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Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Bedfordshire Police's approach to tackling domestic abuse

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Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

- *psychological*
- *physical*
- *sexual*

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

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

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

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

- *financial*
- *emotional”*.

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

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

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

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

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

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

We inspected all police forces in England and Wales, interviewing senior and operational leads in forces, holding focus groups with frontline staff and

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

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

⁶There 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 Bedfordshire⁷

Calls for assistance



In Bedfordshire, domestic abuse accounts for 2% of calls to the police for assistance. Of these calls, 32% were from repeat victims.

Crime

8%

Domestic abuse accounts for 8% of all recorded crime.

Assault with intent

16%

Bedfordshire recorded 95 assaults with intent to cause serious harm, of these 15 were domestic abuse related. This is 16% of all assaults with intent to cause serious harm recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

Assault with injury

35%

The force also recorded 2,982 assaults with injury, of these 1,041 were domestic abuse related. This is 35% of all assaults with injury recorded for the 12 months to end of

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

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

August 2013.

Harassment

57%

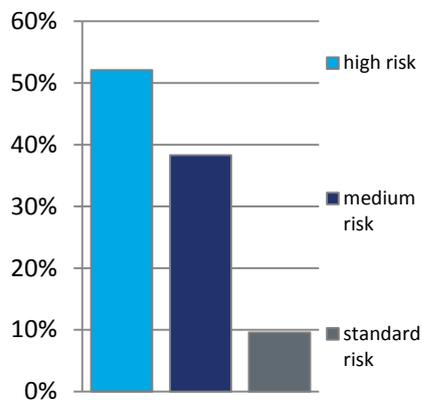
The force recorded 419 harassment offences, of these 238 were domestic abuse related. This is 57% of all harassment offences recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

Sexual offences

12%

The force also recorded 496 sexual offences, of these 60 were domestic abuse related. This is 12% of all sexual offences recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

Risk levels



On, 31 August 2013 Bedfordshire had 261 active domestic abuse cases; 52% were high risk, 38% were medium risk, and 10% were standard risk.

Arrests



For every 100 domestic abuse crimes recorded, there were 79 arrests in Bedfordshire. For most forces the number is between 45 and 90.

Outcomes



Bedfordshire recorded 2,868 domestic abuse related crimes for the 12 months to the end of August 2013. Of these crimes, 21% resulted in a charge, 14% resulted in a caution and, 2% had an out of court disposal, for example, a fixed penalty notice for disorderly conduct.

Background

Bedfordshire Police is one of only four forces where HMIC was so concerned about the scale and extent of the failings in delivering a service to victims of domestic abuse, that following our initial inspection in November 2013, immediate remedial action was required. The force provided an action plan, outlining what it is doing to address our concerns, and HMIC re-inspected the force in February 2014. Our re-inspection found that little had been done to improve the service provided to victims and serious concerns remained about the force's ability to tackle domestic abuse in the county. The force has now provided a more detailed plan which HMIC has considered, and immediate steps have been taken to address key issues. This report details the findings from our initial inspection and comments on findings from the re-inspection. HMIC will re-inspect the way in which the force tackles domestic abuse in September 2014.

Executive summary

There are serious failings in the way Bedfordshire Police responds to victims of domestic abuse. Urgent action is needed to improve the way in which the force acts to keep victims of domestic abuse safe.

HMIC's principal concern is the force's inability to provide a consistently effective response to safeguarding victims. The service the force provides to victims is highly fragmented and potentially dangerous, as victims who should be identified and protected by the force may not be. The force is now aware of these gaps and has been working to improve the service to victims. During the re-inspection there had been some improvements but the level of concern for victim safety remained. Since then, the force has produced a more comprehensive plan to deal with the issues, and if implemented the proposed changes should improve the service delivered by the force to victims of domestic abuse.

The force's organisational structures and internal systems for managing domestic abuse were under resourced and overwhelmed. Specialist resources were stretched too thinly to be effective. The arrangements in place were incoherent and confusing. This is an organisational issue. Despite all of this, there are many highly committed police officers and staff in Bedfordshire Police, who, individually, are doing the best they possibly can to keep victims safe. The force was not supporting them effectively in their endeavours. Capacity has been increased since the re-inspection with additional staff being placed in a newly formed vulnerability co-ordination unit (VCO) and managers overseeing the high-risk domestic abuse team (HRDAT) which has been formed from three smaller units.

Domestic abuse is a priority for the force, but this is not translated into an operational reality. There has been a lack of visible leadership and commitment to tackling domestic abuse. This, coupled with a lack of effective governance and performance management arrangements, is limiting the ability of the police to deliver an effective service to victims. HMIC recognises the financial challenge that the force faces. While this may be a contributing factor to the difficulties we describe, it is not the principal reason for the failings. Given the scale and the seriousness of the areas for improvement, urgent action is needed by the force to address the risks identified in this report. The force has sought assistance from other forces and a detective superintendent and detective chief inspector with specialist knowledge are working with the force to build an improved capability and service. The accountability framework is also now clearer.

Identifying victims

There are risks and significant room for improvement in the way Bedfordshire Police identifies victims of domestic violence. Most calls for police help are received in the force control room, and in some cases call handlers are not getting the full picture of risk from the victim, taking only sufficient detail from a caller to enable an officer to be sent. There is an inconsistent and sometimes limited approach to establishing risk, safeguarding and vulnerability of the victim at this first point of contact. Following HMIC's re-inspection of the force in February 2014 training has been given to control room staff to address this issue. The force recognises the importance of minimising the risk to victims and has a policy of attending all domestic abuse incidents. A review of domestic abuse processes has also been initiated to focus on the needs of the victim.

In order to give the officer attending enough information to make a proper risk assessment at the scene, the police information systems should be checked by the control room staff to relay any previous history or special details such as a vulnerable victim or children present at the address. The force's information is held on a number of different systems which take time to research thoroughly; consequently this is not done consistently. Responding officers may not have all the information that they need in order to have a reasonable picture of the case's history, when they arrive at the scene.

Keeping victims safe

There are weaknesses in leadership, ownership and overall governance of domestic abuse at a strategic level. This limits the effectiveness of the force response to victims. There are gaps and inherent risks in the processes for tackling domestic abuse. Senior officers are aware of this, and since the re-inspection, there is an increased focus by them on domestic abuse and the need to keep victims safe.

The force did not have an overarching strategy with an effective action plan to develop and improve services to victims of domestic abuse. Since our re-inspection an improved action plan has been developed which is now being implemented.

Bedfordshire Police officers and staff recognise the importance of dealing with domestic abuse effectively and they take seriously their role in responding. We found evidence that there is a strong commitment from most officers and staff to achieving the best outcome for the victims. However, the principal weakness is that when dealing with domestic abuse, the focus of the officers is on the perpetrator and the crime rather than on the victim and the risk they face. Since HMIC's initial inspection the force has delivered some domestic abuse training

focused on victim care and safeguarding; however staff we spoke to had not received this.

Management of risk

Bedfordshire Police is not providing consistent services to make victims of domestic abuse safer. There is a lack of clarity as to the roles and functions of different teams, units and departments (all of which have some responsibility for domestic abuse) across the organisation. This causes considerable confusion. Responsibility for domestic abuse cases moves through the organisation with different officers, staff and departments being responsible for the investigation and the victims' safety at different stages. This can mean that victims get a disjointed response from the police particularly in respect of who is responsible for reviewing safeguarding arrangements and keeping in touch with them.

High-risk victims (those at risk of serious harm) receive support from specialist officers although their capacity has been extremely limited. The force has now initiated changes to increase the resilience and capacity to support high-risk victims. Victims who are assessed as medium risk or standard risk received no specialist support and have a poor service, with little attention paid to their safeguarding. They are now referred to victim support who are able to provide some advice and support, but more needs to be done to ensure their safety.

The force does not have a consistent approach to risk assessment that is understood by staff. The criteria that differentiate between the levels of risk have not been communicated across the organisation. In particular, the force had adopted the classification of 'high risk plus' for the highest-risk case. This approach was contrary to national practice and staff were not clear as to what the difference was between high risk plus and high risk. Our re-inspection noted that the force had recognised this and the practice had been discontinued. There is little evidence of effective in-depth partnership working to help keep victims safe.

Organisational effectiveness for keeping people safe

There are significant weaknesses in the force's systems and processes which could mean that it fails to safeguard victims adequately. Due to the fragmented approach to victim safeguarding; lack of effective leadership and management; the limited capacity of the specialist officers; and the capability of other officers outside the specialist units; there is a gap in the level of safeguarding that is provided to victims of domestic abuse. Measures put in place since the re-inspection should help to improve this with revised processes and reviews.

Where the abuse has resulted in a violent crime, it is more likely that the victim will receive a better standard of service; however for all other victims, even those who are repeat victims, there is less certainty that the systems and processes in place will adequately address their future safety.

Risk to the victim in most cases is not reassessed and therefore their future safeguarding needs are not understood or met. The force recognises that there are a number of areas where improvements are needed. The police and crime commissioner (PCC) and force are keen to improve services for domestic abuse victims and they are working with partners to do this.

Findings

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

There are risks and significant room for improvement in the way Bedfordshire Police identifies victims of domestic violence. Most calls for police help are received in the force control room, and in some cases call handlers are not getting the full picture of risk from the victim, taking only sufficient detail from a caller to enable an officer to be sent. There is an inconsistent and sometimes limited approach to establishing risk, safeguarding and vulnerability of the victim at this first point of contact. Following HMIC's re-inspection of the force in February 2014 training has been given to control room staff to address this issue. The force recognises the importance of minimising the risk to victims and has a policy of attending all domestic abuse incidents. A review of domestic abuse processes has also been initiated to focus on the needs of the victim.

In order to give the officer attending enough information to make a proper risk assessment at the scene, the police information systems should be checked by the control room staff to relay any previous history or special details such as a vulnerable victim or children present at the address. The force's information is held on a number of different systems which take time to research thoroughly; consequently this is not done consistently. Responding officers may not have all the information that they need in order to have a reasonable picture of the case's history, when they arrive at the scene.

Most victims ask for help through calls to the police via the force control room (FCR). They can also go in person to a police station or be referred from other agencies, such as the health service or social care or through the multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs). Within the control room, staff are trained to question callers to establish the nature of the call and the risk level to the victim and other people involved in the incident. In some cases, call handlers are not getting enough details from the caller to make a proper risk assessment and are taking only enough information to enable an officer to be despatched. Following HMIC's re-inspection of the force in February 2014, training has been given to control room staff to address this issue. Officers should be sent to all incidents that are identified as domestic abuse.

At the first point of contact the approach to establishing risk, safeguarding and vulnerability of the victim is limited and sometimes inconsistent. The force uses a number of complex intelligence systems to store information which means staff in the control room do not always thoroughly check all the systems, due to

the time it takes. As a result they might not have all the relevant information about any history of domestic abuse with either the victim or the perpetrator, which would allow them to assess the threat and risk the victim may be facing immediately. This information should also be relayed to the officer attending so that they have a full picture of the situation they will be dealing with: for example, if someone is vulnerable; or if a child may live at the address; in order that they could check they were safe and well. This means that the force cannot be confident that officers always take the most appropriate immediate action.

The force has set down a list of actions which must be carried out when dealing with callers reporting a domestic abuse incident. These actions are designed to ensure they obtain enough detail from callers to accurately assess risk to the victim and determine what level of police response is needed. There is a set of questions to determine if the incident ought to be classified as domestic abuse. The call handler keeps the conversation free flowing so they can gather as much information from the caller as possible and therefore better understand the risk presented. However, in some cases call handlers take only sufficient detail from a caller to enable a resource to be despatched before ending the call. There is also an inconsistent and sometimes limited approach to establishing risk and the vulnerability of the victim. Some call handlers are confident and empathetic when dealing with callers who are experiencing domestic abuse, but others are less skilled; some call handlers show little empathy and are abrupt. This means that some victims are getting a poor-quality experience when first reporting domestic abuse, which may make it less likely that they will report any future incidents. Following our re-inspection of the force in February 2014 training has been given to control room staff to address this issue.

When a call is received, the force's command and control system (called STORM) identifies automatically whether there has been a previous call from that telephone number or the address that is given. The call handler is then able to review the previous calls. The automatic identification of previous calls only goes back to March 2013, when STORM was installed. Therefore, call handlers also check the previous command and control system to establish whether there have been calls prior to this date. In addition, there are a number of other police information systems which should be checked to discover, for example, any previous police involvement with the perpetrator, any criminal record, or any information about the involvement of other agencies, which might indicate any children at risk, who may be present. Having access to the case's history is important for the call handler, as it means they have the full picture which helps to make sure the right police response is provided to ensure the safety of the victim. This information also needs to be passed to the officers attending so

they can make as full and effective a risk assessment as possible when they arrive at the scene. There are six systems in total which should be checked. Some are not checked at all or not checked in time to provide the attending officer with the relevant information by the time they arrive at the scene. Since our re-inspection the force has introduced a minimum standard for systems that should be checked to provide officers with sufficient information to make their risk assessment.

Bedfordshire Police attends all reported incidents of domestic abuse. However, the decision on how quickly to attend is based on the control room's assessment of the threat of harm and risk faced by the victim. The call handler locates and sends the nearest available officer, usually a response officer from the local policing team (LPT), to the incident. Unless there is a risk to the officer's safety, the control room do not usually send more than one officer to incidents of domestic abuse. This means that when at the incident the officer is unable to easily separate the parties involved and hear their individual accounts of what has happened.

There is a confused and inconsistent approach to training across the force. Effective training for staff in dealing with domestic abuse is important to ensure that everyone is clear on their roles and responsibilities and understands the complexities of dealing with domestic abuse investigations and victim safety. Some officers have received some training previously which included guidance on the completion of the domestic abuse stalk and harassment (DASH) risk assessment tool. However, the majority of officers and staff have had no specific training in the past three to four years, other than those who have recently joined the force, or have taken other, more local, ad hoc training. There are force policies and procedures that officers can refer to for guidance, and there is a computer-based training package that officers and staff should complete. HMIC is recommending that in the future, domestic abuse training should be face to face, rather than online.

The force recognises that it needs to develop all staff members' knowledge and understanding. It is intending to include domestic abuse awareness and guidance at various training events. Despite of the lack of recent training most officers had a good understanding that domestic abuse covers a wide spectrum, including coercive control.

A repeat victim is defined by the force as where *"the same person or place suffers more than one crime within a 12 month period"*. Staff seen during the inspection demonstrated a good 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'. This will influence any risk assessment that is made.

Vulnerable and repeat victims automatically are identified by the computer system on which the force records calls for assistance, if they call from the same address or telephone number. This means that when a call is received, the operator 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 flagged up by the system to the call handler and, again, this can help them assess the level of risk and help them prioritise cases.

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

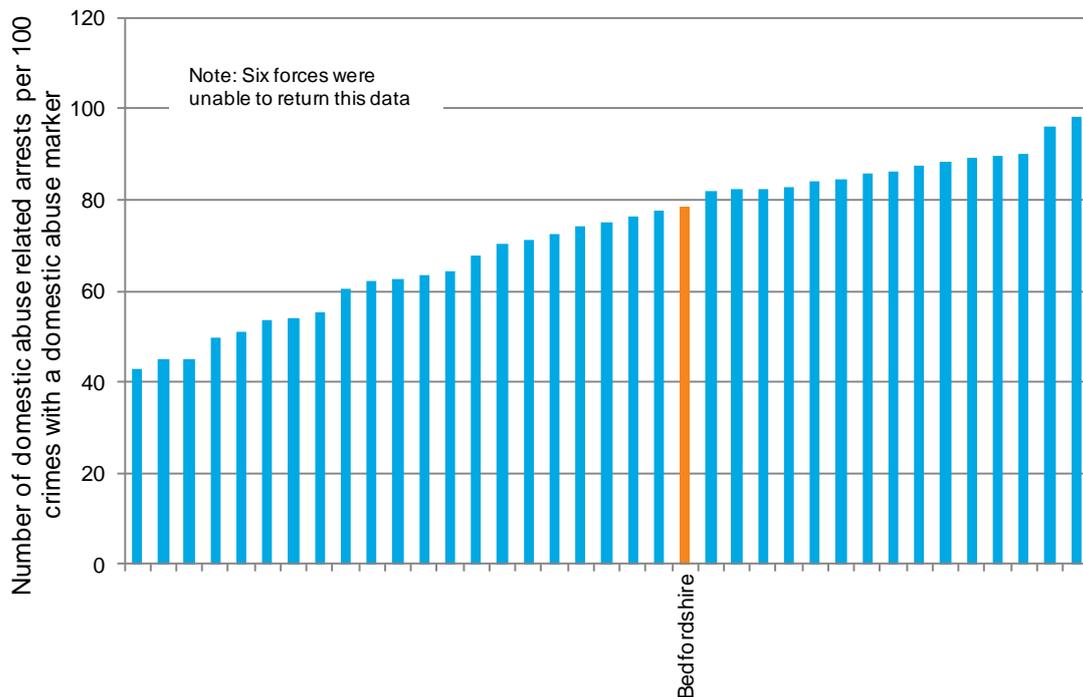
There are weaknesses in leadership, ownership and overall governance of domestic abuse at a strategic level. This limits the effectiveness of the force response to victims. There are gaps and inherent risks in the processes for tackling domestic abuse. Senior officers are aware of this, and since the re-inspection, there is an increased focus by them on domestic abuse and the need to keep victims safe.

The force did not have an overarching strategy with an effective action plan to develop and improve services to victims of domestic abuse. Since our re-inspection an improved action plan has been developed which is now being implemented.

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For every 100 domestic abuse crimes recorded there were 79 arrests in Bedfordshire. For most forces the number is between 45 and 90.⁸

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



Source: HMIC data collection

When initially responding to incidents, the force takes into account the likely threat of harm and risk to the victim or the community and this helps to ensure that the correct initial response is given. Despite relatively little training, officers use their own professional judgement in assessing risk alongside the formal

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

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

DASH risk assessment tool and set a higher risk level where this is appropriate. There is some evidence of commitment and willingness from responding officers to obtain a positive outcome for the victim. They take emergency measures to provide the victim with immediate safeguarding. Practical measures are taken, for example: help finding housing; separation; and arresting the alleged perpetrator. Officers and their supervisors review the completed DASH risk assessment form to make sure the assessment made is, based on the information available, accurate. All cases of domestic abuse are referred to the public protection unit support team (PPUST) for further review.

The force control room (FCR) and frontline staff display a good understanding of how important their role is in making victims safer and that this is their responsibility. However, when dealing with domestic abuse, the focus by officers is on the perpetrator and crime rather than the risk posed to the victim and insufficient leadership attention is given to tackling domestic abuse.

Although officers and staff recognise the importance of dealing with domestic abuse effectively and take their role seriously in responding; it is one of a number of priorities in the force and lacks the focus at a senior level given to other types of crime, such as burglary. There is a strong message from leaders that reducing high-volume crimes such as burglary and vehicle crime are the first priority for the force. Domestic-abuse-related crime receives less attention, and there is no recognition for officers who deal well with domestic abuse related crime, or victims. Since our re-inspection there has been a renewed focus on the importance of domestic abuse within the force by senior managers and leaders.

Leadership, ownership and overall governance of domestic abuse at a strategic level need to be improved. There are gaps and inherent risks in the business processes for tackling domestic abuse, which are known to senior officers but have yet to be addressed. The force does not have an overarching strategy with an action plan to develop and improve services to victims, either by the police alone, or with partner agencies. The PCC and the force have objectives within the police and crime plan, relating to working with partners, to encourage the reporting of domestic abuse, to reduce repeat victims. However, there are no mechanisms in place for the PCC or the force to check how they are delivering against these objectives.

In common with most police forces, the DASH risk assessment tool is used in Bedfordshire to establish the level of risk to a victim. It has a number of questions for the victim which must be asked in order to accurately assess the risk and officers understood why they are asking the questions. Officers are able to increase the risk rating using their own professional judgement should

they feel that a victim is at greater risk than the assessment has indicated. Officers cannot reduce the assessed risk based on their own judgement. Those attending incidents have a good understanding of how they need to establish any threat of harm and risk to victims and that their role is to do whatever they are can to reduce this.

In the majority of cases there was a clear commitment displayed by staff in the control room, attending officers, and specialist officers, to understanding the risk to everyone connected to domestic abuse incidents, in particular children and any vulnerable adults. Officers attending domestic abuse incidents 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. However, the force focuses on other crimes; lack of training; and the workload of officers within the specialist units; raise grave concerns about the force's ability to safeguard victims.

Resources in Bedfordshire are stretched very thinly. The force policy that a single officer will attend all incidents, including domestic abuse incidents, (unless their safety is at risk, in which case more than one officer will be sent) means that it is not always able to deal with the victim effectively. Domestic abuse incidents can be highly charged and complex, particularly where alcohol or drugs are involved. A lone officer is unable to speak to each party separately and gain an understanding of what has taken place which could mean they are not being given the full or correct details of an incident.

Where children are present at the house, it is important that the officer has time to check on the safety and welfare of the children. There is an expectation that the officer's main priority should be the safety of the victim and anyone else who may be at risk, and so they must take some form of positive action.

Officers complete safety planning for the victim. However, they have had little training or guidance in how to do this and what actions they could take to make victims safer. Officers are expected to make an arrest where an offence has been committed. Some officers are reluctant to make an arrest, because it means they will be taken away from their area to deal with the perpetrator, leaving resources elsewhere on the front line, even more stretched.

The approach to the investigation of domestic abuse is fragmented and there is a risk that the force may not achieve the best outcome for the victim consistently. When officers attend a domestic abuse incident and make an arrest, the case is dealt with and investigated by the prisoner handling unit (PHU), serious crime investigation team (SCIT) or the priority crime

investigation team (PCIT). The seriousness of the crime rather than the risk to the victim determines which team investigate. This means that a case where a minor crime is committed, but the risk to a victim is high, may be dealt with by an inexperienced officer who may not have the skills or confidence to achieve the best possible outcome for a victim. The collection of evidence at the scene of domestic abuse is inconsistent. Potential evidence may not be gathered, for example: enquiries of neighbours to establish if they saw or heard anything; or photos taken of injuries to the victim or damage at the house. The force is aware of these issues and is planning to include guidance in training to help address this. Since our re-inspection the force has started to introduce body-worn video to front line officers which will help improve evidence gathering.

Similarly, the approach to safeguarding victims is fragmented. The team investigating the crime may not be the same as those giving support to victims. There is a danger that necessary action to safeguard victims may not be taken, as there could be an expectation from one team that another would be doing it. There is also a risk that victims may be either not contacted at all, or contacted by too many people, too often. This may mean, either that the victims' safety may be compromised, or alternatively, they may lose confidence in the police and feel unable to support the police investigation further, making it less likely that an offender will be brought to justice. The only exception to this are the victims who are assessed as 'high risk plus' (very high risk of serious harm or murder), who receive a better response from the police and partners than those victims who are assessed as at high, medium or standard risk.

Supervision of the initial response to domestic abuse incidents is satisfactory. All domestic abuse incidents are reviewed by a local policing team supervisor to make sure that relevant evidence has been captured at the scene – although evidence is still not routinely gathered, in spite of this supervision. They also review the DASH risk assessment form to make sure it is completed correctly, and that the assessment, based on the information available, is accurate. The risk assessment is also reviewed by staff within the PPUST. Supervisors will also provide support and advice to those officers attending incidents if needed. However, supervisors have not been given any specific training on overseeing domestic abuse incidents and reviewing the DASH risk assessment form.

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

Bedfordshire Police is not providing consistent services to make victims of domestic abuse safer. There is a lack of clarity as to the roles and functions of

different teams, units and departments (all of which have some responsibility for domestic abuse) across the organisation. This causes considerable confusion. Responsibility for domestic abuse cases moves through the organisation with different officers, staff and departments being responsible for the investigation and the victims' safety at different stages. This can mean that victims get a disjointed response from the police particularly in respect of who is responsible for reviewing safeguarding arrangements and keeping in touch with them.

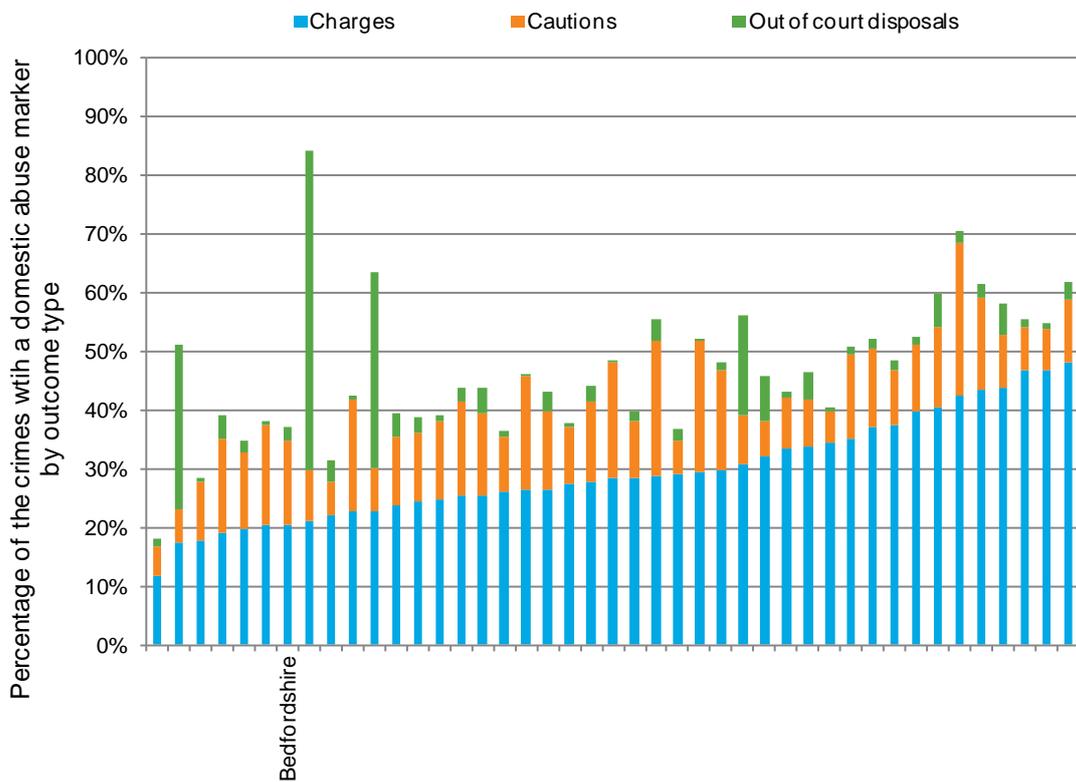
High-risk victims (those at risk of serious harm) receive support from specialist officers although their capacity has been extremely limited. The force has now initiated changes to increase the resilience and capacity to support high-risk victims. Victims who are assessed as medium risk or standard risk received no specialist support and have a poor service, with little attention paid to their safeguarding. They are now referred to victim support who are able to provide some advice and support, but more needs to be done to ensure their safety.

The force does not have a consistent approach to risk assessment that is understood by staff. The criteria that differentiate between the levels of risk have not been communicated across the organisation. In particular, the force had adopted the classification of 'high risk plus' for the highest-risk case. This approach was contrary to national practice and staff were not clear as to what the difference was between high risk plus and high risk. Our re-inspection noted that the force had recognised this and the practice had been discontinued. There is little evidence of effective in-depth partnership working to help keep victims safe.

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

Figure 2: Percentage of different outcome types used for crimes with a domestic abuse marker for the 12 months to 31 August 2013¹¹

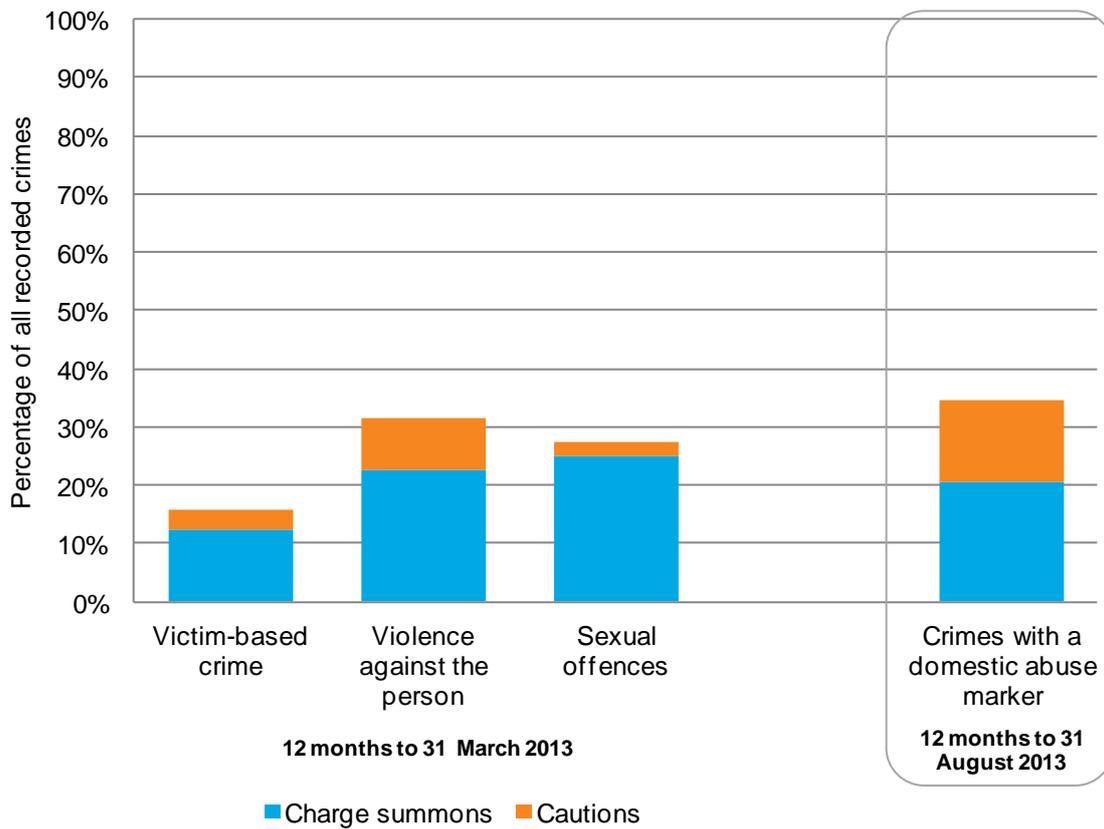


Source: HMIC data collection

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

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

Figure 3: Percentage of charge summons and cautions used for victim-based crime, violence against the person, sexual offences and all crimes with a domestic abuse marker¹²



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

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

The force employs some specialist staff but their capacity is limited and they can only provide a service to high-risk victims. The force's public protection unit (PPU) reviews all domestic abuse risk assessments to check they have been properly completed. There are specialist officers and staff within the MARAC team who support very high-risk victims (assessed as 'high risk plus'). It also has one domestic abuse adviser (DAA) whose role is to review all other cases of high-risk victims and ensure that safeguarding arrangements are in place and that referral to other agencies is undertaken where appropriate and necessary. Medium and standard risk victims do not receive any service from specialist officers. Originally the DAA post was intended to provide specialist support and guidance to non-specialist officers outside of the PPU who were dealing with high-risk cases. However, the role of the DAA has become blurred, and this officer is now also undertaking the direct management of cases and providing ongoing support and safeguarding to victims. On occasions, this officer has also been taken out of this role, to work on other areas of police business, which creates a backlog and delay in the review of high-risk cases. Due to the number of high-risk cases this is an unacceptable demand placed on one individual, and the force cannot be confident that high risk victims are receiving effective safeguarding when they need it. Victims assessed as medium or standard risk receive no specialist support or input. This is of significant concern. Since the re-inspection the force has increased capacity with additional staff being placed in a newly formed vulnerability co-ordination unit (VCO) and managers overseeing the HRDAT which has been formed from three smaller units including the DAA and MARAC.

The specialist officers within the PPU have not received any additional training in relation to domestic abuse awareness and investigation. However, the majority of the specialist officers are experienced and have been working in the domestic abuse arena for a number of years.

The force has access to 11 independent domestic abuse advisers (IDVAs), however their capacity is also limited and they can only help a very small proportion of all victims. Staff in the IDVA role in supporting victims and helping to keep them safe can be key to an effective service. They offer advice, advocacy, information and support; providing advice on a range of issues including benefits, debt, criminal and civil law, homelessness and housing, safety planning and risk, safeguarding children and child contact. They also carry out a further risk assessment using the DASH risk assessment process and undertake safety planning to maximise safety and minimise risk and harm.

They are independent of the police but work alongside the specialist staff. They can be critical in ensuring the continued support of a victim for a prosecution. In most forces, IDVAs provide support to all high-risk victims, however in Bedfordshire, due to the lack of IDVA capacity compared to the number of cases, they are only able to support victims of 'high risk plus' cases. High and medium risk cases are referred to VSS. Those assessed as 'high risk plus' represent a very small proportion of all domestic abuse victims and the vast majority of victims do not receive this enhanced service. Since the initial inspection the force has stopped using the category of 'high risk plus' and the domestic abuse unit now deals with all high-risk cases.

Victims of domestic abuse who are assessed as lower risk receive a poor service that pays little regard to their safeguarding. Officers from the prisoner handling unit, who deal with the greatest proportion of domestic abuse incidents, deal with them as they would with any other crime such as burglary and car crime. No additional focus is given to incidents of domestic abuse and in particular victim safety and support. In those cases where the victim has indicated they cannot support a prosecution, there was evidence to suggest that officers were less proactive in pursuing the investigation, for example by not taking photographs and statements from witnesses.

There are some good working relationships with other public sector partners including health, housing and social services. This can help reduce risk to victims, if information is shared. However, the information sharing and close working relationships are not consistent across the force area.

The MARAC process is a pivotal element in partnership working within domestic abuse and is attended by police, local authority children's and adults' social services, health services, IDVA service, and Women's Aid. There are three MARACs within the force area, each covering one local authority area. These multi-agency conferences enable all relevant partner agencies, with a role in protecting and supporting victims, to share information and agree on a joint-working approach to each individual high-risk case. Both police and partner agencies, including the voluntary sector, for example, Women's Aid and Refuge, refer cases into the MARACs. They each meet monthly and are chaired by a detective inspector from the PPU. The MARAC process in Bedfordshire is regarded as working well.

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

There are significant weaknesses in the force's systems and processes which could mean that it fails to safeguard victims adequately. Due to the fragmented approach to victim safeguarding; lack of effective leadership and management; the limited capacity of the specialist officers; and the capability of other officers outside the specialist units; there is a gap in the level of safeguarding that is provided to victims of domestic abuse. Measures put in place since the re-inspection should help to improve this with revised processes and reviews.

Where the abuse has resulted in a violent crime, it is more likely that the victim will receive a better standard of service; however for all other victims, even those who are repeat victims, there is less certainty that the systems and processes in place will adequately address their future safety.

Risk to the victim in most cases is not reassessed and therefore their future safeguarding needs are not understood or met. The force recognises that there are a number of areas where improvements are needed. The police and crime commissioner (PCC) and force are keen to improve services for domestic abuse victims and they are working with partners to do this.

It is not always clear who is responsible for updating victims when perpetrators are released from custody and who would re-assess risk as a result of this. This could result in a victim being contacted by a number of people, or not contacted at all, and the force and partner agencies being unaware of increased risk. Where victims did not wish to pursue a complaint or support a prosecution there was less impetus given to the investigative process. The force does not have an agreed criterion or process for dealing with repeat victims of non-crime domestic abuse incidents. In cases where physical violence has not been used, custody officers are not charging to the specialist domestic violence court. This is due to a lack of understanding about what these courts are designed to do. These victims are, therefore, not receiving a good service from the police. Since our re-inspection the force has delivered some awareness training for custody officers to help them understand bailing and specialist domestic violence courts.

We found that even where a medium or standard risk victim has been repeatedly subjected to domestic abuse, there is no process in place to refer them to specialist officers for further investigation or support. Where there have been no further calls from victims who have historically been victims on a number of occasions, there is no mechanism to understand why they have stopped calling. These are concerns.

There is some lack of clarity about who is dealing with victims of domestic abuse throughout the investigation and criminal justice process. The role of the force's MARAC team, DAA and DARO (domestic abuse repeat offenders team) was unclear to many staff who did not understand the structures and processes within the teams. This lack of awareness about the roles and responsibilities of specialist staff adds to the risk that frontline officers, who deal with the vast majority of domestic abuse victims, may not be completely clear what their own responsibilities are in terms of safeguarding victims. Staff were not clear on the criteria being used to differentiate between the various levels of risk; in particular the difference between 'high risk plus' compared to high risk.

Following a trigger point in an investigation where risk might be expected to escalate (for example, when a perpetrator has been released on bail or from custody; or as a court hearing date approaches; or once an investigation has been concluded) there is no process to review and reassess the risk level for victims to see if additional safeguarding measures are needed. It is essential that a victim is updated, and the risk they face reassessed, when an offender is released from prison after completing their sentence. There is no clear process for this in Bedfordshire. Victims may be contacted by witness care officers within the criminal justice department, the specialist officers within the MARAC team, the IDVAs or the uniformed officer who dealt with the case. A victim may be contacted by a number of different people, and some victims may not be updated at all before a perpetrator is released. A true understanding of their risk may not be established to enable safety measures to be put in place, because the professionals involved all think that someone else has done it. This means that victims may be placed at risk of further abuse and harm as a consequence. This is a concern.

There are inconsistencies in the way a victim's safety is dealt with across the various local policing teams. There is no force guidance or operating procedures provided to indicate the local policing teams (LPTs) should provide safeguarding and support to domestic abuse victims in their areas. In some areas the local policing teams were supporting victims well, as it is recognised by some as a priority. However, this is not consistent and there is no force policy on the role of LPTs.

The force does have a formalised process that manages perpetrators. In February 2013 the force introduced a domestic abuse repeat offender team (DARO). Its focus includes the identification of those perpetrators likely to cause the most harm, collation of intelligence on these individuals, proactive enforcement action, and, where necessary, to assist with perpetrators who have been arrested. The DARO works closely with the MARAC team to ensure that

appropriate safeguarding activity is undertaken. Frontline officers were not aware of who the serial perpetrators or repeat victims were in their areas because this information was not routinely communicated to them. They are not regularly made aware of vulnerable and repeat victims of domestic abuse in their area. There is no electronic system or list of high-risk victims and knowledge of them is gleaned through previous attendance at a domestic abuse incident or word of mouth from colleagues. Access to systems which contain details of domestic abuse incidents and the intelligence associated with these incidents is available. However, not all officers were aware of the full range of information available, for example, details of the involvement of, and actions from the MARAC.

Officers stated they want to know who the high risk perpetrators and victims are in their communities, so they can provide a better service, particularly in respect of keeping victims safe. By not being involved in the whole process, and by not knowing all the information held on a person or incident, they felt they were just providing an immediate response to the incident, rather than being fully equipped to give the best service possible.

There was no evidence on how the force embeds corporate learning from domestic homicide reviews (DHRs).

The PCC's police and crime plan has two objectives relating to domestic abuse. However, there was no evidence of how the force is delivering against these objectives. The force produces a number of domestic abuse performance reports. These reports are detailed and include analysis of data on incident management, crime management, suspect management, victim management and court outcomes. It is not clear how the datasets are used to drive improvements in service or better outcomes for victims. The force recognises that its approach to tackling domestic abuse needs to change, particularly in respect of an increased focus on the threat of harm and risk to the victim rather than just on the crime. While the most important measure for the force for domestic abuse is how victims feel about the service, no work is undertaken which might help the force to understand and learn from victims' experience.

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 the national report.

1. The force should conduct a review of the complete business process for tackling domestic abuse to deal with the current fragmented approach.
2. There is a need for improved leadership, ownership and overall governance of domestic abuse at a strategic level. There are inherent gaps and risks in business processes. The force does not have an overarching strategy to develop and improve services to victims either by the police alone or with partner agencies.
3. The force should review call handling standards and the advice given to victims, as well as ensuring that systems are researched for relevant information to help assess risk and inform attending officers.
4. There is an inconsistent approach to quality assurance and incident closure by the control room supervisor and inspector which should be reviewed.
5. There is a focus by officers on the perpetrator and crime, when dealing with domestic abuse, as opposed to the safety of the victim. The force needs to ensure that there is focus on the risk posed to the victim, as well as on the perpetrator and the crime.
6. A review of the training and awareness provision for domestic abuse needs to be undertaken to ensure that all staff are able to identify, understand and deal effectively with domestic abuse.
7. The force should consider improving the provision and access to information material for victims of domestic abuse. The available material was limited and in some cases, information contained within the material was out of date.
8. There is little evidence of in-depth partnership working. Partners are committed to improving services for victims of domestic abuse. They need the support from the police at all levels, to be able to achieve this. The force needs to ensure that partner relationships are improved and maintained.

9. The inspection found that all high risk cases were referred to the domestic abuse adviser (police constable) for review and or case management. The role and capacity of the domestic abuse adviser should be reviewed as a matter of urgency due to the unacceptable demand placed on one individual.
10. The role of the MARAC team was not clear during the inspection. This should be reviewed and clarification of the role of this unit should be communicated to all staff.
11. The force should ensure a consistent approach to the risk-assessment process and that all staff understand it. The criteria that differentiate between the levels of risk should be communicated – in particular the difference between very high risk ('high risk plus') compared to high risk.
12. A formal reassessment of risk should be undertaken throughout the process particularly at trigger points, for example, release from custody. At present there is an inconsistent approach to this and very little reassessment takes place.
13. The force does not have a minimum standard for the management of domestic abuse victims at a neighbourhood level. This should be reviewed, and force expectations communicated clearly to staff.
14. It was felt that where victims did not wish to pursue a complaint or support a prosecution, less impetus is given to the investigative process. The force needs to ensure that it provides a consistent approach to all domestic abuse incidents.
15. The force should have an agreed criterion or process for dealing with non-crime domestic abuse incidents that are repeat cases.
16. In non-violent cases, custody officers are not charging to the specialist domestic violence court. This is due to a lack of understanding about what these courts are designed to do. The force should make clear that charges for all domestic abuse related offending should be bailed to the local special domestic violence court.
17. The force should ensure there is a clear process in place where victims of domestic abuse are notified when a perpetrator is released from prison or custody. This should also instigate a re-assessment of risk.

Glossary

Bail conditions

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

Body worn camera

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

CAADA (Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse)

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

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

CCTV

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

Clare's Law

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

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

Code of Practice for Victims of Crime

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

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

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

Coercive control

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

Control room

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

Counter-allegation

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

Crime Scene Investigator

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

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

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

Domestic Homicide Review

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

Domestic Violence Prevention Notices (DVPN)

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

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

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

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

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

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

Frontline

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

Golden hour

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

Harassment

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

House-to- house

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

High risk

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

IDVA – independent domestic violence adviser

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

Incident

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

Intimate Partner Violence

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

MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference)

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

MASH – Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

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

Medium risk

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

National Domestic Abuse helpline

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

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

Partnership

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

Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE)

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

Positive action

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

Problem-solving

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

Refuge

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

Risk assessment

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

Safeguarding

The term safeguarding is applied when protecting children and other vulnerable people. The UK Government has defined the term 'safeguarding children' as: *"The process of protecting children from abuse or neglect, preventing impairment of their health and development, and ensuring they are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care that enables children to have optimum life chances and enter adulthood successfully."*

Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)

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

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

Standard Risk

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

Victim Personal Statement

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

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

Vulnerable

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

What Works Centre for Crime Reduction

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

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