

Increasingly everyone's business: A progress report on the police response to domestic abuse

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Foreword

“Three or four weeks ago it happened again, the police came straight away and they were fantastic. They came within 10 minutes. He came back again at 2.45am in the morning – the police came then, searched for him and arrested him. They helped me settle the children and made me a cup of tea – fantastic.”

In March 2014, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) published a report, *Everyone’s business: improving the police response to domestic abuse*, that found significant weaknesses in the services that were provided to victims of domestic abuse by the police service. As part of that report, HMIC called on forces to take urgent action to improve both their ways of working and to make their services more effective. HMIC committed itself to inspect forces’ progress in making these changes.

Twenty-one months later, the extent of domestic abuse and the number of people whose lives are affected by it remain enormous. In the 12 months to March 2015, the police in England and Wales received more than 900,000 calls about domestic abuse - an average of over 100 calls an hour. Domestic abuse-related crime constituted 10 percent of all recorded crimes and one in three of all recorded assaults with injury crimes.

The identification, protection and support of victims of domestic abuse remain a vital part of the policing mission to prevent crime and disorder. As the above quotation illustrates, the right police response can transform for the better the life of victims of domestic abuse. The complex and sensitive nature of domestic abuse means that the police often need to work in close partnership with a range of agencies to make this happen.

Between June and August 2015, as part of its annual all-force inspection programme covering forces’ effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (known as PEEL), HMIC revisited each police force in England and Wales to examine how well they respond to and safeguard victims of domestic abuse. This included looking at how well they identify repeat and vulnerable victims of domestic abuse; how officers and staff assess and respond to the risks faced by victims; the training and support that officers and staff receive and the standard of investigations of domestic abuse incidents. HMIC also examined the progress that forces have made on the action plans they put in place in response to the findings of *Everyone’s business*.

HMIC found a number of improvements:

- There has been a 31 percent increase in the number of domestic abuse related crimes recorded in England and Wales since the publication of *Everyone's business*. The Office for National Statistics suggests that this is due, in part, to police forces improving their recording of domestic abuse incidents as crimes. Forces have also been actively encouraging victims to come forward to report crimes and it may be that this is reflected in this increase. The reporting and identification of domestic abuse as a crime is vitally important as it increases the chances that victims will receive from the police and partner agencies the service and support they need.
- There has been a determined effort by police leaders to make domestic abuse a priority, not just on paper, but also in practice. Once again, all forces told us that tackling domestic abuse is a priority for them. This stated intent is now beginning to translate into operational reality. In many forces we have seen tangible improvements in the service provided to victims of domestic abuse including – better identification and assessment of the risks faced by victims, better supervision of officers' initial response at the scene and improvements in the standard of subsequent investigations. Tackling domestic abuse also features more prominently in forces' day-to-day activities including the deployment of officers and their management and monitoring arrangements.
- Importantly, we found that police attitudes towards victims of domestic abuse and frontline officers' understanding of the importance of dealing with victims in a supportive and sympathetic way are improving. In many forces, particularly where there have been extensive training programmes, we found that police officers and staff are increasingly seeing domestic abuse as their business, not someone else's. There is still some way to go in many forces, but this progress is enormously encouraging.
- There are large numbers of officers and staff who are dedicated and passionate about protecting victims of domestic abuse and their families. In particular, HMIC welcomes the increased use by response officers of body-worn video cameras at domestic abuse incidents as this provides a powerful source of evidence in any later prosecution.
- At a time of significant financial challenge, forces have continued largely to protect their dedicated teams or other resources that focus on public protection work, which includes domestic abuse.
- Partner organisations and domestic abuse practitioners recognise the steps that forces have taken to tackle domestic abuse. The leadership of the police in local multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) processes which are designed to safeguard victims and their children is particularly welcomed.

Overall, HMIC is encouraged that this inspection found that police leaders, officers, PCSOs and staff have acted on the messages of our 2014 report and now see tackling domestic abuse as an important priority for them – domestic abuse is increasingly becoming ‘everyone’s business’.

However, there is still much more to be done and this inspection found a number of causes of concern and areas for improvement in relation to individual force’s response to domestic abuse. HMIC acknowledges that the scale of change called for in *Everyone’s business* will take time to bring about in full but believes that the police service should immediately appreciate that change needs to start now to ensure that there is effective and consistent operational practice across all force areas.

Every force also needs to do more work to understand the nature and scale of domestic abuse in their area, through comprehensive analysis of their own and partner organisations data. Further enhancements are needed to training so that, wherever they live, victims receive the service and support they need. All officers and staff should be trained to a high standard not only in identifying and supporting victims of domestic abuse but also understanding the complex dynamics of abuse and coercive control. And greater focus on reducing offending by perpetrators is needed as this will save potential victims from abuse and help to reduce demands on police forces.

These conclusions do not diminish the value of the often excellent work being completed by a large number of police leaders, officers and staff and I am grateful to chief constables and their teams for the work they have done so far on this important issue of public interest. As police forces and partners face growing challenges over the next few years, it is vitally important that they sustain their efforts to improve the service they provide to some of the most vulnerable people in our society. This report sets out a set of further recommendations that build on those in *Everyone’s business* to ensure that this happens.

HMIC remains committed to inspecting forces’ progress in tackling domestic abuse during 2016 and beyond.



HMI Zoë Billingham

HM Inspector of Constabulary

Summary

In the 12 months to March 2015, the police service in England and Wales received more than 900,000 calls about domestic abuse – an average of over 100 calls an hour. Domestic abuse-related crime constituted 10 percent of all recorded crime, and represented a third of all recorded assault with injury crimes.

These figures are shocking – all the more so, because domestic abuse is also estimated to be widely under-reported. They show that there are large numbers of people, both female and male, of all demographics and in every geographical area, who are the victims of crimes which are often committed in their homes, and by those they should be able to trust. The effective protection of these vulnerable and sometimes desperate people is essential if the police are to fulfil their primary purpose of preventing crime and disorder and protecting people, particularly the most defenceless and vulnerable in our society.

Domestic abuse cases can be complex and difficult; protecting and supporting victims (or prevention work, to stop them becoming victims in the first place) can usually only be achieved through close partnership working across a range of agencies. At the point at which a victim picks up the phone or walks into a police station, however, it is only the police response that counts. They alone can act promptly, properly and with due empathy in order to protect the victim (both immediately, and in the long term), or else the opportunity might be missed, and the victim potentially placed in more serious danger.

This is a huge and important responsibility. It is critical that the police fulfil it successfully for the victims that they serve.

Everyone's business

In 2013 the Home Secretary commissioned Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) to inspect the police's response to domestic abuse. The resulting HMIC inspection report, *Everyone's business: Improving the police response to domestic abuse*,¹ was published in March 2014. This set out fundamental weaknesses in the service provided to victims of domestic abuse by the police service, made 11 recommendations (see Annex A), and called on forces to take urgent action to improve their ways of working to make their services more effective.

¹ *Everyone's business: Improving the police response to domestic abuse*, HMIC, March 2014, available from www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/improving-the-police-response-to-domestic-abuse/

Everyone's business was an influential report:

- as a result of its findings, in June 2014 the Home Office established a national oversight group on domestic abuse which is attended by members of statutory organisations and representatives from the voluntary sector and chaired by the Home Secretary, to monitor progress against the report's recommendations (see Annex E); and
- every force has now published an action plan to outline the steps it would take to improve its approach to domestic abuse.

To maintain this momentum, HMIC committed to inspect forces' progress on domestic abuse as part of its annual, all-force police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) inspection programme. Between June and August 2015, HMIC inspected all forces on how effective they are at protecting those who are vulnerable from harm and supporting victims. This included an in-depth consideration of victims of domestic abuse.

Nine forces were assessed as having a cause of concern² in relation to their response to domestic abuse and HMIC has made specific recommendations designed to improve the service those forces provide. A further fifteen forces were found to have areas for improvement³ relating to domestic abuse.

This report sets out the principal national themes from this inspection. Findings for each force have been published in separate reports.⁴

Approach⁵

This inspection looked at how well police forces respond to and safeguard victims of domestic abuse. The specific areas looked at included how well force systems identify repeat and vulnerable victims; how well officers and staff assess risk and respond to this; the training and support received by police officers and staff and the standard of investigation. HMIC examined force data and case files, and the domestic abuse action plans that all forces put together as a result of *Everyone's*

² If, during an inspection, HMIC identifies a serious or critical shortcoming in practice, policy or performance, it will be reported as a cause of concern and HMIC will recommend that the force(s) (and sometimes other bodies) make changes to alleviate or eradicate it.

³ If, during an inspection, HMIC finds an aspect of practice, policy or performance that falls short of the expected standard, but which is not a serious or critical shortcoming, this may be reported as an area for improvement. Areas for improvement will not be accompanied by a recommendation.

⁴ *PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015 (Vulnerability)*, Available from www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/

⁵ For PEEL methodology, see www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/peel-assessments/how-we-inspect/2015-peel-assessment/

business. Also, we conducted fieldwork in all 43 forces, including carrying out significant reality testing (listening to calls in control rooms, for instance, and attending multi-agency risk conferences);⁶ carried out an online survey of 450 domestic abuse practitioners;⁷ and held focus groups with 60 victims of domestic abuse.

Findings

There have been improvements in the overall police response to victims of domestic abuse since the publication of *Everyone's business* in March 2014. Police leaders have made domestic abuse a priority and there are some tangible improvements in the identification of victims of domestic abuse; the assessment of the risks they face; better supervision and improvements in the standard of investigations. Police attitudes and frontline officers' understanding of the importance of dealing with victims in a supportive and sympathetic way are improving. There are large numbers of officers and staff who are dedicated and passionate about protecting victims and their families and partner organisations and domestic abuse practitioners recognise the steps that forces have taken to tackle domestic abuse.

There are however, specific 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 6 for our full findings.

Recorded crime data

Since the publication of *Everyone's business*, there has been a 31 percent increase⁸ in the number of domestic abuse-related crimes recorded by police forces in England and Wales (from 269,700 to 353,100). However, calls for assistance to the police for domestic abuse-related incidents fell by 10 percent in the 12 months to March 2015. Therefore, rather than this reflecting a 31 percent increase in this type of offending, the Office for National Statistics (ONS)⁹ suggests it is due in part to police forces improving their recording of these incidents as crimes. This improvement is an extremely positive development and the hard work undertaken by forces should be recognised here, as domestic abuse incidents recorded as crimes are likely to receive an enhanced service.

⁶ For more information on MARACs, see p.20 and the glossary entry.

⁷ These were non-police staff who worked closely with victims of domestic abuse.

⁸ Comparing the 12 months to August 2013 to the 12 months to March 2015, HMIC-collected data. See Annex G - About the data.

⁹ *Part of Statistical Bulletin: Crime in England and Wales, year ending June 2015*, Office for National Statistics, 2015. Available from www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/crime-stats/crime-statistics/year-ending-june-2015/stb-crime--ye-june-2015.html#tab-Violent-crime

As well as improvements in the way the police service identifies and records domestic abuse, the ONS suggests that another possible explanation for the rise is an increase in the reporting of domestic abuse. HMIC acknowledged in *Everyone's business* that the majority of police and crime commissioners (PCCs) showed a strong commitment to tackling domestic abuse and highlighted that just under half of PCCs had made a commitment to increase the reporting of this type of offence. Forces have also been actively encouraging victims to come forward to report crimes and it may be that this is reflected in this increase. This is also a positive development as it suggests that forces are making progress in creating an environment where victims can feel more confident to come forward and be heard.

Organisational issues

Resourcing

Police forces have faced significant financial challenges over the last four years, resulting in reduced budgets and considerably fewer police officers and staff. Despite this, forces have continued largely to protect their investment in public protection resources. While this is encouraging, it is worth noting that this investment only averages 4 percent of forces' total budgets; and, 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.

Leadership

In the vast majority of forces, HMIC was impressed with the chief officer response to the findings in *Everyone's business*. Although fieldwork for this inspection was completed less than 18 months after the publication of our original report, HMIC saw numerous examples of leaders within forces making a determined effort to promote tangible improvements in the service provided to victims of domestic abuse. Comprehensive domestic abuse action plans have been created with many chief officers taking personal responsibility for overseeing changes. Leaders have succeeded in conveying the message to officers and staff that domestic abuse is a priority, although there is more to be done to ensure victims are protected, supported and receive a consistently good standard of service.

Force leaders have achieved positive change especially in relation to identifying and assessing risk associated with domestic abuse. HMIC found there is evidence of better supervision of the initial actions and risk assessments completed by response officers, and an improved standard of initial investigation. Chief officers have played an important role with partner organisations in developing multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASHs). These are leading to better information sharing and safety plans, specifically for victims and family members who are assessed as being at high risk. HMIC recognises that some of the improvements we called for will take time to achieve, for example ensuring all frontline officers and staff have a good

understanding of the dynamics of domestic abuse and controlling behaviour. The leadership challenge for the service now is to sustain the level of determination and commitment seen over the last 21 months to ensure some of the early improvements are fully realised.

Recommendation 4 calls on chief constables to review the progress made in giving full effect to their forces' stated priority on domestic abuse and consider what further action is necessary to build on the progress made. HMIC will draw on forces' assessment of progress on domestic abuse as part of its annual PEEL inspection in 2016.

Performance management

More forces are developing their understanding of both the nature and scale of domestic abuse using their own data and that of other organisations. However, some forces have still not completed comprehensive analysis to understand domestic abuse within their area.

Since the last inspection, more forces are starting to incorporate domestic abuse into their performance management frameworks, but this work is still at an early stage of development in many forces. At a national level, it is now mandatory to capture domestic abuse crimes and incidents for the first time as part of the Annual Data Return (ADR). This data will provide an important benchmark so that forces can assess their performance on a comparative basis.

However, some forces still do not have a good understanding of their performance in relation to domestic abuse incidents. They are unable to explain what is happening in terms of arrest and outcome data even where this is particularly high or low. This suggests these forces are not monitoring their data for insight into what is changing (or not) in the policing of domestic abuse. Force leaders should use force data more effectively in order to understand demand and monitor performance. The challenge now for leaders is to understand the full picture of domestic abuse in their forces so they are able to ask the right questions of their management teams and staff.

Recommendation 2 addresses this issue by proposing the development of a data set relating to domestic abuse. Based on the successful work of the national Rape Monitoring Group,¹⁰ this will enable a more thorough analysis of how domestic abuse is addressed within a force area.

¹⁰ *Rape Monitoring Group: Digests and data 2014/15*, available from www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/rape-monitoring-group-digests-and-data-2014-15/

Training

Training, particularly in relation to the importance of officers understanding the dynamics of domestic abuse and coercive control,¹¹ is a recurring theme throughout this report. For instance:

- while call handlers and control room staff are generally well trained on domestic abuse in general, coverage of the indicators and effects of coercive control is patchy;
- front desk staff do not usually receive the same level of training; and
- across forces, there is an over-reliance on e-learning training packages, which HMIC considers less effective than face-to face-methods in terms of supporting changes in culture, attitudes and behaviours, and ensuring understanding of the often complex dynamics of domestic abuse.

Where forces have invested in training involving victim testimonies or local specialist domestic abuse services, staff have a better understanding of domestic abuse and are able to provide a better response to victims. The College of Policing is currently researching approaches to training that improves officer attitudes and behaviours. Until this research is completed, forces should continue to assess how best to ensure that officers and staff, through training and learning and development opportunities, are able to identify and understand the wide range of violence, behaviours and different perpetrators that fall under the definition of domestic abuse.

Victim feedback

One of the most valuable sources of information in assessing the quality of service being provided is feedback from people who received that service. HMIC found that there is limited evidence of forces engaging with victims to obtain feedback on the service provided. *Everyone's business* recommended that the Home Office should ensure the views of victims of domestic abuse are incorporated routinely and consistently into national monitoring arrangements by the start of the 2015/16 financial year. HMIC acknowledges that a victim satisfaction survey has been piloted by the Home Office and the results are being reviewed currently. However, we are disappointed that this work has not yet been completed. Forces should continue to explore how they can obtain feedback from victims while they await further guidance from the Home Office. This work should be captured in the updated domestic abuse actions plans proposed in Recommendation 3.

¹¹ 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 on-going nature of the behaviour and the extent to which the actions of the perpetrator control the victim through isolation, intimidation, degradation and micro-regulation of everyday life. Crucially it sets out that such abuse can be psychological as well as physical. Coercive control is explicitly covered by the definition of domestic abuse.

First contact

Victims may experience significant abuse before reporting it to the police for the first time. Call handlers need to be able to recognise domestic abuse, reassure the victim and provide them with advice on how to stay safe until the police arrive. It is crucial that these incidents are recorded appropriately on police systems to ensure the correct response is deployed to safeguard not only the victim, but also their children. Response officers need to have detailed information about any previous incidents to ensure they are as well prepared as possible when they arrive at the scene.

Identification of domestic abuse and repeat domestic abuse victims

All forces are now using the government definition of domestic abuse (see Annex C), and the majority (39 out of 43) have also adopted the government definition of a repeat domestic abuse victim. These are positive developments since HMIC's last domestic abuse inspection (when we found a range of different definitions being used). They should ensure more consistent identification of victims, and so provide better and more targeted service.

We found that staff who are answering 999 calls generally understand the definition of domestic abuse and use 'markers' to identify these cases on force information systems. In the majority of calls listened to during our fieldwork, call handlers were calm and reassuring and provided victims with clear advice on how to stay safe until the police arrived at the scene.

However, some forces are still poor at identifying and monitoring the number of repeat victims, with less than half of all forces (19 out of 43) using call handling systems that automatically identify potential repeat victims. This means that repeat victims calling from a different phone number or address could be missed. Over half of forces (24) were unable to provide HMIC with the number of calls received from repeat victims of domestic abuse which is unacceptable. This suggests these forces are not monitoring this important data in order to improve the service they provide to victims. Such monitoring is critical to understanding the nature of domestic abuse locally, as well as providing the evidence base for continuous improvement.

Use of THRIVE

The THRIVE system¹² is now being used in the control rooms in many forces, and provides a structured way of assessing the threat, harm, risk and investigation opportunities associated with a call, the vulnerability of the victim and the level of engagement that is required to resolve the issues.

While this is designed to allow the police to tailor the service they provide according to the particular needs of the victim, HMIC is concerned that staff in some forces

¹² Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability and Engagement. See p.35 for more on THRIVE.

view the model as a means of rationing police services; and of either delaying the deployment of officers to incidents, or not sending them at all. This potentially puts the needs of the force above the needs of the victim, which is the opposite of what THRIVE is designed to achieve.

Supervision

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

Initial response

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 placing them at further risk. Response officers are expected to keep both the victim and their children safe at the scene, assess future risk so that longer term safety plans can be developed, investigate the incident and start to gather evidence to support a prosecution. Victims can be reluctant to support police action and may appear to be uncooperative when in reality this is due to pressure from the perpetrator or they may fear reprisals against them and their children.

Officer understanding of the dynamics of domestic abuse cases

The victims that we spoke to during this inspection described positive experiences where they had been listened to, shown empathy and made to feel safe by response officers. However, it was felt that officer attitudes and behaviour towards victims of domestic abuse are still mixed, with some still lacking the knowledge, skills and understanding to tackle domestic abuse effectively.

More than half (58 percent) of the respondents to an online survey of 450 domestic abuse practitioners¹³ felt that the police response to domestic abuse had improved a lot or slightly since the publication of *Everyone's business*. The practitioners were also asked to identify the top five competencies which were the highest priority for further improvement among response officers and specialist staff and investigators. Understanding the dynamics between victim and perpetrator, particularly in relation to coercive control, was identified as requiring 'a lot of improvement' by the highest

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

proportion of respondents. This was supported by the results of focus groups held in each force with a range of domestic abuse practitioners. Overall, it was felt that some response officers still lacked understanding and appreciation of the dynamics of domestic abuse, particularly in relation to coercive control.

HMIC explored the issue of the importance of a good initial response in 11 focus groups with over 60 victims. A large number felt that responding officers did not always understand the dynamics of domestic abuse and the situation that victims often found themselves in. Some victims described officers responding more positively when they had a visible injury compared to cases where there had been emotional abuse, which reinforces the need for training to develop officers understanding of coercive control. Victims gave examples of how the negative attitudes of particular officers had resulted in them losing trust and not being willing to report subsequent abuse to the police. This had a lasting impact on their views of the police and their expectations of how they would be treated in the future.

Evidence-gathering at the scene of the crime

We found that standards of initial investigative action taken at the scene of domestic abuse incidents have improved but more should still be done. Although not necessarily representative of all case files for all forces, in a file review of 480 case files identified as relating to domestic abuse,¹⁴ HMIC found that:

- photographs were only taken at the time of the incident in 56 percent (214) of the 384 applicable¹⁵ cases; and
- house-to-house enquiries were only made in 40 percent (144) of the 361 applicable cases, which means that opportunities to obtain corroborating evidence may have been missed.

An analysis of 600 case files for actual bodily harm was completed to inform the last domestic abuse inspection. Although we are unable to make direct comparisons as the files reviewed for this inspection cover different offence types, photographs of the injuries sustained by victims were only taken in 46 percent of the 600 cases reviewed and house-to-house enquiries only completed in 23 percent of the cases examined. Despite us not being able to make direct comparisons, the increases in both of these areas may be a positive development and may indicate a general improvement in standards.

Having the knowledge and skills to complete thorough evidence gathering at the scene of an incident is a core policing competency. The updated Authorised

¹⁴ See Annex G – About the data.

¹⁵ Offences where the course of action was appropriate for that particular crime e.g. if the victim did not sustain any physical injuries then photographs of the injury would not be applicable.

Professional Practice (APP) on Domestic Abuse issued by the College of Policing in September 2015 includes a range of quick access checklists covering actions on arrival and protecting the scene, as well as a toolkit for first responders. Forces should ensure that all officers are aware of, understand and use these resources.

In some forces which have seen a large increase in caseload, workloads are excessive which is affecting both the quality and timeliness of the investigation.

In cases identified early as high risk or involving repeat victims, there is often more supervision of both the risk assessment and the investigation, and high risk cases are appropriately given greater priority.

During this inspection, HMIC observed more use of body worn video cameras at domestic abuse incidents. Many forces have introduced, are in the process of introducing or are considering introducing body worn video cameras. In our file review for this inspection, body worn video cameras were used in just over 20 percent (71) of the 329 applicable cases to capture evidence from the victim and the scene. Body worn video cameras were only used in 4 percent of the 600 case files reviewed as part of the last inspection. This is encouraging given that videos are a powerful source of evidence in any prosecution, but particularly those where the victim does not support police action. HMIC recognises that body worn video cameras requires substantial investment in both the equipment itself but also the download and storage facilities, which is challenging at a time of budgetary constraint.

Arrests

Nearly every force (39 forces) has a positive action policy (including arrest) for domestic abuse and the majority of response officers are able to explain how they use this at the scene of an incident. However, the apparent variations in arrest rates across forces (ranging from 43 percent to 93 percent) suggest this policy is not translating into effective practice. Seven forces were unable to provide HMIC with data on the number of domestic abuse arrests, which is unacceptable. The wide variation between forces in all data, but specifically arrest, cautioning and charging rates, continues to be of concern to HMIC. It suggests that victims are still subject to a 'postcode lottery' in terms of whether the alleged perpetrator is arrested, cautioned or charged.

Children present at a domestic abuse scene

There is now more focus on the risk to children following a domestic abuse incident leading to a substantial increase in the number of domestic abuse related referrals to social services. The increase in referrals being received is, in some cases, impacting upon partner organisations' ability to assess these cases. There is evidence that where the police and children's services are working together, especially in the co-located MASH environment, they are developing triage processes to ensure higher

risk cases are identified and prioritised. On a positive note, forces are increasingly working with schools to inform them if one of their pupils is affected by a domestic abuse incident, which allows them to ensure appropriate monitoring and support is in place.

Risk assessment

Although there is more evidence of supervision and review of initial actions and the initial risk assessment, forces are continuing to adopt a range of different and therefore inconsistent practices when assessing risk. The Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and Honour-Based Violence risk identification, assessment and management model (DASH) is used in some form by most forces. However, in some forces the level of understanding among response officers of the importance of the risk assessment and its purpose appears to be poor. Some staff still view it as a process to complete rather than an essential part of understanding risk and protecting the victim.

Not all forces require the DASH form (or force specific risk assessment) to be completed in all domestic abuse cases, for example non crime incidents, and in at least two forces, the DASH risk assessment was being completed over the telephone for some incidents. HMIC has significant concerns about the practice of telephone-based risk assessment for intimate partner violence, not least because the perpetrator may be present at the time of the call, which could influence the victim's response and consequently the call handler could fail to capture the full extent of the risk posed. The College of Policing is completing research to examine how DASH is currently operating in forces to understand how a structured judgement model of risk assessment and management might work most effectively. The full research outcomes are due for publication in spring 2016. HMIC look forward to the findings of this research, which will provide forces with a firm foundation for an evidence based approach to risk assessment going forward.

Use of Domestic Violence Protection Orders

Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) are a new power that enables the police and magistrates courts to put in place protection in the immediate aftermath of a domestic abuse incident. A DVPO can prevent the perpetrator from returning to a residence and from having contact with the victim for up to 28 days. The majority of forces introduced DVPOs in mid 2014 and the use has been extremely varied. Forces are not using DVPOs as widely as they could and opportunities to use them are being missed. The domestic abuse practitioners and victims that we spoke to also expressed disappointment at the lack of action taken when orders or bail conditions were breached. This had a detrimental effect on these victims and their confidence in the police and criminal justice process.

Action taken

Specialist domestic abuse teams and ongoing case management

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. In many forces domestic abuse investigations are still being allocated based on crime type and complexity rather than assessment of risk to the victim. This can result in less experienced or qualified investigators being responsible for what is perceived to be a low level offence, but which in reality is assessed as a high risk case. Encouragingly, most forces have recognised this issue and are attempting to realign resources to address it.

Responsibility and oversight of domestic abuse cases can fragment at the point the case is transferred from the response officer to a specialist team. While there is generally clarity in who has responsibility for both investigation and safeguarding for victims at high risk of harm, this is not always clear in relation to victims assessed to be at medium and standard risk. Better performing forces have greater clarity on what service victims can expect to receive based on their level of risk, for example a follow up visit from the neighbourhood team.

The quality of safety plans for victims at medium and standard risk is inconsistent, as is the recording on police systems of the steps taken to support victims. It is crucial that these victims do not fall into the gaps and that all forces have clear policies in place outlining where responsibility for safeguarding victims at medium and standard risk lies and the quality of service they can expect to receive. This is important given that medium or standard risk cases can quickly escalate to become high risk. This also underlines the need for regular reassessment of risk, as circumstances change.

Domestic homicide reviews

Opportunities to learn from domestic homicide reviews (DHRs) are still being missed. *Everyone's business* recommended that the Home Office complete a comprehensive review of its approach to DHRs to establish if there was a better way of communicating the contents and conclusions of reviews and the lessons learned. HMIC is disappointed by the lack of progress in this area. More action is needed to ensure that the lessons learned are shared with forces with a view to preventing future domestic homicides and violence. Recommendation 6 calls for the development of a system for the collation of learning from domestic homicides and for the dissemination of this learning to forces.

Working with partners

An effective response to victims of domestic abuse requires both statutory and voluntary sector organisations to work together to undertake joint risk assessments and safety planning to address their often complex needs and the needs of their children. The domestic abuse practitioners and police officers that HMIC spoke to were extremely supportive of the multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) process. The feedback was positive about police participation in, and in many cases leadership of, MARACs. It is often the police who are responsible for the chairing, organisation and administration of these meetings.

HMIC observed 52 MARAC meetings in 34 different forces. This provided the opportunity to look at structures, attendance, risk assessment tools, safeguarding actions and the capacity to manage workload, as well as to see how action points are allocated, tracked and progressed. Overall, we found there is good attendance from most partners and good participation from those present, with evidence that victims and their children are being effectively safeguarded through information sharing and joint action planning. However, some forces are struggling to secure attendance from certain partners (commonly health sector organisations, although in some areas health are actively engaged).

The capacity of MARACs in some forces to deal with the high number of cases that meet the criteria for referral is an issue of some concern. Over the last 18 months there has been a 30 percent increase in the number of MARAC referrals from 57,900 to 75,500. The fact that more cases are being identified as high risk and referred to MARAC should be seen as a success particularly in the context of falling numbers of overall calls for assistance for domestic abuse and apparent better recording and reporting. However, this has in turn created new challenges within MARACs, which forces should work with relevant partners to understand and address.

At least one force undertakes a 'screening' exercise which means that not all high risk cases are being referred to MARAC, which is a concern. Some forces are increasing the frequency of MARAC meetings to respond to the increased demand resulting in further pressures being placed on both police and partner resources.

Forces should explore the detail of their data on MARAC referral rates to understand what is happening in terms of any increases, identify what is causing these changes and determine what the response (beyond just the police) needs to be. There should be a greater shared focus on early prevention work with families and early interventions with perpetrators, as the police are only ever one part of the solution. Recommendation 1 proposes that membership of the National Oversight Group 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 including the importance of joint multi-agency working on preventative approaches and early intervention with perpetrators.

Forces continue to improve how they work with partners, including sharing information more effectively. The establishment of multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASHs) and central referral units (CRUs) have led to positive advances in the sharing of information, assessment of risk and needs and agreement of actions to safeguard victims. Although HMIC strongly supports the development of these approaches, there has been little or no evaluation of these models in most forces so it is unclear how effective they are in terms of the outcomes for victims. It is important that these models are founded on what works, but forces currently have little or no evidence to determine this. Recommendation 5 focuses on establishing evidence based good practice and proposes that a 'task and finish group' evaluates the effectiveness of the various models in place for MASHs and CRUs in terms of the outcomes achieved for victims of domestic abuse.

Conclusion

We found that the police service and its partner organisations have undertaken extensive work over the last 18 months to improve the service provided to victims of domestic abuse, and there have been improvements to the overall police response as a result.

There still remain, however, a number of areas for improvement. Those that cause HMIC particular concern include:

- difficulties in identifying repeat callers and victims due to limitations of force computer systems;
- although the THRIVE (Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability and Engagement) decision model appears to be starting to be established with more forces using it, there is evidence of some staff applying it to reduce or ration competing demands rather than tailoring the service to address the needs of victims;
- inconsistent awareness particularly among response staff of coercive and controlling behaviour. Where training is provided, there is still undue reliance on e-learning packages;
- domestic abuse investigations still largely being allocated based on crime type and complexity rather than the assessment of risk;
- confusion in some forces over roles and responsibilities in relation to the safeguarding of victims at medium and standard risk;
- significant increases in workloads in specialist public protection teams;
- limited application of Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) and lack of appropriately robust action in enforcing breaches of these and other orders;

- significant increases in the number of high risk cases being identified mean the capacity of MARACs to safeguard victims is becoming an issue for police and partners;
- inconsistency in the application of the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (VCOP);¹⁶
- better analysis of police and partner organisation data is needed to understand performance and how domestic abuse is dealt with in force areas; and
- limited evidence of victim engagement to provide forces with feedback on the service provided and how this can be improved.

This inspection found clear evidence that the leadership of forces (actively supported by police and crime commissioners) have acted to improve the response to domestic abuse since the publication of *Everyone's business*. The police service should immediately appreciate that change needs to start now to ensure that there is effective and consistent operational practice across all force areas.

HMIC has developed a set of recommendations in consultation with police officers and staff, police and crime commissioners, voluntary sector organisations, government departments and academics. These build upon the previous recommendations in *Everyone's business* and outline the next phase of action needed to secure lasting change for victims of domestic abuse.

¹⁶ *Code of Practice for Victims of Crime*, Ministry of Justice, October 2013, available from www.cps.gov.uk/publications/docs/victims_code_2013.pdf

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 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: 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: 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: 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.

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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: 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: 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.¹⁷

¹⁷ See pp.104-5 for a description of this census, and the information it contains

Domestic abuse in England and Wales in numbers

	12 Months to August 2013	12 Months to March 2015	Change
Volume police business:			
Calls for assistance to the police for domestic abuse related incidents	1,010,000	909,000	Down 10%
Domestic abuse related crimes	269,700	353,100	Up 31%
Domestic abuse related sexual offences	6,400	11,200	Up 74%
Domestic abuse related assault with injury crimes	96,000	115,900	Up 21%
Domestic abuse related harassment crimes	27,300	41,500	Up 52%
Domestic abuse related crime is:			
of total recorded crime (excluding fraud)	8%	10%	Up 2 percentage points
of all recorded sexual offences	11%	13%	Up 2 percentage points
of all recorded assault with injury crimes	33%	33%	No change
of all recorded harassment crimes	49%	51%	Up 2 percentage points
High risk police business:			
High risk of serious harm or murder cases referred to MARAC	57,900	75,500	Up 30%

On average there are over 100 calls an hour to the police for assistance with domestic abuse.

Introduction

HMIC's PEEL effectiveness inspection

In 2014, HMIC started its annual all-force inspections, which look at police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy known as PEEL. Between June and August 2015, HMIC inspected all 43 forces to look at how effective forces are at protecting those who are vulnerable from harm and supporting victims. These inspections considered in detail how well forces respond to and safeguard victims of domestic abuse. The government's definition of domestic abuse is in Annex C.

Inspection methodology

HMIC followed up work from its initial domestic abuse inspection in 2014 and reviewed the progress that forces had made on implementing their action plans. A significant amount of this year's inspection was devoted to carrying out reality testing in forces. This included unannounced visits to force control rooms (including listening to calls) and interviewing 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 forces and domestic abuse practitioners from voluntary and community sector organisations.

HMIC set up a domestic abuse reference group to advise on and inform its domestic abuse inspection work. This group included 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 D.

The specific areas that HMIC looked at in this inspection included, but were not limited to:

- leadership – how well the leadership of the force has made domestic abuse a priority in practice;
- identification of repeat and vulnerable victims – how well the force systems and procedures identify repeat and vulnerable victims, assess and grade risk and the nature of the victim's vulnerability and respond to this at the initial point of contact;
- risk assessment and safety planning procedures - how well officers and staff assess risk and vulnerabilities at initial response and throughout the victim's experience, respond to this and undertake immediate and longer term safeguarding actions;

- training and support - the frequency and content of training provided to front desk staff, call handlers, first response/neighbourhood teams, investigators and domestic abuse specialists;
- standard of investigations - how well the force investigates public protection offences and how effective they are at supporting vulnerable victims during the investigation;
- progress made against the force domestic abuse action plan - what progress the force has made against its action plan, how it will address any outstanding actions and how it has acted upon the feedback from HMIC;
- recommendations from the last inspection - how the force plans to address any outstanding recommendations from the last domestic abuse inspection;
- compliance with the Victims Code of Practice - are the duties specified within the code consistently adhered to and is there evidence that special measures and victim personal statements are being consistently and appropriately used;
- working with other organisations and MARACs - how well the force works with external organisations to share information and safeguard victims and how the force contributes to the effectiveness of the MARAC.

HMIC has also drawn on the following data sources:

- force data on domestic abuse incidents, crimes, disposals and cases collected by HMIC;
- 480 case files for the offences of serious violence, rape and actual bodily harm,¹⁸ which were identified as relating to domestic abuse;
- 11 focus groups (eight female and three male) attended by more than 60 victims of domestic abuse across England and Wales;
- a survey of over 450 domestic abuse practitioners; and
- attendance at Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) – HMIC observed 52 MARAC meetings in 34 different forces. This provided the opportunity to look at structures, attendance, risk assessment tools, safeguarding actions and the capacity to manage workload, as well as see how action points are allocated, tracked and progressed.

¹⁸ HMIC reviewed a sample of rape, burglary, offences of serious violence and actual bodily harm cases. In most forces the review consisted of 10 cases from each crime category but in some larger forces the sample was increased to 15. The file review was designed to provide a broad overview of the identification of vulnerability and the effectiveness of the investigation.

The scale of domestic abuse in England and Wales

The 2013-2014 Crime Survey for England and Wales estimated there were 1.4 million female victims of domestic abuse and 700,000 male victims in that year (this covers all types of domestic abuse).¹⁹ While both men and women can be victims of domestic abuse, women are more likely to be victims than men, with 8.5 percent of women and 4.5 percent of men having experienced domestic abuse.²⁰ Women are also much more likely to be high risk victims.

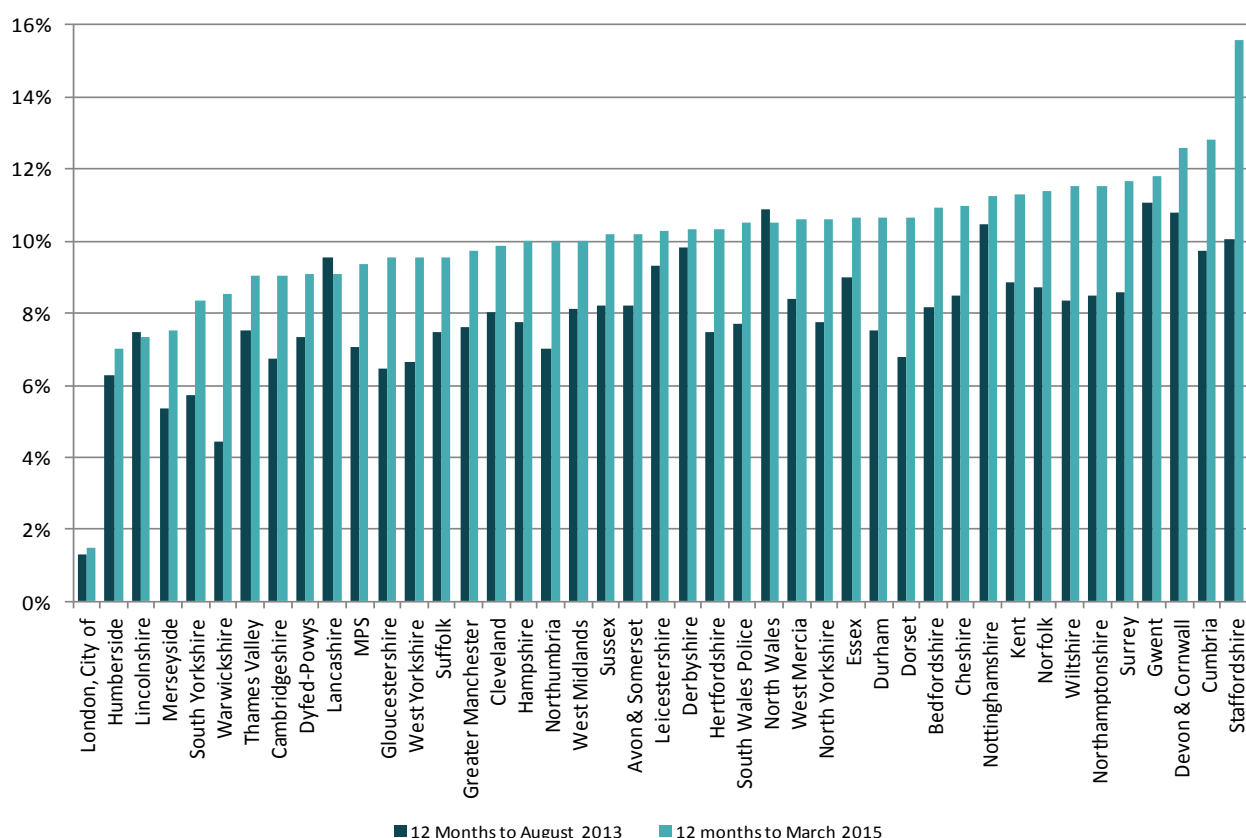
Domestic abuse is both high risk and high volume, with on average over 100 calls an hour being made to the police for assistance with domestic abuse. HMIC collected data from all 43 police forces in England and Wales. This data shows that in the 12 months to 31 March 2015, there were over 3.5 million crimes (see Annex G - About the data).

Domestic abuse related crime was 10 percent of total recorded crime (Figure 1). This is comparable to other volume crimes such as vehicle crime (10 percent) and burglary in a dwelling (6 percent).

¹⁹ This includes partner/ex-partner abuse (non-sexual), family abuse (non-sexual) and sexual assault or stalking carried out by a current or former partner or other family member.

²⁰ *Part of Statistical Bulletin: Crime in England and Wales, year ending June 2015*, Office for National Statistics, 2015. Available from www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/crime-stats/crime-statistics/year-ending-june-2015/stb-crime--ye-june-2015.html#tab-Violent-crime

Figure 1 – The percentage of total police recorded crime with a domestic abuse marker for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 against the 12 months to 31 August 2013



Source: HMIC data collection

Three forces have seen an extremely small reduction (less than half a percentage point) in the percentage of police recorded crime with a domestic abuse marker. These three forces are the only ones to see a reduction in the number of domestic abuse offences for the 12 months to March 2015 against the 12 months to August 2013. The variation between forces is quite small, with domestic abuse being between 8 percent and 12 percent of total crime in the majority of forces.

Overall, there has been an increase of 31 percent in domestic abuse related crimes for the 12 months to March 2015 compared against the 12 months to August 2013. As outlined earlier in this report, this is suggested to be due to forces improving their recording of these incidents rather than an actual upward trend in domestic abuse.

Chapter 1 – Identifying victims of domestic abuse

This chapter sets out findings on:

- how effective force IT systems are at identifying both victims of domestic abuse and repeat victims;
- how effectively call handlers and front desk staff assess and grade risk; and
- how well forces respond to risk and the victim's vulnerability at initial point of contact.

Main findings

- The service that victims of domestic abuse receive when they first contact the police is continuing to improve.
- There are improvements in processes used to identify vulnerable victims with more widespread use of question sets and call scripts. Although the THRIVE (Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability and Engagement) decision model appears to be becoming established with more forces using it, there is evidence of some staff viewing the model as a means of rationing police services rather than tailoring the service to address the needs of victims;
- Some forces find it difficult to identify repeat callers and victims due to limitations with their computer systems.
- Supervision is good within call centres and control rooms with structured training for staff (although there is still an over-reliance on e-learning packages).
- Front desk staff do not receive the same levels of supervision or training as call handlers.

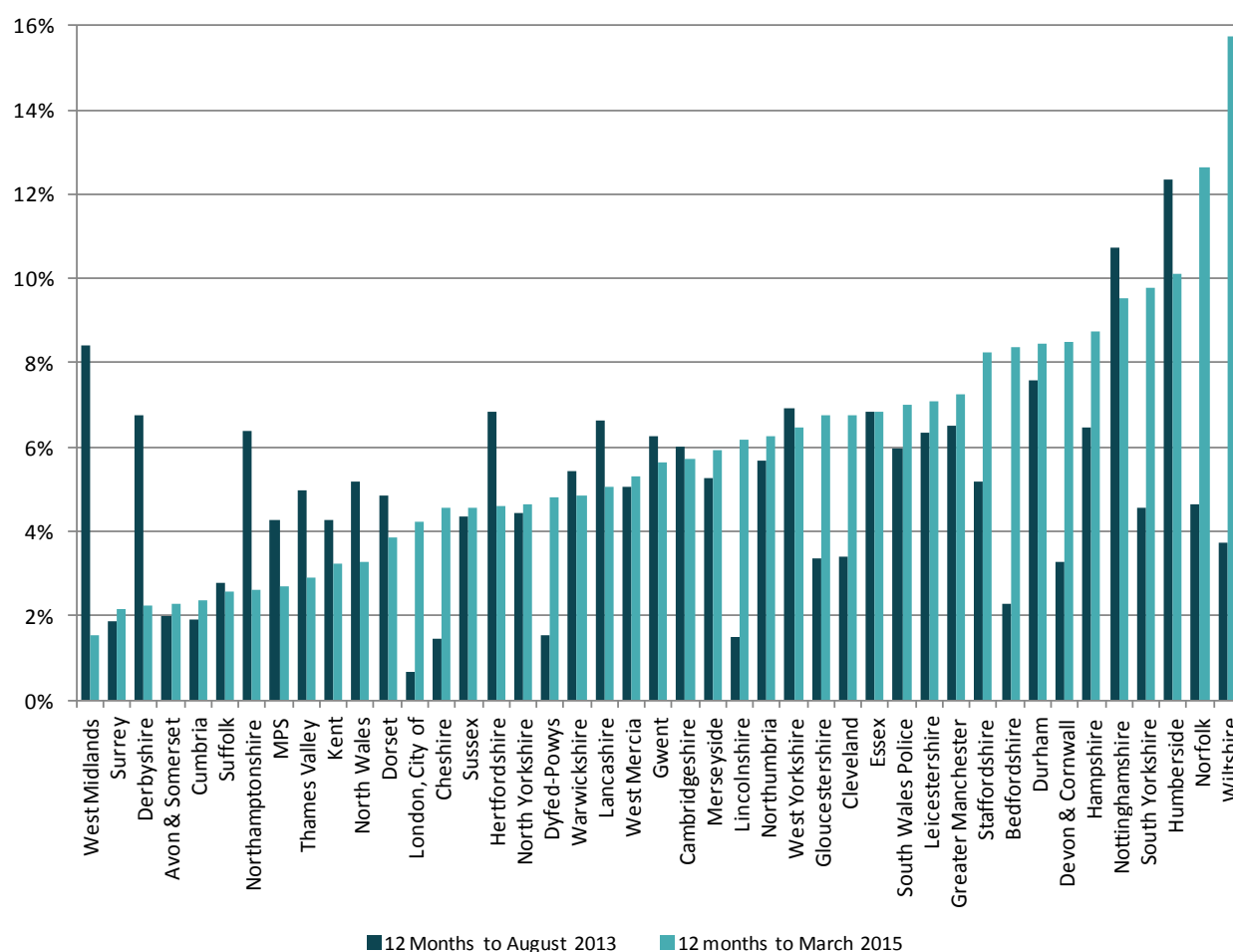
Calls for assistance

Police forces in England and Wales managed over 20 million calls for assistance for the 12 months to March 2015. The number of these that were domestic abuse related is over 900,000. Since the last inspection, both the total calls for assistance and domestic abuse related calls for assistance have reduced, although domestic abuse related calls have fallen more, reducing by 10 percent, with total calls falling by 5 percent.

This reduction in calls for assistance for domestic abuse supports the theory that the significant increase in the number of domestic abuse related crimes (31 percent) is in part due to police forces improving their recording of these incidents as crimes, rather than an actual upward trend in domestic abuse.

Nevertheless, the percentage of total calls for assistance²¹ that are domestic abuse related remains similar at 4.5 percent (4.8 percent for the 12 months to August 2013). On average there are over 100 calls an hour to the police from victims of domestic abuse across England and Wales. Forces told us that between 2 and 16 percent of their total calls related to domestic abuse for the 12 months to March 2015, as set out in Figure 2.

Figure 2 – Percentage of all calls for assistance which had a domestic abuse marker for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 compared to the figures for the 12 months to 31 August 2013



Source: HMIC data collection

²¹ There is no requirement for forces to record calls for assistance in the same way and forces do this differently.

Call handler responses

Overall, the service that victims of domestic abuse receive when they first contact the police continues to improve. Call handlers and control room staff are generally well trained and supervised, although forces could do more to improve call handlers understanding of coercive control. This means that call handlers may still fail to recognise domestic abuse which is not physical, but which is just as harmful. Overall, forces continue to rely on e-learning training packages, which are generally viewed by staff as less effective than face-to-face training.

There is improved access to information systems for call handlers and forces are using intelligence staff more within control rooms. Both of these improvements should help call handlers make a more comprehensive assessment of the risk to victims and provide response officers with more detailed information to ensure they are as prepared as possible when they arrive at a domestic abuse incident. However, there are still areas which could undermine the effectiveness of the police response to victims of domestic abuse. Some forces are still poor at identifying and monitoring the number of repeat victims, which is a concern for HMIC as it can affect the response that is initially provided to victims of domestic abuse. Forces should also be reviewing this data regularly in order to improve the service they provide to victims.

Inspection teams listened to, on average, ten calls per force to assess the behaviour of the call handler and quality of the immediate safeguarding and investigative advice provided. In the majority of these, call handlers were calm and reassuring; they treated victims professionally and with empathy and there was a clear focus on safeguarding the victim until the police arrived at the scene.

More forces are now using the THRIVE (Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability and Engagement) decision model, which force leaders tell us ensures the response to all victims is based on their needs rather than the type of crime. This model allows forces to tailor the service to the individual needs of each victim and help staff decide how best to resolve a call. HMIC supports this approach, but we found that staff in some forces view the model as a means of rationing police services; and of either delaying the deployment of officers to incidents, or not sending them at all. This suggests further clarification is needed in some forces on the purpose of this model. Moreover, in other forces THRIVE is not yet fully established and more activity, particularly training, is needed to support its effective implementation.

Forces use a range of different markers on their command and control systems in order to assist the call handler in identifying whether a caller is a vulnerable person. The markers used are determined by individual forces and examples include intimidated victim, repeat victim, vulnerable adult, child/young person, elderly, mental

health and learning disability. Data provided by forces indicates that all forces are able to identify domestic abuse victims on their call handling system.

A weakness highlighted by the last inspection was that, on receiving a domestic abuse related call, some forces still had to access multiple information systems to gather crucial information about previous incidents. Although this continues to be the case within some forces, there have been improvements in many forces who now use intelligence staff within control rooms, with some having access to these twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. These staff are able quickly to complete research on victims and perpetrators, which aids call handlers and dispatchers by ensuring more detailed research is completed and better information is made available to responding officers.

Additional measures are also in place in some forces for victims assessed as high risk. In Norfolk Constabulary, the duty team within the MASH liaise with other organisations that may have information about a high risk victim and immediately advise on appropriate action.

During the last inspection, we found that call handlers had limited or no access to certain information systems for example child protection databases. Most forces now either have open systems or the ability for specific staff, including some within the control room to quickly access these confidential systems, which is an improvement since the last inspection.

Another positive development since the last inspection has been the increased use by call handlers of call scripting and drop down menus containing question prompts. These aid the identification of domestic abuse victims and decision making in relation to the subsequent action taken. However, some call handlers do not routinely use these resources because they feel they are not easily accessible. This is of concern as it could result in inconsistencies in the way call handlers question victims to assess the level of risk and the advice offered as a result. It is important that forces reinforce the need for call handling staff to routinely use the call scripts and question prompts that are available to ensure victims are properly assessed and receive the appropriate response.

During the last inspection, HMIC found that most forces had quality assurance and supervisory arrangements in place in the control room to ensure the risk to victims was effectively identified and managed. We saw examples of active supervision and review procedures for incidents and call logs, especially in high risk cases. This included supervisors regularly dip-sampling a random number of calls, listening to 'live-time' calls and providing call handlers with individual feedback and also screening all call logs categorised as vulnerable (including domestic abuse) to ensure these incidents are appropriately assessed and managed. Many forces have introduced procedures setting out supervision requirements and procedures for seeking the involvement of more senior officers in domestic abuse cases.

Identifying repeat victims

In relation to the identification of repeat victims, less than half of all forces (19 out of 43) use call handling systems which automatically identify potential repeat victims usually by address and/or telephone number. As highlighted by the last inspection, this potentially means that repeat victims calling from a different phone number or address could be missed. Some forces are trying to bridge this gap by requiring call handlers to specifically ask victims if they have telephoned before or complete manual checks on the caller and address. The limitations of these approaches are recognised by forces and a number of forces are implementing or planning to implement a new crime and intelligence system to address this issue.

We asked forces to tell us the number of calls for assistance that had come from repeat victims for the 12 months to March 2015. Only 19 provided us with this information, the remaining 24 forces were unable to do so. The situation appears to have got worse, as, at the time of the last inspection, 30 forces were able to provide the number of calls for assistance from repeat victims. This is of concern as it suggests that some forces are not using this important information to improve their service.

Moreover, for those 19 forces that could provide this information there was considerable variation within the numbers reported (1 percent to 50 percent). In view of this, it is unlikely that some forces' data accurately reflects the number of calls for assistance from repeat victims. It is crucial that repeat victims are identified at the earliest opportunity in order to build a proper picture of the possible pattern of abuse that may be emerging and spot a potentially dangerous escalation in that abuse.

Training for call handlers

In the last inspection, HMIC found that staff answering 999 calls generally understood the definition of domestic abuse and marked cases accordingly on their information systems. At the time, we saw examples of call handlers obtaining the right information from victims and providing them with sound advice on how to remain safe until an officer arrived. Some forces, however, had no definitions of what constituted a repeat or vulnerable victim and the definitions were not always well understood by staff.

During this inspection, 32 forces were able to provide data on domestic abuse training. In the 12 months to March 2015, ten forces had provided domestic abuse training to over 90 percent of call handlers, with a further 12 forces training between 50 percent and 90 percent of these staff. It is evident from this follow up inspection that call handlers and control room staff are generally well trained in the identification of domestic abuse and able to flag cases on the force information systems. However, the training provided to call handlers on coercive control remains inconsistent across forces.

The College of Policing has recently developed accredited coercive control training including a briefing video supported by a face-to-face package that is intended to be delivered over three hours. As forces start to use this training package, it should help to introduce more consistency across forces in terms of the training provided on coercive control.

Staff working in call centres and control rooms should be trained to identify and grade domestic abuse incidents correctly to ensure an appropriate response is deployed. The incorrect recording of these incidents as a concern for safety, criminal damage or antisocial behaviour instead of domestic abuse, might result in delays and place victims at risk. An important development since the publication of *Everyone's business* has been that all 43 forces are now using the government definition of domestic abuse. Thirty nine out of 43²² have also adopted the government definition of a repeat domestic abuse victim.

It is crucial that forces ensure that call handlers understand the definitions of domestic abuse and repeat victims, as an inability to identify these could lead to an inaccurate assessment of the nature of the victim's vulnerability and risk.

There are examples of call handling staff receiving face-to-face training on domestic abuse, but in the majority of forces there is still a reliance on e-learning packages. The effectiveness of this method by itself in terms of supporting changes in culture, attitudes and behaviours is questionable.

Attendance at police stations

As part of this inspection, HMIC made a number of unannounced visits to police stations to test how effective forces' approach to domestic abuse is in reality. The importance of easily identifiable police buildings with public access for victims in crisis was highlighted in the last inspection. Since then there is increasing evidence of front desk closures and a reduction in opening hours.²³

While the majority of victims report incidents of domestic abuse through 999 or non-emergency calls, some attend a police station to report domestic abuse. In some forces, front desk staff may have responsibilities similar to a call handler or first responder in terms of gathering information and identifying risk factors. Despite this, front desk staff do not usually receive the same level of training as call handlers and staff in control rooms.

²² The forces that have not adopted the government definition of a repeat domestic abuse victim are Greater Manchester, Northamptonshire, South Wales and Suffolk.

²³ Data from HMIC's recent PEEL Efficiency inspection found that, between 2012/13 and 2014/15, the number of front counters in England and Wales reduced by 22 percent (from 881 to 691). For the 40 forces that provided comparable data on front counter opening hours, the hours open reduced by 15 percent.

For this inspection, 32 forces were able to provide data on domestic abuse training. In the 12 months to March 2015, 13 forces have provided domestic abuse training to over 90 percent of front desk staff; with a further seven forces providing training to between 50 percent and 90 percent of these staff. Where training has been provided to front desk staff, this is mostly via an e-learning package with limited opportunity to test or explore what had been covered with colleagues.

As illustrated by the following quote from a victim of domestic abuse the lack of training provided to front desk staff is of concern especially as some victims prefer to attend a police station to report an incident rather than telephone the police:

“I couldn’t call the police to my house. He would know. I wanted to go to a station – I could do that when I was meant to be out shopping.”

As part of this inspection, HMIC held 11 focus groups attended by over 60 victims both female and male. A number of victims that attended did not have English as a first language and described difficulty in communicating with police due to language barriers and were concerned about not being understood. As a result, they often chose to attend police stations to communicate face-to-face with the police:

“My English isn’t good. It is easier to talk to someone at a police building than on the phone.”

Although we observed front office staff dealing with vulnerable victims in a professional and compassionate way, this lack of training may leave them unprepared in terms of recognising and supporting victims of domestic abuse.

HMIC would encourage those forces relying on e-learning packages for front desk staff to incorporate elements of face-to-face training where possible and ensure that e-learning packages are supported by face-to-face staff briefings and question and answer sessions. Forces should also ensure that all front desk staff receive the same domestic abuse training provided to other frontline staff, including the coercive control package recently developed by the College of Policing.

Advice and support leaflets should be readily available to victims of domestic abuse at front desks. In the majority of police stations these resources are easily accessible and, we were told, regularly reviewed and replaced if out of date. However, at several police stations we visited leaflets were kept behind the counter and had to be requested by victims.

Many front desks had support leaflets available for victims on so-called honour-based violence (HBV), female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, which all fall under the 2012 government definition of domestic abuse but may not necessarily be regarded as such by those experiencing these types of violence.

All forces should examine their front desk counters on a regular basis to ensure that up-to-date advice and support resources are easily accessible to victims of domestic abuse. These should be provided in a range of languages to accommodate the needs of the local community.

Chapter 2 – Responding to victims of domestic abuse

This chapter of the report sets out findings related to:

- how well initial response staff assess the risk and nature of the victim's vulnerability; and
- the effectiveness of the initial action taken to safeguard victims of domestic abuse and respond to their needs.

Main findings

- The initial response to domestic abuse has improved, especially for those assessed as high risk, although there is still more improvement required.
- Attitudes and behaviour of frontline staff have improved with better appreciation that domestic abuse is a priority. There remains a lack of understanding of the dynamics of domestic abuse, especially in relation to coercive control, and this is affecting the service victims receive.
- Standards of initial investigation have improved with greater use of photographic evidence and recordings from the initial call to police. There has been considerable investment by many forces in body-worn video cameras, although greater clarity is required for staff regarding its use.
- The use of Domestic Violence Protection Orders is variable across forces with some staff lacking knowledge on how to obtain these and other civil orders that can be used to protect victims. Forces should improve their response to breaches of orders and bail conditions, otherwise they risk losing the confidence of victims.
- Forces are continuing to use a range of different and inconsistent practices when assessing risk to victims and family members. There is greater focus on protecting children in domestic abuse households, although in some force areas the increased referrals to children's services appear to be placing considerable strain on partner organisations.
- Nearly all forces now have a positive action policy, but there is still a wide variation in arrest and charge rates. Of particular concern is the lack of understanding by some forces of the reasons for these variations.
- There is generally better supervision of frontline staff both in relation to investigation and risk assessment.

Overall quality of first response and attitudes of response officers

The initial police response to a domestic abuse incident is vital. It can be the first face-to-face contact the victim has had with the police, often following numerous incidents. A negative experience can result in the victim losing confidence in the police and failing to report future incidents of domestic abuse.

We found that officer attitudes to victims of domestic abuse are still mixed; some response officers fail to understand and appreciate the dynamics of domestic abuse, particularly in relation to coercive control. Most victims described specialist officers as displaying a better level of understanding than response officers.

However, there have been improvements in the initial response and officers' recognition of the importance of domestic abuse, with leaders making it clear that protecting vulnerable victims including victims of domestic abuse and their family members is a priority. There are also better supervision arrangements, especially for high risk cases. More than half (58 percent) of the respondents to an online survey of 450 domestic abuse practitioners²⁴ felt that the police response to domestic abuse had improved a lot or slightly since the publication of *Everyone's business*.

In the last inspection, victims' experience of the initial response was varied. They reported that they were frequently not taken seriously, they felt judged and some officers demonstrated a lack of empathy. To inform this inspection, HMIC held eleven focus groups²⁵ attended by more than 60 victims of domestic abuse across England and Wales. A large number of the victims involved in the focus groups had a history of domestic abuse and were able to compare the response received within the last 12 months with their previous experience. The victims that we spoke to this time described instances of being listened to by attending officers, of feeling believed, of being shown empathy and of being made to feel safe.

"Three or four weeks ago it happened again, the police came straight away and they were fantastic. They came within 10 minutes. He came back again at 2.45am in the morning – the police came then, searched for him and arrested him. They helped me settle the children and made me a cup of tea – fantastic."

²⁴ These were non-police staff who worked closely with victims of domestic abuse.

²⁵ Eight of the 11 focus groups were made up of female victims of domestic abuse. The remaining three focus groups were made up of male victims.

“It only took nine minutes for them to arrive but that wasn’t quick enough. He took out all the windows and the door. Tipped petrol on the floor. One officer stayed with me and got a brush to clear away all the glass; it was everywhere. That way I could come downstairs. He phoned the council and they came immediately. He arranged all that for me. He was good.”

There is however more to do to improve the initial response received by some victims. In this inspection, HMIC completed a survey of domestic abuse practitioners which received over 450 responses. In the survey, practitioners described some frontline officers as being “unsympathetic”, “judgmental” and “rude” and felt that many lack the understanding and empathy required when dealing with victims of domestic abuse.

“There have been some shifts in attitudes, but there does still seem to be a misconception about the victim and their levels of intelligence. The level of coercion and control is still greatly underestimated...The victim’s parenting skills are then held up to question making them feel further to blame for the domestic violence they’ve experienced. The victim is not an idiot or a fool. The victim has been systematically frightened, controlled and abused until they can no longer see a way out.”

Attitudes and behaviours such as this can result in some victims feeling they are not being heard and are to blame for the abuse. It was commented by practitioners that victims who have had a negative experience of frontline officers are less likely to trust the police and may choose not to involve them in future incidents, therefore putting themselves at greater risk.

“On the whole we have some front line and specialist officers who do an outstanding job for victims of domestic and sexual violence. However unfortunately we still hear from our service users about poor responses, where incidents are not taken seriously, judgements are made and victims are left feeling worried about calling the police again.”

Some of the victims we spoke to described officers displaying a negative and judgmental attitude when they became aware that they had previously reported domestic abuse, but had withdrawn the allegation. These victims perceived a change in how they were treated and a lack of understanding of the motivating factors behind their decision.

“They changed their attitude when they found out I hadn’t wanted to press charges before. They didn’t understand how difficult it is. It’s not just me but the children and everything – the embarrassment. I think they thought I was wasting their time.”

Female victims in two of the focus groups described a lack of empathy and understanding being more prevalent among female officers. They described female officers as displaying judgmental attitudes and not showing compassion. This concern did not arise in other focus groups, where victims described having good and bad experiences with officers regardless of the officers' gender.

In our practitioner survey this time, acting in a non-judgmental manner was ranked as the second highest priority area for improvement for response officers and specialist staff. In the last survey, this area was rated third. All incidents of domestic abuse should be taken seriously, as it is likely that the incident giving rise to the call to the police is not the first, whether or not previous incidents have been reported. The police are being asked to provide expert advice to victims and HMIC would expect that this is given in a non-judgemental way.

Victims can feel coerced into withdrawing allegations in response to pressure from the perpetrator or in fear of reprisals against them and their children. Victims said that they want the police to take action on the evidence and said that officers should know what action to take; they should not place the victim in the position of having to decide what the police should do. Several victims said that they were being asked by attending officers "What do you want us to do" and felt that this was an inappropriate question. In some situations, officers need to take positive action even if the victim is unsupportive initially. In these cases, the follow up support available to the victim is extremely important.

"He head-butted me. The police came and he was taken off. I was taken to hospital and an officer stayed with me and constantly tried to get me to press charges. Another time the police came and said "Do you want me to arrest him?" I said no so they said one of us had to leave the house, so I left and stayed with friends. I chose to leave and he stayed in the house."

- Gwent Police is piloting having a domestic abuse expert from Women's Aid with an officer in a response car on Friday and Saturday nights to deliver a joined up service to high risk victims.
- Kent Police has introduced domestic abuse co-ordinators on local policing commands to ensure that the needs of victims are continually assessed and their cases managed in conjunction with partner agencies after initial police contact.

Some victims described negative experiences which have had a lasting impact on their views of the police and their expectations of how they will be treated in the future. Some victims described the behaviour of individual officers as important in terms of them developing or losing trust in the police and being willing to support police action and seek support. Victims described seeking support from other organisations, for example Women's Aid, rather than going to the police where this trust had been lost. It is important that victims have access to a variety of services, each of which has a contribution to make to ensure their safety. The actions taken by officers at the scene of a domestic abuse incident and their understanding of the situations that victims find themselves in is crucial in order to gain the trust and confidence of victims.

A large number of victims described feeling that response officers did not always understand the dynamics of domestic abuse and the situation that victims often found themselves in. Some described officers responding more positively when they had a visible injury compared to cases where there had been emotional abuse.

"They (officers) kept asking if he had hit me. They weren't interested unless I could show them some mark or bruise."

Practitioner: "There still seems an overall emphasis on [the] need for hard evidence rather than listening to the victim...hence very little chance of any prosecution for psychological abuse or coercive control, and stalking behaviours."

Male victims of domestic abuse may be reluctant to contact the police for a number of reasons, some of which will mirror those for female victims, for example a belief that the police will assume he has provoked the situation or fear of losing access to children. Some of these fears may also be intensified due to gender stereotypes. One male victim told us that the police were only empathetic once his female partner had admitted she had assaulted him. He reported that up until that point he felt they were unsure who was the perpetrator and who was the victim. Once they had established that she was the perpetrator, they became more interested in what had happened and took a statement from him.

A number of respondents to the practitioner survey identified gender bias as an issue for some officers when it came to responding to domestic abuse incidents. They stated that officers can struggle to understand and deal with situations where the wife and mother may be the aggressor and still often believe that domestic abuse "only happens to women who are victims at the hands of men and not the other way round".

This is however, not supported by evidence, which suggests that women are three times more likely to be arrested for a violent offence than men for a comparable offence²⁶. Failures in dealing with victims in same sex relationships was also highlighted by practitioners in the survey.

“Frontline officers need to be aware that domestic abuse is not just male aggressors and female victims. Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse regardless of gender or sexuality. All cases need to be treated with the same level of severity.”

So while the attitudes displayed by officers towards victims of domestic abuse appear to be improving, there is still a long way to go if officers are to routinely inspire the trust and confidence of victims. Poor attitudes are not acceptable. Response officers need to fully understand the dynamics of domestic abuse, including the traits of coercive control. While training is extremely important here and HMIC awaits the results of the College of Policing research on training approaches that support improvement in attitudes and behaviours, there is a wider issue concerning awareness and culture which can only be changed by resolute force leadership.

Training for response officers

During fieldwork, HMIC held a focus group in each force with domestic abuse practitioners. Overall, the consensus was that some response officers still exhibited a lack of knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the dynamics of domestic abuse, particularly in relation to coercive control. The importance of officer training and awareness raising was highlighted by practitioners. HMIC recognise the broad range of knowledge and understanding that response officers require to perform their role, however the fact that domestic abuse accounts for 33 percent of all recorded assault with injury crimes and 10 percent of total crime means having a good understanding of domestic abuse and how to respond to this should be a priority for forces. These findings, supported by the results of the practitioner survey, are particularly disappointing given that three quarters of forces (34 forces) told HMIC that they include coercive control as part of their domestic abuse training. It is anticipated that as forces start to utilise the College of Policing’s new accredited training package, this should help to introduce more consistency across forces in terms of the training provided on coercive control.

²⁶ *Who Does What to Whom? Gender and Domestic Violence Perpetrators*, Hester, Marianne, Northern Rock Foundation, June 2009, www.nr-foundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Who-Does-What-to-Whom.pdf

Respondents were asked to state whether a range of different competencies required a lot of improvement, some improvement, a little improvement or no improvement. Table 1 shows the competencies for which the highest number of people said 'a lot of improvement' is required. Understanding the dynamics between victim and perpetrator particularly in relation to coercive control was identified as the area requiring the most improvement for both groups of staff.

Table 1: The top five competencies identified by domestic abuse practitioners as requiring improvement among frontline officers and specialist officers/investigators

Frontline officers		Specialist officers/investigators	
Understanding of victim/perpetrator dynamics (techniques of coercive and controlling behaviour)	46%	Understanding of victim/perpetrator dynamics (techniques of coercive and controlling behaviour)	16%
Comprehensive safety planning for victim (and children) based on understanding of risk	32%	Initial evidence gathering from social media sites	13%
Initial evidence gathering from social media sites	30%	Access to interpreters when English not victim's first language and not using family or friends to interpret	13%
Awareness of victim questioning techniques (interviewing skills)	29%	Initial evidence gathering of computer use and files	12%
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)	28%	Comprehensive safety planning for victim (and children) based on understanding of risk	12%

Respondents to our practitioner survey were also given the opportunity to leave additional comments about their views on the police response to domestic abuse. Lack of training was the most common theme. Practitioners felt that more intensive training was required, which should be regularly refreshed. A number of practitioners also commented that training should involve input from specialist domestic abuse organisations and not be delivered in-house, where it is carried out by police trainers who do not always possess the necessary awareness of the subject matter. There were also several comments about ensuring that training covered the links between alcohol and domestic abuse.

Overall, HMIC found a mixed picture in relation to training of officers. Thirty two forces were able to provide data on domestic abuse training. In the 12 months to March 2015, 11 forces had provided domestic abuse training to over 90 percent of response/neighbourhood teams; with a further six forces providing training to between 50 percent and 90 percent of these staff. The majority of response officers we spoke to during this inspection reported that they had received some form of training over the last 12 months in relation to domestic abuse, but for most this had been an e-learning package rather than face-to-face training. Officers' views were that e-learning was not always effective, as there was not the opportunity to discuss and test what had been learned with colleagues and supervisors. Both officers and the domestic abuse practitioners who took part in focus groups said that training was most effective when victims and specialist domestic abuse organisations were involved with real and relevant (local) examples used to illustrate what works. There is limited evidence of supervisors monitoring completion rates of e-learning for their teams or following up to check the effectiveness of this training in terms of improving the service provided to victims.

Where effective training has been provided, the benefits and increased awareness was evident when speaking with officers. We observed some forces using face-to-face approaches to the delivery of training, but this is not widespread.

- The City of London Police has provided all staff with half day training on domestic abuse involving an external theatre group who act out relevant scenarios. This was described as extremely thought provoking by the staff that we spoke to.
- Derbyshire Police has provided all frontline staff, more than 900 in total, with comprehensive training on domestic abuse. At the time of HMIC's inspection the curriculum was being broadened to include other areas of vulnerability, notably child sexual exploitation and missing and absent persons.

Forces are working to improve their response to victims of domestic abuse by increasing the knowledge and understanding of response officers, as illustrated by the examples below.

- Sussex Police has domestic abuse champions within their Response Investigation Teams (RITs) who receive additional training and offer support and guidance to colleagues on dealing with domestic abuse incidents.
- Durham Constabulary has created a new Safeguarding Training Co-ordinator post, which has responsibility for professionalising the training and awareness of officers and staff in relation to safeguarding and strengthening the safeguarding champions' project. This involves providing additional training to a select number of staff from response and neighbourhood policing teams. Alongside this work, the constabulary has also invested in the training of specialist officers to improve the services provided to victims identified as being at greater risk of harm. These officers work alongside neighbourhood policing staff as part of the safeguarding neighbourhood command.

The College of Policing is currently researching approaches to training that support improving attitudes and behaviours. Pending the results of this research, 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 particularly in relation to coercive control. This work should be included in the updated domestic abuse actions plans proposed in Recommendation 3.

Quality of initial investigation: building the case for the victim

The standard of initial investigations undertaken by response officers is generally satisfactory. For victims assessed as being at high risk, whose cases are usually investigated by specialist officers, the investigations are generally good. However, in some forces specialist units have high workloads affecting both the quality and timeliness of the investigation. Some forces are attempting to improve their initial investigative actions with better performing forces investing in training staff. However, the results of our file review and fieldwork suggest that the quality of service received by victims of domestic abuse remains inconsistent and that further improvements in the initial investigative action taken at the scene of domestic abuse incidents are still required. In cases identified early as high risk or involving repeat victims, there is more supervision of both the risk assessment and the investigation. High risk cases are appropriately given greater priority. Seven forces have received a cause for concern or an area for improvement (AFI) on the supervision of domestic abuse investigations following their vulnerability inspection.

During the inspection, HMIC found strong evidence that effective supervision, coupled with investigation plans containing clearly defined timescales and lines of enquiry, improved the quality of investigations.

In better performing forces, the service to victims was further improved through staff having a clear understanding of what was expected from them in terms of supporting victims and investigating incidents of domestic abuse.

As outlined in the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) *Guidance on Investigating Domestic Abuse*,²⁷ officers should not only be searching for evidence to support a criminal prosecution when investigating these incidents, but also looking for signs that abuse may be occurring even where the conduct may not amount to a crime. Basic first steps in any investigation are to secure the scene, safeguard any evidence and establish the main facts.

In our analysis of 480 case files, we found some weaknesses in the extent to which the evidence set out in existing police practice is routinely gathered at the scene. Table 2 summarises our findings.

²⁷ 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/

Table 2: Review of evidence contained in 480 case files for the offences of serious violence, rape and actual bodily harm which were identified relating to domestic abuse

Evidence	Number of applicable cases (out of 480)	% of applicable files where activity completed
Victim statement taken at time of initial police attendance	452	73% (328)
Photographs of injuries taken at the time of the incident	384	56% (214)
House-to-house enquiries completed	361	40% (144)
Police officer statement providing details of scene, injuries, demeanour of victim/suspect	440	64% (280)
Body-worn video cameras used to capture evidence from the victim and scene	329	22% (71)
Was the 999 call recording listened to and exhibited	395	77% (305)
Safety measures being considered and documented	456	76% (346)

The ACPO *Guidance on Investigating Domestic Abuse*²⁸ 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 are crucial because they can support an evidence-led prosecution where the victim does not support action, support an application for remand in custody, demonstrate the degree of force used and show the evolution of the injury. HMIC found that photographs were taken at the time of the incident in 56 percent (214) of the applicable cases. An analysis of 600 case files for actual bodily harm was completed to inform the previous domestic abuse inspection. Although we are unable to make direct comparisons as the files reviewed for this inspection cover different offence types, photographs of the injuries sustained by victims were taken in 46 percent of the 600 cases reviewed previously.

²⁸ 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/

The potential for using house-to-house enquiries should be identified early in the investigation. House-to-house enquiries were completed in 40 percent (144) of the applicable cases, which means that opportunities to obtain corroborating evidence may have been missed in some cases. Although there may be sensitivities around contacting an individual's neighbours, it should always be considered in domestic abuse cases. In the previous file review, house-to-house enquiries were completed in only 23 percent of the 600 cases examined.

Despite us not being able to make direct comparisons, the increases in both of these areas may be a positive development and may indicate a general improvement in standards.

Audio recordings of 999 calls can provide a useful source of evidence to support the prosecution of domestic abuse related offences. In particular, investigating officers should examine recordings to identify the caller's demeanour, background noise (including comments from witnesses, suspects and victims) and any first description of the incident as provided by the witness or victim. The 999 call recording was listened to in over 75 percent (395) of the applicable cases. In the 600 case files reviewed previously, the 999 call was listened to in only 16 percent of calls. Again despite us not being able to make direct comparisons this may be a positive development.

Some of the victims that we spoke to in focus groups gave examples where the officers who attended the scene failed to separate them from the alleged perpetrator or recognise the effect this would have upon them giving a statement. A number described situations where they wanted to report domestic abuse incidents, but because of the close proximity of the perpetrator they felt unwilling to do this.

Many repeat victims described a frustration at having to repeatedly explain the history of their abuse. Overall, the victims that we spoke to appreciated that response officers often attended quickly (which was important to them), but felt that officers could find out more information about previous incidents once at the scene from police records rather than asking them to explain it again. They stated that, when officers had been given information about previous incidents, it often had a positive effect upon the actions taken and the way in which they were treated. Several victims described cases where officers were unaware of the existence of restraining orders and other protective measures that were in place despite them being recorded on police systems.

A small number of the practitioners surveyed commented that the police evidence gathering, both at the scene and during the investigation, was not good enough. It was felt that evidence gathering tends to rely too heavily on victim/witness statements and is not proactive enough; making evidence-led prosecutions difficult, and that, in some cases, poor collection of evidence results in offenders being found not guilty.

“Unfortunately, the police do not gather information appropriately in preparation for court and as a result, many perpetrators are found not guilty and the victims therefore feel let down and do not wish to report anything to the police again.”

The causes of concern and areas for improvement on the supervision of domestic abuse investigations identified in seven forces in this year's vulnerability inspection cover issues including the lack of recorded supervision on the crime system, poor supervision of handover packages and inconsistent and poor supervision of the initial and subsequent investigation.

Despite the points outlined above, HMIC found that some forces are undertaking work to improve their initial investigative actions.

- The Metropolitan Police Service has developed strong links with specialist lawyers within the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and makes clear efforts to share learning when cases are unsuccessful in order to improve the service for victims.
- Cheshire Constabulary is carrying out a three day classroom-based training package to all frontline officers on file quality and investigative skills.

Body-worn video cameras

HMIC recognises that body-worn video cameras require substantial investment in both the equipment itself but also the download and storage facilities, which is challenging at a time of budgetary constraint. Nevertheless, during this inspection, we have been pleased to find more forces using body-worn video cameras. However, these devices are still not being used as widely as we would have hoped.

In the last inspection, we found that body-worn video cameras were not routinely available for officers attending domestic abuse incidents, despite being an important tool used to gather evidence at the scene. Now, 34 forces told us that they currently use body-worn video cameras, 18 on a force wide basis and 16 on a pilot basis. The response officers we spoke to during fieldwork felt the increased use has been a positive development and was anecdotally associated with increased numbers of charges and guilty pleas.

However, some forces are still not using body-worn video cameras and have no current plans for implementation. In others there is evidence of intended roll out but it is yet to start or slippages are delaying implementation. Of the 480 cases examined as part of the file review, we found that body-worn video cameras were used in just over 20 percent (71) of the 329 applicable cases to capture evidence from the victim and the scene.

Body-worn video cameras were only used in 4 percent of the 600 case files reviewed to inform the previous inspection. The increase in usage is encouraging given video can be powerful sources of evidence in any prosecution. However, it was only used in one in five of the files we reviewed, so forces have a considerable way to go before the benefits of body-worn video cameras are being fully exploited.

In forces where these devices are available, we saw examples where it was not standard practice to send officers equipped with them to all domestic abuse incidents. In addition, in some forces there are often only a limited number of cameras available so not all response officers have routine access to them. There is confusion among some staff about when these devices can be used at domestic incidents and inconsistent approaches by forces to their deployment. Moreover, due to IT infrastructure issues within some forces, the video files created cannot be downloaded electronically from all police stations within a force area.

The current position on the use of body-worn video cameras at domestic abuse incidents is not clear. HMIC is encouraged that the College of Policing has agreed, working with the national policing lead on domestic abuse, to review the guidance to forces to make sure that it is clear to officers the expectations in respect of body-worn video cameras at domestic abuse incidents.

Safeguarding the victim at the scene

There are a range of safeguarding actions that can be taken by the police which include but are not limited to:

- referral to voluntary sector support organisations and provision of details of the local availability of refuges, outreach services and places of safety including local hotels;
- additional security e.g. personal/property alarm systems, locks on doors/windows and gated security to the outside of a property;
- mobile phones (some record live to the police control room);
- installation of CCTV;
- civil orders e.g. non molestation or restraining orders, and Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPOs); and
- sanctuary schemes (providing a safe room from where victims can call and wait for the arrival of the police).

Safety planning should form part of a joint approach between the police and victims and take into account risk assessment and risk management procedures. It should, where possible, also include input from IDVAs or other domestic abuse practitioners.

This inspection found that there is improved awareness of the immediate safeguarding measures available among response officers; although there is limited knowledge of civil remedies for example Domestic Violence Protection Orders or where to obtain advice on them, which is covered in more detail in the section below. There is a need for more accessible professional advice from the College of Policing on the use of civil remedies and how best to access them, especially in the cases assessed as medium or standard risk where IDVA and other support mechanisms are not readily available.

More forces are providing response officers with guidance booklets and check lists to ensure the response at the scene of a domestic abuse incident is appropriate. The content of these differs by force, but they include guidance for officers outlining their responsibilities when attending an incident and completing the initial investigation, body charts for the identification of injuries sustained by the victim, a proforma Victim Personal Statement (VPS) and sections that are given to the victim including contact details of the officer and the result of the risk assessment. These booklets often contain a checklist regarding safeguarding measures, which are used in the handover to investigation teams and viewed by staff as extremely helpful.

Some forces still do not provide response officers with accessible information on local support organisations for victims. In other forces, this information is included as standard in the booklets and check lists used by officers at the scene. The College of Policing has also produced a toolkit for response officers, which would benefit forces who do not provide information and checklists for officers.

A small number of victims in the focus groups were in same sex relationships. Some male victims described a lack of awareness among officers of support organisations for victims in same sex relationships, as well as male victims generally. These victims explained having to find support themselves as the information provided by the police was focused on female victims or those in heterosexual relationships. All response officers need a good understanding of the full range of local services, as it is their responsibility to ensure a victim is aware of support available including specialist groups for male or black and minority ethnic (BME) victims or victims from gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities.

In the practitioner survey, comprehensive safety planning for victims (and children) based upon an understanding of risk was identified as requiring a lot of improvement among response officers by the second highest proportion of respondents. HMIC's case file review (480 reviewed) found evidence of safety measures being considered and documented in 76 percent (456) of applicable cases. This suggests that there is more that forces should do to ensure response officers are fully aware of all of the safeguarding options available and able to advise effectively on safety planning. It is important to recognise that some victims will be unable to absorb all of the information they are given at the scene of an incident and therefore an opportunity for the police and/or a specialist support worker to follow this up with them is vital.

The causes for concern or areas area for improvement on safeguarding in relation to domestic abuse identified in six forces in this year's vulnerability inspection cover issues including inconsistent and poor recording of safeguarding action on systems; delays in referrals and action by CRUs or MASHs often leading to delays in safety plans being created and a lack of knowledge of DVPOs and other preventative orders including non-molestation and restraining orders.

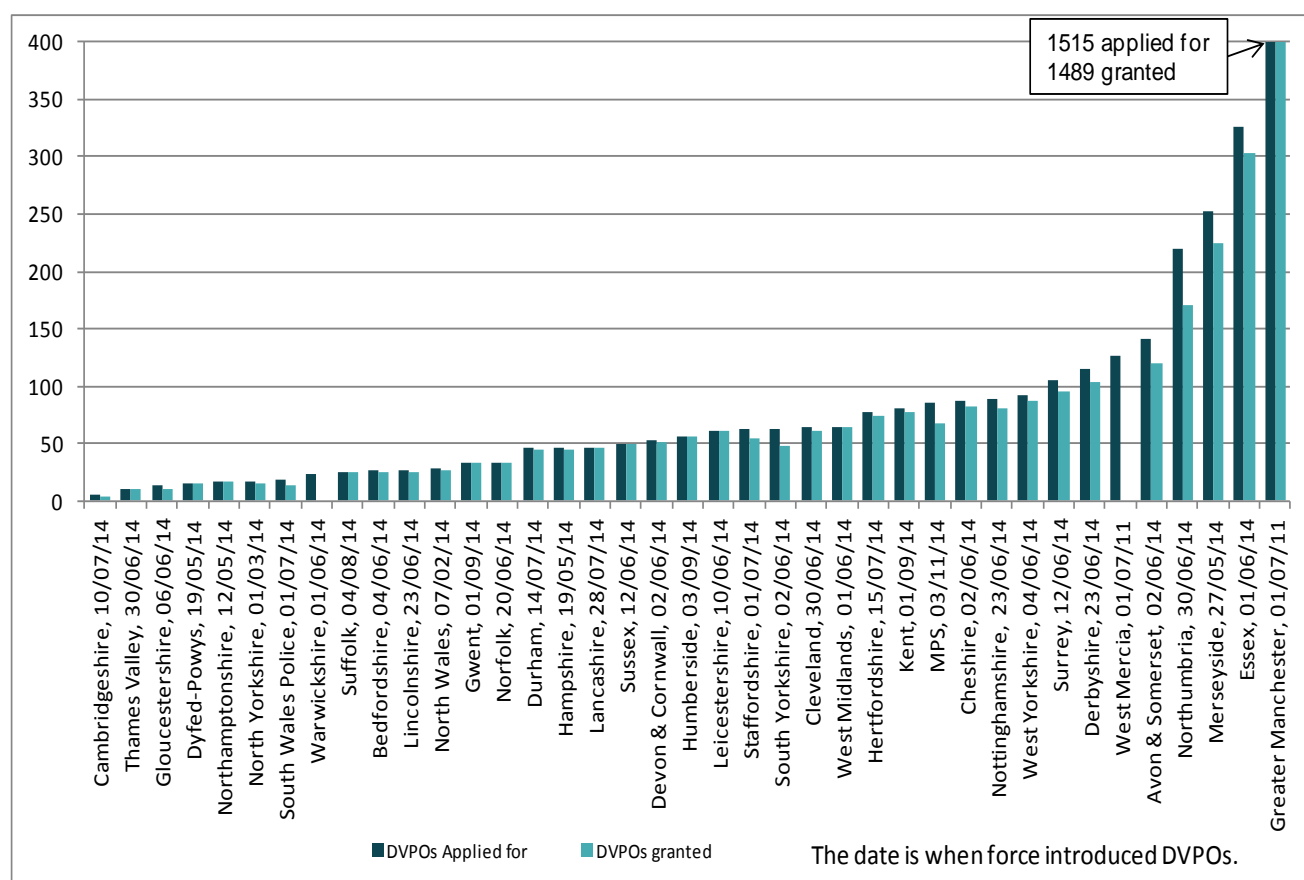
Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs)

The majority of forces introduced DVPOs²⁹ in mid 2014 and the use has been extremely varied (Figure 3). Since DVPOs were introduced, a total of 4,225 (data from 40 forces) have been applied for. For the 38 forces that supplied information on the number of orders granted by court, 3,813 of 4,075 applications were granted. In some forces, responsibility for the application of DVPOs sits with specialist domestic abuse teams, and as a result, awareness and knowledge does not always filter beyond these units to response officers.

Greater Manchester Police introduced DVPOs early as a pilot force for the orders and therefore account for a disproportionate proportion of the total number of DVPOs (36 percent) applied for. Three further forces (Essex, Merseyside and Northumbria) have the next highest number of DVPOs applied for and account for a further 19 percent of the total number applied for. Those forces using DVPOs infrequently should consider how their use might improve the service provided to victims of domestic abuse.

²⁹ DVPOs are a new power that enable 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 they need from a dedicated domestic abuse service.

Figure 3 – Number of Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) applied for to court and granted by court from date of introduction to 31 March 2015



Source: HMIC data collection

The implementation of DVPOs is still at an early stage within many forces, but it is important that officers are aware of the purpose of these orders and the process by which to obtain them. Internal force communications and awareness-raising activity is important. Further research is also required on what works and does not work in relation to the use of these orders and their effectiveness in terms of outcomes for victims. This will provide an evidence base, which forces can use to inform their approach to the use of DVPOs going forward.

In a number of forces officers explained that they were reluctant to use DVPOs due to the bureaucracy around obtaining them and the time involved in the preparation when they are still seeking a decision whether to charge a perpetrator or not. Feedback was received that often two officers needed to be involved, one to investigate the primary offence and build the case for prosecution and another working in parallel to prepare the case for a DVPO should a decision not to charge be made. If response officers received training on DVPOs, this has generally been via an online training package and not face-to-face. Respondents to the practitioner survey highlighted a lack of police support of DVPOs. It was felt that reluctance to apply for DVPOs may be due to a lack of training on their use.

“Police need to have a much better understanding with regards to using DVPOs. They need to use them appropriately and more extensively.”

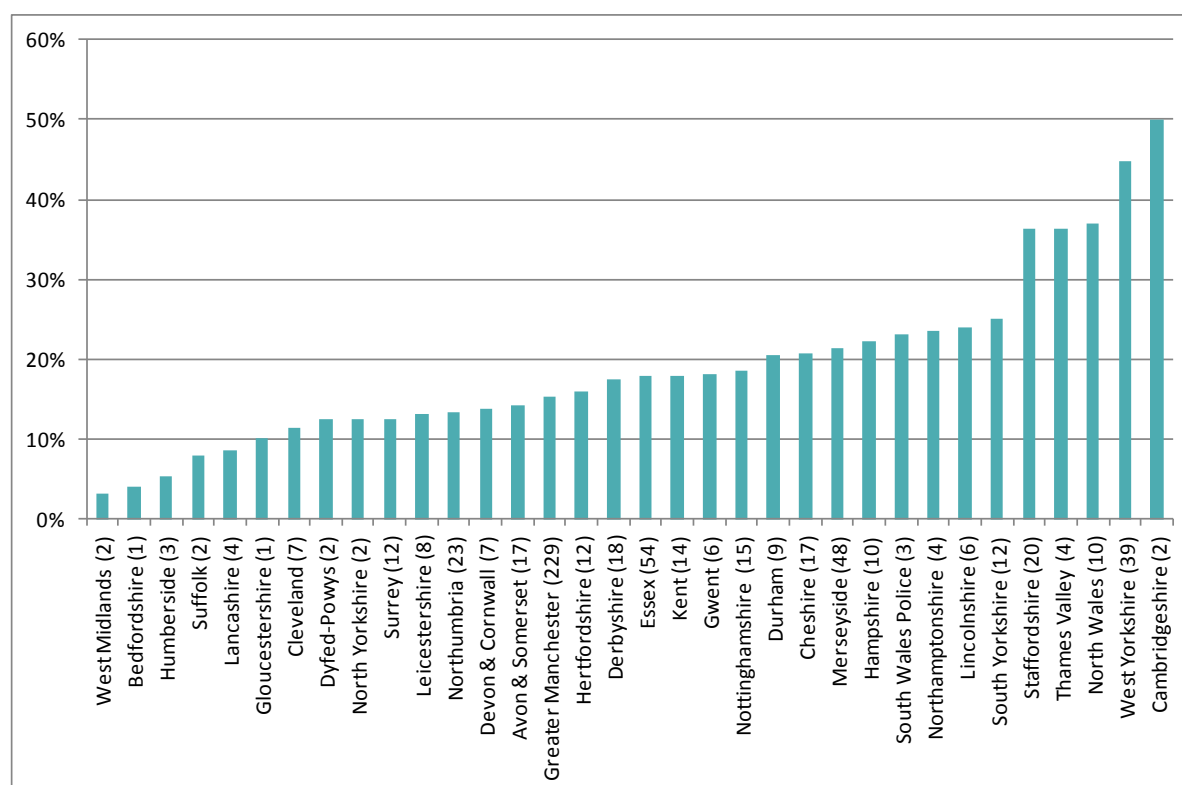
Forces should raise awareness of and promote the effective application of DVPOs where appropriate, both via training and force communications. It is extremely important that the benefits of DVPOs for victims are reinforced so that officers do not view them as yet another task to complete in parallel to the investigation process. The need for them to be underpinned by robust risk management procedures and their applicability in all forms of domestic abuse (not just incidents involving physical abuse) should be emphasised during training. Forces should ensure they are making the best use of this preventative measure and that their processes are streamlined and clearly understood by all staff. The updated Authorised Professional Practice (APP) on Domestic Abuse includes a checklist for DVPO application and forces should ensure that all officers and staff are aware of, understand and use this. There are some examples of forces investing additional resources on DVPOs.

- Derbyshire Constabulary has a detective sergeant who is dedicated to ensuring that DVPOs are used effectively.
- Avon and Somerset Police has produced guidance on applying for DVPOs, which has received favourable comment from partner agency representatives.
- Lancashire Constabulary has recently increased the use of DVPOs; this has been attributed to the increased use of body-worn video cameras in gathering evidence to support these protective orders.

Breaches of DVPOs and other orders

There were concerns raised by domestic abuse practitioners and victims HMIC spoke to about the lack of appropriately robust action in enforcing breaches of DVPOs, as well as non-molestation orders and restraining orders. Since the introduction of DVPOs to 31 March 2015, 17 percent of those granted have been breached (642 of 3745) based on data from 36 forces. Greater Manchester Police (GMP) introduced DVPOs in July 2011 as a pilot force and 39 percent of all DVPOs granted have been granted within this force area. Fifteen percent of all DVPOs granted by GMP have been breached. The breach rate for the remaining forces that provided data is 18 percent. The longer term figure for GMP suggests the current breach rate is likely to be sustained and not change greatly once the use of DVPOs is fully embedded within forces.

Figure 4: Percentage of DVPOs breached since introduction, the number in brackets represents the number of breaches per force



Source: HMIC data collection

During the focus groups, domestic abuse practitioners gave examples of victims who had reported breaches of DVPOs and other orders to the police on a number of occasions, in some instances over ten breaches before any action was taken.

Victims consistently expressed disappointment with the lack of action taken when orders or bail conditions were breached. Some victims described a history of breaches where they perceived very slow or no action at all had been taken by the police. This had a detrimental effect on these victims and their confidence in the police and criminal justice process. They explained that they felt they had gone through a lot to obtain these orders and injunctions and for the police not to respond quickly and decisively was a significant disappointment to them. Breaches of DVPOs and other orders can increase the risk the perpetrator poses and impact on the safety of the victim. If DVPOs and other orders are to be sought and obtained then they need to be enforced.

Respondents to the practitioner survey also reported a lack of police action in relation to offenders who breach bail conditions or non-molestation orders, which led to loss of victim confidence in the police. They highlighted that breaches may not always be recorded by the police, and they may not respond effectively to 999 calls reporting them. As a result, breaches are not always reaching court and these measures are at risk of becoming a “toothless instrument”.

“One of the biggest issues I have seen recently has been the lack of action taken for breaches of bail following an arrest and charge for a domestic violence. A victim will report the breach and nothing will be done or the perpetrator will be warned. This is terrifying for the victim and they feel let down by the police.”

When action is taken following the breach of an order, it can make an enormous difference to the victim concerned, as we heard in one of our victim focus groups.

“Mine was arrested. The police officer from the station phoned me and told me she was about to go and question him. She said she would phone me after. She did. Told me he admitted it and told me they were going to charge him. I was given a contact number for [support group] and they were fantastic. I was phoned with the outcome of the case; he was also given a five-year injunction not to contact me. He came out and contacted me straight away and I reported it. The police arrested him and he was imprisoned.”

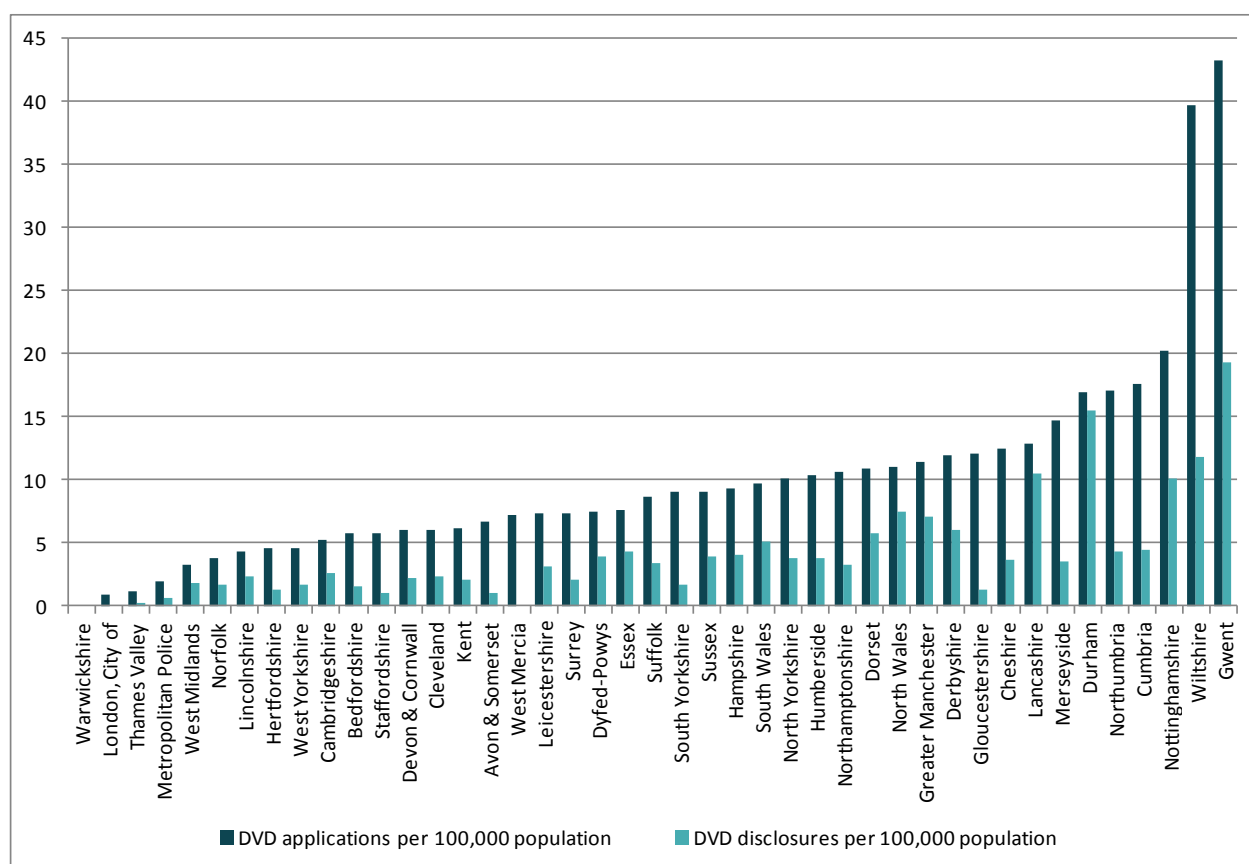
Recommendation 5 focuses on establishing evidence-based good practice and suggests that further consideration is given to the use and effectiveness of DVPOs and how this could be improved, including consideration with the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) of providing clear guidance on the DVPO process and sentencing guidelines for breaches of these orders.

Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS)

Like DVPOs, the implementation of the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) is still at its early stages within many forces, but it is important that both officers and members of the public are aware of the purpose of the scheme and how to make an application.

The DVDS often referred to as Clare’s Law was rolled out across 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. Under the scheme an individual can ask police to check whether a new or existing partner has a violent past. Since its introduction there have been 4,724 applications, and the rate of disclosure is 42 percent nationally (based on data from 41 forces).

Figure 5 – Number of Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) applications and disclosures per 100,000 population from roll out to 31 December 2014



Source: Home Office

Figure 5 highlights the range in the number of applications made across forces from one per 100,000 population in the City of London Police and Thames Valley Police to 43 per 100,000 in Gwent Constabulary. There is also a large variation in the number of disclosures made, with the disclosure rate ranging from 0 percent to 92 percent across forces.

The use of Clare's Law is still at an early stage within many forces, but it is important that members of the public and officers are aware of its purpose and the application process. Both external and internal force communications and awareness-raising activity is important here.

Risk identification and assessment in domestic abuse

In the last inspection, HMIC found that forces were adopting a range of different and inconsistent practices when assessing the risk to victims and this appears still to be the case. There are inconsistencies in when and if a risk assessment is completed, the quality when completed, the understanding among response officers of its purpose and the level of supervision. In this year's vulnerability inspection, HMIC

identified causes of concern or areas for improvement on risk assessments in 11 forces.

The ACPO *Guidance on Investigating Domestic Abuse*³⁰ 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 certain groups of victims and be skilful in applying these factors to individual cases, 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. 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.

Response officers should record the presence of risk factors according to local procedures, and reach a decision on the level of risk. The Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment risk identification, assessment and management model (DASH) is used in some form by the majority of forces. This tool aligns with the non-police SafeLives DASH risk checklist used by IDVAs, specialist domestic abuse practitioners and other partners. The DASH model is designed to assess the risk posed by the perpetrator, and the focus should be on the behaviour of that individual. The process of risk assessment requires significant professional judgement, and should never be seen as a mechanical, tick-box exercise. Reaching a consistent high quality on this element of responding to abuse is absolutely fundamental.

HMIC found that forces are continuing to adopt a range of different and inconsistent practices when assessing risk. The current variations in practice include:

- twenty four forces use the DASH form (one force did not answer), with fourteen using an amended version and four using a completely different form that has been developed by the force;
- in some forces, officers complete a paper copy of the DASH form, which is later scanned onto the force system. Due to workloads there can be a delay between completion of the DASH and it being scanned onto the system;
- some forces use the DASH questions, but do not use the forms, with officers instead having to make a note of the answers in their pocket notebooks and transfer the information onto an electronic form when they return to the station;

³⁰ 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/

- not all forces require the DASH form (or force specific risk assessment) to be completed in all domestic abuse cases, for example non crime incidents;
- some forces allow response officers to use their professional judgment and discretion to decide whether a formal DASH record is completed;
- not all forces provide training on completion of the DASH form so it can be based upon subjective judgment;
- in a number of forces, the grading of risk is still based upon the number of ticks on the DASH form and not on an officer's professional judgment; and
- there are inconsistencies in the methods forces use to assess risk, with different forces using a different number of risks or 'ticks' to grade a case as high risk.

There is generally a high level of compliance in terms of officers completing the risk assessment form. However, in some forces the level of understanding among response officers of the importance of the risk assessment and associated structured questions appears poor, with some staff seeing it as a process rather than an essential part of victim safeguarding. Better performing forces have invested in training and briefing sessions to ensure staff are aware of the reasons behind its completion and the importance of completing an early, accurate risk assessment at the scene.

There is confusion among staff in some forces regarding when a risk assessment is required, which is mainly in relation to cases of abuse between family members. This again reinforces the importance of training to ensure that officers fully understand the wide range of violence and behaviours and different victims and perpetrators that fall under the definition of domestic abuse.

Some forces deal differently with domestic abuse related incidents where a crime has not been committed, giving officers greater discretion over the completion of a risk assessment. The APP on Domestic Abuse (2008) is clear that initial risk identification and safety planning processes need to apply to incidents even where no criminal offence appears to have been committed.

The causes of concern or areas for improvement on risk assessments identified in 11 forces in this year's vulnerability inspection cover issues including the inconsistent completion of risk assessments by staff without apparent action by leaders to address this; processes to identify children at risk in domestic abuse households not being reliable or effective and delays in the secondary assessment processes in CRUs and MASHs and referrals to other organisations.

There were conflicting views from victims regarding risk assessments and how well these are completed. Some victims described their annoyance at being asked what they thought were irrelevant questions every time the police attended. One victim

described calling the police three times in a day and having to answer the same questions on all three occasions. Some felt it was mechanical with officers reading out questions, while others described a more conversational approach which they preferred.

What was apparent was a lack of understanding among victims as to why the questions were important and relevant to their safety. This suggests that a clear explanation of why the risk assessment is being completed is not always provided by officers at the scene.

In at least two forces at the time of the inspection, the DASH risk assessment was completed over the telephone on some occasions. HMIC questions the appropriateness of this approach given that these cases are not always followed up with police attendance and may result in a victim of domestic abuse (and other family members) not being appropriately safeguarded. HMIC is firmly opposed to the practice of telephone-based risk assessment for intimate partner violence because the perpetrator may be present at the time of completion, which could influence the victim's response and fail to capture the full extent of the risk posed.

Recommendation 5 focuses on establishing evidence based good practice and requires that forces 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.

Longer term work is underway to develop an evidence base, which forces can use to inform their approach to risk assessment going forward. Recommendation 6 of *Everyone's business* required that the College of Policing consider the current approach to risk assessment and make an assessment of the sufficiency of the tools that response officers have to assess risk. In December 2014, the College published a summary of findings from a rapid evidence assessment on risk factors and risk assessment for domestic abuse. The review concluded there is no published peer-reviewed evaluation of the DASH model. Based on the findings of the rapid evidence assessment and the analysis of DASH data, the national policing lead and College of Policing wrote to forces in early 2015 advising that they should continue to use their current risk assessment models because there is presently insufficient evidence to support a change, and current models are understood by officers and partner organisations. This letter also contained practical advice pending further research on DASH:

Practical tips for officers

- Officers should consider carefully the victim's own assessment of risk. DASH includes a question asking victims whether they are frightened and what they fear. Research shows that victims' own assessments are as accurate as some predictive tools.
- When conducting risk assessments, officers should actively seek evidence of coercive control. Potentially high-risk cases that can be overlooked are those involving controlling behaviour, harassment and isolation of the victim.
- Structured professional judgement can only operate effectively if the assessor has information about the context of specific risk factors. It is crucial that attending officers complete the free text boxes on the DASH form.

Understanding domestic abuse risk at a force level

- DASH is a 'structured professional judgement' tool; it was not designed to predict risk of victimisation using cut-off scores. Forces should avoid determining the level of risk solely on the number of 'yes' responses.
- Officers frequently do not know what happens to DASH forms after submission. Forces should inform officers how the quality of the initial risk assessment determines whether victims receive appropriate levels of intervention.
- Forces could consider using supervision and informal peer support to improve officers' understanding of domestic abuse and risk assessment and management. An informal 'champion' in the case-study force raised the status of domestic abuse on their shift and helped improve the understanding and response of other officers.
- Some officers deal with cases of domestic abuse on an incident-by-incident basis. Forces should remind officers and call-takers of the importance of checking the history of a case. Where practical, this should involve examining previous risk assessments.
- Forces could provide advice to officers on how best to engage with victims, including listening, empathising, making it clear that they believe the victim and understand why they are reluctant to disclose, and that they are taking it seriously.

The College of Policing through the What Works Centre and in partnership with Cardiff University is currently examining how the DASH model is operating in forces. The purpose of the research is to understand how a structured judgement model of risk assessment and management might work most effectively. The full research outcomes are due for publication in spring 2016. HMIC look forward to the findings of this research, which will provide forces with a firm foundation for an evidence-based approach to risk assessment going forward. 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.

- In Merseyside Police, initial response officers assess and establish the level of risk and the nature of vulnerability, and consider immediate safeguarding for the victim. They complete an initial risk assessment for every incident of domestic abuse. Every case goes to the MASH, which develops the safety plans required. This initial response results in vulnerable victims being identified at the earliest opportunity, with immediate support being offered. Further safeguarding is then provided through partner agencies to all victims at an appropriate level.

Children at domestic abuse incidents

The police have a duty to protect children from harm; in all investigations the principle that the welfare of the child is paramount should be observed. The ACPO (2008) Guidance on Investigating Domestic Abuse states that officers should investigate the welfare of all children who have witnessed domestic abuse or who are normally resident at an address at which a domestic abuse incident has been reported. Where there is any concern as to the welfare or safety of a child, officers should make a notification to the police child abuse investigation unit (CAIU). Any referrals made to local authority children's social care departments should, where possible, be made by officers from the CAIU.

The response officers that we spoke to were aware of their responsibility to identify the effect of incidents upon children and undertake safeguarding activity. This includes talking to children if they are present at a domestic abuse incident or checking on them if they were told they were sleeping upstairs. A large number of the victims that we spoke to during the focus groups described officers enquiring about the safety and well being of children present at incidents. However, very few victims who had children described instances when officers physically checked on them.

Forces have systems in place to make referrals where appropriate. These generally involve response officers completing a vulnerable child form or a section on the domestic abuse risk assessment form to alert Public Protection Units (PPU) and children's social services or are made via MASHs or CRUs. Since the last inspection, HMIC found a greater focus on the risk to children following a domestic abuse incident and a significant increase in referrals to social services. During fieldwork many forces and children's social care departments reported significant increases in the referrals of children. The increase in referrals being received is, in some cases, impacting upon partner organisations' ability to assess these cases.

A number of children's services also reported experiencing significant increases in referrals from police of children associated with domestic abuse incidents. Ofsted have commented on the impact of increases in referrals in some of their recent inspections. There is evidence that where police and children's services are working together, especially in the co-located MASH, they have developed processes to ensure higher risk cases are identified and prioritised via triage and initial screening systems.

This activity is not yet widespread. The issue of referrals to children's social services requires further consideration: as there needs to be appropriate referral with a shared understanding of the risks to children. Impact 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 address this issue.

Some forces are using additional checks and balances to identify and manage the risk to children at domestic abuse incidents.

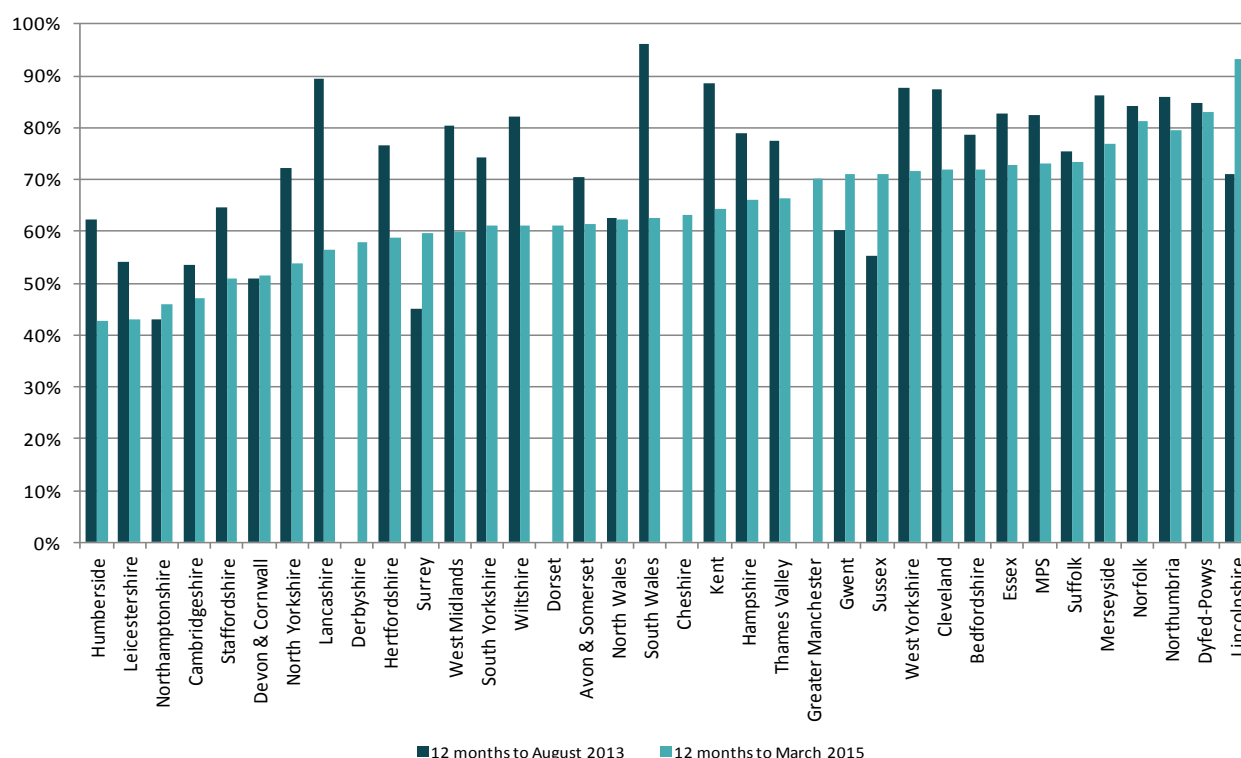
- Derbyshire Constabulary scans all DASH risk assessment forms to ensure that children are appropriately safeguarded.
- Merseyside Police runs Operation Encompass under which, when a domestic abuse incident is attended by a police officer and children are present, a member of staff from the Vulnerable Persons Unit (VPU) or Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) makes immediate contact with the child's school to make them aware. This informs the school of the incident and provides for additional safeguarding. It was described by partners in education as "The best thing the police have given to education".
- Cheshire Constabulary has designated schools liaison officers, who work in and with schools. The schools involved in the scheme identify a member of staff to act as the single point of contact or key adult. Under the scheme the key adult in school is informed if and when one of their pupils is involved in or affected by a domestic abuse incident. This allows them to monitor the pupil's behaviour and ensure appropriate support is in place if required.

Positive action and powers of arrest

Thirty-nine forces told us they have a positive action policy (including arrest) in respect of domestic abuse and the majority of response officers were able to explain how they implement this policy in practice. This is a positive development since our last inspection. However, there remain considerable differences in arrest rates for domestic abuse crimes which suggest this policy is not translating effectively into practice across all forces.

Police officers have a duty to take positive action when dealing with domestic abuse incidents. Often this means making an arrest, provided the grounds exist and it is a necessary and proportionate response. Officers must be able to justify the decision not to arrest in those circumstances. In some situations other positive approaches may be more appropriate. In the last domestic abuse inspection, HMIC highlighted concerns about the inconsistency in the rates of arrests across forces. Considerable variations in these numbers continue to be seen varying between 43 percent in Humberside and Leicestershire and 93 percent in Lincolnshire. This contrasts with the last inspection when the variation was 43 percent in Northamptonshire and 96 percent in South Wales Police (see Figure 6). HMIC would expect to see far greater consistency in the rates of arrests across forces.

Figure 6: Domestic abuse arrest rates for the 12 months to March 2015 and the 12 months to August 2013



Source: HMIC data collection. Where no data is shown for 2013 the force had not been able to provide the number of arrests.

Comparing arrest data for the 12 months to March 2015 against the 12 months to August 2013, the total number of arrests has increased which is a positive development since the last inspection. This increase, however, is not in line with the increase in the number of offences, which means the arrest rate has dropped by 10 percent points (from 76 percent to 66 percent based on data from 32 forces). Since the last inspection, domestic abuse related crimes have increased by 31 percent (from 269,700 to 353,100). HMIC's hypothesis is that the increase in the number of crimes as a result of more accurate crime recording³¹ generally has had an impact upon the arrest rate. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS)³² this increase is in part due to police forces improving their recording of these incidents rather than an actual upward trend in domestic abuse. This improvement in recording is a positive development, as domestic abuse incidents recorded as crimes are likely to receive a better service. HMIC noted in *Everyone's business* that the majority of PCCs were showing a strong commitment to tackling domestic abuse, with just under half having made a commitment to increase the reporting of this type of offence. Forces have also been actively encouraging victims to come forward to report crimes and it may be that this is reflected in this increase. For 26 of the 32 forces that provided comparable data, the number of offences has increased by a greater percentage than the number of arrests resulting in a reduction in arrest rates.

HMIC asked the 12 forces with the largest reductions in arrest rates whether they had undertaken any analysis to establish the reason for this fall. It was suggested that while better crime recording compliance is a key factor, there may be additional explanations. Explanations provided included increased third party reporting with lesser prospects of arrest; the number of cautions particularly for juveniles; interviews under voluntary attendance and perpetrators being arrested once but charged with more than one offence, particularly where these are historical offences. HMIC does not have data to corroborate the extent to which these areas may have contributed to the reduction in the arrest rate. The range of explanations put forward suggests, however, that these forces were unable to determine the exact reason for the fall, which is concerning.

Of the 32 forces with comparable data, only six forces have seen an increase in both their arrest rate and numbers. It is crucial that force leaders explore the detail of their data to develop an understanding of why their arrest data is at the level that it is to ensure they are providing the best service they can to victims. This is particularly important in those seven forces that have seen a decrease in the overall number of

³¹ *Crime Recording: Making the Victim Count*. London, HMIC, 2014. Available from www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/crime-recording-making-the-victim-count.pdf

³² *Part of Statistical Bulletin: Crime in England and Wales, year ending June 2015*, Office for National Statistics, 2015. Available from www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/crime-stats/crime-statistics/year-ending-june-2015/stb-crime--ye-june-2015.html#tab-Violent-crime

arrests. Recommendation 2 addresses this issue by proposing the development of a data set relating to domestic abuse. Based on the successful work of the national Rape Monitoring Group, this will enable more thorough analysis of how domestic abuse is dealt within each force area. All forces should review their arrest rates to ensure that arrests are happening in all appropriate cases. Seven³³ forces were unable to provide HMIC with data on the number of domestic abuse arrests. This suggests that they do not collect and monitor this data, which is unacceptable.

It is particularly important at a domestic abuse incident that officers take positive action to make the victim and any children safe. This may involve arresting an individual who is suspected of an offence, where the power to arrest exists or taking other positive steps to safeguard them such as the installation of a panic alarm, the provision of a mobile phone or organising refuge accommodation.

If the decision not to arrest is taken when it would be a necessary and proportionate response to make an arrest, then an officer must be able to justify their decision not to arrest. Failure to make an arrest when there are grounds to do so may leave a victim at risk from further offences.

The decision to arrest lies with the arresting officer at the scene, based on the circumstances of the offence and their professional judgment about whether this power should be exercised. Earlier in this report, HMIC highlighted its concerns regarding the inconsistent awareness of perpetrators' coercive and controlling behaviour, particularly among response staff. Some victims may not want the perpetrator arrested because of the control that this individual exerts upon them or for fear of reprisals. If forces are to implement effectively a positive action policy, then it is crucial that response officers fully understand the dynamics of domestic abuse, including coercive control, and have the competence and expertise to secure the trust and confidence of victims.

Supervision of initial response and checking initial risk assessment and reviewing

In the last inspection, HMIC highlighted that frontline supervisors were not routinely and actively supervising officers attending domestic abuse incidents. 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. High risk cases are appropriately given greater priority. There is also increasing evidence that supervisors are reviewing initial actions and risk assessments once completed by response officers, although the quality of supervision of risk assessments remains an area for improvement in a number of forces. In this year's vulnerability inspection,

³³ These forces are City of London, Cumbria, Durham, Gloucestershire, Nottinghamshire, Warwickshire and West Mercia.

HMIC identified causes of concern or areas for improvement on the supervision of risk assessments in relation to domestic abuse in 8 forces.

Most force procedures require an initial check of the risk assessment and actions completed by response officers by the supervising sergeant, especially in high risk cases. Where this is not happening, HMIC found that the initial investigation and safeguarding is inconsistent.

There is a range of different procedures and practices currently being used when it comes to checking and reviewing initial risk assessments. In some forces, supervisors are required to take an active role in checking and approving the risk assessments completed by response officers. We saw examples of risk assessments being supervised at sergeant level, with the high risk cases often being overseen by an inspector. In some forces, policy requires that these incidents are not closed on the force command and control system without some form of supervisor's review and endorsement. We also saw examples of cases where risk assessments had been changed to reflect concerns raised by supervisors.

Where supervisors regularly revise officers' risk assessments, it is important that they identify why the assessment is wrongly graded in the first place and feed back this information to response officers. In some cases, inspectors reviewed all risk assessments to check their accuracy and to confirm the appropriateness of the risk rating applied. Supervisors in some forces have received training on the review of and approval of domestic abuse risk assessments, but this is not standard practice in all forces.

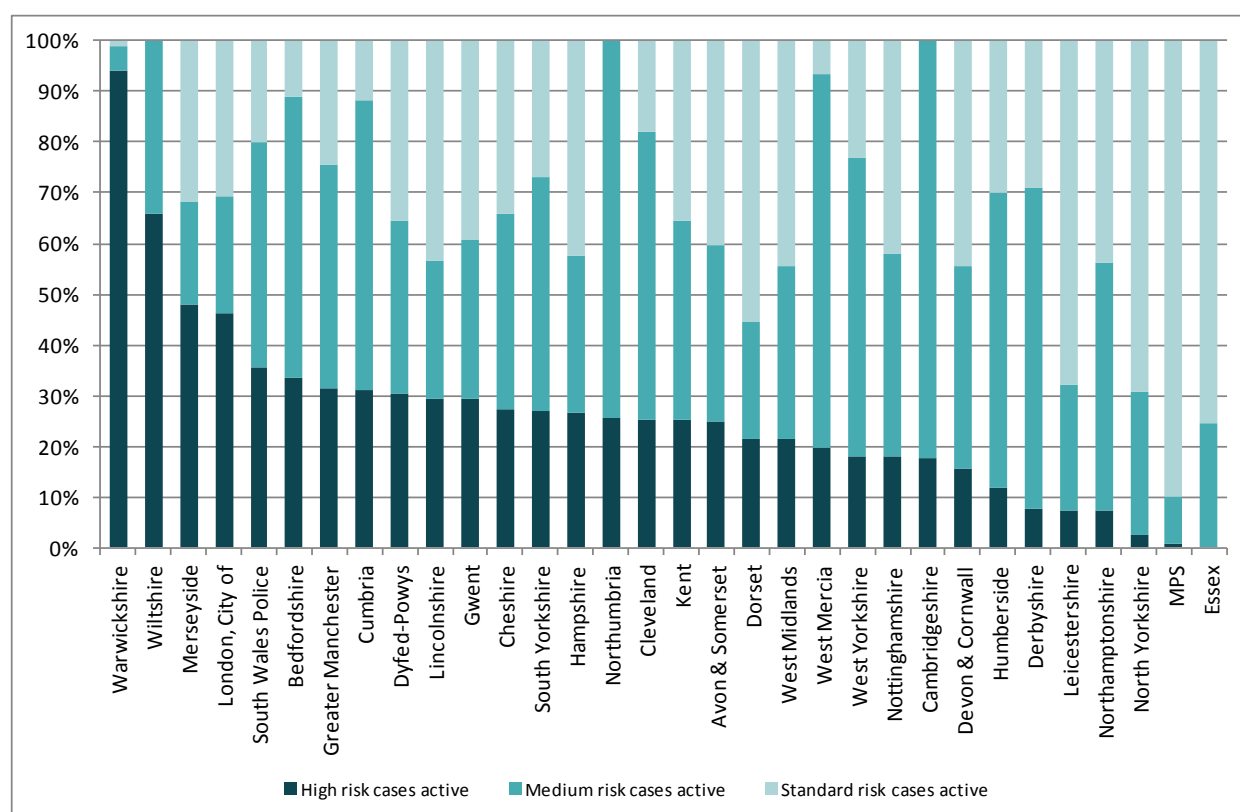
Practitioner: "It is not just frontline officers that need more awareness of domestic abuse, it is all staff including sergeants that should have regular, up-to-date awareness so that they can respond and instruct better on all types of domestic violence."

Despite improvements in some forces, the supervision of risk assessments continues to be an area for improvement. In some forces, there is a complete lack of supervisory oversight and scrutiny of risk assessments. In one force, all risk assessment forms are automatically forwarded to the MASH for consideration without first being checked by a supervisor. As a result, the opportunity for a quick time assessment of the appropriateness of the actions taken at the scene and the risk rating applied could be missed. In another force, although there are systems in place to review risk assessments, delays sometimes mean that these checks are not completed until the following shift. It is crucial that all forces have robust supervisory arrangements in place to ensure not only that victims are protected through the accurate assessment of risk, but that officers who are doing this work well are rewarded and recognised and poor attitudes and performance are challenged.

The causes of concern or areas for improvement on the supervision of risk assessments identified in 8 forces in this year's vulnerability inspection cover issues including the limited supervision in place in some forces and that, where force procedures require supervisor review or endorsement, these not being carried out consistently.

In the last inspection, HMIC highlighted concerns about the inconsistency in forces' data on the number of domestic abuse cases with different levels of risk. In this inspection, we asked forces for a snapshot of their domestic abuse caseload on a given day in April 2015, a repeat of the exercise we conducted last time. Eleven forces were still unable to supply this data. This is of concern as it suggests that those forces are not able to monitor and assess this important area of public protection effectively. There remain significant variations in the proportion of standard, medium and high risk cases for those forces that could provide this data, as shown in Figure 7. This raises questions about the quality of data that forces hold on domestic abuse and highlights the inconsistencies in how they assess and grade risk. Forces should test their understanding of local prevalence and level of need by comparing their data with that held by local specialist domestic abuse services.

Figure 7: Percentage of active domestic abuse cases by risk level on a given day in April 2015



Source: HMIC data collection

Secondary review of initial risk assessment

Most force procedures require supervisors to undertake an initial check of the risk assessment completed by response officers at the scene of an incident. However, force practices differ considerably in terms of what further checks are undertaken. Increasingly, procedures are being put in place where the initial risk assessment is subject to a secondary review generally within the CRU or MASH. This is sensible given that it provides another opportunity to ensure that all appropriate safeguarding actions have been completed and the correct risk rating applied.

Secondary assessments are normally conducted by specialist staff who will complete a thorough review of the information held on police systems to ascertain history and any information that may affect the initial assessment of risk. In addition, these staff will often make referrals to other organisations and seek further information from them to assist in establishing the risk. Secondary risk assessment can be completed by trained police staff, specialist domestic abuse or public protection officers, IDVAs or trained voluntary sector staff. These risk assessments in particular should consider all relevant information, including intelligence, the results of the initial risk assessment and investigation and information from partner organisations.

HMIC found that not all forces have systems whereby victims at standard or medium risk are subject to a secondary assessment with further checks and a review of the grading and initial response. The accuracy of the initial risk assessment completed by response officers is crucial in these cases, as it could be the only one that is undertaken. If cases are graded incorrectly, they may not receive the appropriate safeguarding and support required.

In some forces, we found that staff completing the secondary risk assessments are reluctant to amend the initial officer's assessment. In others, a significant amount of re-grading takes place at the secondary assessment stage. In a number of forces we found backlogs in cases being secondary assessed in both CRUs and MASHs. This means there are delays in the completion of risk assessments, sharing information and making referrals to other organisations, as well as safety planning.

HMIC believes that correct risk assessments form the basis of all subsequent safeguarding activity. Therefore it is crucial that staff have the necessary training, skills and resources to produce accurate risk assessments at the earliest opportunity. It is also vital that staff are empowered to challenge risk assessments if information exists that suggests the risk has been graded incorrectly.

It is also often the case that those subjected to domestic abuse, or their families, have had previous contact with a number of agencies and it is vital that all information is available and assessed at the earliest opportunity by the agencies involved, if risks are to be properly managed. Therefore forces should ensure that they have robust processes and sufficient resources to manage information sharing in a timely fashion; failing to do so increases the risk to victims.

Keeping the victim informed, and compliance with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (VCOP)

Victims are not being offered the opportunity to give a Victim Personal Statement (VPS) at the appropriate time in a large number of forces. Approaches to victim contact are also inconsistent.

Victim Personal Statements (VPS)

All police forces have a statutory duty to comply with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (VCOP), which sets out the service victims can expect from all parts of the criminal justice system. The Code states that all victims of crime should be able to make a Victim Personal Statement (VPS) at the same time as giving a witness statement, which they can use to explain how the crime has affected them. In a large number of forces, not all victims are being offered this opportunity at the appropriate time.

The VPS is especially important in domestic abuse cases because it is the victim's opportunity to convey the context in which the offending has occurred (including controlling or coercive behaviour) and the impact it has had on the victim, how the perpetrator has made them feel and any long-term health or other consequences. It is also appropriate to include reference to any observed impact of the offending on children too young to make their own statement, for example changes in behaviour such as experiencing nightmares or comments made by the child which are heard by the victim. Victims can decide not to make a VPS at the time of giving a witness statement; they can do so later but only if this is before sentencing.

HMIC found that VPS is not consistently being offered until later in the criminal justice process so victims are not being given the opportunity to decide at what stage they make a VPS. HMIC saw numerous examples of statements being sought after the perpetrator has been charged or immediately prior to court attendance. Some officers and staff appeared to have a lack of knowledge regarding when a VPS should be offered. Some reported that it was force policy not to offer victims this opportunity in the early stages of an investigation, to give victims the opportunity to recognise the full impact of the crime upon them.

There is little awareness of the fact that victims may submit a further VPS to the police to add to or to clarify their original statement. Forces should ensure that all officers and staff are aware that victims should be offered the opportunity to make a VPS at initial reporting, as required by the VCOP.

Enhanced services

Under the VCOP, a victim of domestic abuse is eligible for enhanced services as a victim of the most serious crime. This means that they are entitled to be informed by the police of any actions relating to the suspect, for example arrest, charge, bail conditions or release from custody within one working day of this taking place. HMIC found that in some forces, there is frequent contact with victims and updates at important points in the criminal justice process, which are recorded on force systems and show clear supervisory oversight.

Some forces use victim contracts, which outline a victim's preference in terms of the frequency and method of communication. In other forces, it is unclear who has overarching responsibility for updating the victim at crucial points. Where there were a number of different units or people working with the victim, for example the Domestic Abuse Investigation Unit (DAIU), MASH and an IDVA, there can be multiple contacts with victims.

Forces and partners should ensure there is a clear understanding of the relationship between the DAIU, MASH, MARAC and IDVA where applicable so that duplication is avoided and a co-ordinated approach taken.

There were also examples where victim contact appears to be compliance based with only basic details being recorded on force systems. Many forces have procedures where the officer in the case is expected to provide an update to the victim at defined intervals – often 7, 14 or 21 days. In many of these forces the crime recording computer system supports this procedure by notifying the officer of the need to complete an entry confirming contact has been made. Our inspection found that in some forces, officers would respond to the notification rather than be active in managing contact and updates with the victim. In addition, we also found that in some forces, officers only completed entries when prompted by the system as opposed to using the system to record all contact with the victim.

Ensuring that victims are kept informed of developments in their case is crucial in order to safeguard not only them, but often their children. In the focus groups held with victims, they consistently described feeling safer when they understood fully what action was being taken. When the perpetrator had been arrested, victims valued being kept updated. They do not want to have to call the police to find out what is happening. Many victims described the stress caused by having to “chase” officers for this information that is vital to a victim's safety.

Victims particularly highlighted the importance of knowing whether the perpetrator was going to be released from custody, whether they had bail conditions and understanding next steps. It is crucial that forces have clear policies, understood by all staff, setting out who is responsible for communicating bail, sentencing decisions and prison release information to victims to ensure they are not placed at unnecessary risk.

There was frustration from some officers about the difficulties in obtaining information on the outcome of court cases, particularly if these occur on a Saturday.

This can lead to a delay in updating police systems and a subsequent delay in informing the victim. Although this is an essential part of the role of forces to manage the risk of the perpetrator and keep victims safe, the role of the witness service and the at-court IDVA service is also important here, as they can play a key role in the coordination of information between the courts, police, and victims.

Chapter 3 – Specialist domestic abuse teams and ongoing case management

This chapter considers:

- how effectively forces investigate domestic abuse offences; and
- how well forces support victims during the investigation process.

Main findings

- Many forces still allocate domestic abuse investigations based on crime type and complexity rather than the level of risk faced by the victim.
- The standard of investigations conducted by specialist officers is generally good with appropriate supervision, although there is inconsistency in record keeping across forces.
- Safeguarding arrangements for victims assessed as high risk is good, however, in some forces there is confusion over responsibility for protecting victims assessed as medium and standard risk.
- Despite the priority being communicated by forces in relation to responding to domestic abuse and protecting the most vulnerable, workloads and staffing levels within specialist public protection teams is becoming a concern.
- Better forces are making good use of neighbourhood teams to tackle perpetrators and offer greater protection and support to victims.

In this inspection, HMIC identified a number of areas of concern relating to the effectiveness of specialist units investigating domestic abuse cases. The safeguarding activity and development of safety plans for high risk cases is good. However, safeguarding for victims at medium and standard risk is inconsistent and in some forces there is a lack of clarity of responsibilities for such cases. The investigation of domestic abuse cases is still allocated in many forces on crime type and complexity rather than the level of risk.

HMIC found that responsibility for and oversight of domestic abuse cases can fragment at the point at which cases are transferred from response officers to a specialist team who will take responsibility for investigating the crime, continuing to safeguard the victim and managing the perpetrator. Forces use a range of different models so the team that has responsibility for the ongoing management of a domestic abuse case during the investigation varies from force to force. In most forces, the level of risk will determine who supports the victim and who investigates the crime.

Often no one individual has responsibility for all aspects of an individual's case, which is why good communication between investigators and those safeguarding victims is essential.

Most forces have dedicated domestic abuse officers or public protection unit staff responsible for investigating and safeguarding domestic abuse cases, although these mainly focus on those victims assessed as high risk. While there is generally clarity in who has responsibility for both investigation and safeguarding for victims at high risk, this was not always clear in relation to victims assessed as medium and standard risk.

Better performing forces have greater clarity on what service victims can expect to receive based on their level of risk, for example a follow up visit from the neighbourhood team.

The quality of safety plans for victims at medium and standard risk is inconsistent, as is the recording of activity on police systems for these cases.

All forces must have clear policies outlining where responsibility for safeguarding victims at medium and standard risk lies and appropriate safeguarding in place throughout their involvement with the police with referral routes to partner organisations and early access to specialised support where appropriate.

Clear policies need to be supported by robust supervision, well trained staff and effective systems so that cases and relevant information can be passed between units as required. It is also important that forces actively monitor their own data on the proportion of standard, medium and high risk cases as this is crucial to understanding the problem of domestic abuse in their local area. Recommendation 3 addresses this.

In many forces, domestic abuse investigations are still being allocated based on crime type and complexity, rather than assessment of risk to the victim. This can result in less experienced or qualified investigators being responsible for what is perceived to be a low level offence, but which in reality is assessed as a high risk case.

Recommendation 3 calls on forces to review their arrangements for the prioritisation and allocation of domestic abuse investigations, as part of updating their domestic abuse action plans. Most forces have recognised the need to change this and are attempting to realign resources to address it. However, some forces reported finding this challenging as it is difficult to future proof new plans due to ongoing budgetary pressures.

As highlighted in the last inspection, almost every force has a domestic abuse specialist unit often sitting within a wider public protection team. These comprise police officers and staff, many of whom are trained detectives. These teams differ in terms of their size, roles and responsibilities and structure between forces. We spoke

to staff in specialist units in all forces and we are impressed by their commitment to provide an effective service to victims of domestic abuse and safeguard them and their families.

Practitioner: “Police in general do a fantastic and challenging job. I feel with the specialist public protection unit this has raised standards within the Police in safeguarding vulnerable adults and children. They have a better understanding around domestic violence and engage with external agencies to ensure safety for victim and any dependent children.”

Specialist teams represent a very small proportion of forces’ overall resource. Estimates for 2015/16³⁴ show the average police spend to be about 4 percent of their total budget on public protection. This remains in line with expenditure at the time of our last report.

There are still areas of concern however, which may have an impact upon the effectiveness of specialist units. These are similar to those found in the last inspection. Disappointingly, the situation does not appear to have improved significantly over the last 18 months. These include:

- considerable variations in the working patterns of specialist staff with some forces relying on ‘on call’ provision overnight or at weekends;
- teams not being fully staffed due to large numbers of vacant posts, maternity leave or long term sickness absences;
- staff within specialist units being tasked with additional duties, which diverts their attention away from their direct public protection functions for example the development and delivery of vulnerability training for frontline staff;
- delays in allocating medium and standard risk cases to investigators;
- some domestic abuse investigations including high risk cases being allocated to non-specialist staff due to capacity issues;
- staff working in specialist roles not receiving any additional training on domestic abuse. In some forces, those investigating high risk cases receive the same level of training as those investigating medium/low risk cases. Our survey of domestic abuse practitioners suggested that a better understanding of victim/perpetrator dynamics was needed even for specialist staff; and

³⁴ Police objectives analysis (POA) data, Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). See Annex G - About the data.

- in spite of the fact that domestic abuse offences make up 10 percent of all crime and that such abuse has proven wider negative impact upon victims and their families, the lack of resources, in particular, specialist investigators, is becoming a concern.

Since the publication of *Everyone's business* 18 months ago, there has been a 31 percent increase in the number of domestic abuse related crimes (from 269,700 to 353,100). According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS)³⁵ this increase is in part due to police forces improving their recording of these incidents as crimes rather than an actual upward trend in domestic abuse.

This increase in reporting is increasing the number of cases so there are heavy and increasing workloads within a lot of specialist teams, resulting in high levels of stress for the staff working within them and affecting their capability and capacity to support a whole force response to domestic abuse;

Practitioner: "I work really closely with our local domestic violence unit who are amazing - sadly they are hugely under staffed to deal with the volume of cases they have which leads to stress and staff absence. We have lost a number of brilliant, experienced officers to stress/workload issues, soon there will be no-one left to deal with domestic violence as there is too much."

Despite the challenges outlined above, the standard of investigations among specialist officers is generally good. There is evidence of investigation plans, which provide an overview of the investigative actions and strategies used and the rationale for each decision being used. Supervision is also generally good, although we found the standard of record keeping to be inconsistent across forces.

The causes for concern and areas for improvement on the investigation of domestic abuse offences identified in 15 forces in this year's vulnerability inspection cover issues including high risk cases being allocated to non-specialist and inexperienced staff; a lack of recorded investigation plans or poor quality plans; weaknesses in the handover process with poor quality of initial action and gaps in the documentation handed to the investigator and ineffective processes to locate and arrest outstanding perpetrators (including those wanted for breaches).

There are examples however, where forces are working to ensure a high quality service is provided by specialist teams.

³⁵ Part of Statistical Bulletin: Crime in England and Wales, year ending June 2015, Office for National Statistics, 2015. Available from www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/crime-stats/crime-statistics/year-ending-june-2015/stb-crime--ye-june-2015.html#tab-Violent-crime

- West Midlands Police manage medium risk victims in the same way as high risk. Every medium risk victim is allocated to a domestic abuse safeguarding officer who contacts the victim and makes referrals to IDVAs and other support services.
- Durham Constabulary has secured additional funding to establish a dedicated domestic abuse innovation team. One of their priorities will be to improve the response and support provided to victims assessed as being at standard and medium risk of harm.

Other forces are working with partners to provide integrated victim care throughout the life cycle of cases.

- Avon and Somerset Police has brought together a range of victim support services under the Lighthouse programme to provide consistent and coordinated integrated victim care. A standardised protocol, based on the assessed risk of the victim, assists with consistency and timeliness in common needs assessments and contact with vulnerable victims.
- Leicestershire Police is involved in Project 360, a collaborative effort with the University of Leicester, Leicester City Council and Leicestershire and Rutland County Councils aimed at providing the best possible service to victims. The project uses engagement workers, with an expertise in domestic violence, who act as a mediator between the victim, the police and other support services. Initial findings indicate the intervention is associated with an increase in satisfaction with police action and a greater tendency to report future incidents.

Role of neighbourhood policing teams in safeguarding victims

Although there are examples of neighbourhood teams being used to help tackle domestic abuse, this is still not as widespread as HMIC would have anticipated, having drawn attention to this issue in the last inspection. We found previously that many forces were not deploying one of their most valuable assets, neighbourhood policing teams, in the fight against domestic abuse. While most forces had started to identify and target their prolific domestic abuse offenders, in many cases this had not been integrated into the working practices of response officers or neighbourhood teams.

All forces should define a clear role for neighbourhood teams in the response to domestic abuse cases. Neighbourhood teams can assist with gathering and sharing intelligence about suspects, support any targeted disruption activity and monitor repeat victimisation locations. They also have an important role to play in terms of supporting and safeguarding victims and their family members. We spoke to neighbourhood officers and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) who told us they had no involvement in domestic abuse. Greater use should be made of this important resource.

In some forces, neighbourhood officers are actively involved with local schools, holding awareness raising sessions on healthy relationships to safeguard vulnerable young people that may be at risk of domestic abuse.

- In Hampshire Constabulary, neighbourhood officers now have responsibility for domestic abuse cases that are assessed as medium risk and will visit victims within 72 hours of an offence to ensure that appropriate safeguarding measures are put in place. Most neighbourhood staff have already completed a 'Neighbourhood Excellence' course designed to equip them to perform this role.
- West Midlands Police places information markers on high and medium risk victims addresses and information is available to neighbourhood officers, using 'police watch'. Regular reassurance visits are made to victims if appropriate by neighbourhood staff.

However, it is also important that neighbourhood teams are adequately supervised and supported when following up safeguarding activity with victims of domestic abuse. HMIC saw examples of duties being allocated to neighbourhood officers and PCSOs who are working in isolation with insufficient knowledge of the case. It is therefore likely their actions will not always reflect the level of service required to meet victims' needs.

Chapter 4 – Working in partnership to protect victims from harm

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

Main findings

- Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) are working effectively with active participation of police who often provide a leadership role in chairing meetings.
- The significant increase in the number of high risk cases being identified means the capacity of MARACs to safeguard victims is becoming an issue for police and partners.
- More forces are establishing MASHs and CRUs which is improving work between partners especially in relation to information sharing, joint risk assessing and safety planning.
- Backlogs in cases were found in some MASHs and CRUs resulting in delays in information sharing, risk assessing and safety planning.
- IDVAs continue to perform a crucial role in supporting victims.
- Greater priority is being given to evidence-led prosecutions with more awareness among staff and the increased use of body-worn video cameras assisting in securing vital evidence.

Multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs)

Overall, HMIC found that MARACs are seen as being effective by officers and staff. We observed 52 MARAC meetings in 34 forces and found good attendance from partners and good participation from those present. Feedback from partners is generally positive about police participation, and in many cases, leadership, with the police largely being responsible for the chairing, organisation and administration of these meetings. However, consistently high case numbers are placing a strain on all partners, including the police.

MARACs are multi-agency meetings where statutory and voluntary agency representatives share 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, IDVAs, children's services, health and housing. Latest data from SafeLives indicates that there are 262 MARACs currently in operation across England and Wales. 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.

During the last inspection, HMIC raised concerns about the caseload of MARACs and their inability to cope with the sheer volume of high risk cases. Our concern is now more acute: over the last 18 months there has been a 30 percent increase in the number of MARAC referrals. There were 75,500 high risk cases referred to MARAC for the 12 months to 31 March 2015, compared to 57,900 for the 12 months to 31 August 2013. Sixty seven percent of these MARAC referrals were from police forces (based on data from 40 forces).

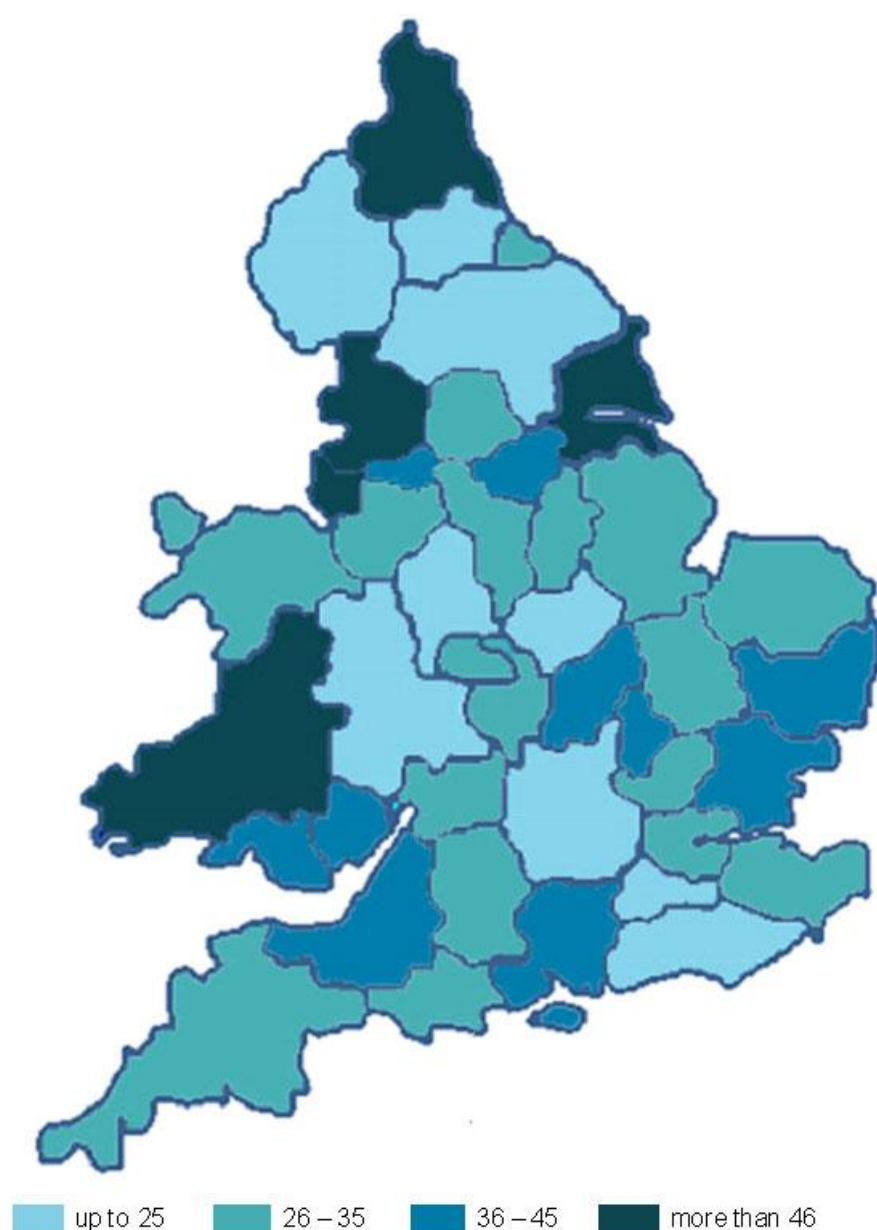
The fact that more cases are being identified as high risk and referred to MARAC should be seen as a success particularly in the context of falling numbers of overall calls for assistance for domestic abuse and apparent better recording and reporting. However, this has in turn created new challenges within MARACs, which forces should work with relevant partners to understand and address.

Some forces do not have the capacity to support the high number of cases that meet the criteria for referral to MARAC. At least one force is conducting a 'screening exercise' which results in high risk cases being screened out of being referred to MARAC. This is unacceptable practice. Forces should explore the detail of their data on MARAC referral rates to understand what is happening in terms of any increases, identify what is driving these changes and determine what the response (beyond just the police) needs to be.

There should also be a greater shared focus on early prevention work with families and early interventions with perpetrators, as the police are only ever one part of the solution. Recommendation 1 proposes that membership of the National Oversight Group 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.

Many forces are increasing the frequency of MARAC meetings to respond to the increased demand, which places further pressures upon both police and partner resources. SafeLives collates data on the number of cases referred to MARAC per head of adult female population. There is considerable variation in this data from 14 cases per 10,000 to 64 per 10,000. Figure 8 shows this variation in more detail.

Figure 8: MARAC cases per head of female population



Source: SafeLives

Overall, there is good attendance from partners and good participation from those present, with evidence that they are effectively safeguarding victims and children through information sharing and joint action planning. Increasingly, cases are being brought to these meetings as a result of professional judgment and not just through established triggers such as a high risk assessment or the identification of a repeat victim. However, caseloads remain a serious concern, with some meetings lasting a full day. Some forces are also struggling to secure attendance from certain partners (commonly health, although in some areas health are actively engaged).

There are MARACs that do not monitor the progress of actions allocated to attendees, which makes it difficult to determine if the agreed timescales are being adhered to. Two forces have seen a reduction in their referral rates to MARACS over the last six months and were unclear of the reasons for this, which should be investigated further as a matter of urgency.

A number of victims in the focus groups stated that they were aware that their cases had been referred to a MARAC and most of them knew that this involved several different organisations. However, none of these victims knew what organisations attended the MARAC apart from the police or understood the purpose of the meeting. In addition, none of the victims recall being informed of the outcome of the MARAC in relation to their case. There appears therefore to be a lack of understanding and involvement of victims with MARACs. This highlights the importance of ensuring that victims understand the purpose of a MARAC and receive appropriate feedback following the meeting.

- Sussex Police holds MARAC PLUS meetings, which deal with complex and repeated cases involving the whole family (victim, children and perpetrator).
- Derbyshire Constabulary has undertaken work with local clinical commissioning groups and health providers, which has resulted in a small number of referrals to the MARAC.

Multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASHs)

Forces are continuing to develop their working practices with partners to share information more effectively. There have been positive advances in the establishment of MASHs and CRUs to share information, assess risk and agree actions to safeguard victims. Forces reported establishing MASHs since the last inspection or greater partner participation in those that were already established. Although any arrangements which support these actions are positive, there has been little or no evaluation of these models in most forces so it is unclear how effective they are in terms of the outcomes for victims. It is important that these models are based upon what works, but forces have little or no evidence to assess this.

There is a range of different models being used both across forces and within individual force areas. The models in use within forces differ greatly in their remit, scope and capacity. In some forces, the MASH is a fully integrated co-located structure, with staff from a number of agencies working together in one building with access to, and sharing, relevant information.

In others, there is a “virtual” MASH with no co-location and information being shared via phone calls and e mails. In other variations, police officers and staff review referrals alone and decide which ones require further information from partners, which is then requested for further assessment.

HMIC recognises the need for forces to adapt their arrangements to accommodate their size, local authority boundaries and the specific needs of their population. However, some staff are confused when different models are being used in different boroughs within one force area. Some forces have both MASH and CRU coverage. In other forces, only certain geographical areas have MASH coverage, as they are either still rolling these arrangements out on a force wide basis or are in negotiations with local authority partners in relation to funding and governance issues.

Practitioner: “There are significant differences across police forces. I work across the UK and have observed very different models of MASH and MARAC operationally and strategically. There needs to be a more robust emphasis on the domestic abuse model across partner agencies”

In forces where there is no MASH or CRU provision, there is some acknowledgement of the restrictions this places upon working together with other local bodies.

There are capacity issues in the processing of risk assessments in domestic abuse cases often in MASHs or CRUs, which result in delayed referrals to MARACs in some forces. In a number of forces we found backlogs in cases being secondary assessed in both CRUs and MASHs. This means there are delays in the completion of risk assessments, sharing information and making referrals to other organisations, as well as safety planning.

The variations in practice across the country are exacerbated by the lack of any national guidance on what a MASH is expected to do. All agencies are in agreement that the sharing of relevant information is vital to ensure vulnerable people are properly safeguarded. However, it is important that these models are based upon what works and forces have little or no evidence to determine this. Recommendation 5 focuses on establishing evidence based good practice and proposes that a ‘task and finish group’ evaluates the effectiveness of the various models in place for MASHs and CRUs in terms of the outcomes achieved for victims of domestic abuse.

The role of Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs)

IDVAs continue to play a crucial role in supporting the police response to domestic abuse. Work with IDVA services was seen as extremely positive by officers and staff.

IDVAs are specialist case workers who offer personalised support to those victims most at risk of homicide or serious harm. They work with a range of partners through the MARAC including police, housing, the 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 their advocate. IDVAs are independent and do not only work through the MARAC or in connection with the criminal justice system. They may work for charities, councils or other organisations like Victim Support or Women's Aid. Many are based in the community such as in hospital accident and emergency departments.

In many force areas, IDVAs work alongside police staff with responsibility for safeguarding victims of domestic abuse. IDVAs and police staff reported that co-location results in quicker and better information sharing, risk assessing and safety planning. While co-location can be helpful, independence from the police is also important particularly for many victims, who do not want to or are not ready to interact with statutory agencies.

Latest figures from SafeLives show that there are 540 IDVAs working nationally with victims identified as being at high risk. SafeLives estimate that 1,025 IDVAs are needed to support all high risk victims in England and Wales, which suggests currently only half the capacity required is available. At the time of the last inspection, this estimate was 650 so the demand for this service has increased significantly over the last eighteen months. SafeLives found 20 police force areas have less than half the required IDVA capacity to support high-risk victims, with five having less than a quarter.

It is important when commissioning services for victims of domestic abuse that PCCs recognise the value and contribution of IDVAs and other domestic abuse practitioners who work with the police on a daily basis to provide support to victims identified as being at standard, medium and high risk. There is evidence of more services being funded by PCCs, with more sustained funding allocations as a result of PCCs now having responsibility for commissioning of victim services.

A number of IDVAs told us that daily contact with police officers allowed them to build good relationships, provide advice and guidance where needed and challenge poor attitudes or practice if necessary. The benefit of having access to police information systems, which could be used in conjunction with their own confidential systems to inform risk assessments, was highlighted.

IDVAs play a critical role in supporting victims. Many forces send a police officer and IDVA in cases where victims are considering withdrawing their support for police action or a prosecution to ensure the victim is supported. This often results in the victim continuing to support police action or where this does not happen, then comprehensive safety planning and support can be agreed with the victim. There are examples of IDVAs or their managers being part of MASHs and daily/weekly tasking meetings to ensure high risk cases are being identified and a coordinated response developed.

Work between some IDVAs and police forces is disconnected usually where there is no co-location and no regular meeting structure in place. Within some forces, IDVAs have different working practices in different locations, resulting in disparity across the force area. There are also delays in certain forces in making referrals to IDVA services.

- Suffolk Constabulary increased its number of IDVAs from 3 to 8 in June 2015 and Dyfed-Powys Police has funded additional posts.
- Other forces are working with IDVAs on joint activity including Northumbria Police, where domestic violence workers accompany police officers on patrol to ensure that appropriate support is given to victims at the earliest opportunity.
- Sussex Police is also using IDVAs to complete exit interviews with victims and provide feedback on the quality of the service received.

Chapter 5 - Investigating crimes and bringing offenders to justice

This chapter explores how effectively forces investigate domestic abuse offences and secure a positive outcome for the victim involved.

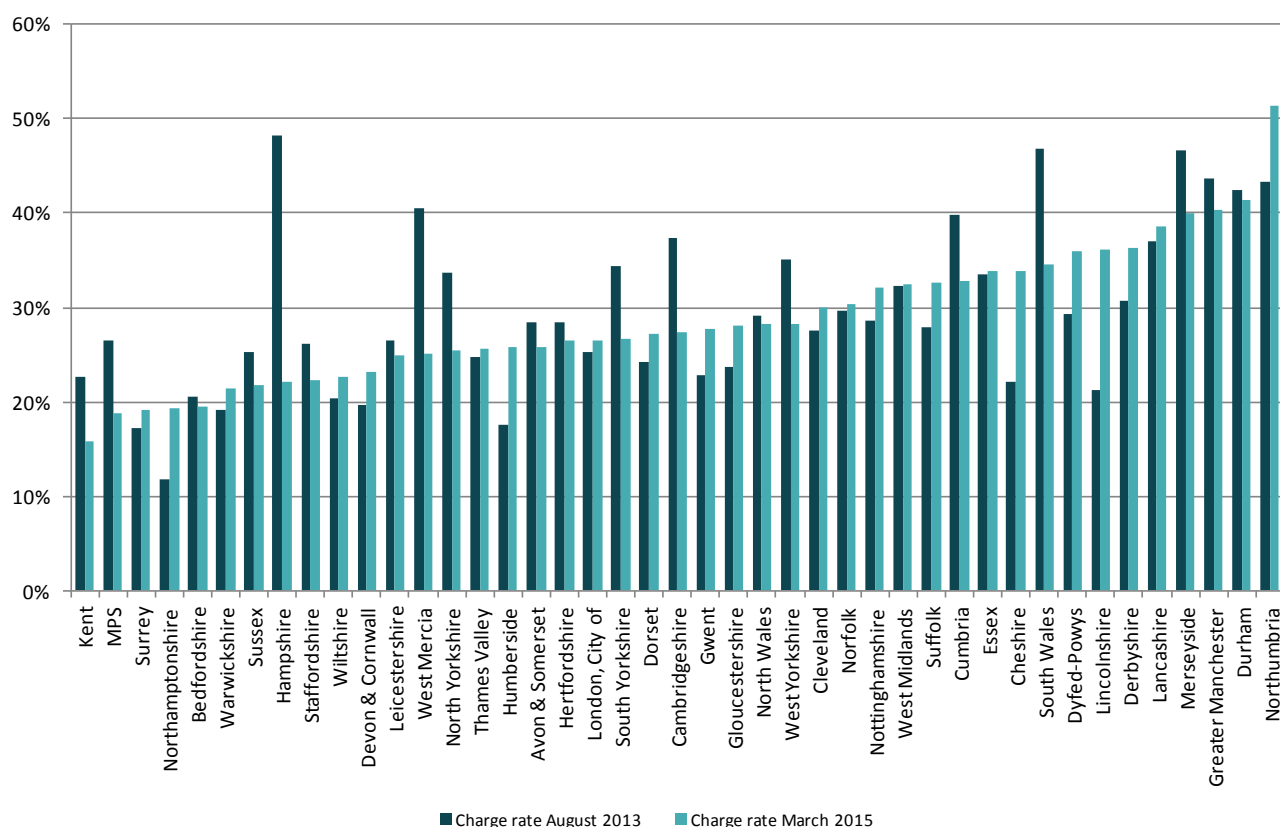
Main findings

- There are still significant variations in criminal justice outcomes across forces.
- There is more focus on evidence-led prosecutions, which is a positive development since the last inspection.
- Greater focus on reducing offending by perpetrators is needed as this will save potential victims from abuse and help to reduce demands on police forces.

Domestic abuse offences should be treated as seriously as other victim based and violent crimes and where the threshold is met and it is in the public interest, suspects should be charged and referred to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). There is still an unacceptable degree of variation in the extent to which alleged perpetrators of domestic abuse are charged with criminal offences (see Figure 9 on the next page). On a more positive note, HMIC found that there has been a reduction in the number of cautions since the last inspection.

The charge rate for domestic abuse crimes for England and Wales is 27 percent for the 12 months to March 2015. This is a decrease from a 30 percent charge rate for the 12 months to August 2013. Nearly half of forces (20) have seen a reduction in their charge rate for domestic abuse crimes. As with arrest data, in the last inspection HMIC highlighted concerns about unacceptable variations in charge rates between forces. Again in this inspection considerable variations in these numbers continue to be seen, with the rate varying between 16 percent in Kent and 51 percent in Northumbria. These variations are similar to those identified in the last inspection when the charge rate varied between 12 percent in Northamptonshire and 48 percent in Hampshire. As highlighted earlier in this report, it is important that force leaders develop an understanding of why their charge rate for domestic abuse crimes is at the level that it is to ensure they are providing the best service that they can to victims. Recommendation 2 addresses this issue by proposing the development of a data set relating to domestic abuse, which will enable more thorough analysis of how domestic abuse is dealt within a force area.

Figure 9: Charge rates for the 12 months to March 2015 compared to the 12 months to August 2013



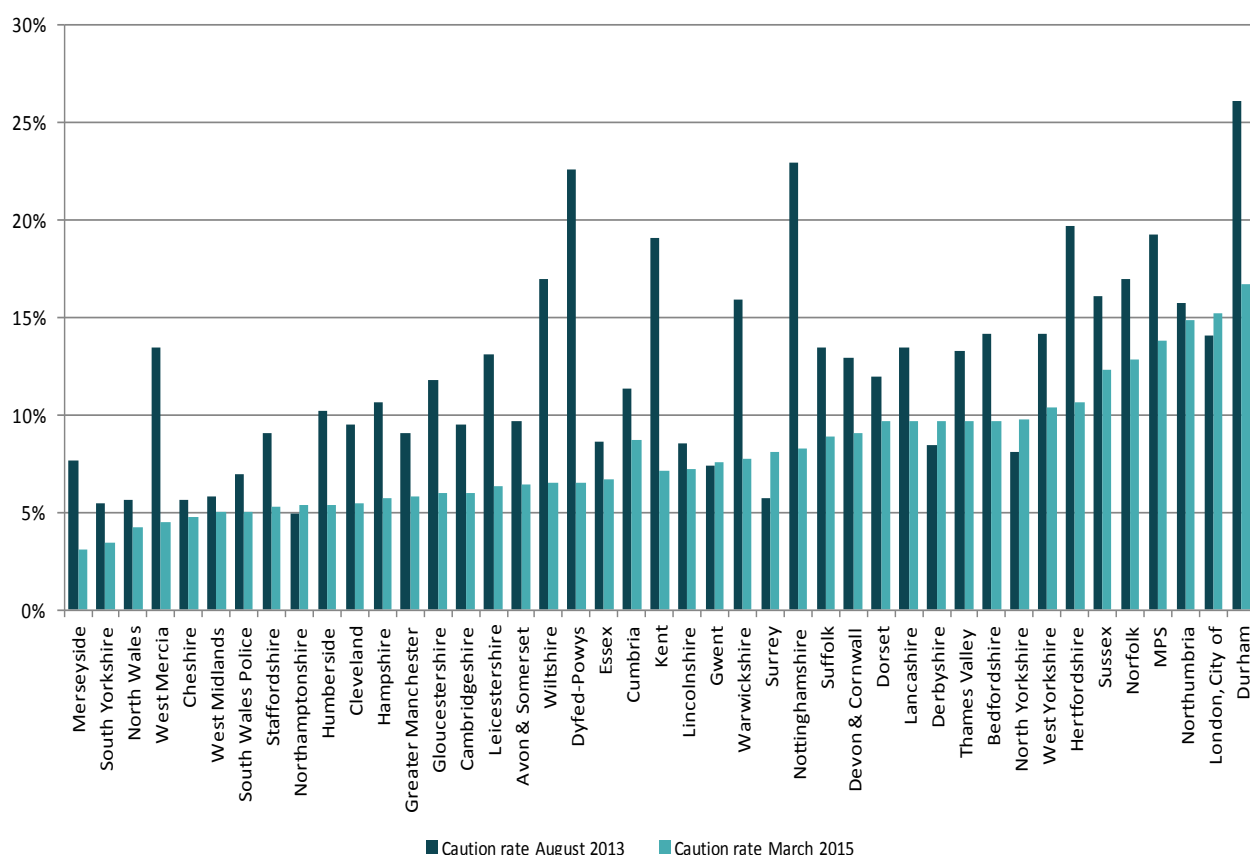
Source: HMIC data collection

Some forces are using additional checks and balances to scrutinise ‘no further action’ (NFA) decisions in domestic abuse cases, with supervisors (often referred to as evidential review officers) assessing the evidence and either endorsing the decision to NFA or directing further action. This is a positive development. It enables forces to use this data to scrutinise and manage their own performance and to provide officers and staff with feedback to improve the outcomes for victims.

In the last inspection, HMIC found simple cautions were being excessively used in cases of domestic abuse. This was despite CPS guidance that a simple caution is rarely appropriate in these circumstances.

The number of cautions for domestic abuse crimes has fallen from 35,100 for the 12 months to 31 August 2013 to 30,700 for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 (see Figure 10 on the next page), with the caution rate for England and Wales falling from 13 percent for the 12 months to August 2013 to nine percent for the 12 months to 31 March 2015. Cautions rates also vary widely between forces ranging from three percent in Merseyside to 17 percent in Durham. Only six forces have seen a rise in the caution rate during this period.

Figure 10: Caution rates for the 12 months to March 2015 compared to the 12 months to August 2013



Source: HMIC data collection

The updated 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). HMIC welcomes the reduction in the number of cautions, as, if there is sufficient evidence to caution, then there is sufficient evidence to charge. Again, forces need to understand their data to determine why their caution rate for domestic abuse crimes is at the level that it is to ensure the most appropriate course of action is taken in every case.

After charges or cautions, the most frequent outcomes across England and Wales are that evidential difficulties prevent further action; victim supports police action and evidential difficulties prevent further action; victim does not support police action. Figures 11 and 12 shows the range in uses of these outcomes for the forces that were able to provide this data.

Figure 11: Evidential difficulties prevent further action; victim supports police action rate for the 12 months to March 2015

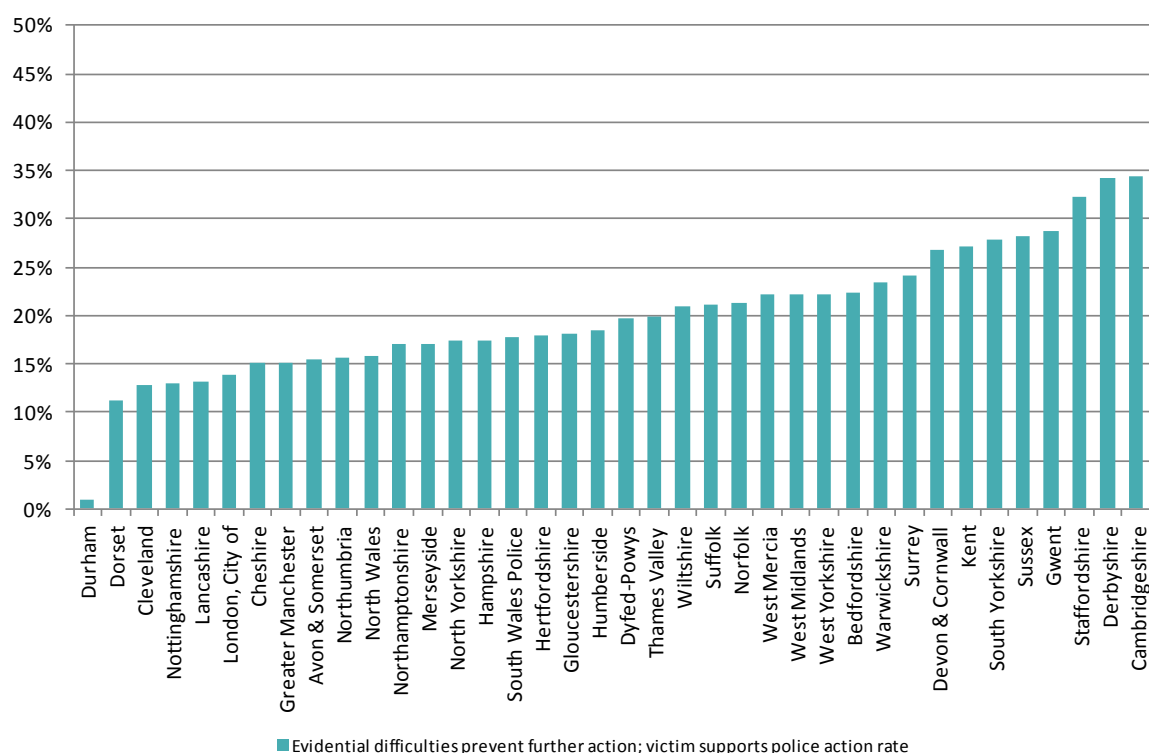
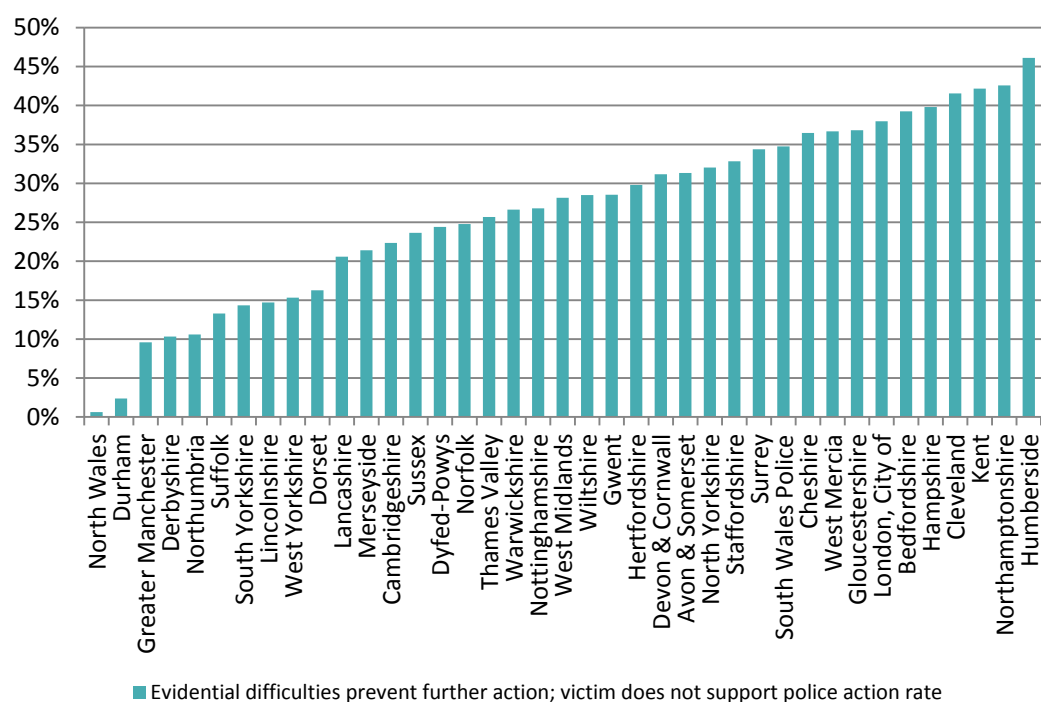


Figure 12: Evidential difficulties prevent further action; victim does not support police action rate for the 12 months to March 2015



Source: HMIC data collection

There are again considerable variations in this data across forces. The range of cases categorised as “evidential difficulties prevent further action, victim supports police action” is between one percent in Durham and 34 percent in Derbyshire/Cambridgeshire. The range of cases categorised as “evidential difficulties prevent further action, victim does not support police action” is between one percent in North Wales and 46 percent in Humberside.

These ways of categorising outcomes were introduced in April 2014, as part of a new way of recording the outcome of police investigations to replace what was known as ‘sanction detections’ (e.g. charges and/or summons). HMIC is therefore unable to draw any conclusions on the pattern of use over the last 18 months. Forces should however seek to understand what effect, if any, the new outcomes approach is having on its own approach to domestic abuse. In particular forces should consider whether the proportion of domestic abuse cases that fail to proceed is acceptable. HMIC will consider this issue in further detail in our PEEL effectiveness inspection next year.

Evidence-led prosecutions

HMIC found that there is more focus on evidence-led prosecutions³⁶ and the majority of officers are able to explain how they implement this in practice. This is a positive development since the last inspection, when HMIC heard mixed reports about the extent to which forces were pursuing evidence-led prosecutions.

As outlined in the ACPO Guidance (2008) on Investigating Domestic Abuse, officers should investigate domestic abuse proactively from the outset with a view to building an evidence-led case that does not rely on the support of the victim. Detection of domestic abuse is more likely to result if a victim supports police action and prosecution, but there are many reasons why a victim may not do so and it is important to extend the investigation beyond the victim.

HMIC found a greater awareness among response officers about the importance of collecting evidence at the scene even if the victim did not support further action. Increasingly, body-worn video cameras are also being used in forces with a focus on securing evidence-led prosecutions. HMIC recognises that building an evidence-led case without the support of a victim is challenging but it can be effective, as demonstrated by the examples below.

³⁶ There are three main types of evidence-led prosecutions — the prosecution based on hearsay evidence, the prosecution featuring a hostile victim and the prosecution featuring circumstantial evidence — each of which requires officers to adopt a different approach to investigation

Table 3: Examples of successful evidence-led prosecutions taken from Authorised Professional Practice (APP) on Domestic Abuse

Evidence	Result
Partial admissions, injury photos and bad character evidence of the accused	Guilty plea
Initial account given on body-worn video, denied but no account given by the defendant, and injury photos	Guilty plea
999 call, injuries captured on body-worn video cameras and hearsay evidence from the victim recorded in the responding officer's statement	Found guilty after trial
Victim's 999 call as <i>res gestae</i> and officer's description of injuries	Found guilty after trial
Victim's account on body-worn video cameras as hearsay (witness unable to give evidence through fear)	Found guilty after trial
Victim's account recorded in officer's pocket note book entry as hearsay (witness unable to give evidence through fear) and injury photographs	Found guilty after trial
Victim's account recorded in section 9 statement as hearsay (witness cannot be found), injury photographs and independent eyewitness testimony	Found guilty after trial
Circumstantial evidence from a neighbour who hears an argument between the victim and perpetrator and notes injury to the victim in the immediate aftermath	Found guilty after trial
Victim's original written account supported by other key evidence including evidence of injury preferred by court over hostile victim contradictory live evidence at trial	Found guilty after trial

As highlighted earlier in this report, it is extremely important that officers understand the dynamics of domestic abuse and the reasons behind why a victim may feel unable to support police action and prosecution. There needs to be a continuing focus within forces on sharing the learning from successful evidence-led

prosecutions. This learning, supported by effective supervision, will ensure response officers are aware of the appropriate action needed at the scene to provide the best chance of securing these prosecutions.

The updated APP on Domestic Abuse includes a checklist for preparing information for the CPS in evidence-led prosecutions. Forces should ensure that relevant officers and staff are aware of, understand and use this.

Encouragingly, some forces are taking specific action in an attempt to increase the number of successful evidence-led prosecutions.

- Thames Valley Police has provided training to frontline staff on the evidence needed to successfully prosecute an offender where the victim does not wish to support police action or withdraws their cooperation before a court trial takes place.
- The Metropolitan Police Service is working with the CPS to pursue prosecutions where there are reluctant or intimidated witnesses, where this is appropriate.

Perpetrator Programmes

Many forces are using perpetrator programmes to manage offenders' behaviour and encourage them to stop further offending. While domestic abuse perpetrators can access these programmes after a conviction, there is limited provision for them as part of a wider offender management strategy prior to conviction. The organisation Respect is funded to accredit domestic abuse perpetrator programmes and is continually adding to the evidence base on effective programmes. The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) also provides programmes to certain domestic abuse offenders as a condition of their sentence.

Twenty four forces told HMIC that they have a perpetrator scheme or programme in place for domestic abuse. Other forces do not have their own programmes in place, but access programmes run by partners in their force area including probation services or local authorities. A small number of forces informed us that they were currently piloting perpetrator programmes or developing plans to do so shortly.

- National organisations SafeLives, Respect and Social Finance have formed a partnership to create a new type of intervention for perpetrators of domestic abuse. South Wales, Sussex and Essex Police will be part of a three-year pilot due to start in January 2016. The model, referred to as Drive, will involve working with perpetrators of domestic abuse on a one-to-one basis, in order to reduce their offending. The programme is designed to reduce harm caused to victims, the overall number of victims, and the number of domestic abuse crimes. It will deal with the top 100 perpetrators within each of these forces and bring together a number of agencies to ensure a holistic approach is taken. Additional support will be provided to the victims affected by each of the perpetrators on the programme.

All 43 police forces in England and Wales provided HMIC with a domestic abuse action plan in September 2014, outlining the specific steps they would take to improve their approach to domestic abuse. These plans showed there is a lack of consistency around the management of serial perpetrators and the provision of perpetrator programmes. Also, very few forces include domestic abuse perpetrators in their Integrated Offender Management (IOM) process.³⁷

HMIC were unable to look at the content and effectiveness of perpetrator programmes in detail during this inspection. However, the management of domestic abuse perpetrators including perpetrator programmes and approaches to the disruption and targeting of repeat or prolific perpetrators, will be considered as part of its annual PEEL inspection in 2016.

It is crucial that perpetrator programmes are based on evidence of what works. Introducing programmes also requires specialist knowledge otherwise victims may be put at greater risk. In September 2015, the College of Policing published details of perpetrator programmes being used by forces and the evidence or evaluation underpinning these. Most forces rely on programmes that follow a model that has been evaluated by Respect under Project Mirabel.

The College is currently working with the Institute of Education to understand the evidence of the effectiveness of existing perpetrator programmes, and this research will be published by the end of 2015. HMIC looks forward to the findings of this research, which will provide forces with a firm foundation for an evidence based approach to perpetrator programmes going forward.

³⁷ Integrated Offender Management involves multi agency identification and management of the most persistent and prolific offenders in communities to reduce crime and re-offending. It is based on key principles refreshed by the Home Office in 2015, which can be accessed at www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/406865/HO_IOM_Key_Principles_document_Final.pdf

It is important that forces and PCCs understand what referral options are available in their local area for perpetrators of domestic abuse, where these programmes are an appropriate intervention.

Recommendation 5 focuses on establishing evidence-based good practice and proposes that as part of updating their action plans, forces should use research carried out by the College of Policing on perpetrator programmes and summary of existing initiatives to inform the development of their own programmes.

Chapter 6 - Making domestic abuse a force priority

This chapter explores:

- the effectiveness of forces' response to addressing domestic abuse; and
- the progress being made against domestic abuse action plans.

Main findings

- Domestic abuse is now clearly viewed as a priority by chief officers, officers and staff, with HMIC finding a tangible improvement since 2014.
- There is better identification and recording of domestic abuse as crimes which has resulted in significant increases in crime rates.
- Some forces have yet to complete a comprehensive analysis of data to understand domestic abuse within their area. This should include partnership data as well as police data.
- Forces should do more to understand performance specifically in relation to changes in data such as recording rates, risk assessment, arrest and outcome data, including evidential difficulties where the victim supports police action.
- Many forces are able to demonstrate good progress since the 2014 inspection of domestic abuse. However, nine forces' response to domestic abuse is assessed in some respects as a cause for concern to HMIC with a further fifteen having areas for improvement.
- More needs to be done to share the findings and learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR) with forces to improve their response to victims.
- There is still limited evidence of forces engaging with victims of domestic abuse to obtain feedback on the service provided.

Domestic abuse is now seen as a force wide priority supported by effective leadership. There is clear evidence that the leadership of forces (actively supported by PCCs) have acted to improve the response to domestic abuse through:

- better identification and recording of domestic abuse crimes, as demonstrated by the 31 percent increase in the number of domestic abuse related crimes over the last 18 months;

- new and revised processes to improve the initial police response with more effective supervision and scrutiny of risk assessments and the initial action taken;
- investment by forces in body-worn video cameras and training and IT infrastructure to support this. Also, a greater awareness among officers of evidence-led prosecutions; and
- an increase in the provision of MASHs and co-located working with partners, often requiring considerable support from senior police and partner leaders.

The police's previous primary focus on volume and acquisitive crime reduction appears to have shifted, although in a number of forces this remains the primary focus. Forces have established action plans with clear evidence of progress and domestic abuse is widely viewed by police officers and staff as a priority. The next challenge for force leaders is to move from officers and staff prioritising the issue to truly understanding it and applying this understanding when supporting and safeguarding victims of domestic abuse.

Recommendation 2 addresses this issue by proposing the development of a data set relating to domestic abuse, which will enable more thorough analysis of how domestic abuse is dealt with in a force area. For chief constables, the data will assist with an improved understanding of force performance on domestic abuse. For PCCs, the data will assist in setting force priorities and holding the force to account in respect of its response to victims of domestic abuse.

Measuring performance

Some forces have still not completed comprehensive analysis to understand domestic abuse within their area. Where there are assessments, in some forces these are out of date and do not draw on data from relevant police systems or use partner data. During the last inspection, HMIC found little evidence of domestic abuse problem profiles, which analyse the problem in such a way that enables organisations to plan a strategic response. It is encouraging that more forces now appear to either have these or are in the process of developing or refreshing a local problem profile for domestic abuse. However, there are still a large number of forces which do not have these profiles in place.

More forces are starting to incorporate domestic abuse into their performance management frameworks and are collecting and monitoring a range of data. This includes completion rates and the timeliness of the submission of risk assessments; arrest; caution and outcome data; the timeliness of referrals to other agencies and support groups and compliance with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime on frequency of victim contact.

Some forces however, still do not have a good understanding of performance in relation to domestic abuse and are unable to explain arrest and outcome data, even where this is particularly high or low. In terms of measuring and monitoring performance, there is still a need for a clear focus on positive outcomes beyond criminal justice sanctions such as number of arrests, charges or successful prosecutions. Forces need access to qualitative data to understand their own performance. Key to this is feedback from victims, which is covered later in this report.

In the last inspection, HMIC highlighted the lack of a central requirement to report domestic abuse crimes alongside other returns of data on crimes. Recommendation 4 in *Everyone's business* proposed action at a national level to improve the quality of data for the public and police and crime commissioners on domestic abuse. In response, the Home Office has developed national data standards in relation to domestic abuse, which are collected by police forces and now provided as part of the annual data return (ADR). This includes data standards for both crimes and incidents and a clear definition of 'repeat victim' to ensure that like-for-like comparisons can be made.

These new data standards should help to reduce the previous lack of transparency for PCCs and the public on the nature and extent of domestic abuse. The increased consistency will also allow one force to compare itself with another force. These new national monitoring arrangements were introduced from April 2015 so the effectiveness in terms of measuring domestic abuse performance will need to be monitored over the next few years.

Following the publication of *Everyone's business*, chief constables were asked to review how they (and their senior officers) support their force's stated priority on domestic abuse. This included giving consideration to the force's culture; how action to tackle domestic abuse is prioritised and valued; and how messages on domestic abuse conveyed by the senior leadership team might improve their staff's understanding of the issues and lead to an improved service to victims.

Recommendation 4 of this report places a responsibility on chief constables to review the progress made by their force in giving full effect to their force's stated priority on domestic abuse and as soon as practicable take whatever further action is necessary to build on the progress made. HMIC will draw on forces' assessment of progress on domestic abuse as part of its annual PEEL inspection in 2016.

Police and crime commissioners need effective mechanisms for holding chief constables and senior police leaders to account for the delivery of improved services to victims of domestic abuse. An updated version of the checklist included in *Everyone's business* to support PCCs in doing this is in Annex B. This includes the areas for improvement identified during this inspection.

Progress against domestic abuse action plans

In September 2014, HMIC received a domestic abuse action plan from each of the 43 police forces in England and Wales outlining the specific steps it would take to improve its approach to domestic abuse. Four assessment panels were held in November 2014 to review the plans. These panels found that the plans were of varying quality in terms of content and format.

Overall, forces had invested substantial time and resources into constructing their plans and self-assessing their response to domestic abuse. The information in many of the plans indicates that forces are taking a range of steps to support implementation.

It was of some concern that 15 plans did not clearly identify how the chief constable would ensure that the force's organisational culture supported an effective response to domestic abuse. In a further five plans, reference was made to this – but the actions described were limited. There were also some weaknesses in scrutiny mechanisms. Only 23 plans documented how the police and crime commissioner and the chief constable engaged relevant partners and support sector in a regular scrutiny of the service.

The panel identified some areas that were absent from plans altogether, which included:

- approaches to managing offenders and keeping victims safe across police boundaries;
- an emphasis on identifying incidents of coercive control and patterns of abuse, rather than dealing with victims on an incident by incident basis; and
- tackling domestic abuse where the perpetrators are police officers.

The table below outlines the observations from the domestic abuse action plan assessment panels, which forces can use to inform the continual development of their plans.

Table 4 – High-level observations from the HMIC domestic abuse action plan assessment panels

Criteria	High-level observations
Leadership and governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forces relying on one or two key individuals having ownership for progressing activity. • Need for a greater focus around embedding domestic abuse into performance management processes. • Good examples of some forces having multi-agency safeguarding hubs, which appear to be working effectively but evaluation of the outcomes required. • Lack of focus around equality and diversity issues.
Initial contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for call handlers has increased with extra emphasis on supervision, with some forces using dip sampling techniques to maintain high call standards. • Additional resources provided in some forces to improve research and sharing of intelligence to officers attending domestic abuse incidents. • Forces are improving processes and staff knowledge to help identify repeat and vulnerable callers.
First response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for greater ownership by individuals responsible for managing frontline staff. • Availability of body-worn videos for officers attending domestic abuse incidents is patchy. Forces are investing or planning to invest in body-worn video cameras for frontline staff to capture evidence from domestic abuse incidents. • Forces have increased their training provision for front line officers, but there was still a reliance on computer-based training packages.

Investigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some forces lack specialist investigative capability, but use accredited staff to investigate high risk domestic abuse cases. • Most forces ensure specialist officers investigate the most serious cases or those where the risk to the victim was high.
Managing victims and offenders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very few forces include domestic abuse perpetrators in their Integrated Offender Management process. Lack of consistency around management of serial perpetrators or provision of perpetrator programmes. • Lack of clarity around who “owns” the victim and is responsible for supporting them throughout the entire process. • Most forces struggling around obtaining victim feedback. • Lack of communication to victims about bail/sentencing decisions. • Strong support for Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) and some forces where they were managing medium as well as high risk cases. • Variable links with wider partners and local service providers. • Most forces have reviewed their MARAC process with the support of SafeLives and improved services through the recruitment of additional co-ordinators and by increasing the frequency of meetings.
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater use should be made of processes such as dip-sampling for quality assurance purposes and to assist with the identification of learning. • Further evidence needed around how forces are embedding the learning from domestic homicides. • All forces have enhanced their training programmes for front line officers and control room staff; however there is still significant reliance upon computer based training.

During this inspection, HMIC reviewed all forces' progress on the implementation of their action plans. Overall, the majority of forces are able to demonstrate good progress against these plans, which is regularly monitored via various steering groups and boards. Most forces also have clear plans in place to address any outstanding actions. In terms of the recommendations made to individual forces during HMIC's last domestic abuse inspection, again most forces have either completed these or are working towards completion.

However, it is disappointing that a small number of forces have made limited progress against previous recommendations. It is important that forces continue to review and update these plans and use them to monitor the progress being made on improving their approach to domestic abuse as outlined in Recommendation 3.

HMIC's latest assessment of individual force's progress on improving the service provided to victims of domestic abuse is contained in the 43 vulnerability reports, which were published in December 2015. All causes for concern and areas for improvement identified in relation to domestic abuse in the vulnerability reports should be incorporated into individual force domestic abuse action plans. During the HMIC PEEL inspection process in 2016, all forces with causes of concern will be inspected to assess what progress has been made.

Sharing learning: domestic homicide reviews

Despite most forces reporting that they have systems in place to learn from Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs), there is still the need for a more open and facilitated approach to support forces (and local partners) to learn from all DHRs, including those that do not specifically relate to their own or to neighbouring forces.

Recommendation 9 in *Everyone's business* suggested that the Home Office complete a comprehensive review of its approach to DHRs to establish if there was a better way of communicating the contents and conclusions of reviews and the lessons learned. The Home Office is planning to update the statutory guidance for the conduct of DHRs and produce a lessons learned document to share with partners.

A number of process improvements are also being put in place to capture data from reviews more effectively. However, HMIC is disappointed at the lack of progress in this area. According to Home Office data there were 84 domestic homicides in 2013/14 (76 in 2012/13) and more action is needed to ensure that the lessons learned are shared with forces at a national level with a view to preventing future homicides and violence. Recommendation 6 calls for the development of a system for the collation of learning from domestic homicides and the dissemination of this learning to forces.

The Femicide Census is an extremely useful tool, which could potentially assist with the identification of key themes and learning from DHRs. The Census has been developed by Karen Ingala Smith, Chief Executive of nia in partnership with Women's Aid with support from Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP and Deloitte LLP. It includes a wide range of information about women who have been killed by male violence, the perpetrators and the incident of murder itself, including the date, names, police force area, and information about children, recorded motive and the weapon.

This information is collected primarily via Freedom of Information Act requests to police forces, local authorities and other public bodies throughout England. This census helps to provide a clearer picture of domestic homicides in the UK by a range of demographic data and allows for the drawing of comparisons and parallels between cases. However, there are currently difficulties with obtaining information from some forces to populate the database. Recommendation 6 addresses this issue by proposing that consideration is also given to how forces can contribute effectively to and access the information held within the Femicide Census.

Victim feedback

There is limited evidence of forces engaging with victims to obtain feedback on the service provided. *Everyone's business* highlighted that the views of victims are an essential element in monitoring police effectiveness and recommended that the Home Office should ensure that the views of victims of domestic abuse are incorporated routinely and consistently into national monitoring arrangements by the start of the 2015/16 financial year. HMIC acknowledges that a victim satisfaction survey has been piloted by the Home Office and the results of this are currently being reviewed. We are, however, disappointed that this work has not yet been completed.

During this inspection, most forces said that they were awaiting guidance from the Home Office on capturing the views of victims before progressing work in this area. Feedback from victims of domestic abuse is crucial to ensuring that the service provided by the police meets their needs. Work to capture their views with the appropriate safeguards in place, should not be delayed any further. While forces await guidance from the Home Office, they should continue to explore how they can obtain feedback from victims, for example through surveys, qualitative interviews, focus groups with victims facilitated by local domestic abuse organisations and feedback from these organisations and practitioners who work closely with victims.

Recommendation 3 calls for every police force in England and Wales to update their domestic abuse action plans by March 2016 to determine what more they can do to address the areas for further improvement highlighted in this report.

This includes all forces having a system in place to regularly capture the views of victims of domestic abuse and to act on this feedback. These approaches should be reconsidered when the Home Office issues its guidance on obtaining the views of victims.

Some forces have been conducting victim surveys for some time including Leicestershire Police and Durham Constabulary. Despite the overall lack of activity in this area, we did find examples of victims' views being sought in a small number of forces.

- Kent Police in conjunction with the PCC has commissioned Birkbeck University to carry out research on domestic abuse victims experience and views on the service delivered by the force. This will be used to inform improvements to services and will enhance the force's understanding of the impact and quality of the service that it provides.
- Sussex Police uses victims' surveys and feedback from agencies including exit interviews completed by IDVAs to improve the police response.
- Northumbria Police has conducted various surveys to find out the views of victims of domestic abuse. This is now shaping how and what services are being provided, and has improved the way it identifies and manages serial perpetrators of domestic abuse in partnership with other agencies.

Glossary

Bail conditions	A court can remand a defendant in custody or grant bail, with or without conditions attached. Before the first court hearing, the police can also retain a defendant in custody or grant bail, with or without conditions attached, but their powers to do so are more limited than the courts. Conditions can only be imposed to ensure that the defendant attends the next court hearing, commits no new offences in the meantime, and does not interfere with any witnesses or obstruct the course of justice.
Body-worn video cameras	A video camera, worn on the helmet or upper body of an officer, which records visual and audio footage of an incident.
CCTV	Evidence from Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) can be used to support police investigations. It is primarily used for corroborating what is already known in investigating incidents and to trigger further opportunities to carry out investigation, such as the identification of witnesses and suspects.
Clare's Law	Clare's Law – the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme – is designed to provide victims with information that may protect them from an abusive situation before it ends in tragedy. The scheme allows the police to disclose information about a partner's previous history of domestic violence or violent acts. The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme is named after Clare Wood who was brutally murdered in 2009 by her former partner George Appleton, who had a record of violence against women.
Code of Practice for Victims of Crime	<p>The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (the Victims' Code) places a statutory obligation on criminal justice agencies to provide a standard of service to victims of crime or, where the victim died as a result of the criminal conduct, their relatives. The obligations the Victims' Code places on the agencies concerned include that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• They provide victims, or their relatives, with information about the crime, including about arrests, prosecutions and court decisions;• They provide information about eligibility for compensation under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme;

- Victims be told about Victim Support and either be referred on to them or offered their service;
- Bereaved relatives be assigned a family liaison police officer; and
- Victims of an offender who receives a sentence of 12 months or more after being convicted of a sexual or violent offence have the opportunity to make representations about what licence conditions or supervision requirements the offender should be subject to on release from prison.

There are enhanced entitlements for victims of the most serious crime which includes domestic abuse.

Coercive control	This is term and concept developed by Evan Stark which seeks to explain the range of tactics used by perpetrators and the impact of those on victims. It highlights the on-going nature of the behaviour and the extent to which the actions of the perpetrator control the victim through isolation, intimidation, degradation and micro-regulation of everyday life. Crucially it sets out that such abuse can be psychological as well as physical. Coercive control is explicitly covered by the definition of domestic abuse.
Control room	A police control or communications room manages emergency (999) and non-emergency (101) calls, and sending police officers to these calls.
Counter-allegation	Where someone initially identified as the perpetrator makes an allegation against the victim. If counter-allegations are not identified and resolved agencies may be providing services to the perpetrator and inadvertently helping them isolate and control the victim. The victim may not get access to the services they need because they are labelled 'the perpetrator'.
DASH – domestic abuse, stalking and harassment (DASH 2009)	DASH is a risk identification, assessment and management model adopted by UK police forces and partner agencies in 2009. The aim of the DASH assessment is to help front-line practitioners identify high risk cases of domestic abuse, stalking and so-called honour-based violence.
Domestic Homicide Review	Local areas are expected to undertake a multi-agency review following a domestic homicide. The process aims to assist all those involved, to identify the lessons that can be learned from

homicides where a person is killed as a result of domestic violence, with a view to preventing future homicides and violence.

Domestic Violence
Protection Notices
(DVPN)

A DVPN is the initial notice issued by the police to provide emergency protection to an individual believed to be the victim of domestic violence. This notice, which must be authorised by a police superintendent, contains prohibitions that effectively bar the suspected perpetrator from returning to the victim's home or otherwise contacting the victim.

A DVPN may be issued to a person aged 18 years and over if the police superintendent has reasonable grounds for believing that:

- the individual has been violent towards, or
- has threatened violence towards an associated person, and
- the DVPN is necessary to protect that person from violence or a threat of violence by the intended recipient of the DVPN

Female Genital
Mutilation (FGM)

Female genital mutilation (sometimes referred to as female circumcision) refers to procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The practice is illegal in the UK.

Frontline or
response officers

These are police officers or police staff who are in everyday contact with the public and who directly intervene to keep people safe and enforce the law. The HMIC publication, *Policing in Austerity: Rising to the Challenge* (2013) sets this out in more detail.

Golden hour

Commonly used to refer to the time after a crime has been committed during which there is maximum potential for recovery of forensic evidence

Harassment

The term harassment is used to cover the 'causing alarm or distress' offences under section 2 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 as amended (PHA), and 'putting people in fear of violence' offences under section 4 of the PHA.

High risk	Term used when, following a DASH risk assessment, there are identifiable indicators of risk of serious harm. The potential event could happen at any time and the impact would be serious. Risk of serious harm (Home Office 2002 and OASys 2006): 'A risk which is life threatening and/or traumatic, and from which recovery, whether physical or psychological, can be expected to be difficult or impossible'.
House-to-house	House-to-house enquiries are likely to feature in many investigations to: identify suspects and canvas for witnesses in areas connected to an incident, establish who lives or works in a particular location, and obtain an account of their movements during relevant times.
IDVA – independent domestic violence adviser	Independent domestic violence advisers or advocates (IDVAs) are trained specialists who provide a service to victims at high risk of harm from intimate partners, ex-partners or family members, with the aim of securing their safety and the safety of their children. Serving as a victim's primary point of contact, IDVAs normally work with their clients from the point of crisis, to assess the level of risk, discuss the range of suitable options and develop safety plans.
Incident	When a member of the public calls for police assistance, or a police officer observes or discovers a crime the police usually create an incident record. This is the first step, the police will then decide whether a crime has been committed and, if it is appropriate, create a crime record.
Intimate Partner Violence	This describes physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse. This type of violence can occur among heterosexual or same-sex couples and does not require sexual intimacy.
MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference)	MARACs are regular local meetings where information about high risk domestic abuse victims (those at risk of murder or serious harm) is shared between local agencies. By bringing all agencies together at a MARAC, and ensuring that whenever possible the voice of the victim is represented by the IDVA, a risk focused, co-ordinated safety plan can be drawn up to support the victim. There are currently over 284 MARACs operating across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland managing more than 78,000 cases a year.

MASH – Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub	A Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) brings together staff from police and partner agencies who work from the same location, sharing information and ensuring a timely and joined-up response to protect children and vulnerable adults.
Medium risk	Term used when following a DASH risk assessment there are identifiable indicators of risk of serious harm. The offender has the potential to cause serious harm but is unlikely to do so unless there is a change in circumstances, for example, failure to take medication, loss of accommodation, relationship breakdown, drug or alcohol misuse.
National Domestic Abuse helpline	<p>A Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline, run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge, is a national service for women experiencing domestic violence, their family, friends, colleagues and others calling on their behalf.</p> <p>The Helpline can give support, help and information over the telephone, wherever the caller might be in the country. The Helpline is staffed 24 hours a day by fully trained female helpline support workers and volunteers. All calls are completely confidential. Translation facilities for callers whose first language is not English, and a service for callers who are deaf or hard of hearing are available.</p>
Partnership	A term used where collaborative working is established between the police and other public, private or voluntary organisations.
Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE)	<p>The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and the PACE codes of practice provide the core framework of police powers and safeguards around stop and search, arrest, detention, investigation, identification and interviewing detainees.</p> <p>Available at www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-and-criminal-evidence-act-1984-pace-current-versions</p>
Positive action	The term refers to the steps and action taken at all stages of the police response to ensure effective protection of victims and children, while allowing the criminal justice system to hold the offender to account. It is often used in the context of arrest policy, police guidance states that “arrest will normally be ‘necessary’ under the terms of PACE to protect a child or vulnerable person, prevent the suspect causing injury and/or to allow for the prompt and effective investigation of the offence”.

Problem-solving	Problem-solving is a term used in policing where forces systematically identify and analyse crime and disorder problems, develop specific responses to individual problems and subsequently assess whether the response has been successful.
Refuge	A refuge is a safe house where women and children who are experiencing domestic violence can stay free from abuse. Refuge addresses (and sometimes telephone numbers) are confidential. According to Women's Aid on a typical day, over 7000 women and children are resident in refuge accommodation in England.
Risk assessment	A risk assessment is based on structured professional judgment. It provides structure and informs decisions that are already being made. It is only a guide/checklist and should not be seen as a scientific predictive solution. Its completion is intended to assist officers in the decision-making process on appropriate levels of intervention for victims of domestic violence.
Safeguarding	The term safeguarding is applied when protecting children and other vulnerable people. The UK Government has defined the term 'safeguarding children' as: "The process of protecting children from abuse or neglect, preventing impairment of their health and development, and ensuring they are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care that enables children to have optimum life chances and enter adulthood successfully".
SafeLives (Formerly Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse)	SafeLives is a national charity supporting a strong multi-agency response to domestic abuse. Its work focuses on saving lives and public money. SafeLives provides practical help to support professionals and organisations working with domestic abuse victims. The aim is to protect the highest risk victims and their children – those at risk of murder or serious harm.
Standard Risk	Term used following a DASH risk assessment where current evidence does not indicate likelihood of causing serious harm.
Victim Personal Statement	The Victim Personal Statement (VPS) gives victims an opportunity to describe the wider effects of the crime upon them, express their concerns and indicate whether or not they require any support. Provisions relating to the making of a VPS and its use in criminal proceedings are included in the Code of

Practice for Victims of Crime (Victims' Code), which was published on 29 October 2013 and came into force on 10 December 2013.

Vulnerable A term used to describe a person who is in need of special care, support, or protection because of age, disability, or risk of abuse or neglect.

What Works Centre for Crime Reduction The What Works Centre for Crime Reduction is hosted by the College of Policing. The What Works Centre for Crime Reduction will: review research on practices and interventions to reduce crime, label the evidence base in terms of quality, cost and impact, and provide police and crime commissioners and other crime reduction partners with the knowledge, tools and guidance to help them target their resources more effectively. It will be led by a core team from the College of Policing, and supported by a "commissioned partnership programme" which has been jointly funded by the College and the Economic and Social Research Council.

Annex A – Recommendations from *Everyone's business: Improving the police response to domestic abuse*

Summary of recommendations for *Everyone's business: Improving the police response to domestic abuse*

Recommendation 1

There should be a renewed national effort to tackle domestic abuse. The Home Office, working with the College of Policing, chief constables and police and crime commissioners, needs to inject urgency and energy into solving the material problems identified in this report.

A national oversight and monitoring group should be established and convened immediately to monitor and report on the progress made in implementing these recommendations. This group should have a wide membership (including non-government domestic abuse organisations), be chaired at a senior level, and be able to influence government departments and other national and local bodies where multi-agency issues are raised about domestic abuse.

The group should report publicly on progress every quarter. There should be a full review of the police service's progress in relation to all recommendations in 12 months' time.

Recommendation 2

By September 2014, every police force in England and Wales should establish and publish an action plan that specifies in detail what steps it will take to improve its approach to domestic abuse. This action plan should be developed:

- in consultation with police and crime commissioners, domestic abuse support organisations and victims' representatives;
- after close consideration of all the recommendations in this report;
- with reference to all relevant domestic homicide reviews and IPCC findings, whether in connection with the force in question or another force; and
- drawing on relevant knowledge acquired or available from other sources such as CPS scrutiny panels and MARAC self assessments.

The action plan should be established on the basis of best practice, based on revised relevant guidance from the College of Policing. To ensure consistency, the College and the national policing lead on domestic abuse have agreed to provide advice on the areas that each plan should cover by the end of April 2014.

Chief officers in each police force should oversee and ensure full implementation of these action plans. This should be a personal responsibility in each case. Police and crime commissioners should hold forces to account in this respect. HMIC will inspect forces' progress on domestic abuse as part of its new annual all-force inspection programme. Police and crime commissioners and chief constables should be called upon to report publicly on progress, as well as to the national oversight and monitoring group.

Recommendation 3

To inform the action plan specified in Recommendation 2, chief constables should review how they, and their senior officers, give full effect to their forces' stated priority on domestic abuse. This should consider how action to tackle domestic abuse is prioritised and valued, and how staff are given the appropriate level of professional and conspicuous support and encouragement. This should be done through a clear and specific assessment of the following issues in respect of domestic abuse:

- the force's culture and values;
- the force's performance management framework;
- the reward and recognition policy in the force and the roles and behaviours that this rewards currently;
- the selection and promotion arrangements 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 in the force are managed.

Where the review identifies shortcomings, the chief constable should ensure the implementation of prompt, adequate and effective remedial action. Those remedial steps should be incorporated into the action plan specified in Recommendation 2. HMIC should be provided with a copy of each review and the action plan.

Recommendation 4

Data collected on domestic abuse needs to be consistent, comparable, accessible and accurate so that it can be used to monitor progress. This requires the Home Office to develop national data standards in relation to domestic abuse data. The data should be collected by police forces and provided to the Home Office, for example as part of the annual data return. These should include data standards for both crimes and incidents, and clear and unambiguous definitions of important terms such as 'repeat victim', to ensure like-for-like comparisons can be made.

In addition, the views of victims are an essential element in monitoring police effectiveness. The Home Office should ensure that the views of victims of domestic abuse are incorporated routinely and consistently into national monitoring arrangements.

The new national arrangements for collecting data and capturing the views of victims should be in place by the start of the 2015/16 financial year.

Recommendation 5

The College of Policing is updating authorised professional practice for officers on domestic abuse alongside other areas such as investigation and public protection. This update should be informed by the conclusions of and recommendations in this report, together with existing reviews of domestic abuse best practice, and should be developed with contributions from a wide set of interested parties.

The authorised professional practice update should reiterate and clearly set out principles and minimum standards in the following areas:

- approaches to identifying repeat and vulnerable victims;
- information that responding officers must have available to them on or before arrival;
- victim care and safety planning;
- evidence-gathering to support domestic abuse investigations (in the context of professional police investigation) and evidence-led prosecutions;
- positive action and arrest in cases of domestic abuse;
- risk assessment;
- standards of supervision;

- effective targeting of domestic abuse perpetrators, including covert tactics and the definition of serial and/or persistent perpetrators;
- use of different criminal justice disposals, in particular simple cautions and restorative justice; and
- the principal components of multi-agency arrangements (such as the MARAC and MASH) to tackle domestic abuse.

Recommendation 6

The College of Policing is reviewing the evidence base for risk assessment in cases of domestic abuse. The College should urgently consider the current approach to risk assessment with others, such as practitioners in forces, academic experts and organisations supporting practitioners and victims. It should make an assessment of the sufficiency of the tools that frontline officers are given to assess risk, and of the training they receive in connection with risk assessment.

This approach should:

- in the immediate term, examine whether the approach to identifying the risk of domestic abuse can be made more efficient and assess how forces can be assisted to improve awareness and training to ensure that risk assessments link directly to risk management and safety planning actions; and
- in the medium term, establish a ‘task and finish group’ (a specific action-orientated group with a set deadline) to consider, over the next six months, the evidence base that underpins identification of risk and determine whether more fundamental changes are needed to the current approach.

Meanwhile, forces should ensure that they continue to use the DASH risk assessment tool in the way that it was originally intended.

Recommendation 7

The College of Policing should conduct a thorough and fundamental review of the sufficiency and effect of training and development on forces’ response to domestic abuse. Training for officers and staff should reflect the fact that tackling domestic abuse is core policing business; all relevant officers and staff should be trained to understand the dynamics of different types of domestic abuse, particularly coercive control.

Domestic abuse training should link to:

- other relevant areas of training and development, for example investigative practice, working with vulnerable people, and developing communication skills, including a specific focus on empathy with victims;
- the College of Policing's revised guidance and professional practice, and the developing evidence based on effective ways to tackle domestic abuse.

The College of Policing should include successful attainment of professional standards in domestic abuse in the foundation skills threshold and specialist skills threshold tests which police officers have to pass to progress up their pay scales, so as to ensure that a sound professional understanding of domestic abuse becomes part of officers' continuing professional development and is embedded throughout the careers of all serving officers.

Police forces should ensure that their approach to domestic abuse training is evidence-based. Training should tackle the specific problems of lack of knowledge and poor attitudes to domestic abuse which exist in forces. It should be face-to-face training rather than provided through e-learning.

Recommendation 8

Forces need support in how they target and manage perpetrators of domestic abuse. The College of Policing, through the national policing lead for domestic abuse, should disseminate to forces examples of how forces are targeting serial and repeat domestic abuse perpetrators in order to prevent future offending. The College's What Works Centre for Crime Reduction should provide to forces evidence about how effective programmes of managing perpetrators achieve reductions in domestic abuse. They should work with departments such as the Ministry of Justice and the Home Office, academic institutions and organisations working with perpetrators to build a strong evidence base in this area.

Recommendation 9

The Home Office should reconsider its approach to domestic homicide reviews. It needs to re-assess whether the current process, guidance and quality assurance arrangements provide the best opportunities for the improvement of forces' knowledge of and approach to domestic abuse cases. It should consider whether there is a better way of communicating the contents and conclusions of reviews and the lessons learned. Police and crime commissioners should track how and when recommendations from domestic homicide reviews are implemented.

Recommendation 10

Police and crime commissioners should consider the findings and recommendations of this report when commissioning services for victims of domestic abuse. In particular, they should take note of the strong value placed on the role of independent domestic violence advisers by the victims, police and other criminal justice agencies.

Recommendation 11

Tackling domestic abuse requires a number of organisations in both the statutory services (including health, local authorities, the Crown Prosecution Service and probation) and voluntary and community services to work together. Following HMIC's inspection, there should be a further multi-agency inspection of these services. This should consider how local services provide advice, assistance and support to victims of domestic abuse. The inspection should not only consider how individual services contribute to keeping victims safe, but also the quality of the partnerships and the ways in which joint working is scrutinised.

Annex B – Holding to account: tackling domestic abuse

Checklist for police and crime commissioners

HMIC has updated this checklist first published in HMIC report *Everyone's business*. It is designed to support police and crime commissioners in holding the force to account for bringing about improved services to victims of domestic abuse.

It falls into two parts:

- ten questions for the force; and
- eight pieces of data for routine scrutiny.

Ten questions for the force

1. How effective is the force leadership at giving full effect to their force's stated priority on domestic abuse?

- How do chief officers ensure effective oversight of domestic abuse?
- How do chief officers demonstrate their commitment to tackling domestic abuse?
- How do they personally support staff working in these areas and communicate messages to all staff, including first responders?
- How is the force responding to the recommendations of HMIC's national and force reports?
- What progress has the force made against its domestic abuse action plan and how is this measured? How regularly does it review and update this plan?

2. How effective are the force's mechanisms for ensuring that the stated priority translates into an operational reality?

- How does the force ensure that domestic abuse is an operational priority?
- How does domestic abuse (and other forms of safeguarding vulnerable people) feature as part of the force's strategic and operational plans, including problem profiles and other intelligence products?
- How does tackling domestic abuse feature in the priorities for the day-to-day activity of frontline officers and assignment of work?

- How widely known is the force policy on domestic abuse and when was it last reviewed?
- How does the force's performance management regime promote tackling domestic abuse as a force priority?
- How does the force promote and value the work of officers and staff who work well with victims of domestic abuse?
- How is poor performance of officers and staff and inappropriate behaviour in respect of domestic abuse identified and dealt with by the force?
- How does the force deal with victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse who are employees?

3. How well does the force deal with initial contact?

- Are call handlers able to identify repeat and vulnerable victims of domestic abuse consistently and do they understand the force definitions?
- Are call handlers able to accurately assess the level of risk and vulnerability of victims of domestic abuse?
- To what extent do call handlers have access to relevant and reliable information to provide an accurate history to response officers?
- What information on previous history will a response officer have each time they attend a domestic abuse incident? Is this sufficient and is it guaranteed to be provided?

4. How effective is the force's initial response?

- How is the quality of the response officer's initial investigation and the effectiveness of safeguarding activity assessed?
- Are details of local specialist domestic abuse services, advice or support organisations shared with victims as standard practice?
- How effectively are risks to children within the household identified and assessed and referrals made to children's social services where appropriate?
- What does the force's policy on positive action mean in practice; do staff understand it; and how does the force measure the effectiveness of this policy?
- Has the force reviewed its data on arrests for domestic abuse related crimes and how does it keep this under review?

- How does the force satisfy itself that the risk assessment and safety planning processes are well understood and conducted effectively by response officers?
- What is the force policy on the use of body-worn video cameras at domestic abuse incidents and how does the force evaluate their effectiveness?

5. How effective is the force in investigating crimes and safeguarding victims?

- Are resources allocated on the complexity of the crime and/or the level of risk?
- Following handover by response officers, is it clear who is responsible for what element of victim care and investigation, and is this well understood by staff across the organisation? Is it clear who is responsible for safeguarding victims assessed as medium and standard risk?
- How is the repeat 'handover' of victims between different officers minimised by the force and how are such handovers monitored to ensure any delays in service provision are kept to a minimum?
- How does the force monitor that domestic abuse units are properly resourced and address any short-fall in resources?
- What monitoring processes are in place to ensure that risk levels are not being downgraded on the basis of the capacity of the specialist team or the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) rather than on the basis of risk to the victim?
- How successful is the force at bringing offenders to justice?
- What is the force's approach to securing evidence led prosecutions, even when the victim withdraws their statement and how successful is this?
- How is the force working to reduce the number of cases where evidential difficulties prevent further action, but the victim supports police action?

6. How effective is the force in preventing domestic abuse?

- Has the force completed comprehensive analysis to understand domestic abuse within its area and how does this inform the force's strategic, operational and tactical plans?
- What is the force's strategy for dealing with serial perpetrators of domestic abuse?

- Does the force have an active and well-managed approach to targeting domestic abuse perpetrators and how does it measure its effectiveness?
- To what extent are the force's neighbourhood policing resources deployed in preventative activity in respect of domestic abuse, and safeguarding victims?
- To what extent is the force using Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) and the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) as a means of protecting victims of domestic abuse and are these used in all appropriate cases? How does the force measure the effectiveness of these?
- How seriously does the force treat breaches of DVPOs, restraining orders and non-molestation orders?

7. How well does the force work with partners?

- How does the force work with local specialist domestic abuse services to improve the service for victims of domestic abuse?
- How does feedback from local specialist domestic abuse services help to shape the service the force provides?
- Is the provision of local specialist domestic abuse services in the force area appropriate? How can a long-term commitment to funding these services be achieved?
- What data does the force use to assess the effectiveness of MARACs? How are local specialist domestic abuse services involved in this assessment?
- What other multi-agency approaches does the force support, for example, a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)? Do the multi-agency arrangements have good support from other partners? How is the effectiveness of these arrangements assessed?
- How do the force and the CPS work together to support evidence led prosecutions? How successful has the approach to evidence led prosecutions been so far?
- To what extent does the force review, with the CPS, the reasons for low conviction rates in domestic abuse?
- How does the force work with partners to improve the service and outcome for victims of domestic abuse?
-

8. How effectively are victims supported and their feedback obtained and used?

- How effectively are victims kept informed on the progress of their case by the force?
- How is the force fulfilling its statutory responsibilities under the Victims' Code? Is there evidence of the consistent and appropriate use of special measures and victim personal statements?
- How are no further action (NFA) decisions communicated to victims?
- What process does the force have for victims wishing to make a withdrawal statement?
- How does the force routinely survey victims of domestic abuse?
- How does feedback from victims help to shape the service the force provides?

9. How effective is the force's training on domestic abuse?

- How does the force provide training on domestic abuse? Is this for all frontline officers at all ranks? How regular is this training?
- What has the force done to ensure staff are aware of and able to identify coercive control amongst all staff?
- Are local specialist domestic abuse organisations or external partners involved in the development and/or delivery of training on domestic abuse?
- Are call handlers trained to appropriate standards in identifying risk and vulnerability? How often is this training refreshed?
- Do officers have the skills and knowledge necessary to engage confidently and competently with victims of domestic abuse, and how does the force assess this?
- Do staff working in specialist domestic abuse teams receive any additional training and support?
- How does the force measure the effectiveness of this training in terms of the service provided to victims of domestic abuse?
- How much training is face-to-face as opposed to e-learning? What are the opportunities for extending training?

10. How effective are the force's supervision arrangements in respect of domestic abuse?

- What are the principal responsibilities of frontline supervisors and how does the force establish if they are effective?
- Does the force check or dip sample any of the following:
 - Control room call logs and recordings to check the correct identification of victims of domestic abuse and in particular vulnerable and repeat victims?
 - Control room call logs to ensure that domestic abuse incidents are correctly recorded as crime or incident reports in all cases?
 - Decisions by call handlers to make a scheduled appointment?
 - DASH forms to check the quality of the risk assessment, especially in medium or standard risk cases?
 - Officer justifications for a decision not to arrest when a crime has been committed?
 - Case files to provide assurance on the quality of initial investigation?
 - Decisions to take no further action (NFA) on a domestic abuse case?
 - Decisions to caution or give harassment warnings rather than charge in domestic abuse cases?

Nine pieces of data for routine monitoring

1. Can the force provide data on domestic abuse incidents and crimes and on victims (broken down by relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, age, ethnicity and gender)?
2. Does the force have a clear definition of repeat victims and can it access data that tells it the number of repeat victims?
3. Can the force provide accurate data on the arrest rate where a domestic abuse related crime has been committed?
4. What does the force measure in terms of domestic abuse outcomes and how does this compare with other victim based or violent crimes?
5. How does the force use data from the CPS to track successful criminal justice outcomes?
6. Can the force measure its domestic abuse cases at every level of risk?

7. How does the force use data provided by local specialist domestic abuse organisations or external partners?
8. How regularly does the force collect data on victim satisfaction and what tools does it use to collect this data?

Annex C – Definition of domestic abuse

The cross-government definition of domestic abuse was revised following extensive consultation in 2012 to include those aged 16 to 17 and make explicit reference to coercive control for the first time.

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

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

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour. Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

Domestic abuse covers a wide range of violence and behaviours and involves different perpetrators. The definition includes intimate partner violence, child abuse, elder abuse, sibling abuse, child to parent abuse, so-called 'crimes of honour', female genital mutilation, forced marriage and other violent acts within the family. There are marked differences between sibling abuse and intimate partner abuse. Intimate partner violence, which affects women disproportionately includes a range of different types of violence including physical and or/sexual violence, intimidation, isolation, control and the 'micro management' of everyday life.

Annex D – HMIC’s Domestic Abuse Reference Group

HMIC had the following people on its Domestic Abuse Reference Group. The reference group was chaired by HMI Zoë Billingham and met five times during the inspection programme.

Name	Organisation
Vera Baird QC	Police and crime commissioner for Northumbria
Alexandra Barker	Victim Support
Liz Hughes	Avon and Somerset Police and previous Staff Officer to ACC Louisa Rolfe
Hilary Fisher	Women’s Aid
Steve Jackson	College of Policing
Suzanne Jacob	SafeLives
Sara Jones	Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner for Sussex
Mark Norris	Local Government Association
Christian Papaleontiou	Home Office
ACC Louisa Rolfe	Avon and Somerset Police and the National Policing Lead on Domestic Abuse
Isobel Shirlaw	Refuge
Betsy Stanko	Formerly Metropolitan Police Service, now Mayor’s Office for Police and Crime (MOPAC)
Jo Todd	Respect
David Tucker	College of Policing
Jane Wigmore	Avon and Somerset Police and Staff Officer to ACC Louisa Rolfe

Annex E – Progress against recommendations from *Everyone's business: Improving 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 2014 report, *Everyone's business*.

Home Office

Recommendation 1

There should be a renewed national effort to tackle domestic abuse. The Home Office, working with the College of Policing, chief constables and police and crime commissioners, needs to inject urgency and energy into solving the material problems identified in this report.

A national oversight and monitoring group should be established and convened immediately to monitor and report on the progress made in implementing these recommendations. This group should have a wide membership (including non-government domestic abuse organisations), be chaired at a senior level, and be able to influence government departments and other national and local bodies where multi-agency issues are raised about domestic abuse.

The group should report publicly on progress every quarter. There should be a full review of the police service's progress in relation to all recommendations in 12 months' time.

Update on progress against recommendation 1 and summary of principal activity

Following the publication of HMIC's report *Everyone's business* in March 2014, the Home Secretary established and chaired the National Oversight Group on Domestic Abuse. The group has met five times and its membership includes the Minister for Preventing Abuse and Exploitation, the National Policing Leads on Crime and Domestic Violence, Police and Crime Commissioners, the Chief Executive of the College of Policing, Public Protection Policing leads and key sector partners. The National Oversight Group has monitored and led delivery of HMIC's recommendations.

The National Oversight Group is part of the wider Home Office governance structure on violence against women and girls (VAWG), with emerging issues for wider government action feeding into the Inter-Ministerial Group on VAWG.

Areas still outstanding on recommendation 1 and anticipated completion date

The membership and terms of reference for the National Oversight Group will be reviewed taking into account recommendations from HMIC's re-inspection of police forces response to domestic abuse.

Recommendation 4

Data collected on domestic abuse needs to be consistent, comparable, accessible and accurate so that it can be used to monitor progress. This requires the Home Office to develop national data standards in relation to domestic abuse data. The data should be collected by police forces and provided to the Home Office, for example as part of the annual data return. These should include data standards for both crimes and incidents, and clear and unambiguous definitions of important terms such as 'repeat victim', to ensure like-for-like comparisons can be made.

In addition, the views of victims are an essential element in monitoring police effectiveness. The Home Office should ensure that the views of victims of domestic abuse are incorporated routinely and consistently into national monitoring arrangements.

The new national arrangements for collecting data and capturing the views of victims should be in place by the start of the 2015/16 financial year.

Areas still outstanding on recommendation 4 and anticipated completion date

Dissemination of guidance and evaluation report to police forces in January 2016, with ongoing monitoring of the roll-out of the survey through the National Oversight Group.

Recommendation 9

The Home Office should reconsider its approach to domestic homicide reviews. It needs to re-assess whether the current process, guidance and quality assurance arrangements provide the best opportunities for the improvement of forces' knowledge of and approach to domestic abuse cases. It should consider whether there is a better way of communicating the contents and conclusions of reviews and the lessons learned. Police and crime commissioners should track how and when recommendations from domestic homicide reviews are implemented.

Update on progress against recommendation 9 and summary of principal activity

The Home Office has implemented a number of steps to improve the capture and dissemination of learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs). An internal process review has been completed resulting in an increase in Home Office resources to support the DHR process and better data management.

The Home Office case management system has been improved to routinely capture themes emerging from every DHR. Good practice examples of DHRs are also now routinely captured which can be used to support other local areas. All feedback from the Home Office DHR Quality Assurance Panel is now routinely copied to the relevant police and crime commissioner. The Home Office is also working with other government departments to promote cross-learning from Serious Case Reviews and Mental Health Investigations.

In addition, Home Office researchers have undertaken a 'dip sample' of DHR reports to identify best practice. Based on this analysis, a 'top tips' document is currently being developed for dissemination to Community Safety Partnerships to help embed these lessons. Web links for all published DHRs are also now collated on the case management system to support requests from external organisations to conduct research on DHRs.

The Home Office has also begun to review DHR statutory guidance with members of the DHR Quality Assurance Panel to reflect the key learning that has been identified since its first iteration in 2011.

Areas still outstanding on recommendation 9 and anticipated completion date

Dissemination of learning from dip sample of DHR Reports – January 2016

Publication of updated statutory guidance – April 2016

Ongoing oversight of promotion of learning from DHRs by National Oversight Group

HMIC

Recommendation 2

By September 2014, every police force in England and Wales should establish and publish an action plan that specifies in detail what steps it will take to improve its approach to domestic abuse. This action plan should be developed:

- in consultation with police and crime commissioners, domestic abuse support organisations and victims' representatives;
- after close consideration of all the recommendations in this report;
- with reference to all relevant domestic homicide reviews and IPCC findings, whether in connection with the force in question or another force; and
- drawing on relevant knowledge acquired or available from other sources such as CPS scrutiny panels and MARAC self assessments.

The action plan should be established on the basis of best practice, based on revised relevant guidance from the College of Policing. To ensure consistency, the College and the national policing lead on domestic abuse have agreed to provide advice on the areas that each plan should cover by the end of April 2014.

Chief officers in each police force should oversee and ensure full implementation of these action plans. This should be a personal responsibility in each case. Police and crime commissioners should hold forces to account in this respect. HMIC will inspect forces' progress on domestic abuse as part of its new annual all-force inspection programme. Police and crime commissioners and chief constables should be called upon to report publicly on progress, as well as to the national oversight and monitoring group.

Recommendation 3

To inform the action plan specified in Recommendation 2, chief constables should review how they, and their senior officers, give full effect to their forces' stated priority on domestic abuse. This should consider how action to tackle domestic abuse is prioritised and valued, and how staff are given the appropriate level of professional and conspicuous support and encouragement. This should be done through a clear and specific assessment of the following issues in respect of domestic abuse:

- the force's culture and values;
- the force's performance management framework;
- the reward and recognition policy in the force and the roles and behaviours that

this rewards currently;

- the selection and promotion arrangements 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 in the force are managed.

Where the review identifies shortcomings, the chief constable should ensure the implementation of prompt, adequate and effective remedial action. Those remedial steps should be incorporated into the action plan specified in recommendation 2. HMIC should be provided with a copy of each review and the action plan.

Update on progress against recommendations 2 and 3 and summary of principal activity

In September 2014, HMIC received a domestic abuse action plan from each of the 43 police forces in England and Wales outlining the specific steps it would take to improve its approach to domestic abuse. HMIC held four assessment panels in November 2014 to review these plans. The panels comprised HMIC staff, peer specialists from forces, peer experts from the support sector (SafeLives and Women's Aid) and representatives from the Home Office and the College of Policing. This desk-based exercise allowed HMIC to assess the robustness and quality of each action plan and to identify where further detail or clarification was required. The panel looked for evidence that the plans had clear milestones, included examples of good practice, evidenced strong links with local partners and demonstrated that senior leaders were involved in planning and implementation.

The assessments panel noted that there were a number of recurrent issues in the plans:

- Prioritisation - very few plans had prioritised actions - it is important that they do and this should be on the basis of victim risk and need;
- Reliance on a small number of people - many plans made one or two individuals (often public protection specialists) responsible for implementing the vast majority of the actions, which may be unfeasible;
- Tracking progress - it was unclear how some forces would track progress against the actions in their plan;
- Understanding the effect on service - a large number of plans did not give an indication of the anticipated results of actions and how improvements in the service to victims would be measured.

Considerable efforts have been devoted to the production of the majority of action plans. However, some forces still have work to do to improve the quality of their plans and then to implement them. All forces received written feedback on their action plans from HMIC in January 2015 to assist them with improvements and implementation going forward.

Areas still outstanding on recommendations 2 and 3 and anticipated completion date

This action is complete and there are no outstanding matters.

Recommendation 11

Tackling domestic abuse requires a number of organisations in both the statutory services (including health, local authorities, the Crown Prosecution Service and probation) and voluntary and community services to work together. Following HMIC's inspection, there should be a further multi-agency inspection of these services. This should consider how local services provide advice, assistance and support to victims of domestic abuse. The inspection should not only consider how individual services contribute to keeping victims safe, but also the quality of the partnerships and the ways in which joint working is scrutinised.

Update on progress against recommendation 11 and summary of principal activity

Limited progress has been made against this recommendation, pending the findings of HMIC's inspection of forces' progress on domestic abuse, which was completed as part of the all force PEEL vulnerability inspection in June/July 2015. There is however, still a strong commitment from HIMC to progress this recommendation. The logistics of undertaking a multi-agency inspection could be discussed at the expanded National Oversight Group (recommendation 1).

Areas still outstanding on recommendation 11 and anticipated completion date

Plans to progress this recommendation will be discussed at the next meeting of the expanded National Oversight Group

College of Policing and National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC)

Recommendation 5

The College of Policing is updating authorised professional practice for officers on domestic abuse alongside other areas such as investigation and public protection. This update should be informed by the conclusions of and recommendations in this report, together with existing reviews of domestic abuse best practice, and should be developed with contributions from a wide set of interested parties.

The authorised professional practice update should reiterate and clearly set out principles and minimum standards in the following areas:

- approaches to identifying repeat and vulnerable victims;
- information that responding officers must have available to them on or before arrival;
- victim care and safety planning;
- evidence-gathering to support domestic abuse investigations (in the context of professional police investigation) and evidence-led prosecutions;
- positive action and arrest in cases of domestic abuse;
- risk assessment;
- standards of supervision;
- effective targeting of domestic abuse perpetrators, including the use of covert tactics and the definition of serial and/or persistent perpetrators;
- use of different criminal justice disposals, in particular simple cautions and restorative justice; and
- the principal components of multi-agency arrangements (such as the MARAC and MASH) to tackle domestic abuse.

Update on progress against recommendation 5 and summary of principal activity

Revised Authorised Professional Practice (APP) was issued on 21 September 2015.

All of the issues raised by the HMIC report have been included in the updated APP, bar one. Very strong and consistent feedback was received during the consultation about the risks of defining 'repeat' victims and perpetrators – contributors pointed out that most victims of domestic abuse will have been repeat victims before they call police. As a result, the College decided not to adopt those definitions at this stage. This does not

apply to the definition of 'serial' perpetrators, which is included.

The more detailed content is supported by a set of quick reference guides for frontline roles (call handlers and first response officers – which may be added to in the future) as well as a first response supervisor's checklist to improve consistency of oversight. Checklists are also built into the text for use as prompts and to highlight essential points.

The APP was subject to a full public consultation which was launched on International Human Rights Day, 10 December 2014.

There were 45 responses representing the entire spectrum of interest – HMIC, IPCC and CPS (both HQ and area level), 21 police forces, 12 third sector groups, 3 academics, 2 local authorities, 1 PCC, 1 NHS trust and 1 survivor of domestic abuse. The extensive feedback was reviewed in detail and incorporated as appropriate to produce the final version of the APP.

In addition, a toolkit for first responders was issued at the same time to support these officers at the scenes of incidents to ensure that they take the right actions to make victims and potential victims safe and gather evidence effectively.

Areas still outstanding on recommendation 5 and anticipated completion date

This action is complete and there are no outstanding matters

Recommendation 6

The College of Policing is reviewing the evidence base for risk assessment in cases of domestic abuse. The College should urgently consider the current approach to risk assessment with others, such as practitioners in forces, academic experts and organisations supporting practitioners and victims. It should make an assessment of the sufficiency of the tools that frontline officers are given to assess risk, and of the training they receive in connection with risk assessment.

This approach should:

- in the immediate term, examine whether the approach to identifying the risk of domestic abuse can be made more efficient and assess how forces can be assisted to improve awareness and training to ensure that risk assessments link directly to risk management and safety planning actions; and
- in the medium term, establish a 'task and finish group' (a specific action-orientated group with a set deadline) to consider, over the next six months, the evidence base that underpins identification of risk and determine whether more fundamental changes are needed to the current approach.

Meanwhile, forces should ensure that they continue to use the DASH risk assessment tool in the way that it was originally intended.

Update on progress against recommendation 6 and summary of principal activity

Most forces use the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment and Honour-Based Violence risk identification, assessment and management model (DASH). DASH is a 'structured professional judgement' model that helps officers to identify the risk factors that may be found at a domestic abuse incident and assists them to structure decision-making on risk assessment and management. The form that underpins the model requires officers to record whether a particular risk factor is present and complete a free text box to record details about that risk factor. It is the free text box that is significant in setting out the nature of the risk. The number of ticks on a form is less significant.

College researchers have been examining the evidence underpinning the DASH risk assessment model for some time, beginning before the HMIC report. In December 2014, the College published a summary of findings from a rapid evidence assessment on risk factors and risk assessment for domestic abuse. The review concluded there is no published peer-reviewed evaluation of the DASH model. The review identified that the majority of existing international research relates to the accuracy of risk assessment tools in predicting future physical violence; that existing tools have moderate levels of predictive accuracy; and that there is no clear evidence to support any particular model as most effective. The review found little or no evaluation of how structured judgement models operate, or how effective they are. The review also highlighted the importance of victims' own perceptions of risk, and the salience of patterns of coercive and controlling behaviour.

At the same time, the College undertook in conjunction with City University analysis of data from DASH forms to identify factors most associated with high risk cases of domestic abuse. This analysis is in the final stages of development and is finding that factors associated with coercive and controlling behaviour were most likely to be present consistently when cases might be regarded as high risk. This analysis is with peer reviewers to ensure findings are robust. They will be notified to forces once the peer review process has been concluded.

Based on the findings of the rapid evidence assessment and the analysis of DASH data, the National Policing Lead and College Chief Executive wrote to forces in early 2015 advising that they should continue to use their current risk assessment models because there is presently insufficient evidence to support a change, and current models are understood by officers and partner organisations.

The College is carrying out, through the What Works Centre and in partnership with Cardiff University, a properly designed and resourced research project over 18 months, examining how the DASH model is operating currently in forces. The purpose of the research is to understand how a structured judgement model of risk assessment and management might work most effectively. As part of the research, interviews are being undertaken with a wide range of police practitioners and representatives of voluntary and statutory agencies. This research must be robust because risk assessment is the bedrock on which action to make people safe rests. The full research outcomes are expected to be published in the second quarter of 2016.

Areas still outstanding on recommendation 6 and anticipated completion date

Completion of the research into risk assessment – due in the second quarter of 2016

Recommendation 7

The College of Policing should conduct a thorough and fundamental review of the sufficiency and effect of training and development on forces' response to domestic abuse. Training for officers and staff should reflect the fact that tackling domestic abuse is core policing business; all relevant officers and staff should be trained to understand the dynamics of different types of domestic abuse, particularly coercive control.

Domestic abuse training should link to:

- other relevant areas of training and development, for example investigative practice, working with vulnerable people, and developing communication skills, including a specific focus on empathy with victims;
- the College of Policing's revised guidance and professional practice, and the developing evidence based on effective ways to tackle domestic abuse.

The College of Policing should include successful attainment of professional standards in domestic abuse in the foundation skills threshold and specialist skills threshold tests which police officers have to pass to progress up their pay scales, so as to ensure that a sound professional understanding of domestic abuse becomes part of officers' continuing professional development and is embedded throughout the careers of all serving officers.

Police forces should ensure that their approach to domestic abuse training is evidence-based. Training should tackle the specific problems of lack of knowledge and poor attitudes to domestic abuse which exist in forces. It should be face-to-face training rather than provided through e-learning.

Update on progress against recommendation 7 and summary of principal activity

The College of Policing commissioned CAADA (Coordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse, now SafeLives) to review all of its training products. The review found that there were some gaps in training products and that police forces had developed their own materials.

The College has updated its domestic abuse training materials to reflect the issues raised in the CAADA/SafeLives report.

Domestic abuse training forms part of the Public Protection Learning Programme (PPLP). This programme teaches students about risks and vulnerabilities across a range of issues, such as missing persons, child abuse and domestic abuse. Each of the thirteen strands of vulnerability, including domestic abuse, are explored. Coercive control forms an integral part of the DA section of the training. There are links to all other relevant areas of policing.

All new recruits and all new detectives undergo the classroom-based PPLP training. PPLP is available for forces to use as a discrete training product. Some forces have also developed their own training and are able to use their own materials if they choose, provided that they meet the learning standards contained within the national policing curriculum, maintained by the College.

There are also computer based training products available to all forces. These products focus on linked areas including domestic violence prevention orders, domestic violence disclosure scheme and stalking and harassment as part of a suite of e-learning covering the 13 strands of public protection. They are used to deliver knowledge to improve the skills of existing officers as part of a blended learning programme, where computer based products are augmented by face-to-face training.

CAADA/SafeLives also worked with the College to develop a product to address both knowledge about and attitudes towards domestic abuse. This product is designed to train a large number of officers in a short period of time so that the level of knowledge within an entire police force is driven up consistently, ensuring that a critical mass of officers has received training to improve their skills. The training was delivered in one force as a pilot in April, May and June 2015. Over a thousand officers were trained, including supervisors and coaches. The supervisors and coaches are essential to maintain the improvement in knowledge and service delivery.

The College evaluated the training input for first responding officers using a randomised controlled trial. The evaluation report is being prepared and will go out for peer review in the next few weeks. Although there appears to have been only a small positive change in frontline officers' knowledge of coercive control, the evaluation has highlighted how the content and delivery can be improved to ensure it delivers the improvements required in both knowledge and attitudes.

Also, anecdotal evidence in feedback from first responders and specialist DA investigators within the force is very positive about the method of training delivery and the potential for it to impact on their professional practice.

A second force intends to implement the training programme and the College will assist that force with evaluation. The College is also developing training products for forces to use to train officers and staff in the new offence of 'coercive control' that is expected to be commenced by the Home Office soon. The College will evaluate the face-to-face training to ensure it is fit for purpose.

Areas still outstanding on recommendation 7 and anticipated completion date

The College has reviewed its training products and they have been updated.

We are not able to take forward the recommendation to link pay scales to competence in dealing with domestic abuse at the moment because this is linked to a complex piece of work regarding assessment and competence.

All other areas have been completed.

Recommendation 8

Forces need support in how they target and manage perpetrators of domestic abuse. The College of Policing, through the national policing lead for domestic abuse, should disseminate to forces examples of how forces are targeting serial and repeat domestic abuse perpetrators in order to prevent future offending. The College's What Works Centre for Crime Reduction should provide to forces evidence about how effective programmes of managing perpetrators achieve reductions in domestic abuse. They should work with departments such as the Ministry of Justice and the Home Office, academic institutions and organisations working with perpetrators to build a strong evidence base in this area.

Update on progress against recommendation 8 and summary of principal activity

As part of the release of documents on 21 September 2015 the College of Policing released details of perpetrator programmes being used by forces. The document included a point of contact and the details of evidence or evaluation on which forces are relying to support their use of a particular programme. Most forces rely on programmes that follow a model that has been evaluated by Respect under Project Mirabel.

The College has also supported forces through the use of the Police Online Knowledge Area (POLKA), a system that allows police officers and staff to communicate with colleagues who share professional interests. Our domestic abuse site has been used to disseminate promising practice on managing offenders. We have also hosted an event for forces exploring the management of domestic abuse perpetrators.

We have carried out research with the Institute of Education to understand the evidence of effectiveness of perpetrator programmes. This work is very close to completion and is due to be published by the end of 2015.

Areas still outstanding on recommendation 8 and anticipated completion date

Publication of research into perpetrator programmes by the end of 2015

Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC)



Zoë Billingham
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16 November 2015

Dear Zoe

Update on progress against the recommendations in 'Everyone's business: Improving the police response to domestic abuse'

Thank you for your letter of 28th October requesting an up-date from the APCC on recommendation 10 of the above report. I am replying as Chair of the Supporting Victims and Reducing Harm Standing Group of the APCC. Whilst content to respond as the Chair of the relevant Standing Group of PCCs, please note that we refer to specialist support workers in our letter, meaning a wider cohort than independent domestic violence adviser, which has become a term of art referring to a particular kind of worker dealing only with high risk victims and which some areas are no longer funding.

Recommendation 10

Police and crime commissioners should consider the findings and recommendations of this report when commissioning services for victims of domestic abuse. In particular, they should take note of the strong value placed on the role of independent domestic violence advisers by the victims, police and other criminal justice agencies.

Position statement on recommendation 10 and overview of relevant activity

The APCC Victims Standing Group is committed to ensuring that tackling violence against women and girls is treated as a priority both at a national and a local level and that victims of domestic violence receive the best support possible. The Standing Group also fully acknowledges the crucial role that is played by specialist support workers in supporting victims of domestic violence.

The Standing Group has, and continues, to provide support and advice for PCCs when commissioning services for victims, and in doing so, reflects the findings of the HMIC report – that domestic violence must

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The APCC provides support to all
Police and Crime Commissioners
and policing governance bodies in
England and Wales



be treated as a priority, including in the provision of appropriate specialist support to victims where appropriate.

The APCC is also taking forward work with Government more broadly in respect of violence against women and girls. In particular, working with the Home Office on their new Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy and pressing Government to put funding for victims of domestic violence on a more long-term sustainable footing.

Yours sincerely,

Vera Baird QC, Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria, and,
Chair APCC Standing Group, *Supporting Victims and Reducing Harm*

Annex F – Changes to policing practice and policy in the last 18 months

There have been a number of changes to practice and policy that are specific to policing since the publication of *Everyone's business*.

Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) were rolled out across all 43 police forces in England and Wales from 8 March 2014, with full implementation completed in November 2014. They are a new 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 they need. The Home Office published the findings from an assessment of the operation of DVPOs since national roll-out commenced in November 2015.

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) often referred to as Clare's Law was rolled out across 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. Under the scheme an individual can ask police to check whether a new/existing partner has a violent past. This is the "right to ask". If records show that an individual may be at risk of domestic violence from a partner, the police will consider disclosing the information. Under "right to know" an agency can apply for a disclosure if it is believed that an individual is at risk of domestic violence from their partner. The police can release information if it is lawful, necessary and proportionate to do so.

The government announced a new domestic abuse offence of coercive and controlling behaviour in December 2014. Victims of coercive control can have every aspect of life controlled by their partner, often being subjected to daily intimidation and humiliation. The new law will help protect victims by outlawing sustained patterns of behaviour that stop short of serious physical violence, but amount to extreme psychological and emotional abuse. The Serious Crime Bill, including Clause 76 regarding the offence of "Controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship" achieved Royal Assent on 3 March 2015 and the new offence is due to come into force in December 2015. This report considers the implementation of DVPOs and the Disclosure Scheme in section 4.

The police service, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the College of Policing have been working together to develop both training and guidance material for officers and staff that provides an understanding of the new offence and the dynamics of domestic abuse, particularly in relation to evidence-led prosecutions. The national policing lead for domestic abuse contacted all forces early in 2015

asking them to identify time before the autumn to deliver training on controlling and coercive behaviour. Forces have been given a College of Policing training package on the new offence and new Authorised Professional Practice for Domestic Abuse that includes an initial investigator's toolkit. The police service (NPCC) and CPS have created a new evidence checklist and charging advice and guidance material that supplements the training provided to officers and staff on controlling and coercive behaviour to ensure delivery of an effective policing response.

Annex G – About the data

The information presented in this report comes from a range of sources, including published data, inspection fieldwork, data collected from all 43 geographic police forces in England and Wales, and surveys of the public. Where HMIC has collected data directly from police forces, we have taken reasonable steps to agree with forces the design of the data collection, and to verify the data that we have collected.

Data from HMIC-designed data collection

Data	Timings	Provided by
Calls to assistance	12 months to 31 March 2015	All forces
DA calls to assistance	12 months to 31 March 2015	All forces
DA offences	12 months to 31 March 2015	All forces
DA repeat victims	12 months to 31 March 2015	19 forces
DA arrests	12 months to 31 March 2015	36 forces
DA charges and cautions	12 months to 31 March 2015	All forces
DA evidential difficulties	12 months to 31 March 2015	39 forces
Training	12 months to 31 March 2015	32 forces
Coercive control training	12 months to 31 March 2015	All forces
DVPOs	From introduction to 31 March 2015	Applied for 40 forces Granted 38 forces Breaches 37 forces
MARAC cases	12 months to 31 March 2015	All forces
Victim breakdown	12 months to 31 March 2015	36 forces
Perpetrator scheme	As at April 2015	All forces
High, medium, standard risk cases	On a day in April 2015	32 forces

The data were verified in the following ways:

- HMIC carried out checks on the data forces submitted, and raised queries with forces where, for example, their figures were significantly different from other forces, or were internally inconsistent; and
- all forces were asked to check the specific final data used to support the analysis, and correct any errors in their figures.

Additional data collected by HMIC

File review

HMIC reviewed a sample of rape, burglary, offences of serious violence and actual bodily harm cases. In most forces the review consisted of 10 cases from each crime category but in some larger forces the sample was increased to 15. The file review was designed to provide a broad overview of the identification vulnerability and the effectiveness of the investigation.

Of the 1,330 files reviewed for rape, offences of serious violence and actual bodily harm cases, 480 were identified as domestic abuse. These 480 files have been analysed for this report.

Practitioner survey

Domestic abuse practitioners were asked to complete an online survey to give their opinion on where they feel improvement is needed for both front line response officers and specialist officers/investigators, more than 450 responses were received and analysed.

Data from other sources

- Recorded crime data – published by Office for National statistics (ONS) Title 5 www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcm%3A77-373428
- Domestic violence disclosure orders – this data was provided to the home office by forces, data is from roll out until 31 December 2014.
- Police budgets – data provided by Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Police Objective Analysis (POA) data. Data were collected from forces in summer 2014.
- Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) data – data was provided by SafeLives

- Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/crime-stats/crime-statistics/focus-on-violent-crime-and-sexual-offences--2013-14/index.html
- Population estimates – Mid-year 2014 estimates, published by Office for National Statistics (ONS) www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/pop-estimate/population-estimates-for-uk--england-and-wales--scotland-and-northern-ireland/mid-2014/stb---mid-2014-uk-population-estimates.html