e. create space for action.
- disrupting an established pattern of controlling or coercive behaviour.

²⁴ Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. Available at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1984/60/contents

- allowing time to pursue other lines of enquiry, e.g. neighbours, police crime recording systems, information from social services or medical practitioners, researching potential bad character evidence from other force systems.
- providing an opportunity to put services in place to support the family or relationship.
- generating a PNC ID and obtaining DNA and fingerprints if the offence is recordable – this may assist with resolving outstanding or future offending
- being able to impose bail conditions to protect the victim.
- sending a message to the perpetrator that their behaviour is not acceptable and will not be tolerated, and that the victim is not alone.
- giving an indication to the victim that he or she is being taken seriously.

The range of variations in arrest rates for domestic abuse offences is unacceptable. Force leaders need to understand their use of arrest, and determine whether it is being used appropriately to protect vulnerable victims. Recommendation 3 calls on forces to use monitoring processes, supported by accurate data, to ensure that they are taking positive action, such as arrest where appropriate, as well as making effective use of wider powers such as Domestic Violence Protection Orders and the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme.

Chapter 3 – Investigating domestic abuse and bringing offenders to justice

Main findings

This chapter sets out findings on how effectively forces investigate domestic abuse offences; and how well forces support victims throughout the investigation process.

- The standard of investigations of domestic abuse offences is generally high, with levels of supervision for domestic abuse crimes appearing to be better than for other crimes.
- In many forces, domestic abuse investigations are still being allocated based on crime type and complexity rather than on an assessment of risk to the victim. Complex investigations involving vulnerable victims are being conducted in some forces by non-specialist uniformed officers rather than by detectives.
- Although most forces have continued to protect their investment in public protection, there are concerns about the capacity and capabilities of these units.
- The charge rate for domestic abuse crimes²⁵ in England and Wales has continued to decrease over the last three years, and forces have inconsistent levels of understanding of charge rates and wider outcomes.
- We are concerned that an increased number of cases are being closed because evidential difficulties prevent further action, or because the victim does not support police action.
- Despite the overall number of referrals from the police to the Crown Prosecution Service increasing over the last three years, the rate of referrals for domestic abuse crime has dropped. There is also a wide variation in rates of referrals between forces.

Most forces have dedicated domestic abuse officers or public protection unit (PPU) staff responsible for investigating and safeguarding victims in domestic abuse cases. These units usually focus on victims assessed as high-risk and the response is generally good. However, in many forces domestic abuse investigations are still being allocated based on crime type and complexity rather than on an assessment of

²⁵ *Violence Against Women and Girls Report*, Tenth Edition, 2016-2017, CPS, 2017. Available at: www.cps.gov.uk/publications/docs/cps-vawg-report-2017.pdf

risk to the victim, which mirrors the findings in our last domestic abuse thematic report *Increasingly everyone's business*.

Eight forces were assessed as having an 'area for improvement' in their investigation processes for domestic abuse offences. These covered a range of areas including the capacity within specialist units, supervision of investigations and ensuring that offences are investigated by officers and staff with the appropriate professional skills, specifically in relation to complex cases.

Despite this, most forces have continued to protect their investment in public protection resources, in the face of a difficult financial situation. During the period 2013/14 to 2015/16, the estimated spending on public protection rose by 16 percent; the greatest contrast is with spending on local investigations/prisoner processing, which has reduced by 12 percent over the same period. Although this increase is encouraging, it is worth noting that with greater demand in terms of both the number of domestic abuse crimes and other kinds of offending involving vulnerable people (for instance, related to reports of child abuse), forces need to keep their budgets under close review.

Although HMICFRS recognises the benefits that this investment has realised, we still have concerns about the resilience of public protection units and the extent to which they are staffed by experienced and qualified investigators, which can affect the quality of the work they carry out. In addition, our PEEL effectiveness 2016 national report²⁶ found a severe shortage of qualified detectives and other investigators and concluded that this was a national crisis.

HMICFRS is concerned that too often, police officers without the right skills and experience are investigating high-risk or serious domestic abuse cases. Although this is not widespread in all forces, where it occurs it can have serious consequences for the victim. In some cases, complex investigations with vulnerable victims are conducted by non-specialist uniformed officers rather than by detectives.

However, the investigation of domestic abuse offences is generally of a high standard. Forces are increasingly focused on providing an effective service to vulnerable victims. In HMICFRS' 43-force review of 2,701 crime files, files for crimes with a domestic abuse element (898 in total) evidenced slightly more effective investigations, better victim care and better supervision when compared to all cases reviewed (figure 10 below).

²⁶ PEEL: *Police effectiveness 2016 – A national overview*, HMIC, 2017. Available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/peel-police-effectiveness-2016/

Figure 10: File review – evidence of effective investigation, victim care and supervision – files reviewed with a domestic abuse element compared to all files reviewed

	Files reviewed with a domestic abuse element		All files reviewed	
Total number of files reviewed	898		2701	
Evidence found during review of:	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Effective investigation	781	87%	2238	83%
Good victim care	788	88%	2287	85%
Effective supervision	488	54%	1353	50%
Effective, or limited but appropriate supervision	699	78%	2010	74%

Source: HMICFRS 2016 Effectiveness file review

HMICFRS understands that domestic abuse investigations are high in number and that forces have different investigative models to reflect their local circumstances. Generally, investigations carrying a higher level of threat, risk and harm to the victim are conducted well and by investigators who have been trained in domestic abuse investigations. Low-risk domestic abuse cases are usually the responsibility of response or investigation units. In both cases, our file review and fieldwork found that levels of supervision for domestic abuse crimes seem to be better than for other crimes, further highlighting forces' increased focus on domestic abuse.

We found that in cases identified early as high risk or involving repeat victims, there is more supervision of both the risk assessment and the investigation. Such cases are appropriately given greater priority by forces.

Against this broadly positive picture, we did find that in some forces specialist units have high workloads affecting both the quality and timeliness of the investigation. This is often the result of a lack of capacity in specialist investigation units. Although the number of staff allocated to public protection departments has been protected and often increased, the officers are not qualified and are often not physically present. This is as a result of re-deployments to other investigations or difficulties in recruiting. As we reported in PEEL effectiveness 2016, there is a national shortage of qualified detectives and other investigators, and the increase in demand from a range of crimes involving vulnerable victims has made this problem worse. Our inspection fieldwork found several examples of this:

- Given the increase in domestic abuse cases, many forces have struggled to provide a consistent service to victims. One force that had a dedicated domestic abuse team in 2015 took the decision to disband the team, and the majority of high and medium risk domestic abuse investigations were

transferred to the CID. Due to unmanageable workloads, the majority of cases were then transferred to the prisoner investigation unit. The force has retained a small unit to deal with the more complex domestic abuse investigations, but its remit is unclear. Cases within the CID are retained on the basis of complexity and/or seriousness of the offence rather than the level of safeguarding required. As a result, victims (especially those who are high and medium-risk) are receiving an inconsistent service with some cases being investigated by the specialist domestic abuse team, some by the CID and some by the prisoner investigation unit.

- In a small number of forces, high-risk cases such as those involving serious sexual offences and high-risk domestic abuse are still too often being allocated to response officers who do not have the necessary training or experience to deal with them. This means that vulnerable victims are not receiving the level of service which they need, and safeguarding measures are being overlooked.
- In one force, cases such as rape, grievous bodily harm and high risk domestic abuse were allocated to whoever was available, rather than according to the officers' skills and experience. In another force we found that investigations for high risk domestic abuse cases, serious sexual offences and rape were passed to uniformed officers rather than qualified investigators, because the specialist serious sexual offences team had an excessive caseload.

As discussed earlier in this report, some of the victims of domestic abuse that we spoke to reported that they asked for a female officer because they felt more comfortable disclosing information to a woman. This is particularly the case for serious sexual offences or where children are involved as witnesses, or have experienced abuse.

“The sexual assault team that dealt with my case was two blokes, which was intimidating. I had to talk about sex with them, which was difficult. They explained everything, they were good but two guys coming to speak to a woman in a refuge was intimidating.”

Forces need to consider which officers they are sending to vulnerable victims in certain situations. HMICFRS accepts that it is not always possible to send a female officer to every incident where the victim asks for one, but there needs to be an element of prioritisation. In the example above, it is difficult to justify sending two male officers into a refuge which houses women who are vulnerable victims of domestic abuse.

Outcomes for victims of domestic abuse crimes

Since April 2014, police forces in England and Wales have been required to record how investigations are concluded in a new way, known as 'outcomes'. Replacing what was known as 'detections', the outcomes framework gives a more complete picture of the work the police do to investigate and resolve crime, and over time all crimes will be assigned an outcome.

The broader outcomes framework (it now contains 21 different types of outcomes) is designed to support police officers in using their professional judgment to ensure a just and timely resolution for victims. The resolution should reflect the harm caused to the victim, the seriousness of the offending behaviour and the negative effect on the community, and should deter future offending.

In April 2015, the Home Office began collecting information from the police on whether recorded offences were related to domestic abuse. Crimes are identified by the police as related to domestic abuse if the offence meets the government definition of domestic violence and abuse. The rates of outcomes recorded in the 12 months to 30 June 2016 for offences related to domestic abuse are shown in figure 11 on the next page.

Figure 11: Rates of outcomes recorded in the 12 months to 30 June 2016 for domestic abuse-related offences in England and Wales²⁷

Outcome	12 months to 30 June 2016	12 months to 31 March 2015
Charged / Summoned	23.2	27.3
Caution – adults	5.6	8.2
Caution – youths	0.3	0.5
Community resolution	1.4	1.2
Evidential difficulties prevent further action; victim supports police action	24.1	15.4
Evidential difficulties prevent further action; victim does not support police action	35.4	19.8

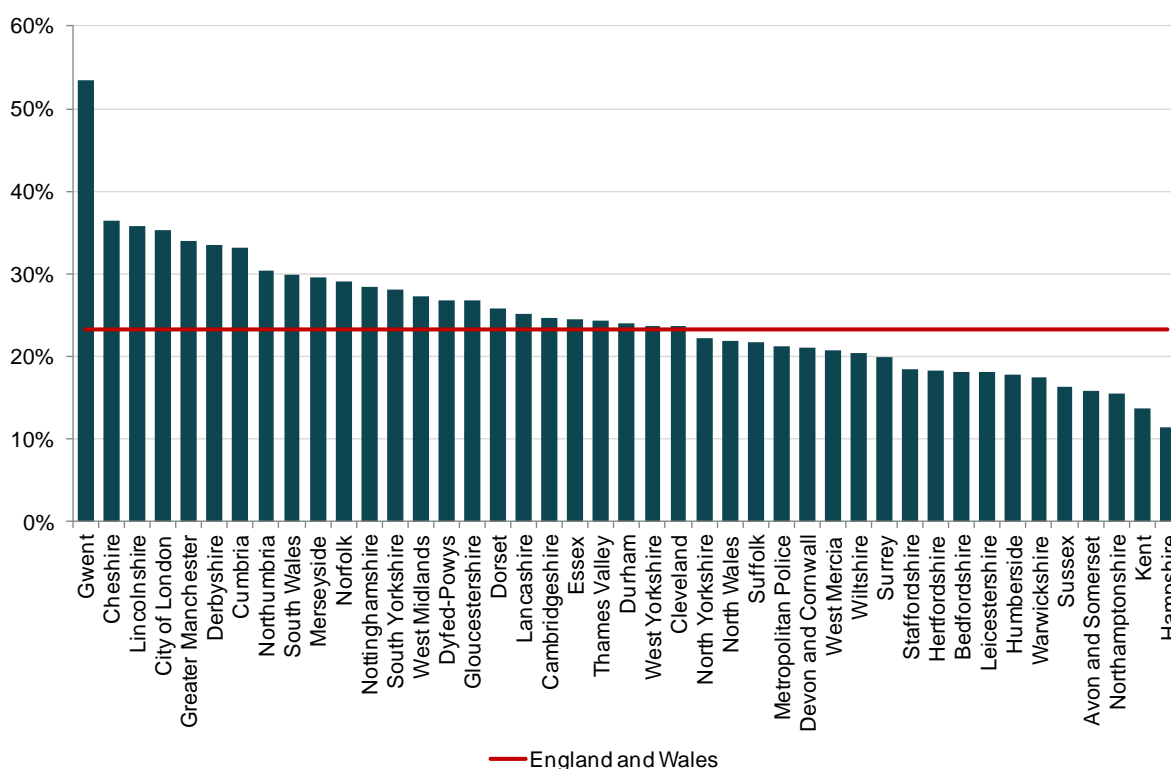
Source: HMICFRS data collection

Charge rates

Despite forces focusing on the victims, there is still an unacceptable degree of variation in the rate at which alleged perpetrators of domestic abuse are charged with criminal offences. In addition, the percentage of charges has continued to fall over the past three years. The charge rate for domestic abuse crimes for England and Wales was 30 percent during the 12 months to 31 August 2013. This dropped to 27 percent for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 and in the period of this current inspection, the charge rate for the 12 months to 30 June 2016 had fallen to 23 percent (figure 12).

²⁷ Dorset Police and Nottinghamshire Police were unable to submit domestic abuse outcomes data. Therefore, these forces' data are not included in the calculation of the England and Wales rate.

Figure 12: Number of domestic abuse charges per 100 domestic abuse crimes, by force in the 12 months to 30 June 2016²⁸



Source: HMICFRS data collection

While domestic abuse recorded crime continues to increase year on year, the number of charges is not increasing at the same pace. Although 25 forces recorded an increase in the overall number of charges for domestic abuse related offences in the 12 months to 30 June 2016 compared to 12 months to 31 March 2015, an increase in the charge rate per 100 domestic abuse related offences was only seen in seven forces. Some 34 forces reported a decrease in their charge rate, which demonstrates further reductions of this important positive outcome for victims of domestic abuse.

HMICFRS has previously recommended that force leaders develop an understanding of their charge rate for domestic abuse crimes. However, this inspection found that forces’ understanding of charge rates and wider outcomes remained inconsistent. HMICFRS recognises that charge is not appropriate in all cases, and where this is so, forces need to consider the use of powers such as DVPNs/DVPOs and referrals to appropriate specialist domestic abuse organisations to protect and safeguard the victim.

²⁸ Dorset Police and Nottinghamshire Police were unable to submit domestic abuse outcomes data; therefore, they have been excluded from the graph and from the England and Wales rate.

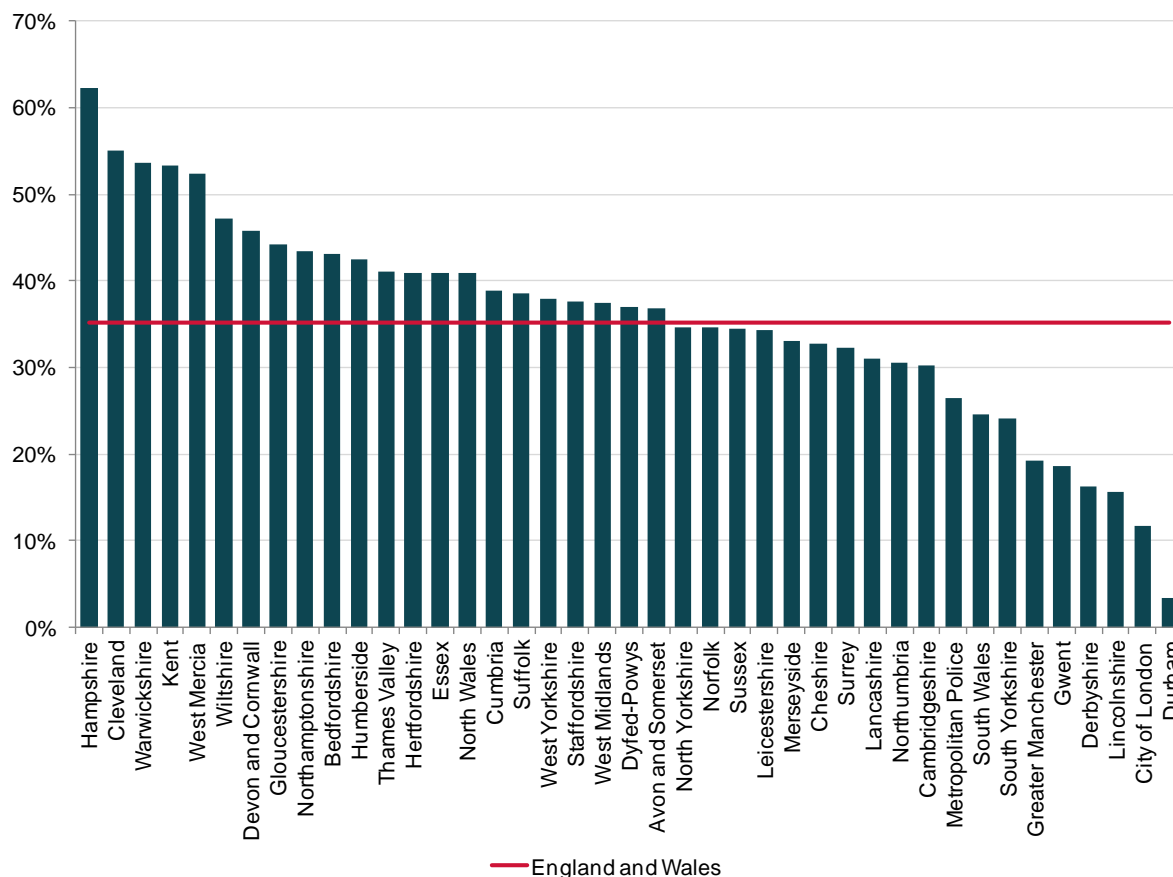
More positively, HMICFRS is pleased to report a continued fall in the use of cautions for domestic abuse, from 13 percent for the 12 months to 31 August 2013 to less than 6 percent of all cases for the 12 months to June 2016. All 41 forces that were able to provide domestic abuse outcomes data exhibited a reduction in the rate of cautions per 100 domestic abuse related crimes, which suggests it is now widely recognised that a caution is rarely an appropriate outcome for these crimes.

However, despite this reduction in the use of cautions found during this inspection, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) states that simple cautions are still being used inappropriately. The Authorised Professional Practice on Domestic Abuse reiterates the appropriate policy and procedures on cautions. Charge is always the preferred option where the case passes the evidential and public interest tests. There may be public interest or other reasons for not proceeding with a prosecution in a particular case, and it is in those cases that a caution may be considered as an alternative to no further action (NFA). The police service must satisfy itself that simple cautions are not being used inappropriately in domestic abuse cases.

Evidential difficulties prevent further action

Of most interest and concern to HMICFRS are those outcomes categorised as 'evidential difficulties prevent further action, victim does not support police action'. In our 2015 *Increasingly everyone's business* report, HMICFRS noted that the percentage of cases in this category varied between forces from 1 percent to 46 percent in the 12 months to 31 March 2015. However, in the 12 months to 30 June 2016, the use of this outcome appears to have increased throughout England and Wales – with five forces completing in excess of 50 percent of their domestic abuse investigations in this way and one force finalising nearly two-thirds of all domestic abuse investigations with this outcome (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Evidential difficulties; victim does not support police action as a percentage of all domestic abuse crimes, by force in the 12 months to 30 June 2016²⁹



Source: HMICFRS data collection

Working with partner agencies and police forces, HMICFRS has identified some potential reasons why the use of this outcome may be so high in many forces:

- As forces have focused less on performance measures in recent years, officers are being held less accountable for their actions. In some forces, officers are able to file crimes without sufficient supervisory oversight. For some officers, a victim not supporting police action is seen as a ‘green light’ to file a crime with little or no further investigation.
- Although evidence-led prosecutions have been possible for many years, their use is not increasing. Officers appear to have a working knowledge of what is needed to prosecute without a victim’s support, but there is little evidence to demonstrate that evidence-led prosecutions are routinely considered. In the crime files we reviewed, steps were taken to pursue the case without the

²⁹ Dorset Police and Nottinghamshire Police were unable to submit domestic abuse outcomes data; therefore, they have been excluded from the graph and from the England and Wales rate.

support of the victim in 26 percent (123 of 468 cases) of the cases where the victim withdrew support.

- Although forces have specialist units to pursue these investigations, these units may not have all the staff they need, which can result in increased workloads and delayed investigations. Victims might not receive timely support, and any delay increases the chances of the victim not supporting a prosecution.
- The outcomes framework is still relatively new, and as a result officers and supervisors are not always using the correct code to file the case after an investigation has finished.

HMICFRS is concerned by both the considerable variation between forces in the use of this outcome and the unacceptably high level of use overall. We are particularly concerned about the potential failure to consider all available evidence, and ultimately convict some of the most dangerous people in society. It is vital that clear standards and expectations are set for building the best possible case for the victim, including cooperation with specialist domestic abuse services which increases the likelihood of a victim cooperating with the criminal justice process and giving evidence at trial. Recommendation 3 calls on forces to ensure there are clear standards and expectations, with effective supervision, for building the best possible case for the victims of domestic abuse whether they support police action or not.

In addition, forces with high levels of cases closed using this outcome category³⁰ should produce an action plan that sets out how they will:

- Undertake a comprehensive analysis, and an accompanying report for scrutiny by HMICFRS, of the use of this outcome throughout the force to understand how they differ from other forces.
- Review the extent to which the force's use of this outcome category is appropriate.
- Take steps to reduce the force's reliance on this outcome category and improve outcomes for victims.

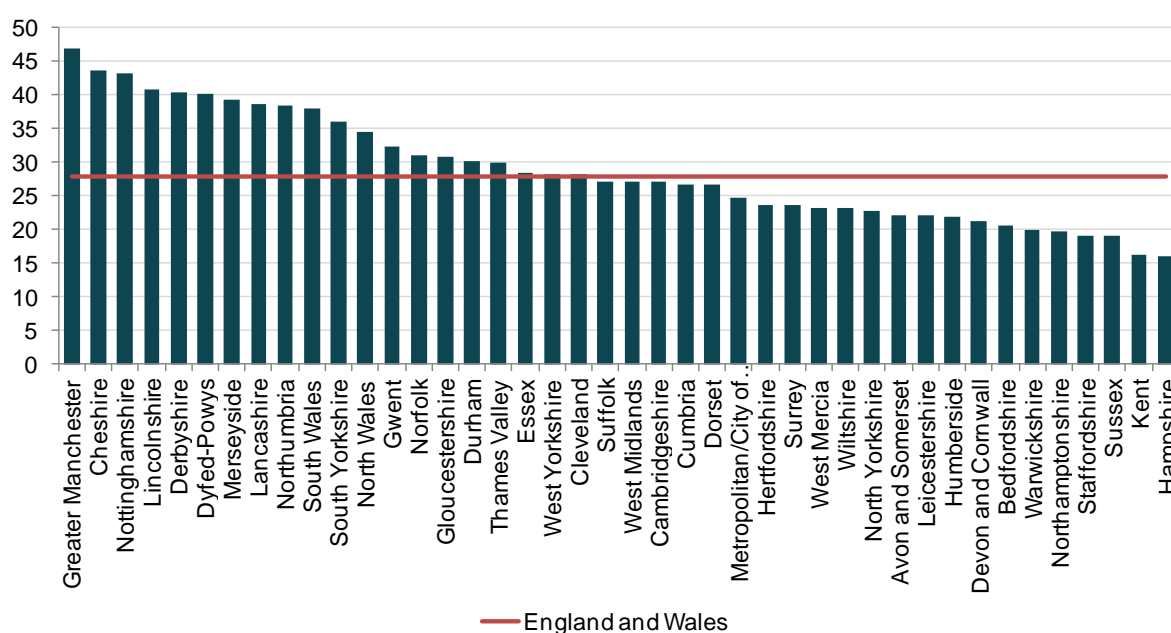
These forces have undertaken a considerable amount of work to seek to understand this issue. HMICFRS may conduct follow-up visits to these forces to verify this analysis, and will publish a short report based on the forces' analysis to help them consider how to use this outcome code.

³⁰ Cleveland, Kent, Hampshire, Humberside, Warwickshire and West Mercia forces.

Referrals to the Crown Prosecution Service

The concerns raised by HMICFRS about referrals from the police to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) are being examined by the police service. The overall number of referrals has increased from 103,569 for the 12 months to 31 March 2014 to 117,882 for the 12 months to 31 March 2016 (a 14 percent increase), but the rate of referrals for domestic abuse crime has dropped from 35 referrals per 100 domestic abuse crimes to 28 referrals per 100 domestic abuse crimes. There is also a wide variation between rates of referrals per 100 domestic abuse crimes between forces (as shown in figure 14).

Figure 14: Number of referrals to the CPS per 100 domestic abuse-related offences, by force in the 12 months to 31 March 2016

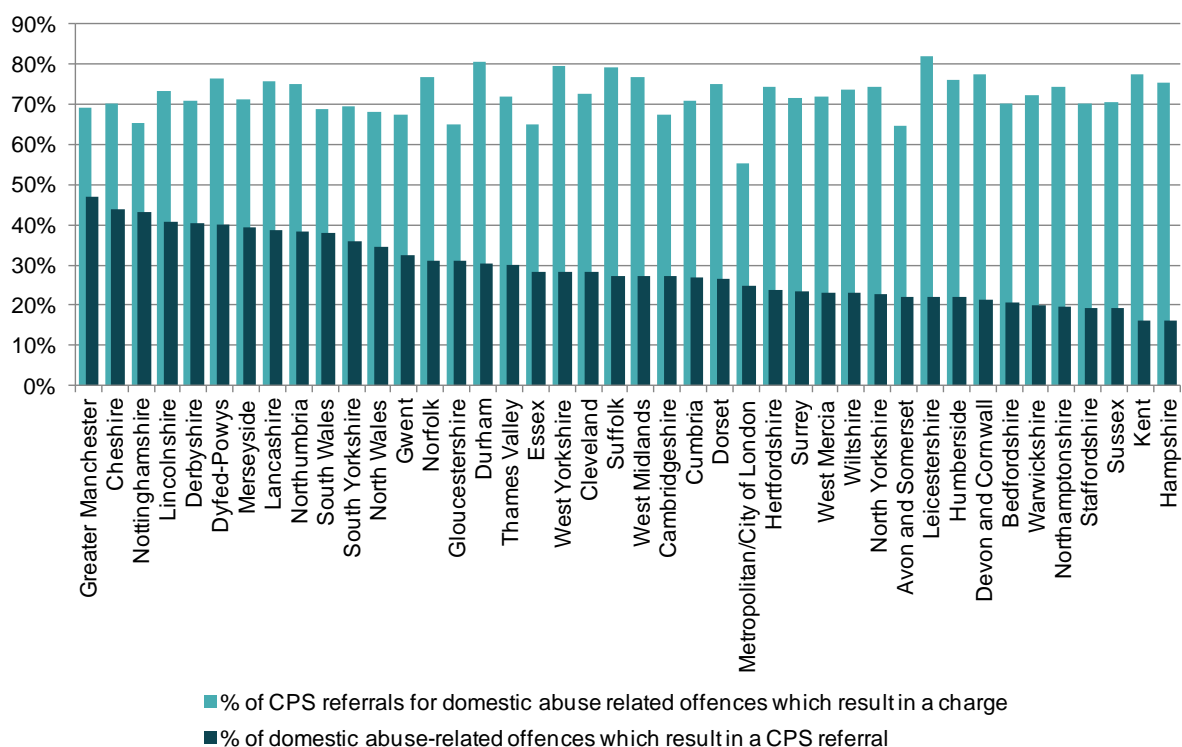


Source: ONS Domestic abuse in England and Wales data³¹

Figure 15 shows that some forces, such as Hampshire and Kent, refer a low percentage of their domestic abuse offences to the CPS, but they achieve a high charge rate for the ones they do refer. On the other hand, some forces, such as Nottinghamshire, are referring more crimes, but achieving a lower rate of charges. The Metropolitan Police Service and City of London Police are referring a comparably low level of crimes compared with other forces and are achieving the lowest charge rate.

³¹ Domestic abuse in England and Wales - Data Tool. ONS 2016. Available at: www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/domesticabuseinenglandandwalesdatatool

Figure 15: Percentage of domestic abuse-related offences referred to the CPS, compared with the percentage of CPS referrals that resulted in a charge, by force in the 12 months to 31 March 2016



Source: ONS domestic abuse in England and Wales data

Police forces and the CPS have been examining this matter in an attempt to understand the variation and reduction in the rate of referrals to the CPS, which could be due to a number of factors including:

- Systems and processes in forces differ. Some forces may use different criteria for which cases to refer to the CPS.
- The relationship between forces and the CPS. For example, forces told us that investigating officers will make a judgment on which cases to refer based on previous experience and interactions with the CPS.
- The quality of the evidence. For example, non-attendance or delayed attendance has an effect on the evidence that can be collected and used to build the case for the victim.
- Inappropriate use of alternative disposal methods, for example, cautions being issued without the case being referred to the CPS for a charging decision.

Ensuring positive outcomes is a critical part of safeguarding victims of domestic abuse. The working relationship between the police and CPS is critical in this process. Such a wide variation in the number of referrals to the CPS suggests that

there are significant differences in this relationship across England and Wales, and a difference in understanding of which crimes should be referred to the CPS for review. All victims of domestic abuse should have the same likelihood of a successful prosecution regardless of where they live, and should be given the very best opportunity for this to happen. Currently, this does not appear to be the case and forces need to monitor their data on this and work closely with the CPS to understand whether improvement is required, and if so to effect change. This work should be included in their updated domestic abuse action plans.

Victim contact

“Officers need to recognise that we are not confident people, we are very vulnerable and have been brain washed and will go with the flow. They need to instil confidence in the victims.”

When assessing the effectiveness of any service, one of the most valuable sources of information is feedback from people who have received that service. HMICFRS is disappointed that most police forces still do not talk to victims to obtain feedback on the service which they have received. This is a rich source of information that forces should use to improve the service which they provide to victims of domestic abuse.

Norfolk Constabulary

Norfolk has established a focus group comprising victims of domestic abuse, which meets senior police managers to discuss the force’s domestic abuse policies and practices. The group meets every six weeks, which ensures that policies are kept under regular review and that refinements are made.

One point regularly raised by the victims we spoke to is that they want to be kept updated as their case progresses. They told us they were confused about who was responsible for keeping them updated. For example, a perpetrator who has been charged and remanded is sometimes granted bail at a later point in the court process. Some of the victims we spoke to told us that they sometimes only find out when they see the perpetrator unexpectedly, or information appears on Facebook. If a case is being dropped, or there are changes in bail conditions as the case progresses, or indeed a perpetrator is granted bail, the victims we spoke to felt that the contact at this stage was not as good as it had been during the investigation:

“I just feel that I put so much trust in the police, but they have let me down so badly. I had to beg them to do the job they should have been doing. I just want the police to do what they should be doing. Why is no one doing anything? The first officer was amazing, two months of that and then the last 15 months of bad officers.”

HMICFRS’ 2015 PEEL effectiveness report found that many forces needed to improve their compliance with their duties under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (VCOP),³² specifically in relation to victim personal statements. Some progress has been made, but more work is needed.

During our fieldwork, we found that among frontline staff understanding about meeting victims’ needs is mixed. Despite the fact that senior leaders have a good understanding of the importance of keeping victims updated, some staff are still unsure about their responsibility for keeping in contact with victims. Often, cases that we reviewed during fieldwork showed that the frequency of contact with victims deteriorated quickly after the initial stages of investigations. The responsibility of staff to agree ‘victim contracts’ and the frequency and methods for updating victims on the progress of their cases could be improved in a number of forces.

Not all staff are taking every chance to offer victims the opportunity to make a victim personal statement. The VCOP states that all victims of crime should be able to make a victim personal statement (VPS) at the same time that they give a witness statement. A VPS gives victims the opportunity to explain how the crime has affected them, which strengthens their voice in the criminal justice system.

Despite this, the overall picture is improving, and at the time of inspection many forces were making progress in implementing action plans to ensure that they were complying with the requirements of VCOP.

³² *Code of Practice for Victims of Crime*, Ministry of Justice, October 2015, available from: www.cps.gov.uk/legal/assets/uploads/files/OD_000049.pdf

Chapter 4 – Working in partnership to protect people from harm

Main findings

This chapter explores how effectively forces work with partners to protect and support victims of domestic abuse.

- Multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) continue to safeguard victims, although HMICFRS remains concerned about the high number of cases being reported to MARACs and police forces' ability to cope with this.
- Some MARACs do not discuss all cases referred to them, and others have introduced a filtering or screening process to decide which cases should go to MARACs to manage demand, rather than assessing risk accurately, and planning for the safety of the victim.
- In the majority of force areas, multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASHs) and central referral units (CRUs) are well established, with practices in place to work with partners to assess risk and agree actions to safeguard victims.
- Independent domestic violence advisers (IDVAs) continue to play an important role in supporting victims, but although numbers are increasing, longer-term funding and sustainability appears uncertain.

Keeping victims of domestic abuse and their families safe requires the police to work closely with other public and voluntary sector support services. Police officers have a clear role to provide immediate protection, for example by arresting a suspect, and to investigate crimes so that offenders can be brought to justice. Police officers will work with other agencies in order to keep victims and their children safe, and support victims through the long and often difficult experience of investigation and prosecution. These agencies include children's social services, housing departments, and voluntary sector organisations who provide independent domestic violence advisers and workers in refuges.

Multi-agency risk assessment conferences

Multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) are meetings where representatives of statutory and voluntary agencies exchange information about high-risk victims of domestic abuse in order to produce a co-ordinated action plan to increase victim safety. The organisations that attend MARACs vary, but are likely to include the police, probation service, IDVAs, children's services and health and housing workers. The MARAC is not an agency and does not have a case

management function. The responsibility to take appropriate action lies with the individual organisations involved.

The most recent data supplied to HMICFRS by SafeLives³³ (a national charity dedicated to improving the response to domestic violence in conjunction with partners) indicate that there are 293 MARACs currently in operation throughout England and Wales, compared with 262 in 2015. Further analysis from SafeLives showed that in the 12 months to 31 December 2016, 85,504 cases were discussed at MARACs in England and Wales. This is a 5 percent increase in the total number of cases discussed at MARAC when compared to the same period in 2015, and represents a rate of 34 cases for every 10,000 adult females in the population.

In the 12 months to 31 December 2016, there were 87 MARACs which discussed the recommended number of cases or above (40 or more cases per 10,000 adult females). Some 15 MARACs had seen an increase of more than 50 percent in the number of cases discussed.

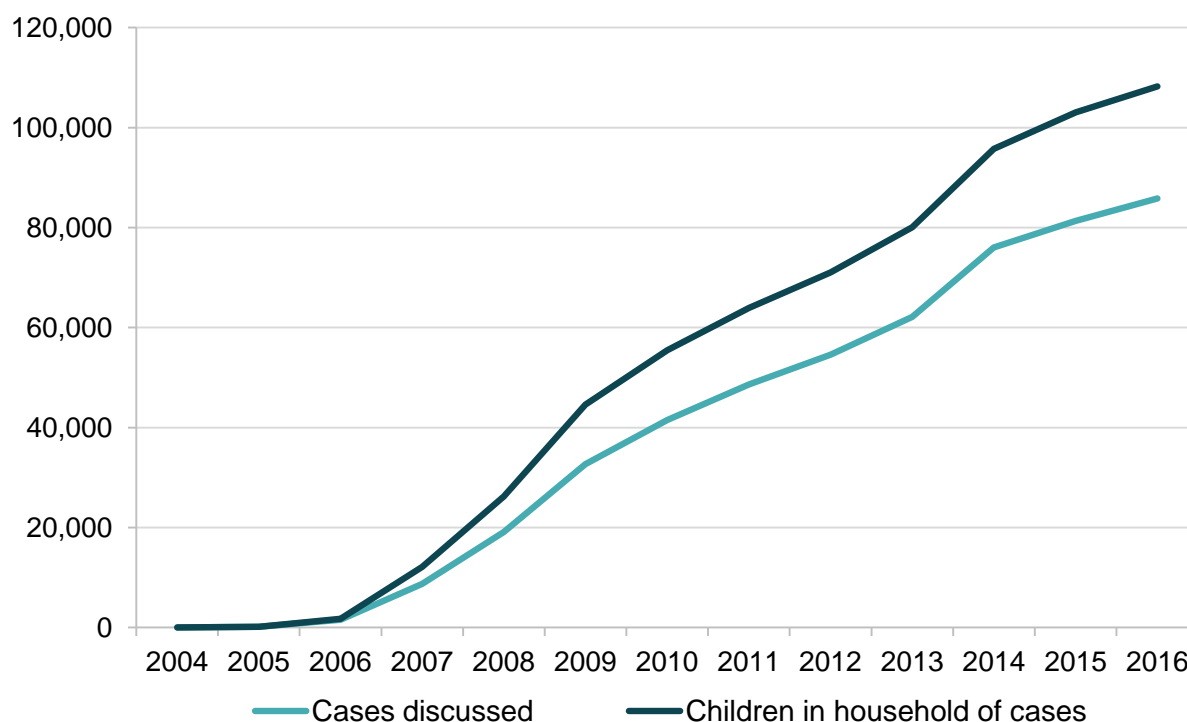
Analysis also shows that 21 MARACs (seven percent) have an average of 29 cases per meeting. These high-volume MARACs have recorded an 18 percent increase in the number of cases in the last 12 months, and nine MARACs have met the 'high volume' criteria³⁴ for the last three years.

A considerable number of children are linked to these MARAC cases (18,407 children, which is 18 percent of all children (in households) of MARAC cases), and numbers are increasing (figure 13).

³³ Unpublished SafeLives 2016 MARAC dataset

³⁴ SafeLives guidance is that a high-volume MARAC is defined as discussing 25 percent above their recommended 40 cases per 10,000 adult female population for the local data. SafeLives defines a MARAC as high volume if it exceeds an annual volume of over 520 cases and therefore could not meet our guidance of between 15 to 20 cases per meeting.

Figure 13: Cases discussed at MARAC, and associated children living in the household



Source: SafeLives data

HMICFRS continue to be concerned about the ability of police forces and wider agencies to cope with the increasing number of cases being referred to MARAC. The increase in numbers is positive for victims because more cases are being considered and appropriate safeguarding actions are being taken. SafeLives has conducted some work with MARACs, including a survey to try and understand why some are experiencing such high numbers of cases. The reasons include:

- The policy is for all high-risk cases to be referred to MARACs, but other cases may be referred as a precaution, for example medium-risk cases involving victims with complex needs. Professionals told SafeLives that they would prefer to raise the level of risk at a MARAC where this situation occurs.
- Part of the reason for referring as a precaution is the lack of clear referral processes for victims who are not so high-risk. The survey found that knowledge of alternative methods of support is very variable.
- Agencies referring into MARACs are submitting inaccurate risk assessments. About half of the survey respondents from other agencies stated that they had not received proper training about how to complete risk assessments.

MARACs have different ways of managing high caseloads, and in some cases these approaches are of concern to HMICFRS. Both the SafeLives survey and our inspection findings found that some MARACs did not discuss all cases in full (43 percent of the MARACs surveyed) and others (15 percent) had introduced a pre-MARAC process to assess which cases should be discussed at the MARAC.

HMICFRS has concerns that these approaches are primarily intended to manage demand, rather than assess risk accurately and plan for the safety of the victim.

Examples we observed during our fieldwork include:

- A triage meeting where only the police and two partner agencies (health and Women's Aid) were represented. Some high-risk cases were removed from the list in order to meet the quota of 21 cases that had been agreed with partner organisations. Three of the referrals removed were from the police and nine were from a range of agencies.
- In another force, the number of MARAC meetings held fell by over 50 percent in 2016. This was because of a secondary risk assessment conducted within the force that reduced a number of high-risk cases to medium-risk, resulting in no referral to MARAC. This single-agency rationing of referrals is deeply concerning.

Those surveyed by SafeLives supported some of these concerns and findings:

- The existence of a screening process was not known to all parties in the MARAC, particularly respondents from partner agencies.
- There is a lack of awareness about who makes decisions to screen. Of the forces which screen MARAC cases to some extent, 42 percent of respondents said that they did not know who makes screening decisions or whether there is any process to challenge those cases which are screened out (almost half of all respondents did not know if there was such a process).
- The majority of attendees at high-volume MARACs did not believe that the screening approach was effective.

These findings show that police forces are not the only agencies responsible for identifying cases to be considered at MARACs. For example, one force reported that although the MARAC needs to meet more often as a result of the level of demand, partner agencies state that they are unable to provide sufficient resources for it to do so. As a result, cases are not being considered. This highlights that the police are not the only agency under pressure from the increase in demand, and that there is a shared pressure across all agencies.

Lancashire Constabulary

In Lancashire the MARAC process has been instrumental in the increase in disclosure applications received by the constabulary, indicating that partnership working to support vulnerable victims of domestic abuse is effective.

Multi-agency safeguarding hubs

Forces are continuing to develop working practices with partner agencies to exchange information more effectively. Multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASHs) and Central Referral Units (CRUs) are being used to bring together staff from police forces and partner agencies to work from the same location (in some instances), exchange information and ensure a timely and joined-up response to protect children and vulnerable adults.

There are 143 MASHs in England and Wales, with 42 out of 43 forces having some form of MASH model. In 32 of the 43 forces, the MASHs cover the entire force area. Participation in the MASHs varies considerably, depending on local arrangements. Figure 16 shows the participation rates for the main partners in MASHs across England and Wales.

Figure 16: MASH participation percentage by agency

	Number of MASHs attended	% of MASHs attended
Police	142	99%
Children's social services	135	94%
Health	126	88%
Education	72	50%
Probation	70	49%
Adult social services	46	32%
Housing	34	24%

Source: HMICFRS data collection

In a small number of cases, HMICFRS found there were still capacity problems in the processing of risk assessments in MASHs, with a high number of referrals that had not been assessed as soon as they were received, resulting in a backlog awaiting assessment. This was consistent with our findings in 2015. It appears that this is as a result of a general increase in referrals and, in some areas, insufficient staff numbers to deal with the increase.

In the majority of force areas MASHs are well established and practices are in place to assess risk and agree actions to safeguard victims. However, it still remains unclear what the most effective model for a MASH is. There is no evaluation of

MASHs in most forces, so it is not clear how effective they are in terms of the outcomes for victims. This issue was highlighted in our last domestic abuse thematic report *Increasingly everyone's business*.

In Merseyside, partner agencies told HMICFRS that arrangements for exchanging information work well, and there are no barriers to exchanging information on handover between different services. We visited two MASHs during the Merseyside inspection, one of which was working very effectively. The second MASH, however, had a backlog of cases because of the number that it was managing. We found that the backlog had been triaged to ensure that all victims received some safeguarding, and those who were the most vulnerable were then allocated further support. The force and its partners have commissioned a review of all the MASHs across Merseyside to determine the most appropriate model. However, partners told us that they consider the inconsistency between the five MASHs to be positive because each MASH is specific to the needs of the local area.

HMICFRS accepts that a standard approach to multi-agency working on domestic abuse is not possible or necessarily desirable. A range of different models is being used across forces in England and Wales, and even within individual force areas. The models in use within forces differ greatly in their remit, scope and capacity. The variations in practice across the country are exacerbated by the lack of any national guidance on what a MASH is expected to do. In addition, the recent report about the second joint targeted area inspection (JTAs) programme, which examined the 'multi-agency response to children living with domestic abuse'³⁵ highlighted there is still a lack of clarity about how to navigate the complexities of information sharing. This programme found there is still not a clear and consistent understanding about which information professionals can share within and across agencies.

In our previous domestic abuse thematic report *Increasingly everyone's business* (2015), HMICFRS proposed that a 'task and finish group' evaluated the effectiveness of the various models in place for MASHs and CRUs in terms of the outcomes achieved for victims of domestic abuse, and produced some principles for multi-agency working in this area. The Home Office is leading this work and is in the process of developing a set of principles, which include guidance on sharing information safely and effectively. This will be published in due course.

The role of independent domestic violence advisers

Independent domestic violence advisers (IDVAs) work to secure the safety of victims and survivors (and their children) who are at high risk of harm from intimate partners, ex-partners or family members. IDVAs normally work with victims to assess the level

³⁵ *The multi-agency response to children living with domestic abuse*, HM Inspectorate of Probation, HMICFRS, Care Quality Commission, Ofsted, 2017. Available at: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/645642/JTAI_domestic_abuse_18_Sept_2017.pdf

of risk posed by the perpetrator and to discuss the range of available options and develop safety plans. They receive specialist accredited training and hold a nationally recognised qualification.

IDVAs work with a range of partner agencies through the MARAC, including the police, housing, council, local health services and others to develop a co-ordinated safety plan for victims. They also ensure that the victim's voice is heard at MARAC by acting as his or her advocate. IDVAs are independent and also provide support outside the MARAC and the criminal justice system.

In 2016 SafeLives published a survey of IDVA provision in England and Wales, which found:

- There are 815 full-time equivalent (FTE) IDVAs working in England and Wales. This is an increase of 69 additional FTE IDVAs or an increase of 9.2 percent since SafeLives' 2015 survey.
- All victims at highest risk from abuse should have IDVA support. The current number of IDVAs supporting victims at high risk of serious harm is just 67 percent of what is estimated to be needed.
- Fifteen out of 43 police forces in England and Wales have less than half the numbers of IDVAs they need to support victims of high-risk abuse.

Although it is positive that the number of IDVAs has increased since last year, SafeLives reports that there are still not enough. An additional 216 FTE IDVAs are required to meet the needs of victims of high-risk domestic abuse in England and Wales.

The role of the IDVA is now firmly established in the multi-agency response to domestic abuse. Often police officers and IDVAs provide support to victims where victims are considering withdrawing their support for police action or a prosecution. At a time when demand for a police response to domestic abuse is increasing rapidly, and given the increase in cases that are dropped after the victim withdraws support, it is vitally important that the use of IDVAs continues.

IDVAs are important in implementing safety plans and longer-term solutions in conjunction with the victim. These plans include actions from a MARAC, where IDVAs are important members of the response team, advocating on behalf of high-risk victims. There are also good examples of IDVAs being part of MASHs' and forces' processes for allocating resources, helping to ensure that high-risk cases are identified and benefit from a coordinated response.

Although we are pleased that the number of IDVAs continues to increase, funding in this area remains uncertain. The provision of IDVAs is not statutory and their funding is received from a number of sources, predominantly from local authorities but increasingly from other agencies including police and crime commissioners and

clinical commissioning groups. It is critical that these agencies recognise the substantial contribution made by IDVAs in support of victims of domestic abuse.

Suffolk police and crime commissioner

The police and crime commissioner in Suffolk has responded to the high demand on the IDVA service and increased the number of IDVAs from eight to 11 across the county. IDVAs work in the same building as the police and have access to the same computer system as the domestic abuse team to ensure that information is exchanged quickly.

Conclusion

Building on the impressive response from chief officers to the findings in our previous two domestic abuse reports, during this inspection HMICFRS observed a continued desire to improve the service provided to victims of domestic abuse. Increasingly, officers and staff feel that domestic abuse is a priority.

We found that domestic abuse cases were prioritised by senior managers in daily management meetings (DMMs). Vulnerability was discussed in all force DMMs we observed, and it was clear that senior officers reviewed incidents relating to domestic abuse closely. As referenced in this report, police leaders now prioritise tackling domestic abuse within the wider context of supporting vulnerable people and keeping them safe and as a result of investment in training on domestic abuse, the attitudes and behaviour of frontline staff are continuing to improve.

However, this inspection has highlighted areas in which performance has declined since 2015. Forces need to identify and understand the causes of decline and the actions required to correct it. Many forces still do not have a good understanding of their performance in responding to domestic abuse incidents. They are unable to explain what is happening in terms of arrest and outcome data, even when their figures are particularly high or low. This suggests that these forces are not monitoring the data they collect for insights into what is changing (or not) in the policing of domestic abuse. This problem appears to exist across all of the component parts of the police response to domestic abuse, from the initial contact and demand management through to investigation and outcomes for victims.

As highlighted in this report, force leaders should use data more effectively to understand demand and monitor performance. The variation in performance in relation to domestic abuse rates and outcomes is startling. This suggests inconsistency across the service in the understanding and provision of the response to domestic abuse. At a time of significantly increased demand, and recent legislative changes, the police service needs more than ever to understand its role in protecting and supporting victims of domestic abuse. Overall, we congratulate the police service on the progress it has made to date and look forward to seeing further improvements in the service provided to victims of domestic abuse when we report on the findings of our latest PEEL effectiveness inspection in March 2018.

Definitions and interpretation

In this report, the following words, phrases and expressions in the left-hand column have the meanings assigned to them in the right-hand column. Sometimes, the definition will be followed by a fuller explanation of the matter in question, with references to sources and other material which may be of assistance to the reader.

bail conditions	terms upon which a defendant has been granted bail pending a court hearing; their purpose is 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; they are usually set by the court, which can grant bail without any such conditions or can detain the defendant in custody; before the first court hearing, the police can also detain a defendant in custody or grant bail, with or without conditions attached, but their powers to do so are more limited than the courts; breach of these conditions may amount to a separate offence under section 7(3) of the Bail Act 1976
body-worn video camera	worn on the helmet or upper body of an officer, which records visual and audio footage of an incident
Clare's Law	scheme which enables the police to disclose information about a partner's previous history of domestic violence or violent acts; also known as the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, its purpose is to provide potential victims with information that may protect them from an abusive situation before it ends in tragedy; named after Clare Wood who was brutally murdered in 2009 by her former partner George Appleton, who had a record of violence against women;

the scheme was first piloted in 2012 in four police areas and was rolled out nationally in 2014

Code of Practice for Victims of Crime

statutory code of practice issued by the Secretary of State for Justice under section 32 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004; the code establishes minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime; its stated objective is to ensure the criminal justice system puts victims first, making the system more responsive to them and easier for them to navigate; it also aims to ensure that victims of crime are treated well and receive appropriate support to help them cope and recover, and to protect them from becoming victims again; the code specifies the services which must be provided to victims of crime in England and Wales, and sets a minimum for the standard of those services; higher entitlements are set for victims of the most serious crime, persistently targeted victims and vulnerable or intimidated victims; the public sector bodies which are obliged to provide services to victims of crime are specified in the code, and include police forces and police and crime commissioners; the Victims' Commissioner has a statutory duty to keep the code under regular review; the code is at:

www.cps.gov.uk/legal/assets/uploads/files/OD_000049.pdf

coercive control

behaviour and actions of a perpetrator which are intended to control the victim through isolation, intimidation, degradation and micro-regulation of everyday life; the term and concept was developed by Evan Stark which seeks to explain the range of tactics used by

	<p>perpetrators and the effects of those on victims; the concept highlights the continuing nature of the behaviour and the extent to which the actions of the perpetrator control the victim; crucially, the concept sets out that such abuse can be psychological as well as physical; the term is explicitly covered within the definition of domestic abuse; the offence of controlling or coercive behaviour within an intimate or familial relationship is set out in section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 and carries a maximum sentence of five years' imprisonment, a fine, or both, for offenders</p>
control room	<p>facility in each police force in which call operators answer telephone calls from the public, determine the circumstances of the call and decide the initial response</p>
DASH	<p>domestic abuse, stalking and harassment and honour-based violence assessment;</p>
domestic abuse, stalking and harassment and honour-based violence assessment	<p>risk identification, assessment and management model adopted by United Kingdom police forces and partner agencies in 2009</p>
Domestic Homicide Review	<p>multi-agency review within the local police area 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</p>
Domestic Violence Protection Notice	<p>made against a suspected perpetrator of domestic violence; its purpose is to provide emergency protection to an individual believed to be the victim of domestic violence; this notice, which must be authorised by a police</p>

superintendent, contains prohibitions that effectively bar the suspected perpetrator from returning to the victim's home or otherwise contacting the victim with immediate effect; may be issued to a person aged 18 years and over if the police superintendent has reasonable grounds for believing that: the recipient 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 recipient; introduced by sections 24-33 of the Crime and Security Act 2010; its introduction was piloted in three police areas in 2011-12, and was rolled out nationally in 2014;

Domestic Violence Protection Order

power that enables the police and magistrates' courts to put in place protection in the immediate aftermath of a domestic abuse incident; where there is insufficient evidence to charge a perpetrator and provide protection to a victim via bail conditions, can prevent the perpetrator from returning to a residence and from having contact with the victim for up to 28 days; this gives the victim an opportunity to consider their options and get the support and guidance which he or she needs from a dedicated domestic abuse service

DVPO

domestic violence protection order

DVPN

domestic violence protection notice

FGM

female genital mutilation

female genital mutilation

procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons; sometimes known as 'female circumcision'; sometimes religious, cultural or social

	<p>reasons are given for inflicting this practice, however it is illegal in the UK; since 2003 it has also been illegal for a UK national or a resident of the UK to take their child abroad to undergo such a procedure</p>
harassment	<p>causing alarm or distress and/or put people in fear of violence; includes the offence of stalking either in person or through other means of communication; defined under sections 2 and 4 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 as amended</p>
high risk	<p>likely that a victim will be subject to an incident which is life threatening and/or traumatic, and from which recovery, whether physical or psychological, can be expected to be difficult or impossible; commonly used when, following a DASH risk assessment, there are identifiable indicators of risk of serious harm; the potential incident could happen at any time and the effects would be serious</p>
IDVA	<p>independent domestic violence adviser</p>
independent domestic violence adviser	<p>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; also known as independent domestic violence advocates; serve as a victim's primary point of contact and 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; can be accessed through voluntary organisations against domestic abuse or local authority services and usually work within a multi-agency framework.</p>

MARAC	multi-agency risk assessment conference
MASH	multi-agency safeguarding hub
medium risk	potential for an offender to cause, or a victim to suffer, 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); commonly used when, following a DASH risk-assessment, there are identifiable indicators of risk of serious harm
multi-agency risk assessment conference	meeting in which information about high-risk domestic abuse victims is shared between local statutory and voluntary agencies; together safeguarding agencies and, if possible, the victim as represented by the IDVA, work to produce a risk-focused, co-ordinated safety plan to support the victim
multi-agency safeguarding hub	location in which staff from the police, local authority and other safeguarding agencies share data, research and decision-making in relation to local children and adults who are vulnerable; representatives from agencies are likely to include: police public protection unit, children's social care, health and education providers, child and adolescent mental health services (CAHMS), adult services, substance misuse, the early intervention services, probation and housing, amongst others; the purpose is to ensure a timely and joined-up response for children and vulnerable adults who require protection
PACE	Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984
partnership	established collaborative working between the police and other public,

Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984

private or voluntary organisations

statute under which police forces primarily operate; together with the PACE codes of practice it provides the essential framework of police powers and safeguards; legislates in relation to matters such as stop and search, arrest, detention, investigation, identification and interviewing detainees; for more detail see:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-and-criminal-evidence-act-1984-pace-current-versions

positive action

activity conducted 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; often used in the context of arrest policy, i.e. that an 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

approach used by police forces; to systematically identify and analyse crime and disorder problems, develop specific responses to individual problems and subsequently assess whether the response has been successful

refuge

safe house where women and children who are victims of domestic violence can stay free from abuse; refuge addresses (and sometimes telephone numbers) are confidential; run by voluntary organisations; often provide assistance to victims to re-build their lives

risk assessment

structured professional judgment using a guide/checklist method by which the

	likelihood of risk is determined; completion is intended to assist police officers in the decision-making process on appropriate levels of intervention for victims of domestic violence
safeguarding	process of protecting vulnerable people from abuse or neglect
SafeLives	national charity against domestic abuse; its aim is to protect the highest risk victims and their children, i.e. those at risk of murder or serious harm; its approach is focused on saving lives and public money and supports a strong multi-agency response to domestic abuse; provides practical help to support professionals and organisations working with domestic abuse victims; originally set up in 2005 as the Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA) by Diana Barren
standard risk	no indication of the likelihood of serious harm being caused; commonly used following a DASH assessment based on the current evidence.
victim personal statement	written on behalf of the victim of a crime; gives victims an opportunity to describe the wider effects of the crime upon them, to express their concerns and indicate whether or not they require any support; provisions relating to its preparation for, and use in, criminal proceedings are included in the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (Victims' Code), October 2015.
vulnerable	person who is in need of special care, support, or protection because of age, disability, or risk of abuse or neglect

Annex A – Recommendations from *Increasingly everyone’s business: A progress report on the police response to domestic abuse*

This annex summarises our recommendations from *Increasingly everyone’s business: A progress report on the police response to domestic abuse*.

Recommendation 1 in 2015 report: National Oversight Group

The National Oversight Group, chaired by the Home Secretary, has played a vitally important and successful role in improving the police response to domestic abuse through its public scrutiny of progress against each of HMIC’s original national recommendations. The National Oversight Group should continue its work and its membership should be reviewed and updated to reflect the wide-ranging effort that is required beyond policing and across the broader public services to tackle domestic abuse. The current group should be enlarged so as to include membership from the Department of Health and NHS England, the Department for Education, local government and social care organisations. The National Oversight Group should continue to monitor and report on the progress made in implementing this further set of recommendations as well as the original recommendations that are outstanding. There should be a renewed focus on the importance of joint multi-agency working on preventative approaches and early intervention with perpetrators.

Recommendation 2 in 2015 report: National domestic abuse data monitoring

The national Rape Monitoring Group has developed a range of statistics that help forces analyse their responses to rape and serious sexual offences. The Home Office, the Ministry of Justice, the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC), the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC), the College of Policing, HMIC and domestic abuse organisations should work together to develop a data set relating to domestic abuse which will enable more thorough analysis of how domestic abuse is dealt with in a force area. As for the Rape Monitoring Group, a process should be put in place to publish this data set periodically.

Using these data, police and crime commissioners, police, prosecutors and agencies within the criminal justice system will have an enhanced view of how domestic abuse is dealt with in their local area. For chief constables, the data will assist with an improved understanding of force performance on domestic abuse. For police and crime commissioners, the data will assist in setting force priorities and holding the force to account in respect of its response to victims of domestic abuse.

The work to establish the data set relating to domestic abuse should be completed by March 2016. The new arrangements for collecting this data should be in place by June 2016 and the first publication of the national data set should take place before the end of the 2016/17 financial year.

Recommendation 3 in 2015 report: Update of forces' domestic abuse action plans

By March 2016, every police force in England and Wales should update its domestic abuse action plan; determine what more it can do to address the areas for further improvement highlighted in this report and specified below; and publish its revised action plan accordingly:

- **Understanding and identifying risk:** Pending completion of the College of Policing's review of the evidence base for risk assessment in cases of domestic abuse (Recommendation 6 in Everyone's business), forces should ensure that their arrangements for assessing and managing risk are well understood and appropriately used by officers and staff across the force, are being put into practice and are supervised effectively. Once the College of Policing research is published in early 2016, forces should further review their guidance to officers and staff. **Prioritising and allocating domestic abuse investigations:** Domestic abuse cases should be prioritised and allocated for investigation on the basis of risk and there should be a clear allocation and prioritisation policy for high, medium and standard risk cases. Forces should ensure their arrangements for doing so are effective. **Safeguarding victims at medium and standard risk:** Recognising the dynamic nature of risk in domestic abuse situations, forces should ensure that there is appropriate safeguarding in place for victims at medium and standard risk throughout their involvement with the police with referral routes to partner organisations and early access to specialised support and advice where appropriate.
- **Views of victims:** Forces should have in place processes to seek regularly the views of victims of domestic abuse and to act on this feedback by incorporating changes into policy, practice and learning and development activities. These approaches should be reconsidered when the Home Office issues its guidance on obtaining the views of victims.
- **Training:** It is important that officers and staff understand the dynamics of domestic abuse and that their attitudes and behaviours reflect their knowledge. Forces should consider how best to ensure that officers and staff are able to identify and understand the wide range of violence, behaviours and different perpetrators that fall under the definition of domestic abuse through training, learning and development activities. They should also ensure that their officers and staff demonstrate understanding and supportive

attitudes and behaviours towards victims. In particular, forces should improve understanding and appreciation of the dynamics of domestic abuse, particularly in relation to coercive control. These activities should include the personal experiences of victims and the participation of local specialist domestic abuse organisations wherever possible. Training should be face-to-face (supported by but not substituted by e-learning). The College of Policing is researching approaches to training that support improvement in attitudes and behaviours. Once this research is complete and training developed as a result, forces should specify how it will be given priority and/or incorporated into their existing training programmes.

To ensure consistency, the College of Policing and the national policing lead on domestic abuse have agreed to provide further advice on the revisions to the existing action plans as soon as possible. The College of Policing and the national policing lead on domestic abuse should provide feedback on this work to the National Oversight Group.

Chief officers in each police force should continue to oversee and ensure full implementation of these action plans and offer regular feedback on progress to their police and crime commissioner. This should be a personal responsibility of the chief constable in each case.

Recommendation 4 in 2015 report: Force progress reviews

By June 2016, chief constables should review the progress made by their forces in giving full effect to their forces' stated priorities on domestic abuse. Every force in England and Wales should undertake a clear and specific assessment of its own progress in respect of domestic abuse, potentially through peer review, which should include reference to the following:

- the force's updated action plan on domestic abuse; the force's culture and values; the force's performance management framework;
- the force's approach to the use of data and evidence of what works in support of the development of a learning organisation;
- the reward and recognition policy in the force and the roles and behaviours that this rewards currently; the selection and promotion processes in the force;
- the messages and communications sent by the senior leadership team to the rest of the force about tackling domestic abuse;
- the development opportunities for officers and staff in the force; and

- force policy on how perpetrators and victims of domestic abuse who are employed by the force are managed.

To ensure consistency, the College of Policing and the national policing lead on domestic abuse have agreed to provide advice on the form and content of the assessment of progress by March 2016.

HMIC will draw on forces' assessment of progress on domestic abuse as part of its annual PEEL inspection in 2016.

Chief constables should as soon as practicable take whatever further action is necessary to build on the progress made in giving effect to their forces' stated priorities on domestic abuse. This should include action to raise awareness of domestic abuse to instil a deeper understanding of and commitment to addressing the often complex needs of victims of domestic abuse. Chief constables should also take steps to support, encourage and conspicuously value officers and staff who exemplify this understanding and commitment.

Recommendation 5 in 2015 report: Innovation and establishing evidence-based good practice

Innovative practice in forces to tackle domestic abuse should be encouraged but it should be informed by robust, independent evaluation which demonstrates the effectiveness of that practice, particularly in terms of safeguarding people at risk of harm. Working in consultation with partners, forces should assess the available evidence that supports innovative practice before it is implemented and ensure that safety planning is built into any new practice from the outset. Where there is little or no available evidence, forces should be clear about the thinking behind the innovative practice and should carry out a thorough evaluation of the practice, ideally supported by the College of Policing, as quickly as possible. Multi-agency safeguarding hubs and central referral units: In the next six months, the National Oversight Group should commission a 'task and finish group' to evaluate the effectiveness of the various models in place for MASHs and CRUs in terms of the outcomes achieved for victims of domestic abuse. By spring 2017, this task and finish group should provide forces with guidance and examples of good practice to illustrate how multi-agency arrangements most effectively share information, assess risk and undertake joint safeguarding activities to protect victims of domestic abuse. The group should involve representatives from the Home Office, Department of Health, Department for Education and relevant inspectorates, as well as practitioners within forces and academics.

Perpetrator programmes including integrated offender management: Reducing offending by perpetrators will save potential victims from abuse and help to reduce the demand on forces. As part of updating their action plans, forces should use the soon to be published research carried out by the College of Policing on perpetrator

programmes and summary of existing initiatives to inform the development of their own programmes. Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs): The National Oversight Group should ensure that, by April 2016, further consideration is given to increasing the use and effectiveness of DVPOs. The Ministry of Justice should provide clear guidance on the DVPO process and sentencing guidelines for breaches of these orders.

Recommendation 6 in 2015 report: Learning from domestic abuse homicides

By September 2016, the Home Office should ensure that conclusions from domestic homicide reviews are shared swiftly and effectively with police forces, police and crime commissioners and domestic abuse practitioners. With the assistance of the College of Policing, the national policing lead on domestic abuse and domestic abuse practitioners from the voluntary sector, a system should be developed and implemented to collate learning from domestic homicides and to disseminate this learning on an annual basis to forces. They should also consider how forces can contribute effectively to and access the information held within the Femicide Census.

Annex B – HMICFRS’ Domestic Abuse Reference Group

HMICFRS had the following people on its Domestic Abuse Reference Group. The reference group is chaired by HMI Zoë Billingham.

Name	Organisation
Vera Baird QC	Police and Crime Commissioner, Northumbria Police
Alexandra Barker	Victim Support
Alexa Bradley	Office for National Statistics
Hannah Buckley	Home Office
Hilary Fisher	Women’s Aid
Charlotte Hickman	Home Office
Suzanne Jacob	SafeLives
Sara Jones	Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner for Sussex
Jane Keeper	Refuge
Lydia Mason	West Midlands Police and Staff Officer to DCC Louisa Rolfe
Ellen Miller	Victim Support
Karen Morgan-Read	Crown Prosecution Service
DCC Louisa Rolfe	West Midlands Police and the National Policing Lead on Domestic Abuse
Isobel Shirlaw	Refuge
Jo Todd	RESPECT
David Tucker	College of Policing

Annex C – Progress against recommendations from *Increasingly everyone’s business: A progress report on the police response to domestic abuse*

This annex contains progress updates provided by the organisations with lead responsibility for the recommendations contained in HMIC’s 2015 report, *Increasingly everyone’s business*.

Home Office

Recommendation 1

The National Oversight Group, chaired by the Home Secretary, has played a vitally important and successful role in improving the police response to domestic abuse through its public scrutiny of progress against each of HMIC’s original national recommendations. The National Oversight Group should continue its work and its membership should be reviewed and updated to reflect the wide-ranging effort that is required beyond policing and across the broader public services to tackle domestic abuse. The current group should be enlarged so as to include membership from the Department of Health and NHS England, the Department for Education, local government and social care organisations.

The National Oversight Group should continue to monitor and report on the progress made in implementing this further set of recommendations as well as the original recommendations that are outstanding. There should be a renewed focus on the importance of joint multi-agency working on preventative approaches and early intervention with perpetrators.

Update on progress against recommendation 1

- The National Oversight Group on Domestic Abuse was established in 2014 to monitor and report on progress in implementing the recommendations published in HMIC’s 2014 report, *Everyone’s business: improving the police response to domestic abuse*. The group was expanded in March 2016 following HMIC’s re-inspection of all forces to include representatives from NHS England, Department for Education, local government and social care organisations.
- The National Oversight Group, which meets on a quarterly basis, continues to be chaired by the Home Secretary.
- In 2017 the scope of the National Oversight Group has been broadened to cover so-called ‘honour-based’ violence and stalking and harassment.

Recommendation 2

The national Rape Monitoring Group has developed a range of statistics that help forces analyse their responses to rape and serious sexual offences. The Home Office, the Ministry of Justice, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC), the College of Policing, HMIC and domestic abuse organisations should work together to develop a data set relating to domestic abuse which will enable more thorough analysis of how domestic abuse is dealt with in a force area. As for the Rape Monitoring Group, a process should be put in place to publish this data set periodically.

Using these data, police and crime commissioners, police, prosecutors and agencies within the criminal justice system will have an enhanced view of how domestic abuse is dealt with in their local area. For chief constables, the data will assist with an improved understanding of force performance on domestic abuse. For police and crime commissioners, the data will assist in setting force priorities and holding the force to account in respect of its response to victims of domestic abuse.

The work to establish the data set relating to domestic abuse should be completed by March 2016. The new arrangements for collecting this data should be in place by June 2016 and the first publication of the national data set should take place before the end of the 2016/17 financial year.

Update on progress against recommendation 2

- The Office for National Statistics (ONS) published in December 2016, in partnership with the Home Office and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), a new statistical bulletin and data tool in relation to domestic abuse, bringing together comprehensive data on domestic abuse at a local level.
- We expect police forces and crown prosecutors to use the data, alongside local knowledge, to ask hard and critical questions about their performance in relation to domestic abuse in order to identify areas for improvement.
- The next phase of the bulletin is planned for publication in December 2017.

Recommendation 5

Innovative practice in forces to tackle domestic abuse should be encouraged but it should be informed by robust, independent evaluation which demonstrates the effectiveness of that practice, particularly in terms of safeguarding people at risk of harm. Working in consultation with partners, forces should assess the available evidence that supports innovative practice before it is implemented and ensure that safety planning is built into any new practice from the outset. Where there is little or no available evidence, forces should be clear about the thinking behind the innovative practice and should carry out a thorough evaluation of the practice, ideally supported by the College of Policing, as quickly as possible.

- Multi-agency safeguarding hubs and central referral units: In the next six months, the National Oversight Group should commission a 'task and finish group' to evaluate the effectiveness of the various models in place for MASHs and CRUs in terms of the outcomes achieved for victims of domestic abuse. By spring 2017, this task and finish group should provide forces with guidance and examples of good practice to illustrate how multi-agency arrangements most effectively share information, assess risk and undertake joint safeguarding activities to protect victims of domestic abuse. The group should involve representatives from the Home Office, Department of Health, Department for Education and relevant inspectorates, as well as practitioners within forces and academics.
- Perpetrator programmes including integrated offender management: Reducing offending by perpetrators will save potential victims from abuse and help to reduce the demand on forces. As part of updating their action plans, forces should use the soon to be published research carried out by the College of Policing on perpetrator programmes and summary of existing initiatives to inform the development of their own programmes.
- Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs): The National Oversight Group should ensure that, by April 2016, further consideration is given to increasing the use and effectiveness of DVPOs. The Ministry of Justice should provide clear guidance on the DVPO process and sentencing guidelines for breaches of these orders.

Update on progress against recommendation 5

- As multi-agency models are still in the early stages of roll-out, it may be some time before it is possible to fully evaluate different approaches and make informed comparisons. However, in order to encourage good quality multi-agency working in local areas in the meantime and share good practice, a set of draft principles to underpin better multi-agency working are being reviewed and will be published as soon as possible.
- One of the main aims of the proposed Domestic Violence and Abuse Bill is to create a clearer pathway of protection for victims. As part of this work, we will consider how the current regime of civil and criminal prevention and protection orders, including DVPOs, can be improved to better protect victims of domestic abuse.

Recommendation 6

By September 2016, the Home Office should ensure that conclusions from domestic homicide reviews are shared swiftly and effectively with police forces, police and crime commissioners and domestic abuse practitioners. With the assistance of the College of Policing, the national policing lead on domestic abuse and domestic

abuse practitioners from the voluntary sector, a system should be developed and implemented to collate learning from domestic homicides and to disseminate this learning on an annual basis to forces. They should also consider how forces can contribute effectively to and access the information held within the Femicide Census.

Update on progress against recommendation 6

- On 7 December 2016 the Home Office published updated statutory guidance on conducting Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) which reinforces the importance of fully involving families in reviews and provides improved templates on the structure of a DHR report to assist local areas. The guidance also takes account of the new tools that have been implemented, such as the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme and Domestic Violence Protection Orders, as well as the new coercive and controlling offence introduced in the Serious Crime Act 2015.
- At the same time, we also published the findings from an analysis of 40 DHRs to share the lessons learned and help implement good practice and to encourage local areas to reflect on how they can make improvements to local operational processes and services to enhance their ability to safeguard victims and prevent domestic homicide.
- The Home Office provided additional funding for a series of regional two-day events to promote the updated statutory guidance, disseminate the DHR findings, implement the learning and share best practice. Almost 500 people attended the events which took place between January and May 2017.

College of Policing

Recommendation 3

By March 2016, every police force in England and Wales should update its domestic abuse action plan; determine what more it can do to address the areas for further improvement highlighted in this report and specified below; and publish its revised action plan accordingly:

- Understanding and identifying risk: Pending completion of the College of Policing's review of the evidence base for risk assessment in cases of domestic abuse (Recommendation 6 in *Everyone's business*), forces should ensure that their arrangements for assessing and managing risk are well understood and appropriately used by officers and staff across the force, are being put into practice and are supervised effectively. Once the College of Policing research is published in early 2016, forces should further review their guidance to officers and staff.

- **Prioritising and allocating domestic abuse investigations:** Domestic abuse cases should be prioritised and allocated for investigation on the basis of risk and there should be a clear allocation and prioritisation policy for high, medium and standard risk cases. Forces should ensure their arrangements for doing so are effective.
- **Safeguarding victims at medium and standard risk:** Recognising the dynamic nature or risk in domestic abuse situations, forces should ensure that there is appropriate safeguarding in place for victims at medium and standard risk throughout their involvement with the police with referral routes to partner organisations and early access to specialised support and advice where appropriate.
- **Views of victims:** Forces should have in place processes to seek regularly the views of victims of domestic abuse and to act on this feedback by incorporating changes into policy, practice and learning and development activities. These approaches should be reconsidered when the Home Office issues its guidance on obtaining the views of victims.
- **Training:** It is important that officers and staff understand the dynamics of domestic abuse and that their attitudes and behaviours reflect their knowledge. Forces should consider how best to ensure that officers and staff are able to identify and understand the wide range of violence, behaviours and different perpetrators that fall under the definition of domestic abuse through training, learning and development activities. They should also ensure that their officers and staff demonstrate understanding and supportive attitudes and behaviours towards victims. In particular, forces should improve understanding and appreciation of the dynamics of domestic abuse, particularly in relation to coercive control. These activities should include the personal experiences of victims and the participation of local specialist domestic abuse organisations wherever possible. Training should be face-to-face (supported by but not substituted by e-learning). The College of Policing is researching approaches to training that support improvement in attitudes and behaviours. Once this research is complete and training developed as a result, forces should specify how it will be given priority and/or incorporated into their existing training programmes.

To ensure consistency, the College of Policing and the national policing lead on domestic abuse have agreed to provide further advice on the revisions to the existing action plans as soon as possible. The College of Policing and the national policing lead on domestic abuse should provide feedback on this work to the National Oversight Group.

Chief officers in each police force should continue to oversee and ensure full implementation of these action plans and offer regular feedback on progress to their police and crime commissioner. This should be a personal responsibility of the chief constable in each case.

Update on progress against recommendation 3

- The College of Policing and national policing lead on domestic abuse wrote to all chief constables and heads of public protection in February 2016 to provide advice on the specific areas that should be covered in the revised action plans. It was recommended that the best way to build on the good progress found by HMICFRS was to concentrate activity in a small number of areas in order to have the greatest beneficial impact for victims or potential victims of domestic abuse.

These areas were:

- Assessment and management of risk;
 - Safeguarding victims assessed at standard and medium risk;
 - Development of victim surveys;
 - Creating an information framework that informs senior officers of the way in which domestic abuse policing is being delivered;
 - Focusing on children present at domestic abuse incidents; and
 - Prioritising the management and disruption of domestic abuse perpetrators.
- Police leaders were asked to audit and track the progression of domestic abuse action plans through either their continuous improvement frameworks or other change management processes.

Recommendation 4

By June 2016, chief constables should review the progress made by their forces in giving full effect to their forces' stated priorities on domestic abuse. Every force in England and Wales should undertake a clear and specific assessment of its own progress in respect of domestic abuse, potentially through peer review, which should include reference to the following:

- the force's updated action plan on domestic abuse;
- the force's culture and values;
- the force's performance management framework;

- the force's approach to the use of data and evidence of what works in support of the development of a learning organisation;
- the reward and recognition policy in the force and the roles and behaviours that this rewards currently;
- the selection and promotion processes in the force;
- the messages and communications sent by the senior leadership team to the rest of the force about tackling domestic abuse;
- the development opportunities for officers and staff in the force; and
- force policy on how perpetrators and victims of domestic abuse who are employed by the force are managed.

To ensure consistency, the College of Policing and the national policing lead on domestic abuse have agreed to provide advice on the form and content of the assessment of progress by March 2016.

HMIC will draw on forces' assessment of progress on domestic abuse as part of its annual PEEL inspection in 2016.

Chief constables should as soon as practicable take whatever further action is necessary to build on the progress made in giving effect to their forces' stated priorities on domestic abuse. This should include action to raise awareness of domestic abuse to instil a deeper understanding of and commitment to addressing the often complex needs of victims of domestic abuse. Chief constables should also take steps to support, encourage and conspicuously value officers and staff who exemplify this understanding and commitment.

Update on progress against recommendation 4

- The College of Policing and national policing lead on domestic abuse wrote to all forces in April 2016 to provide a template, which outlined the areas that should be addressed by forces when conducting their reviews. It was requested responses were limited to: realistic assessments of progress; succinct descriptions of evidence; and, where progress had not been as rapid as hoped, a description of progress with plans for action.
- Forces were asked to complete their assessments by the end of June 2016. HMICFRS requested copies of the assessments in advance of the PEEL inspection visits in autumn 2016 and drew on the contents of these to inform inspection activity.

Annex D – About the data

The information presented in this report comes from a range of sources, including published data by the Home Office and Office for National Statistics, inspection fieldwork and data collected directly from all 43 geographic police forces in England and Wales.

Where HMICFRS has collected data directly from police forces, we have taken reasonable steps to agree the design of the data collection with forces and with other relevant interested parties such as the Home Office. We have given forces several opportunities to check and validate the data they have provided us to ensure the accuracy of our evidence. For instance, we checked the data that forces submitted and queried with forces where figures were notably different from other forces or were internally inconsistent.

Methodology

Data in the report

The British Transport Police was outside the scope of inspection. Therefore any aggregated totals for England and Wales exclude British Transport Police data and numbers will differ from those published by the Home Office.

Population

For all uses of population as a denominator in our calculations, unless otherwise noted, we use Office for National Statistics (ONS) mid-2015 population estimates. These were the most recent data available at the time of the inspection.

For the specific case of City of London Police, we include both resident and transient population within our calculations. This is to account for the unique nature and demographics of this force's responsibility.

Review of crime files

HMICFRS reviewed 60 police case files across crime types for: robbery, common assault (flagged as domestic abuse), grievous bodily harm (GBH), stalking, harassment, rape and domestic burglary. The file review was designed to provide a broad overview of the identification of vulnerability, the effectiveness of investigations and to understand how victims are treated through police processes. Files were randomly selected from crimes recorded between 1 January 2016 and 31 March 2016 and were assessed against several criteria. Due to the small sample size of cases selected, we have not used results from the file review as the sole basis for assessing individual force performance but alongside other evidence gathered.

Domestic abuse crime, arrests and outcomes

Data for domestic abuse flagged offences were provided by the Home Office for the 12 months to 30 June 2016. These are more recent figures than those previously published by Office for National Statistics.

Data relating to domestic abuse arrests, charges and outcomes were collected through the HMIC data collection.³⁶

Domestic abuse arrest rate (per 100 domestic abuse crimes), for the 12 months to 30 June 2016

Derbyshire, Durham and Gloucestershire forces were unable to provide domestic abuse arrest data. Therefore, these forces' data are not included in the graph or in the calculation of the England and Wales rate.

The arrest rate is calculated using a common time period for arrests and offences. It is important to note that each arrest is not necessarily directly linked to its specific domestic abuse offence recorded in the 12 months to 30 June 2016 in this calculation. It is also possible to have more than one arrest per offence although this is rare. In addition, the reader should note the increase in police-recorded crime which has affected the majority of forces over the last year (39 out of 43). This may have the effect of arrest rates actually being higher than the figures suggest. Despite this, the calculation still indicates whether the force prioritises arrests for domestic abuse offenders over other potential forms of action. HMICFRS has evaluated the arrest rate alongside other measures (such as use of voluntary attendance or body-worn video cameras) during our inspection process to understand how each force deals with domestic abuse overall.

When viewing this data the user should be aware of the following:

- Cambridgeshire Constabulary identified a recording problem, and it could only obtain accurate data from a manual audit of its custody records. This means its data may indicate a lower arrest rate. However, at the time of publication this was the most reliable figure the force could provide for the 12 months to 30 June 2016. The force plans to conduct regular manual audits while the recording problem is resolved. HMICFRS will conduct a further review to test this evidence when more data are available.
- Lancashire Constabulary experienced difficulties in identifying all domestic abuse flagged arrests. This affected 23 days in the 12 months to 30 June

³⁶ Further information about the domestic abuse statistics and recent releases are in Domestic abuse in England and Wales: year ending March 2016, ONS 2016. Available at: www.ons.gov.uk/releases/domesticabuseinenglandandwalesyearendingmarch2016

2016. The force investigated this and confirmed that the impact on data provided to HMICFRS would be marginal and that these are the most reliable figures it can provide.

Rate of outcomes recorded in 12 months to 30 June 2016 for domestic-related offences

Dorset Police has been excluded from domestic abuse outcomes data. Dorset Police experienced difficulties with the recording of crime outcomes for the 12 months to 30 June 2016. This was because the force had introduced the Niche records management system in spring 2015. Problems with the implementation of Niche meant that crime outcomes were not reliably recorded. The failure to file investigations properly meant that a higher than normal proportion of offences were allocated to 'Not yet assigned an outcome'. During 2016, the force conducted additional work to solve the problem. In doing so, some crime outcomes from the 12 months to 30 June 2016 were updated after that date and are reflected in a later period. This makes Dorset Police's crime outcome data inconsistent with that provided by other forces. HMICFRS has decided not to use Dorset Police's outcome data in the interests of consistency of data use and to maintain fairness to all forces.

Nottinghamshire Police has been excluded from domestic abuse outcomes data. The force experienced difficulties with the conversion of some crime data when it moved to a new crime recording system. This means that the force did not record reliably some crime outcomes for domestic abuse related offences. The force subsequently solved the problem and provided updated outcomes figures. However, this makes Nottinghamshire Police's outcomes data for domestic abuse related offences inconsistent with that provided by other forces. HMICFRS has decided not to use Nottinghamshire Police's outcomes data for domestic abuse related offences in the interests of consistency of data use and to maintain fairness to all forces.

In April 2015, the Home Office began collecting information from the police on whether recorded offences were related to domestic abuse. Crimes are identified by the police as domestic abuse related if the offence meets the government definition of domestic violence and abuse which is:

“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or 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 domestic abuse outcomes rate is calculated by the number of each outcome recorded for domestic abuse flagged offences in the 12 months to 30 June 2016, divided by the total number of domestic abuse offences recorded in the 12 months to 30 June 2016. The domestic abuse-related crimes used in this calculation are not necessarily those to which the outcomes have been assigned. Therefore, direct comparisons should not be made between general outcomes, where each crime is linked to its associated outcome, and domestic abuse outcomes.

Any interpretation of outcomes should take into account that outcomes will vary dependent on the crime types that occur in each force area, and how the force deals with offenders for different crimes.