

# **Improving the response to domestic violence and abuse in Nottinghamshire**

A WHOLE SYSTEMS APPROACH

## **Executive Summary**

**FINAL CONSULTATION DRAFT**

## About this paper

The full Domestic Abuse Position Paper has been compiled by the Nottinghamshire Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner with contributions from Nottinghamshire Police, Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council strategic leads for domestic abuse and local commissioned domestic abuse service providers.

It considers the current service landscape and opportunities to improve the response to domestic abuse across five potential phases of intervention as part of a 'whole-systems approach'. These include:

- Prevention of domestic abuse, from primary through to tertiary prevention
- Identification and discovery of domestic abuse and hidden harm
- Immediate safeguarding and crisis care response to domestic abuse
- Longer term recovery and rehabilitation among survivors and perpetrators respectively
- Criminal justice outcomes

The paper collates findings from a range of existing assessment and inspection reports which include:

- HMIC and HMCPSP: Evidence-led Domestic Abuse Prosecutions, 2020 (HMI-ELP2020)
- Nottinghamshire JSNA: Domestic Abuse, 2019 (NS-JSNA2019)
- Nottinghamshire DSVAP Partnership, 2019 (DSVAP-2019)
- HMICFRS: Nottinghamshire PEEL Inspection, 2019 (HMI-PEEL19)
- HMICFRS: Police Response to Domestic Abuse Follow Up, 2019 (HMI-DA2019)
- Nottingham JSNA: Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse, 2018 (NM-JSNA2018)
- Rural Crime Network 'Captive and Controlled' research reports (RCN2019)

The paper sets out recommendations for the Police and PCC in addition to areas for more systemic consideration by the wider domestic abuse partnerships in the city and county. Care has been taken to identify recommendations which fall into the PCC's purview.

The information in the full paper will be used by the Police and Crime Commissioner ("the PCC") and other key partners to help inform scrutiny, planning and commissioning activity for 2020 and beyond.

This paper is an Executive Summary of the full Position Paper, which includes the key findings and recommendations.

# Executive Summary

## Key Findings

1. Domestic violence and abuse remains a critical shared priority for partner agencies across Nottinghamshire on account of the high level of individual harm it can cause, prevalence and likelihood of abuse occurring in local communities and the extent to which presenting demand continues to exceed available service capacity. Despite this profile, the service response to domestic abuse in Nottinghamshire maintains a highly positive trajectory.
2. The County's Domestic and Sexual Abuse Framework is due to expire in 2020 and the City's Violence Against Women and Girls ("VAWG") strategy is still in development. There is a gap for a city/county wide domestic abuse strategy which sets out clear measures of success. Given the link between domestic abuse, sexual violence, honour based abuse, female genital mutilation ("FGM") and stalking, and the need for any strategy to address all aspects of domestic abuse, including prevention activity as well as supporting survivors, a PCC led VAWG Strategy for Nottinghamshire would enable all strands to be brought together under one overarching plan with clear success measures.
3. Evidence suggests that both the prevalence and severity of domestic abuse occurring within our communities has been in steady decline over the last decade. However, our growing understanding of non-physical aspects of abuse, the use of technology to exercise power and control, the growing complexity and increasing presenting demand continue to present new challenges for victim service providers and the criminal justice system. Other emerging trends reported by specialist providers such as adolescent to parent violence may require the development of new approaches.
4. A good range of specialist primary prevention initiatives are in place across the force area. Healthy relationship provision in schools has been consistently funded in the city for many years and is almost universal. Specialist schools-based prevention activity has been more ad hoc across the county, but has been growing year on year. Further work is required to secure a more stable and consistent strategic approach across Nottinghamshire.
5. Domestic abuse services across Nottinghamshire are generally, strong, resilient, well-embedded and mostly compliant with Public Health Guidance 116 and the Home Office's National Statement of Expectations for domestic abuse support in local areas, with some gaps in some areas which require further development, such as perpetrators - see below. Despite reductions in the overall budget for policing since 2010, the force has also maintained and invested in its response to domestic abuse over this period with dedicated investigators and specialists.
6. The proportion of domestic abuse coming to the attention of the police and other agencies is growing markedly, driven in part by better recording, greater recognition of coercive control and stalking, more police proactivity in identifying hidden harm and increases in victim disclosure. This positive trend is likely to continue to do so over the next three years given the increasing multi-agency focus on trauma-informed practice and routine enquiry.

7. Despite this, however, the number of domestic incidents recorded by police remains lower than that of other comparable police force areas and some groups, such as male victims, remain under-represented within the police recorded crime profile. This indicates opportunities for further partnership engagement, outreach and awareness raising activity. The number of domestic crimes remains broadly similar to that of other comparable areas.
8. Domestic abuse-related demand and the complexity of that demand continues to grow in Nottinghamshire, placing increasing pressures on investigation, public protection caseloads, Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences ("MARACs"), criminal justice and victim support services. Analysis of Independent Domestic Violence Advisers ("IDVAs") supporting survivors at high risk of harm demonstrates that there is a good level of local resourcing which is just under nationally recommended levels but well above East Midlands and national averages.
9. The first response to domestic abuse is a critical period in terms of safety planning, protecting victims and preventing future harm. Arrest rates for domestic abuse are marginally lower than average in Nottinghamshire, however arrest rates vary significantly and proportionately on the basis of the risk presented.
10. Further work should be undertaken to explore the reasons for variance in successful application rate for Domestic Violence Protection Orders ("DVPOs") and 'right to know' applications when compared to the national picture and ensure the police and other relevant agencies involved in the management of perpetrators are aware of new relationships and proactively engage with potential victims.
11. While positive outcome rates for domestic-related crime have been falling over recent years, Nottinghamshire Police maintains a stronger position than the East Midlands and England and Wales average. Reductions in positive outcomes rates are being driven in part by cases in which the survivor does not support further action.
12. Similarly, while CPS charging rates and conviction for domestic abuse related crimes have been increasing since 2014/15 and are in line with the England and Wales and East Midlands picture, the volume of legal decisions, charges and prosecutions has been falling. This has been driven in part by demand pressures on the police and CPS, higher thresholds required for charging and standards expected of digital and medical evidence and disclosure.
13. Consequently, while police recorded domestic abuse is rising, levels of charging, prosecution and conviction have been falling over recent years. Only around 8.4% of domestic abuse-related crimes reported to the police currently result in conviction. This local and national concern has led to an increasing focus on evidence-led prosecution.
14. The PCC, City and County Councils work together closely to co-commission evidence based support services which help survivors. The co-commissioned support services meet national Women's Aid, Respect and SafeLives quality standards as well as the Home Office's VAWG National Statement of Expectations. They consistently deliver high rates of positive outcomes, for example in feelings of safety and greater confidence. They have made good progress in identifying and reaching out to survivors from groups which are under-represented in service, such as disabled, BAME and LGBT survivors. However,

there is more work to be done in this area, including to understand and respond to the needs of migrant workers, which is an issue identified nationally.

15. In terms of crisis intervention, there are capacity constraints relating to agencies attending increasing MARAC presentations and constraints on the availability of refuge places, with new statutory responsibilities for local authorities under the Domestic Abuse Bill likely to increase demand for community-based services and refuge. Nottingham and Nottinghamshire do not currently have sufficient refuge provision and a substantial proportion of existing refuge space in Nottinghamshire is funded nationally, with Ministry of Housing, Local Government and Communities (MHCLG) funding currently supporting over 40% of the refuge units across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. Temporary MHCLG funding has recently been re-awarded until the new statutory duties are in force. If insufficient national funding is available to pay for current and additional refuge provision, the new Domestic Abuse Bill may have unintended consequences by diverting local funding from wider domestic abuse support services to refuge. Local partnership working will be required to ensure no negative impact on domestic abuse provision.
16. Despite national expectations and NICE recommendations for local areas to commission tailored interventions for people who perpetrate domestic violence, work in this area remains under-developed both nationally and locally. In Nottinghamshire there is already some primary, secondary and tertiary prevention activity in place to tackle perpetrators, often funded by the PCC. Nottinghamshire's DVA Integrated Offender Management (IOM) pilot has demonstrated a reduction in risk from high risk serial perpetrators and increasing the sense of safety of the survivors associated with them.
17. However, there is a need to do more to address perpetrator behaviour and there are gaps and opportunities for further activity. National evidence suggests that it is unlikely that a universal, one-size fits all programme will be found that meets the needs of survivors, perpetrators, commissioners and police. Given this, a strategic local approach to prevention work is needed, based on best available evidence and considering where resources are best targeted (for example at emerging low risk perpetrators or high risk offenders). Any work funded should meet national Respect guidelines and complement Nottinghamshire's mature domestic abuse landscape. Great care must be taken to ensure that programmes are safe and do no further harm.
18. The Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent restrictions have presented challenges for domestic abuse services, with lockdown measures widely perceived to have exacerbated and escalated the risk of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse demand on Nottinghamshire Police dipped during lockdown then rose as restrictions were eased. Demand in the county continues to be higher than expected. Nottinghamshire's DSVA Helpline has experienced very high demand and some co-commissioned support services rising from moderate to severe pressure in August 2020. Mitigation is in place to reduce pressure to back to moderate in early September.
19. Strong existing partnership structures helped to ensure a swift response to changes to domestic abuse provision during the lockdown. In addition, the PCC used emergency MoJ funding to bolster support services, however, more financial help may be needed when the national funding expires. There is a need to identify and implement the domestic abuse specific lessons learnt from the pandemic and an opportunity for public sector

partners to work together strategically to ensure that employers in Nottinghamshire have the capacity to respond to domestic abuse experienced by employees.

20. Learning from domestic homicide reviews across Nottinghamshire since 2015 have reiterated many of the key messages set out in this paper, most notably the importance of an effective response to people with complex needs, rigorous and robust information sharing, comprehensive training across agencies and the value of a whole family approach.
21. This paper draws largely on information collected by the police, criminal justice bodies and locally commissioned survivor support services. It should be recognised that arrests, prosecutions and survivor support only hold part of the solution. Further work may be required to better understand the individual and family level impact of domestic abuse from a public health perspective as part of a sustainable long term approach.
22. The analysis in this paper offers only a point in time snapshot of what is a rapidly changing picture. Further policy and legislative changes are likely to impact upon the profile of domestic abuse over the coming year, including the Government's review of pre-charge bail and new duties and responsibilities under the Homelessness Reduction and Domestic Abuse Acts. In addition, Covid-19 measures will continue to have an impact on domestic abuse.
23. The momentum brought about by the Government's landmark Domestic Abuse Bill, combined with the focus on domestic abuse during Covid-19, provides a timely opportunity to drive further improvements in Nottinghamshire's approach to tackling and reducing domestic abuse, underpinned by dedicated funding and new duties and responsibilities. These developments, and the recommendations below, should be taken forward as part of an integrated multi-agency whole-systems approach across the Nottinghamshire Police force area.

## Recommendations

Theme	Recommendation	Lead agencies
<b>Policy context</b>	1. The PCC to work with key stakeholders across the violence against women and girls sector to develop a whole systems Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and Action plan for 2020-2025 by March 2021. This should include indicators of success against which performance will be tracked.	PCC City Council County Council Violence Reduction Unit
<b>Nature and prevalence of domestic abuse</b>	2. The PCC to continue to work with local authority partners to co-commission professional development activity to embed coercive control, emotional abuse, economic abuse, parental abuse and technologically-assisted abuse through local training	PCC City Council County Council
	3. As part of the VAWG strategy and action plan, the PCC to work with partners to take forward work to address the particular issues faced by migrants and children affected by domestic abuse, bidding for national funding if available.	PCC City Council County Council
<b>Prevention</b>	4. The PCC and partners to continue to invest in universal and targeted education, prevention and awareness raising activities and campaigns across the city and county where there is clear evidence of impact and where possible increase funding to ensure consistent city/county wide coverage.	PCC City Council County Council
	5. The PCC to work with the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Violence Reduction Unit to continue to fund and then evaluate initiatives to respond to children and young people who have witnessed violence with knives.	PCC Violence Reduction Unit
<b>Identification</b>	6. Nottinghamshire Police to drive further improvements in the domestic crime and incident identification rate, with a focus on spotting the signs of abuse and ensuring routine enquiry as part of interactions with potentially vulnerable groups.	Nottinghamshire Police
	7. The PCC and City and County Councils to review front line capacity in view of any increasing identification rate. Further resource may be required.	PCC City Council County Council
	8. The PCC to work with the City and County Council to review the take up of support services across all of Nottinghamshire's communities and develop an action plan to improve take up from under-represented groups, including hidden harm in BAME and rural communities and amongst male survivors.	PCC City Council County Council

Theme	Recommendation	Lead agencies
<b>Safeguarding</b>	9. Nottinghamshire Police to lead work to improve the use of domestic violence protection orders.	Nottinghamshire Police
	10. Nottinghamshire Police to work with co-commissioned support services to improve the rate of take up of Claire's law.	Nottinghamshire Police
	11. The PCC to work with the City and County Councils to continue to co-commission high quality evidence based support services and monitor their capacity to provide high quality helpline, MARAC and IDVA support, reviewing the level of IDVA provision as necessary.	PCC City Council County Council
	12. The PCC and partners to work together to ensure that the forthcoming statutory duty for domestic abuse accommodation is properly funded and does not have a negative impact on other specialist services.	PCC City Council County Council
<b>Longer term support and recovery</b>	13. The PCC to consult with the clinical commissioning groups about the provision of, demand for and clinical effectiveness of therapeutic support provided to survivors of domestic violence and abuse.	PCC City Council County Council CCGs
	14. The PCC and partners to improve understanding of the needs, experiences and service response to male survivors of domestic abuse, working with the existing male support service.	PCC City Council County Council
<b>Rehabilitation and behaviour change</b>	15. The PCC to work with partners to put a DVA prevention strategy in place, as part of the Violence Against Girls Strategy and Action Plan.	PCC, Nottinghamshire Police, Probation, Violence Reduction Unit, Local authorities
	16. The PCC, Nottinghamshire Police, CRC and commissioned support services to consider expansion to build on the success of the DVA IOM Scheme.	PCC Nottinghamshire Police
	17. Develop and seek funding to pilot a Respect accredited DV perpetrator programme for offenders within and outside of the CJS, ideally informed by NNVRU's literature review.	PCC Violence Reduction Unit



Theme	Recommendation	Lead agencies
The Criminal Justice System	18. Improve oversight and scrutiny of the appropriate use of 'release under investigation' and pre-charge bail pending legislative/guidance changes.	PCC Nottinghamshire Police
	19. Ensure ongoing monitoring of domestic abuse satisfaction rates and support action to maintain strong levels of survivor satisfaction with police, particularly via improvements in follow up and feedback.	PCC Nottinghamshire Police
	20. Work with HM Courts and criminal justice partners to ensure access to justice and sufficient specialist DV provision across the city and county.	PCC Crown Prosecution Service HM Courts
	21. Police and CPS to explore opportunities to improve use and understanding of evidence-led prosecutions alongside appropriate training, messaging and sharing of best practice.	Nottinghamshire Police Crown Prosecution Service
Covid-19	22. The PCC work with local authorities and Nottinghamshire Police to ensure that critical specialist support services can continue safely throughout and after the pandemic.	PCC City Council County Council
	23. The PCC to work with Nottinghamshire Police, local authorities and commissioned support services to identify and implement lessons learnt from Covid-19.	PCC Nottinghamshire Police City Council County Council