



# Nottinghamshire Police's approach to tackling domestic abuse

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## Introduction

The extent and nature of domestic abuse remains shocking. A core part of the policing mission is to prevent crime and disorder. Domestic abuse causes both serious harm and constitutes a considerable proportion of overall crime. It costs society an estimated £15.7 billion a year.<sup>1</sup> 77 women were killed by their partners or ex-partners in 2012/13.<sup>2</sup> In the UK, one in four young people aged 10 to 24 reported that they experienced domestic violence and abuse during their childhood.<sup>3</sup> Forces told us that crime relating to domestic abuse constitutes some 8 percent of all recorded crime in their area, and one third of their recorded assaults with injury. On average the police receive an emergency call relating to domestic abuse every 30 seconds.

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>1</sup> Walby, S. (2009). *The cost of domestic violence*. Retrieved from: [www.lancaster.ac.uk/fass/doc.../Cost\\_of\\_domestic\\_violence\\_update.doc](http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/fass/doc.../Cost_of_domestic_violence_update.doc)

<sup>2</sup> Office for National Statistics (2013). *Focus on violent crime and sexual offences 2012/13 – Chapter 4: Intimate Personal Violence and Partner Abuse*. Retrieved from: [http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776\\_352362.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_352362.pdf)

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

<sup>4</sup> All definitions are taken from [www.gov.uk/domestic-violence-and-abuse](http://www.gov.uk/domestic-violence-and-abuse)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>5</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/news/major-review-of-police-response-to-domestic-violence](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/major-review-of-police-response-to-domestic-violence)

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

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

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

# Domestic abuse in Nottinghamshire<sup>7</sup>

## Calls for assistance



In Nottinghamshire, domestic abuse accounts for 11% of calls to the police for assistance. Of these calls, 39% were from repeat victims.

## Crime

# 10%

Domestic abuse accounts for 10% of all recorded crime.

## Assault with intent

# 21%

Nottinghamshire recorded 434 assaults with intent to cause serious harm, of these 91 were domestic abuse related. This is 21% of all assaults with intent to cause serious harm recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

## Assault with injury

# 40%

The force also recorded 6,961 assaults with injury, of these 2,786 were domestic abuse related. This is 40% of all assaults with injury recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

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<sup>7</sup> Data in this section is based upon forces' own definition of calls for assistance and domestic abuse, and forces' use of domestic abuse markers on IT systems.

Source: HMIC data collection. Crime figures are taken from police-recorded crime submitted to the Home Office.

## Harassment

73%

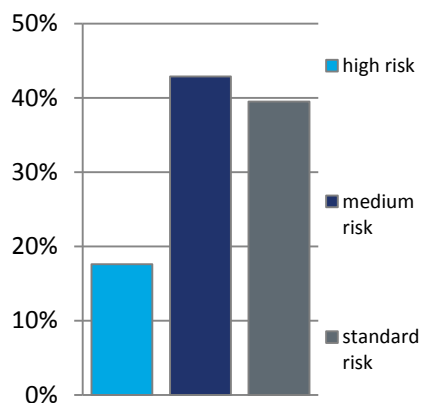
The force recorded 695 harassment offences, of these 510 were domestic abuse related. This is 73% of all harassment offences recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

## Sexual offences

11%

The force also recorded 1,081 sexual offences, of these 114 were domestic abuse related. This is 11% of all sexual offences recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

## Risk levels



On, 31 August 2013 Nottinghamshire had 977 active domestic abuse cases; 18% were high risk, 43% were medium risk, and 40% were standard risk.

## Arrests



For every 100 domestic abuse crimes recorded, there were 83 arrests in Nottinghamshire. For most forces the number is between 45 and 90.

## Outcomes



Nottinghamshire recorded 7,156 domestic abuse related crimes for the 12 months to the end of August 2013. Of these crimes, 29% resulted in a charge, 23% resulted in a caution and, 4% had an out of court disposal, for example, a fixed penalty notice for disorderly conduct.

## Executive summary

Nottinghamshire Police's approach to tackling domestic abuse is effective in some areas, but there are important aspects of the service the force provides to victims that require further improvement.

Tackling domestic abuse is a priority for the police and crime commissioner (PCC) and the chief constable. Staff are committed to supporting victims and making them safe. They have benefited from recent training and briefings about domestic abuse but more could be done to improve their understanding of how to use their professional judgement and discretion to help achieve better outcomes for victims.

Victims assessed as high risk (of serious risk of harm or murder) receive a better standard of service from officers and specialist staff, but victims assessed as of medium or standard risk receive an inconsistent service from the police.

The three multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) in the county operate slightly differently and do not provide consistent services to high risk victims. However, the force has strong links with partner agencies and they work together to share information and deliver a service to high risk victims.

The force does not have an understanding of the serial perpetrators of domestic abuse in the county and although some progress has been made, has not yet developed a way of tackling this behaviour with other local agencies.

This report outlines a number of areas where the force could strengthen its response.

## Identifying victims

Most domestic abuse calls are dealt with by customer service advisers in the force control room. They are competent, confident and empathetic in dealing with domestic abuse victims. They are trained to gather as much relevant information as possible from questioning the caller and carrying out background checks of the police databases for any previous police involvement. This enables them to assess the risk and send the right level of police response.

Domestic abuse incidents are given priority response and will either be attended as an emergency or within an hour depending of the threat of harm to the victim.

Staff understand the importance of identifying repeat victims although sometimes they do not always ask questions to establish whether the caller had previously been a victim and rely on force computer systems instead.



Supervision in the control room of the calls and the response is good. There are also intelligence officers, located in the control room, who routinely search police databases to support customer service advisers and gather information about the caller, perpetrator, family or address to help officers attending build a picture of the threat of harm to a victim and their children.

## **Keeping victims safe**

Domestic abuse is regarded as important for the force. The PCC's police and crime plan has an objective to "protect, support and respond to repeat victims of domestic abuse". There is a positive approach to ensure both a satisfactory investigation and a focus on keeping the victim safer. Allocation of cases to specialist investigators is based on the threat of harm and risk to the victim.

Officers have received domestic abuse risk assessment training and some have had additional training covering coercive control, stalking, harassment and so-called honour-based violence. Frontline staff spoke positively about domestic abuse briefings and a DVD film, produced by the force, which has contributed towards officers taking positive action.

However, there has been little training on increasing the use of professional judgement and encouraging frontline officers to use their discretion, think beyond the formal risk assessment, and increase the risk level, if they feel this is appropriate.

For those victims at high risk of harm, there is a good deal of thought given by officers to the safety of the victim and children at incidents of domestic abuse, and measures are put in place to protect them. However, for those victims who are medium and standard risk, investigation and safeguarding approaches are inconsistent, with investigations often being conducted by response officers, and safeguarding actions by beat managers.

As cases are passed between teams and departments, victims may not be contacted, or may be contacted by a number of different people, which can be equally concerning. It is unclear who is responsible for dealing with the victims of domestic abuse throughout the investigation and criminal justice process. Uniformed officers do not really understand what the specialist teams do, despite there being DASH guidance available on the force system. This can mean victims may be contacted by too many people, too frequently, often asking questions that the victim has answered before. This slightly fragmented approach could cause victims to lose confidence in how the police are dealing with their case, which in turn could lead to victims deciding that they no longer wish to support the police investigation further.

## **Management of risk**

The force works hard to make victims safer from the first point of contact. All cases assessed as high risk are reviewed again by specialist officers, however those which are medium and standard risk are not. Although safeguarding victims assessed as medium risk is given specifically to beat managers to undertake, those victims assessed as standard risk often receive limited safeguarding support. They may have been subjected to a number of repeated incidents of domestic abuse, and aside from a brief check of previous history, the pattern of escalating risk associated with this may not be identified. This is a concern. However, there is emerging good practice where a Women's Aid worker will carry out a joint visit with the beat manager to medium risk and repeat standard risk victims.

Staff displayed a good understanding of how important their role is to make victims safer and that this was their responsibility.

There are three multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) operating across the force area and a recent review identified some inconsistent working practices. The different processes operating across the city and county council administrative boundaries present a challenge in achieving a consistent service to victims. However, there are good relationships with partners, information is exchanged promptly and risk assessments and safety plans are put in place to reduce risk for high risk victims and their families.

## **Organisational effectiveness for keeping people safe**

The force has a sound approach to managing victim safety based on the initial threat of harm and risk to the victim. But there are weaknesses with its current processes and the force is not managing consistently the ongoing and future risk to victims.

There is no system in place for reviewing ongoing risk and any changes to risk levels faced by medium and standard risk victims, for example when a perpetrator is released from custody. There is a lack of awareness among local officers about domestic abuse victims in their area. Response officers are more likely to know where offences took place as they are required to pursue perpetrators as they are assigned this work by the daily management meeting.

The force does not have a full understanding of its current profile of known serial and serious domestic abuse perpetrators and there are undeveloped plans on how, with partners, they are working to prevent offending and re-offending. This is a cause for concern and needs to be addressed.

The force monitors some measures of its performance in tackling domestic abuse and has recognised the importance of enabling the victims' perspective

to be heard and consequently carries out monthly surveys of domestic abuse victims. But there is no process for evaluating and sharing what works in terms of operational activities to improve the outcomes for victims.

## Findings

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

Most domestic abuse calls are dealt with by customer service advisers in the force control room. They are competent, confident and empathetic in dealing with domestic abuse victims. They are trained to gather as much relevant information as possible by questioning the caller and carrying out background checks of the police databases for any previous police involvement. This enables them to assess the risk and send the right level of police response.

Domestic abuse incidents are given a priority response and will either be attended as an emergency or within an hour, depending of the threat of harm to the victim.

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Domestic abuse incidents are reported in different ways. A report may be made in person at a police station or may be referred from other agencies, such as the health service or social care, through a multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC). For the police it is more common for a telephone call to be received via the force command and control room. In Nottinghamshire Police, customer service advisers have responsibility for taking calls and identifying the possibility of domestic abuse, and will highlight any incident which meets the definition for domestic abuse.

Staff within the force control room are trained to ask questions to callers to identify whether they are at immediate risk. The safety of the caller is paramount and the call taker may give advice to them, for example, to go into another room away from the perpetrator and close the door. Where callers do not speak English the operator has easy access to interpreters through a quick dial process to a language line. Call takers ask questions which establish whether the caller or any other person – for example, a child – is at immediate risk of harm, and this information is recorded on the incident log.

Previous contact with the police and the identification of a repeat victim is not always revealed during the call. The force relies more on police databases to identify a repeat caller and whether there has been any previous police involvement. The questioning of the caller and further background checks identifies and manages risk at the first point of contact but would be enhanced by using a more structured question set to do this. Although previous contact and repeat victims are identified through the force's command and control system, and there is some provision to receive notification by foreign forces of victims who have moved to the force area, the force does not always identify those victims who have recently moved to the force area or who may have been victims of domestic abuse elsewhere.

When a call is received, the customer service adviser checks the police systems to see whether there is any information available which will help them, and officers who attend the incident, establish the levels of risk the caller faces. The systems hold information such as previous calls to the address, information about the caller and alleged perpetrator, information held relating to children in the house who may be at risk and whether anyone at the address holds a firearm. Intelligence officers, based in the control room, carry out more in-depth checks and pass this information to attending officers in all cases. This means that officers have the most complete information available when they attend an incident. This means they are better prepared for what they will encounter at the scene and in a better position to make a full assessment of the risk faced by the victim. Additional checks are carried out should the officers request further information.

Supervisors in the control room check the calls as they are in progress and ensure the right action is being taken. The information gathered is passed to officers over the radio as they travel to the incident. Officers are sent either immediately, where there is believed to be a risk to life or safety; or, when the victim is thought to be safe, officers will visit them within an hour. The decision on how quickly resources have to attend is based on the call takers assessment of harm, threat and risk faced by the victim.

All response calls of differing grades are monitored and measured. However, those working within the control room stated that there were times when they did not have available officers, or officers were not available quickly enough to send to calls and the caller will be re-contacted to update them of this delay. This means that on occasion a domestic abuse case might not have police attendance as quickly as they should. The control room will always send more than one officer to incidents of domestic abuse where this is possible, so that when they arrive, they can separate those involved in the incident, to ensure each is able to give their separate account of what has happened and victim safety issues can be properly addressed.

Domestic abuse incidents are normally attended by response officers and generally these incidents receive an emergency or priority response, although victims can receive a scheduled appointment, where requested, and where there is no immediate harm or threat of harm to the victim. These deferred calls are authorised by the control room supervisor and closely monitored by daily management inspectors (DMI) on each shift. Concerns were expressed by some officers that these deferred calls still require initial investigation, which takes time, and often another appointment or deferred call was waiting for the officer, which may mean that the officer is unable to complete a satisfactory investigation.

Supervision of domestic abuse incidents is generally overseen by response sergeants; however these are not always brought to their attention by the control room. This means that officers who are attending an incident of domestic abuse could be developing a safeguarding plan without supervisory oversight at the time. Also, the investigation and safeguarding plan is only seen by a supervisor when the incident log is ready for closure after the initial response. All high risk cases should be brought to the attention of the DMI in the response team, however, when HMIC reviewed a small sample of incident logs, the DMI's involvement was not always recorded. As a result, it is not known if they were aware of the case or not.

Staff within the control room receive training as part of their initial course when they start working for the police. An element of this is specifically about domestic abuse. In addition, as part of force-wide domestic abuse training in 2011–12, all staff, have seen a DVD film called *Don't leave me this way: Casey's Story*, which was produced by the force following an Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) report and recommendations. Guidance has been given about stalking and harassment and some staff have received this training. Coercive control was recognised by staff as a form of domestic abuse and there has also been some training provided which explained so-called honour-based violence. However, at the time of inspection there was no planned training day as part of the shift system in the control room. Overall, staff are confident and empathetic when dealing with callers who were experience domestic abuse.

A repeat victim is defined by the force as any second incident within a rolling 12-month period. Staff have a clear understanding that any case where the victim has reported domestic abuse to the police or another agency or where the victim states they have been subjected to abuse in the past is a 'repeat case' and this will influence any risk assessment that is made. There is a good understanding among those who deal with victims about how repeat victims may have heightened risk levels and so they are prioritised by both response officers and the specialist domestic abuse investigation team.

Vulnerable and repeat victims are identified by the police computer system on which the force record calls for assistance, if they call from the same address, telephone number or give their name. A search is always made of the force's Case Administration Tracking System (CATS) to see whether there are any current or historic risk assessments in place for the victim. This means that when a call is received the customer service adviser can look at previous calls for assistance and better understand the risk that may be present. If someone has previously been identified as vulnerable then this is also apparent to the call taker, and again, this can help them manage the risk posed to the caller and help prioritise the response.

There is good management and supervision in the control room. Where incidents of domestic abuse are identified as being high risk prior to police arrival, then these are monitored by control room supervisors to ensure that immediate and appropriate action is taken. The force sets out to supervise all domestic abuse calls but this is not always possible. Supervisors in the control room listen to their teams' calls and dip sample them to ensure that they are asking the right questions, to establish that risk is being accurately assessed.

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

Domestic abuse is regarded as important for the force. The PCC's police and crime plan has an objective to "protect, support and respond to repeat victims of domestic abuse". There is a positive approach to ensure both a satisfactory investigation and a focus on keeping the victim safer. Allocation of cases to specialist investigators is based on the threat of harm and risk to the victim.

Officers have received domestic abuse risk assessment training and some have had additional training covering coercive control, stalking, harassment and so-called honour-based violence. Frontline staff spoke positively about domestic abuse briefings and a DVD film, produced by the force, which has contributed towards officers taking positive action.

However, there has been little training on increasing the use of professional judgement and encouraging frontline officers to use their discretion, think beyond the formal risk assessment, and increase the risk level, if they feel this is appropriate.

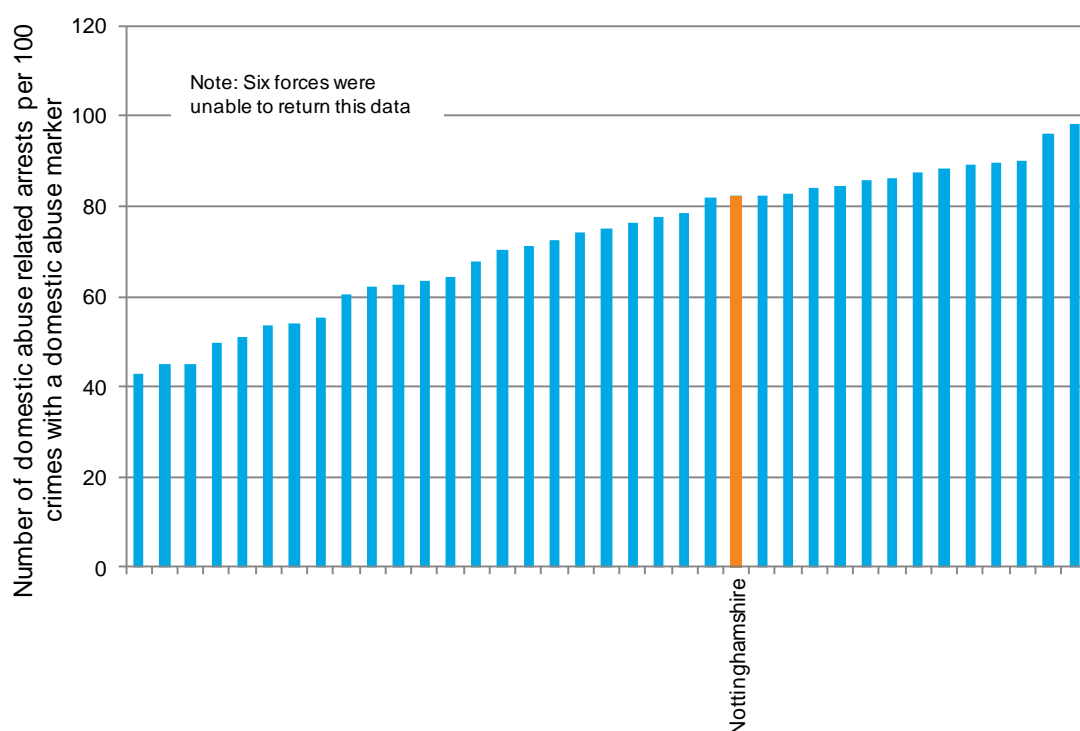
For those victims at high risk of harm, there is a good deal of thought given by officers to the safety of the victim and children at incidents of domestic abuse, and measures are put in place to protect them. However, for those victims who are medium and standard risk, investigation and safeguarding approaches are

inconsistent, with investigations often being conducted by response officers, and safeguarding actions by beat managers.

As cases are passed between teams and departments, victims may not be contacted, or may be contacted by a number of different people, which can be equally concerning. It is unclear who is responsible for dealing with the victims of domestic abuse throughout the investigation and criminal justice process. Uniformed officers do not really understand what the specialist teams do, despite there being DASH guidance available on the force system. This can mean victims may be contacted by too many people, too frequently, often asking questions that the victim has answered before. This slightly fragmented approach could cause victims to lose confidence in how the police are dealing with their case, which in turn could lead to victims deciding that they no longer wish to support the police investigation further.

For every 100 domestic abuse crimes recorded there were 83 arrests in Nottinghamshire. For most forces the number is between 45 and 90.<sup>8</sup>

**Figure 1: Number of domestic abuse related arrests per 100 crimes with a domestic abuse marker for the 12 months to 31 August 2013**



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



Tackling domestic abuse is a priority for the PCC and the force, and this is reflected in the behaviours and understanding of the workforce. The PCC's police and crime plan has an objective to "protect, support and respond to repeat victims of domestic abuse". The Deputy PCC has been working closely with key partners. Funding has been invested in academic research on 'what works' as well as a recent investment to support three new posts for medium risk intervention workers. Violence is one of three key force priorities, of which domestic abuse is a key strand. Throughout the organisation, officers and staff understand that positive action is important so that domestic abuse is investigated and safeguarding actions put in place for victims. The force works with partner agencies such as the health service and social care at both a strategic and operational level to deal with violence against women, girls, men and boys. There is however a need for the force and partners to translate strategic intent into working practices and the necessary programmes of work, to improve police and partnership response, in a consistent and coherent way, across the city and county boundaries.

Officers attending any domestic abuse incident are required to carry out a formal risk assessment, using the nationally recognised domestic abuse, stalking and harassment (DASH) risk assessment tool. All officers attending incidents have received initial training which gives them an understanding of domestic abuse. There has also been DASH risk assessment training in the past two years.

More recently some training has been delivered to help staff better understand coercive control, stalking, harassment and so-called honour-based violence so that officers can recognise all forms of domestic abuse and understand how they should deal with victims of these types of abuse. The force's domestic abuse training DVD was widely reported as having had a positive impact on officers' attitudes and behaviours. However, frontline officers reported that it made them less likely to use their professional judgement, and some had not received any recent formal guidance on the revised national definition<sup>9</sup> of domestic abuse and how they should apply this to incidents. Therefore they were unsure of when to complete a DASH risk assessment. The force is aware of this issue and is currently developing a second DVD as a training aid, incorporating clearer guidance and encouraging officers to use their discretion and professional judgement.

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<sup>9</sup> The national definition of domestic abuse developed by the Association of Chief Police Officers was broadened in April 2013 to include any person over the age of 16 years (formerly 18 years) and added coercive controlling behaviour.

Officers and staff who fill out the DASH risk assessment form understand why they are asking the questions on the form. Those attending incidents have a good understanding of how they need to establish any threat, harm and risk to victims and that their role is to do whatever they can to reduce this.

There is clear commitment displayed by staff in the control room, attending officers and specialists, to understand the risk to everyone connected with a domestic abuse incident, in particular, children and any vulnerable adults. Where a child is part of a family where there has been domestic abuse, then children's social care are informed. When children are in a family where there is a high risk of violence, then the case will be discussed with social workers in order to protect them properly. Officers attending a domestic abuse incident where children have been present in the past, or where children have been identified as being at risk, are informed of this. This helps them establish the current level of risk and take any action necessary to protect the children.

Wherever possible, two officers are sent to incidents of domestic abuse. This means that they are able to speak to each party separately and gain an understanding of what has taken place. Officers' main priority is the safety of the victim and anyone else who may be at risk. They are expected to make an arrest where an offence has been committed and take action to ensure the safety of those present. Officers are expected to complete a safety plan to make victims safer before they leave an incident. The management of the risk present is the responsibility of the attending officer, who records any immediate safeguarding actions taken on the crime management system.

Supervisors review all officers' completed high and medium risk assessment forms for completeness and accuracy. Immediate action taken by officers is supervised by their sergeants and inspectors; however supervisors cannot monitor or attend every domestic violence call, so there needs to be a level of reliance on the actions of individual attending officers. There is a policy within the force that officers will take 'positive action' at every domestic abuse incident. This may be by arresting the perpetrator if appropriate, or other action to make victims safer; for example, speaking with neighbours to ask them to call the police if they see the perpetrator near the house, or hear any concerning noise from the address. Positive action is understood by all staff as being wide-ranging and includes making an arrest where a crime has been committed.

The DASH risk assessment form for high risk victims is monitored and reviewed by the DMI for safeguarding actions. Once completed it is reviewed again by specialist staff in the domestic abuse support unit. High risk cases will ultimately be handed over to the domestic abuse investigation team who work closely with an independent domestic violence adviser (IDVA) who is responsible for carrying out longer-term safeguarding actions.

Safeguarding actions involving medium risk cases are the responsibility of beat managers. There is emerging good practice that where the beat manager and a Women's Aid officer jointly visit a victim they provide a more holistic safeguarding package for the victim. Early indications are that this is reducing repeat victimisation and increasing confidence in the police. However, there is no consistent approach on how to deliver safeguarding actions and beat managers reported that they were unsure of their role and had received little training. In addition, many are unaware of the status of the investigative process being conducted by their response officer colleagues which had sometimes caused victims to lose confidence in the police. Standard risk victim incidents are not supervised and referral to the national 24 hour helpline is routinely provided as the only safeguarding action.

Following a recent review of public protection, the force has centralised the management of its domestic abuse investigation team with the location of the team at two sites. This has provided greater consistency of approach across the force: the investigation of high risk cases is carried out by specialist staff in the domestic abuse investigation team and, where there is capacity they will deal with some medium risk cases. The majority of medium and standard risk victim's cases are investigated by response officers. Cases are allocated based on threat and risk to the victim and, although many specialist officers who have recently moved from response to the investigation team, have some training needs, they regard themselves as developing a level of expertise due to the volume of their caseloads.

The force has an objective that all specialist staff dealing with domestic abuse will be accredited detectives. It has a workforce plan in place which recognises the significant current skill shortfalls that exist across the domestic abuse teams. Officers on these teams have been given priority. However, with only three constables out of 41, trained to accredited status, this is considered a significant area of vulnerability for the force and one which it is actively trying to address.

Cases are investigated by different teams to those giving support to victims. This can lead to issues with victims being contacted by too many people, too frequently, or too infrequently, where the contact is provided by response officers, working shifts. This fragmented approach means victims could decide they do not want to continue to support the police investigation.

HMIC reviewed a small sample of prosecution files which showed that they were of good quality and contained relevant evidence. Officers' statements contained evidence of victim health and injuries and showed officers were gathering photographic evidence as well as conducting house-to-house enquiries in the majority of cases. Where cases were discontinued by the

Crown Prosecution Service, these were not due to file quality issues. There were some cases where custody sergeants were making decisions to take no further action on domestic abuse cases in custody, where policy states that an inspector should be making this decision, to ensure consistency and that all lines of enquiry have been explored.

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

The force works hard to make victims safer from the first point of contact. All cases assessed as high risk are reviewed again by specialist officers, however those which are medium and standard risk are not. Although safeguarding of victims assessed as medium risk is specifically given to beat managers to undertake, those victims assessed as standard risk often receive very limited safeguarding support. They may have been subjected to a number of repeated incidents of domestic abuse, and the pattern of escalating risk associated with this may not be identified. This is a concern. However, there is emerging good practice where a Women's Aid worker will conduct a joint visit with the beat manager to medium risk and repeat standard risk victims.

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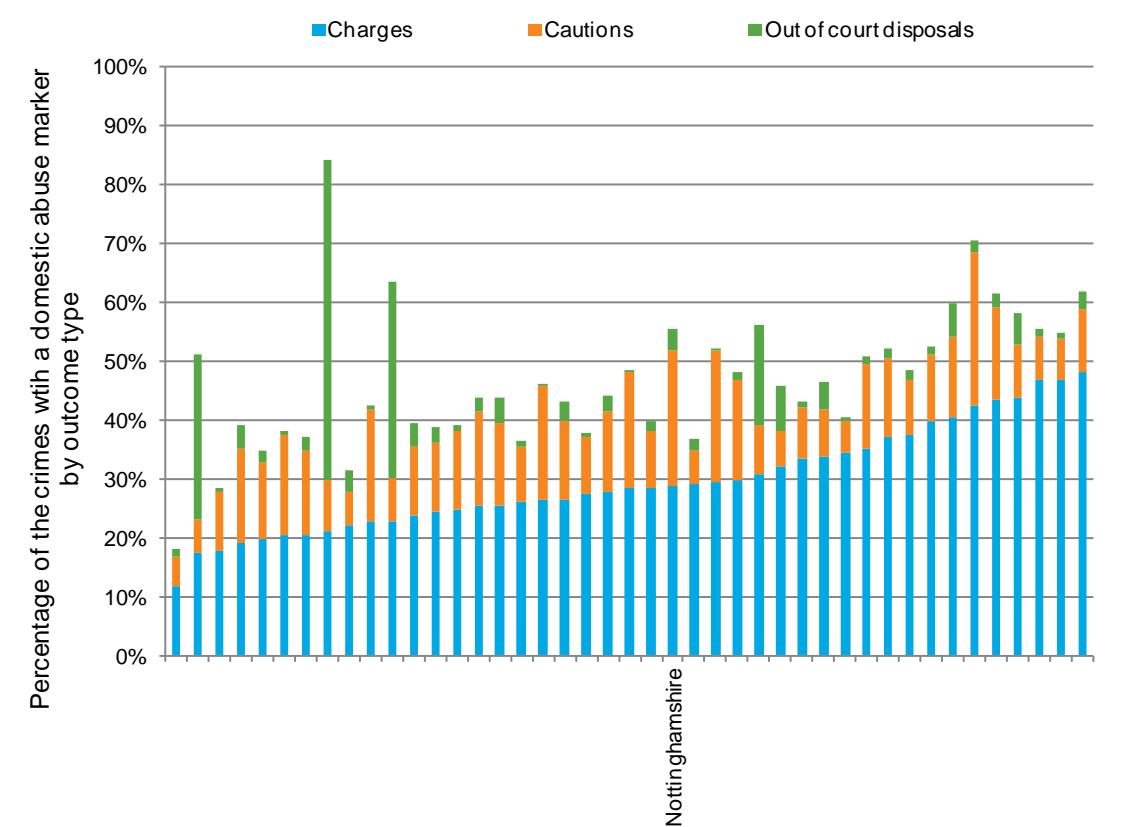
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<sup>10</sup> Based on forces' own definition of domestic abuse and use of a domestic abuse marker on IT systems.

**Figure 2: Percentage of different outcome types used for crimes with a domestic abuse marker for the 12 months to 31 August 2013<sup>11</sup>**

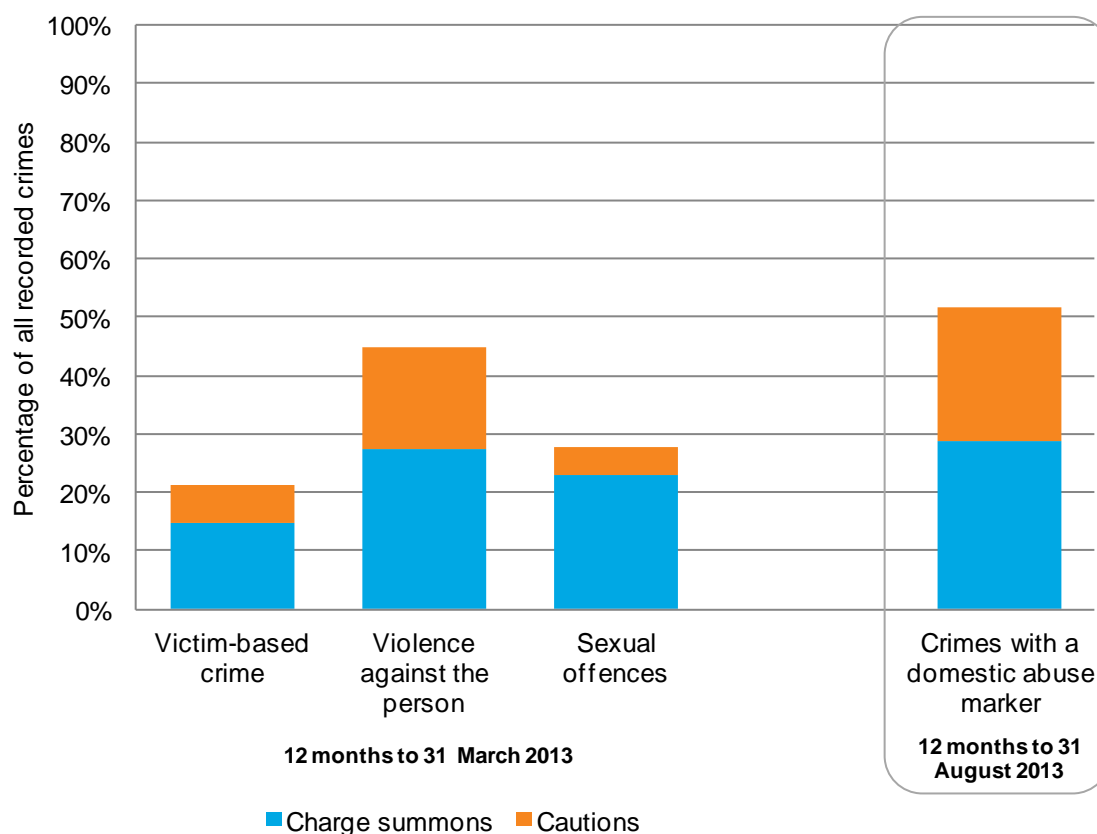


Source: HMIC data collection

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

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

**Figure 3: Percentage of charge summons and cautions used for victim-based crime, violence against the person, sexual offences and all crimes with a domestic abuse marker<sup>12</sup>**



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

The force area covers the local authority areas of Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council. The City and County Councils have developed different approaches for working with the police to tackle domestic abuse. This means that there are different structures, systems and process for keeping victims safe, which the police, and other partners, must then be able to work across seamlessly and efficiently.

A detective sergeant and an IDVA in the domestic abuse support unit (DASU) review all DASH risk assessment forms graded high and use additional information from partner agencies to help them develop a more complete picture of the risk a victim may be facing. This means that a victim facing higher levels of risk should receive appropriate support and actions to reduce risk, for

<sup>12</sup> Based on forces' own definition of domestic abuse and use of a domestic abuse marker on IT systems.

example, help to have locks changed or a mobile phone to contact the police in an emergency. The DASU is split onto two sites: one is located within a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH); and one is located with a domestic abuse referral team (DART). The make-up of the domestic abuse partner agencies co-located with the police in the DART and the MASH is slightly different. The role of MASH is to share timely information for all new safeguarding concerns or referrals.

Partner agencies voiced concerns about the confusion of reporting and submitting DASH risk assessments through two different routes. All agreed that a central referral point would benefit partners and the understanding by their staff. It was reported that confusion by their staff was stopping them referring domestic abuse victims and this is concerning.

Domestic abuse cases that are graded as medium and standard are reviewed against previous domestic abusive history but are not re-assessed by specialists in the DASUs and are no longer dip sampled by them to ensure accuracy. This is of concern. It means that the quality of these assessments is unknown to the force although medium risk forms are viewed so that beat managers can be allocated safeguarding actions. However, there is no clear process to update the DART or MASH teams on whether or not these actions have been completed or their outcome. It is also up to the beat manager and their supervisor to decide when to stop the visits. As specialists are not re-assessing these forms, a number of repeated incidents, which may appear in isolation not to constitute a threat to the victim, may not send necessary warning signals to the attending officers. This is a significant concern.

Specialist officers are responsible for providing support to victims and helping to make them safer through safety planning and partnership working. Officers in the DASU should attend a two-day training input on domestic abuse, in addition to seeing the DVD film produced by the force which is intended to improve overall domestic abuse awareness. However, some officers spoken to in the DASU have not received any enhanced training, and expertise has developed through working with colleagues and partners. At the time of inspection the two domestic abuse officers within the MASH were currently on sick leave, one long-term. This has significantly reduced its effectiveness and the support to victims. For example, at the time of inspection there was a two to four week back log of medium risk cases which needed to be scanned onto the force's crime management system, although this had not delayed the allocation of visits and safety planning conducted by the beat managers.

The role of the domestic abuse investigation team and officers within the DASU is unclear to many officers and staff. This means that inaccurate assumptions are made about who will make sure a victim is updated about their case; who is

dealing with the victims throughout the investigation and criminal justice process. Victims may, as a result, not be contacted. Sometimes, when victims were contacted, the information they were given was incorrect and raised expectations unnecessarily. This is generally based on a misunderstanding of different roles within the process. The force has recently re-structured its public protection unit and centralised its domestic abuse investigation team which may have contributed to this. However, this lack of clarity on who contacts the victim and the quality of information conveyed is concerning.

The force provides mobile phones to some victims to enable them to contact the police in an emergency. Officers attending incidents produce a fast action response plan to reduce risk to victims. This might include ensuring that the control room is aware that any call to a particular address should be treated as an emergency, achieved by marking the address on police systems. Any change in circumstances, for example, where a perpetrator is released from police custody, should be the responsibility of the officer who is dealing with the case, who should update the victim. However, where the officer is not on duty it is not clear who would make sure a victim was aware that this had happened. In such a situation it is also not certain that the risk to the victim would be reviewed and any safety plan updated to deal with any changes in risk. This is a concern and needs to be addressed.

When a high risk case has been identified, the case is referred for discussion with partners as to whether it goes to the next multi agency risk assessment conference (MARAC). An IDVA will be appointed to make contact with the victim. There are good working relationships between partners including health, housing and the local authorities. This means the force is able to share information effectively and has a more complete picture of risk levels. The MARAC process in Nottinghamshire works well and there is good attendance by partners, including the voluntary sector.

There are three MARACs – two in the county council area (north and south) and one in the city council area. The city and county MARACs each have a separate MARAC steering group. Each MARAC is limited to 20 cases per meeting with each meeting taking place every two weeks. Partners expressed concern that the meetings are too long. However, with training for MARAC chairs to take place shortly, and more agencies becoming involved in chairing, this situation may improve. At present, if there are more than 20 high risk cases, the ones that cannot be heard will not simply be deferred to the next meeting. Instead safeguarding actions are put in place through IDVA support. The introduction of the two multi-agency teams, the DART (Nottingham City) and the MASH (Nottinghamshire County), has had no effect on reducing the number of high risk cases being discussed at the MARACs and this is concerning, since safeguarding actions put in place immediately on receipt of the case should



have been expected to reduce the risk in some cases. This means that even if the risk was lowered between being received and actions being put in place, it would still come to the MARAC for discussion, even though those actions may have actually reduced the risk to medium. This appears to be exacerbating the issues about capacity at the MARACs.

When cases are discussed at the MARAC, the police and their partners work well in reviewing the level of risk allocated and ensure each organisation takes appropriate responsibility for relevant actions. However, there are some issues with actions to help reduce risk being allocated to some partners who do not always respond to actions, do not attend, or who do not have a person who can make decisions, and the decision then has to be deferred. This leaves an opportunity for the action to be missed or for the time taken to respond to be too long. There has been a formal internal review, carried out by the police and Women's Aid, of the effectiveness of the north and south county-based MARACs which shows that there are inconsistent approaches between the two. The city MARAC has not been evaluated yet, but specialists expressed concern about issues of their capacity to take on more work and that many of the cases which came to the meeting were not truly high risk.

Although the MARACs are effective for information sharing across agencies and improved the overall response to victims, it is not clear which actions work or that is their overall effectiveness in keeping victims safer. An evaluation will help the force understand how the process is working and where it can be improved.

There are good working relationships with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS); decisions about domestic abuse cases can be challenged if officers disagree with the CPS on particular cases. There are two specialist domestic violence courts operating which are first hearing courts only. After this the domestic abuse case enters normal court business. Recently it has been noticed that those cases that have not gone to trial are either due to court listings being double-booked or an issue with the defence rather than the victim failing to appear. The force had identified potential weaknesses in the way court case files were prepared and has improved their quality and timeliness. The police and CPS share information on force performance and the number of court cases that fail to get a conviction; and the force's head of criminal justice reviews recent successful and unsuccessful outcomes, to develop learning. The force is also working with the courts to introduce 'live link' to hear domestic abuse cases, which would mean that victims will not have to give evidence from within the court room.

Staff throughout Nottinghamshire Police displayed a commitment to reducing threat, harm and risk to victims of domestic abuse. They generally understand their role in this although, as discussed earlier, there is some lack of clarity

about what the specialist team is responsible for. Information is available to staff on the intranet, but there is no consistent briefing arrangement where local officers can be made aware of high risk or standard risk victims living in their area and they are only aware of those medium risk victims where they receive specific actions from the DART. Although high risk victims are discussed at daily management meetings this information may not filter down to frontline officers and, overall, local officers lack information and intelligence on victims and their perpetrators.

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

The force has a sound approach to managing victim safety based on the initial threat of harm and risk to the victim. But there are weaknesses with its current processes and the force is not managing consistently the ongoing and future risk to victims.

There is no system in place for reviewing ongoing risk and any changes to risk levels faced by medium and standard risk victims, for example when a perpetrator is released from custody. There is a lack of awareness among local officers about domestic abuse victims in their area. Response officers are more likely to know where offences took place as they are required to pursue perpetrators as they are assigned this work by the daily management meeting.

The force does not have a full understanding of its current profile of known serial and serious domestic abuse perpetrators and there are undeveloped plans on how, with partners, they are working to prevent offending and re-offending. This is a cause for concern and needs to be addressed.

The force monitors some measures of its performance in tackling domestic abuse and has recognised the importance of enabling the victims' perspective to be heard and consequently carries out monthly surveys of domestic abuse victims. But there is no process for evaluating and sharing what works in terms of operational activities to improve the outcomes for victims.

The force has a sound approach to managing victim safety based on the initial threat of harm and risk to the victim. However, there are weaknesses in its current processes. It cannot be confident that it is consistently and effectively managing the ongoing and future risk to victims. This is a concern.

Reviewing ongoing risk was inconsistent as were any changes in level of risk, for example, when a perpetrator is released from prison. There is a lack of clarity about who is responsible for informing a victim when a perpetrator is released from prison, having served a sentence. It is essential that victims are

updated prior to a release, and their levels of risk re-assessed. For high risk cases, contact is maintained with the victim by the domestic abuse investigation officer and the IDVA, but there is no system in place for the officer in a case with medium or standard risk victims to maintain contact.

Similarly, the victim should also receive updates on the release of the perpetrator from police custody, and any bail conditions imposed, but this is not routinely happening for medium and standard risk victims. This means that some victims may not be updated before a perpetrator is released and their level of risk may not be reassessed at this critical time.

A second area of concern is the lack of routine follow-up with victims who are no longer contacting the police. Where there have been no further calls from victims who have historically been victims on a number of occasions there is no work to understand why they have stopped calling.

The identification and management of the worst domestic abuse offenders is not a formalised process and there is no clear responsibility on who and how these perpetrators are tracked and monitored. The MARACs are improving their processes for identifying serial perpetrators and there is a developing plan to assign perpetrators to individual officers in the domestic abuse investigation teams. The force needs to start tackling domestic abuse perpetrators more systematically to manage future risk by reducing reoffending.

Nottinghamshire has been one of the four forces nationally involved in the pilot of 'Clare's Law', or the domestic violence disclosure scheme, which enables the police to disclose someone's criminal record to their partner or certain other third parties. Those who suspect their partner may have been involved in domestic abuse of previous partners and specified third parties have a 'right to ask' the police to disclose any relevant records.

Officers are routinely made aware of any perpetrators who have not yet been found and arrested; the DMI has a rolling 24-hour briefing where any domestic abuse actions, such as arrest, are followed up. The briefing and tasking system (BATS) can be used to make officers aware of perpetrators and victims, but high and standard risk victims' addresses are not widely known among frontline staff. Beat managers are only aware of the medium risk victims in their area of responsibility.

Tragically, the force has dealt with a number of domestic murders. Learning from the resulting reviews has been shared across the force and with partners. The force has an action plan in place as a result of the last domestic homicide review.

Domestic abuse performance information is monitored and reported as part of the overall strategy for reducing violence. Performance dashboards are published on the force intranet and domestic abuse is a standing agenda item on daily management meetings, bi-weekly and monthly chief officer-led meetings with the PCC. A detailed analysis has produced a profile of domestic abuse offending so that good information is held to show how much of an issue this type of offending is for the force. This will help the force allocate appropriate levels of staff to deal with it. Offender profiles are to be developed which will help local officers understand who the high risk offenders are, in their area. Over the last year, there has been a significant increase in the number of reported domestic incidents, partly due to the definition change, but also as a result of force-wide communication campaigns and greater transparency on recording incidents.

Although the force collects and monitors data on tackling domestic abuse, including numbers of reported incidents and numbers of arrests and convictions, there is no formal process to evaluate what works in operational activity and what leads to better outcomes for victims. This type of information is shared within the domestic abuse team but not throughout the force or with partners and the force is developing a lessons learnt bulletin to improve this.

The force conducts up to 50 victim satisfaction surveys per month with victims of domestic abuse. This is good practice. The survey also has free text boxes and outcomes can be communicated to individual officers to spread good practice and help improve performance. The force has also held victim focus groups, to better understand the whole victim experience, to try and improve how they deliver a service to victims. This is positive.

The PCC's target for reducing repeat victimisation for domestic abuse is part of the performance processes within the force. The deputy PCC has commissioned an academic review of medium risk repeat victims. The project started on 01 October 2013 and will submit its final report by August 2015. This work, together with the outcomes from the Women's Aid medium risk support worker project, and work being conducted locally, for example, by the Nottinghamshire Women's Aid group working with beat managers to visit repeat standard risk victims together, will provide the force with a rich evidence-base to understand 'what works'.

## Recommendations

As a result of this inspection, HMIC has developed recommendations which are designed to tackle any risks identified in the service to victims of domestic abuse. These force-specific recommendations should be considered in conjunction with recommendations to all forces set out in HMIC's national report on domestic abuse.

1. The force should better identify repeat victims of domestic abuse, and develop and implement a question set in the control room which includes asking the caller about their domestic abuse history and previous contact with the police.
2. The force should implement a system where response supervisors are informed by radio of all domestic abuse incidents as soon as possible and this action recorded on the incident log.
3. The force should review domestic abuse training focusing on the domestic abuse definition and provide scenarios and clear guidance to assist officers to make a professional judgement, and decide on the appropriateness of completing the DASH form. It should also give clear guidance on delivering effective safeguarding actions.
4. As a matter of urgency, the force to prioritise PIP Level 2 training for officers within the domestic abuse investigation teams and review the investigatory accreditation status of supervisors and managers to ensure there is robust management of investigations.
5. The force should decide who makes the decision not to proceed with a domestic abuse investigation and put in place a process to ensure greater consistency.
6. The force should develop further the existing way that safeguarding actions to beat managers are given so that officers know the intelligence requirements and both the DART and the MASH are provided with intelligence updates on these tasks.
7. The force should, with its partners, review the efficiency and effectiveness of the current separate arrangements of the DART and the MASH. Ideally, two important outcomes would be: the identification of one central referral point; and a fluid and transparent process so safeguarding actions would reduce the risk from high to medium. This would mean cases did not have to be referred to the MARACs, therefore focusing valuable expertise on the most difficult and challenging cases.

8. With the CPS and courts, the force should reduce the double listings of domestic abuse cases to improve victim engagement and attendance.
9. The force should have a stronger, more formalised process on prevention, identification and management of serial and serious perpetrators, with clear responsibility and actions for officers, including how partner agencies will work with the police to reduce re-offending.
10. The force should review the contact that officers and staff have with victims throughout their involvement with the police, to give a single point of contact, who is able to update them so contact is not duplicated.
11. The force should review the process by which repeat standard risk cases are identified and put in place a means by which these are monitored to ensure risk assessments accurately reflect a series of low level incidents.
12. The force should review the means by which victims are updated if a perpetrator is released from custody and ensure that risk assessments are reviewed at this stage.
13. The force should publicise the role of the specialist team in order that all staff understand what they do and how they can help make victims safer.

# Glossary

## **Bail conditions**

A court can remand a defendant in custody or grant bail, with or without conditions attached. Before the first court hearing, the police can also retain a defendant in custody or grant bail, with or without conditions attached, but their powers to do so are more limited than the court's. Conditions can only be imposed to ensure that the defendant attends the next court hearing, commits no new offences in the meantime, and does not interfere with any witnesses or obstruct the course of justice.

## **Body worn camera**

A video camera, worn on the helmet or upper body of an officer, which records visual and audio footage of an incident.

## **CAADA (Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse)**

CAADA is a national charity supporting a strong multi-agency response to domestic abuse. Its work focuses on saving lives and public money.

CAADA provides practical help to support professionals and organisations working with domestic abuse victims. The aim is to protect the highest risk victims and their children – those at risk of murder or serious harm.

## **CCTV**

Evidence from Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) can be used to support police investigations. It is primarily used for corroborating what is already known in investigating incidents and to trigger further opportunities to carry out investigation, such as the identification of witnesses and suspects.

## **Clare's Law**

Clare's Law – the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme – is designed to provide victims with information that may protect them from an abusive situation before it ends in tragedy. The scheme allows the police to disclose information about a partner's previous history of domestic violence or violent acts. The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme is named after Clare Wood who was

brutally murdered in 2009 by her former partner George Appleton, who had a record of violence against women.

### **Code of Practice for Victims of Crime**

The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (the Victims' Code) places a statutory obligation on criminal justice agencies to provide a standard of service to victims of crime or, where the victim died as a result of the criminal conduct, their relatives. The obligations the Victims' Code places on the agencies concerned include that:

- They provide victims, or their relatives, with information about the crime, including about arrests, prosecutions and court decisions;
- They provide information about eligibility for compensation under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme;
- Victims be told about Victim Support and either be referred on to them or offered their service;
- Bereaved relatives be assigned a family liaison police officer; and
- Victims of an offender who receives a sentence of 12 months or more after being convicted of a sexual or violent offence have the opportunity to make representations about what licence conditions or supervision requirements the offender should be subject to on release from prison.

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

### **Coercive control**

This is term and concept developed by Evan Stark which seeks to explain the range of tactics used by perpetrators and the impact of those on victims. It highlights the on-going nature of the behaviour and the extent to which the actions of the perpetrator control the victim through isolation, intimidation, degradation and micro-regulation of everyday life. Crucially it sets out such abuse can be psychological as well as physical. Coercive control is explicitly covered by the definition of domestic abuse.

### **Control room**

A police control or communications room manages emergency (999) and non-emergency (101) calls, and sending police officers to these calls.



## **Counter-allegation**

Where someone initially identified as the perpetrator makes an allegation against the victim. If counter-allegations are not identified and resolved agencies may be providing services to the perpetrator and inadvertently helping them isolate and control the victim. The victim may not get access to the services they need because they are labelled 'the perpetrator'.

## **Crime Scene Investigator**

Police staff who work alongside uniformed and plain clothed police officers during the investigation of a crime to locate, record and recover evidence from crime scenes.

## **DASH – domestic abuse, stalking and harassment (DASH 2009)**

DASH is a risk identification, assessment and management model adopted by UK police forces and partner agencies in 2009. The aim of the DASH assessment is to help front-line practitioners identify high risk cases of domestic abuse, stalking and so-called honour-based violence.

## **Domestic Homicide Review**

Local areas are expected to undertake a multi-agency review following a domestic homicide. The process aims to assist all those involved, to identify the lessons that can be learned from homicides where a person is killed as a result of domestic violence, with a view to preventing future homicides and violence.

## **Domestic Violence Prevention Notices (DVPN)**

A DVPN is the initial notice issued by the police to provide emergency protection to an individual believed to be the victim of domestic violence.

This notice, which must be authorised by a police superintendent, contains prohibitions that effectively bar the suspected perpetrator from returning to the victim's home or otherwise contacting the victim.

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

- the individual has been violent towards, or

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

### **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

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

### **Frontline**

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

### **Golden hour**

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

### **Harassment**

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

### **House-to- house**

House-to-house enquiries are likely to feature in many investigations to: identify suspects and canvas for witnesses in areas connected to an incident, establish who lives or works in a particular location, and obtain an account of their movements during relevant times.

### **High risk**

Term used when, following a DASH risk assessment, there are identifiable

indicators of risk of serious harm. The potential event could happen at any time and the impact would be serious. Risk of serious harm (Home Office 2002 and OASys 2006): 'A risk which is life threatening and/or traumatic, and from which recovery, whether physical or psychological, can be expected to be difficult or impossible'.

### **IDVA – independent domestic violence adviser**

Independent domestic violence advisers or advocates (IDVAs) are trained specialists who provide a service to victims at high risk of harm from intimate partners, ex-partners or family members, with the aim of securing their safety and the safety of their children. Serving as a victim's primary point of contact, IDVAs normally work with their clients from the point of crisis, to assess the level of risk, discuss the range of suitable options and develop safety plans.

### **Incident**

When a member of the public calls for police assistance, or a police officer observes or discovers a crime the police usually create an incident record. This is the first step, the police will then decide whether a crime has been committed and, if it is appropriate, create a crime record.

### **Intimate Partner Violence**

This describes physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse. This type of violence can occur among heterosexual or same-sex couples and does not require sexual intimacy.

### **MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference)**

MARACs are regular local meetings where information about high risk domestic abuse victims (those at risk of murder or serious harm) is shared between local agencies. By bringing all agencies together at a MARAC, and ensuring that whenever possible the voice of the victim is represented by the IDVA, a risk focused, co-ordinated safety plan can be drawn up to support the victim. There are currently over 270 MARACs operating across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland managing more than 64,000 cases a year.

## **MASH – Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub**

A Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) brings together staff from police and partner agencies who work from the same location, sharing information and ensuring a timely and joined-up response to protect children and vulnerable adults.

## **Medium risk**

Term used when following a DASH risk assessment there are identifiable indicators of risk of serious harm. The offender has the potential to cause serious harm but is unlikely to do so unless there is a change in circumstances, for example, failure to take medication, loss of accommodation, relationship breakdown, drug or alcohol misuse.

## **National Domestic Abuse helpline**

A Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline, run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge, is a national service for women experiencing domestic violence, their family, friends, colleagues and others calling on their behalf.

The Helpline can give support, help and information over the telephone, wherever the caller might be in the country. The Helpline is staffed 24 hours a day by fully trained female helpline support workers and volunteers. All calls are completely confidential. Translation facilities for callers whose first language is not English, and a service for callers who are deaf or hard of hearing are available.

## **Partnership**

A term used where collaborative working is established between the police and other public, private or voluntary organisations.

## **Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE)**

The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and the PACE codes of practice provide the core framework of police powers and safeguards around stop and search, arrest, detention, investigation, identification and interviewing detainees.  
[www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-and-criminal-evidence-act-1984-pace-current-versions](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-and-criminal-evidence-act-1984-pace-current-versions)

## Positive action

The term refers to the steps and action taken at all stages of the police response to ensure effective protection of victims and children, while allowing the criminal justice system to hold the offender to account. It is often used in the context of arrest policy, police guidance states that “arrest will normally be ‘necessary’ under the terms of PACE to protect a child or vulnerable person, prevent the suspect causing injury and/or to allow for the prompt and effective investigation of the offence”.

## Problem-solving

Problem-solving is a term used in policing where forces systematically identify and analyse crime and disorder problems, develop specific responses to individual problems and subsequently assess whether the response has been successful.

## Refuge

A refuge is a safe house where women and children who are experiencing domestic violence can stay free from abuse. Refuge addresses (and sometimes telephone numbers) are confidential. According to Women’s Aid on a typical day, **over 7000 women and children** are resident in refuge accommodation in England

## Risk assessment

A risk assessment is based on structured professional judgment. It provides structure and informs decisions that are already being made. It is only a guide/checklist and should not be seen as a scientific predictive solution. Its completion is intended to assist officers in the decision-making process on appropriate levels of intervention for victims of domestic violence.

## Safeguarding

The term safeguarding is applied when protecting children and other vulnerable people. The UK Government has defined the term ‘safeguarding children’ as: *“The process of protecting children from abuse or neglect, preventing impairment of their health and development, and ensuring they are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care that*

*enables children to have optimum life chances and enter adulthood successfully."*

### **Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)**

SARCs are specialist medical and forensic services for anyone who has been raped or sexually assaulted.

They aim to be a one-stop service, providing the following under one roof: medical care and forensic examination following assault/rape and, in some locations, sexual health services.

### **Standard Risk**

Term used following a DASH risk assessment where current evidence does not indicate likelihood of causing serious harm.

### **Victim Personal Statement**

The Victim Personal Statement (VPS) gives victims an opportunity to describe the wider effects of the crime upon them, express their concerns and indicate whether or not they require any support.

Provisions relating to the making of a VPS and its use in criminal proceedings are included in the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (Victims' Code), which was published on 29 October 2013 and came into force on 10 December 2013.

### **Vulnerable**

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

### **What Works Centre for Crime Reduction**

The What Works Centre for Crime Reduction is hosted by the College of Policing. The What Works Centre for Crime Reduction will: review research on practices and interventions to reduce crime, label the evidence base in terms of quality, cost and impact, and provide police and crime commissioners and other crime reduction partners with the knowledge, tools and guidance to help them target their resources more effectively.

It will be led by a core team from the College of Policing, and supported by a "commissioned partnership programme" which has been jointly funded by the College and the Economic and Social Research Council.