

Surrey 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.

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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*
- *financial*
- *emotional”.*

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

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 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

⁵ 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 Surrey 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.

⁶ 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 Surrey⁷

Calls for assistance



In Surrey, domestic abuse accounts for 2% of calls to the police for assistance. The force was unable to provide the number of these calls that were from repeat victims.

Crime

9%

Domestic abuse accounts for 9% of all recorded crime.

Assault with intent

16%

Surrey recorded 82 assaults with intent to cause serious harm, of these 13 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

36%

The force also recorded 2,969 assaults with injury, of these 1,071 were domestic abuse related. This is 36% of all assaults with injury recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

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.

Harassment

51%

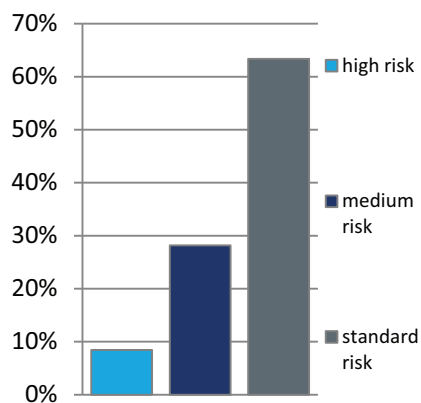
The force recorded 1,013 harassment offences, of these 520 were domestic abuse related. This is 51% of all harassment offences recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

Sexual offences

10%

The force also recorded 590 sexual offences, of these 61 were domestic abuse related. This is 10% of all sexual offences recorded for the 12 months to end of August 2013.

Risk levels



On 31 August 2013 Surrey had 71 active domestic abuse cases; 8% were high risk, 28% were medium risk, and 63% were standard risk.

Arrests



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

Outcomes



Surrey recorded 4,339 domestic abuse related crimes for the 12 months to the end of August 2013. Of these crimes, 17% resulted in a charge, 6% resulted in a caution and, 28% had an out of court disposal, for example, a fixed penalty notice for disorderly conduct.

Executive summary

There are a number of areas that require further development by Surrey Police in order to tackle domestic abuse and make victims safer.

Tackling domestic abuse is a priority for the police and crime commissioner and the chief constable. However, the force recognises that more must be done to improve its response. The chief constable has taken personal responsibility for ensuring that improvements are delivered.

There is a fragmented approach and gaps in service to some victims, particularly those who are assessed as having a standard risk of serious harm. There is a lack of clarity about who is responsible for safeguarding these victims through the criminal justice process and updating victims when a perpetrator is released from prison. This is a concern.

There is sound partnership working and the multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) are regarded as working well, with information being shared promptly.

There is no structured process in place to ensure that learning from domestic homicide reviews is embedded and reflected in the way the force will deal with domestic abuse in the future.

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

Identifying victims

Victims of domestic abuse are identified by the force through calls to the contact centre through their attendance at police stations and referrals from other agencies, such as the health service or social care or through the MARAC. Where incidents require deployment, they are flagged to the force control room (FCR) which then manages the deployment process.

Within the contact centre staff are trained to question callers to establish the nature of the call, the risk level to the victim and other people involved in the incident. Officers should be sent to all incidents that are identified as domestic abuse. Contact centre staff research police databases to gather available information about a caller, the victim, alleged perpetrator and family or address. This information is passed via the FCR to attending officers to help build a picture of the threat of harm and risk to the victim and other people involved, for example a child. This part of the process works well.

Keeping victims safe

Domestic abuse is regarded as important by the force. Officers and staff have had relatively little training in respect of domestic abuse. However, they are encouraged to use their own discretion to think beyond using the domestic abuse, stalking and harassment (DASH) risk assessment as a 'box-ticking' exercise. This helps them make a rounded assessment of the level of risk that a victim of domestic abuse faces, which is vital if appropriate measures are to be put in place to keep the victim and children safe.

All victims who are assessed as high or medium risk are referred to and supported by, the public protection investigation unit's (PPIU) officers and staff. Force policy is that standard-risk domestic abuse is dealt with by the prisoner investigation unit (PIU). However, there is some evidence of confusion over who deals with those victims who have been assessed as being at a standard risk. Ownership of cases moves through the organisation, with different officers, staff and departments being responsible for the case and victim safety at different stages. This can mean that victims receive a disjointed response, particularly in respect of contact about their case. They may not be contacted at all, as officers or staff think it is someone else's responsibility, or they may be contacted by a number of different people, which can be equally concerning (as victims may lose confidence in the police response if they are repeatedly asked similar questions by different staff).

Management of risk

Officers and their supervisors review the completed DASH risk assessment form to make sure the assessment made is accurate, based on the information available. All cases of domestic abuse are referred to the PPIU. Those cases that are assessed as standard risk are dealt with by the force's PIU. This team deals with domestic abuse in the same way as any other crime and does not have staff with specialist skills.

The force has recently introduced a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) and its MARACs are regarded as working well. There are good relationships with partners which means that information is exchanged promptly, and victim safety plans are put in place to reduce risk.

However, there is a lack of knowledge among frontline officers about what the specialist team does. Despite force policy, there is also a lack of clarity about who is responsible for victim safety throughout the investigation and criminal justice process, particularly for standard-risk cases.

Organisational effectiveness for keeping people safe

The PCC and force are keen to improve services for domestic abuse victims and they are working with partners to do this.

Domestic abuse performance, strategy and delivery of services are discussed at a number of police and multi-agency meetings. The force has a number of plans, either directly focused on domestic abuse or with a domestic abuse element within them. However, at present, the force needs to apply more rigour and improve the implementation process in order to achieve success.

It is not always clear who is responsible for updating victims and re-assessing their risk when perpetrators are released from custody. This could result in a victim being contacted by a number of people or not contacted at all, and the force and partner agencies might not be aware of the victim's increased risk.

The force does not have a clear process to make sure any learning from domestic abuse incidents is understood and that action is taken to improve.

Findings

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

Victims of domestic abuse are identified by the force through calls to the contact centre through their attendance at police stations and referrals from other agencies, such as the health service or social care or through the MARAC. Where incidents require deployment, they are flagged to the force control room (FCR) which then manages the deployment process.

Within the contact centre staff are trained to question callers to establish the nature of the call, the risk level to the victim and other people involved in the incident. Officers should be sent to all incidents that are identified as domestic abuse. Contact centre staff research police databases to gather available information about a caller, the victim, alleged perpetrator and family or address. This information is passed via the FCR to attending officers to help build a picture of the threat of harm and risk to the victim and other people involved, for example a child. This part of the process works well.

Contact centre staff must complete certain actions when dealing with callers reporting a domestic abuse incident. These actions ensure that they obtain enough detail to accurately assess risk, such as whether there are children at the address. There is a set of questions that call handlers follow to determine if the incident being reported is domestic abuse. The call handler will try to keep the conversation free flowing to try and draw as much information from the caller as possible and therefore better understand the risk presented. Staff within the contact centre and FCR receive regular training on domestic abuse and those spoken to by HMIC had a good understanding of their responsibilities.

HMIC listened to a small sample of calls and found in the majority of the cases (90 percent) the call handlers asked questions which established whether the caller or any other person, for example a child, was at immediate risk of harm. This risk assessment was recorded in the incident log.

When a call is received by the control centre, the system does not automatically identify whether there has been a previous call from that person. However, call handlers are required to ask the caller whether they have previously suffered a domestic abuse incident. Having a record of the history is important for the call handler as it means they are in possession of information that may help to inform them of what initial actions need to be taken to keep a victim safe. This information can also be passed to attending officers. Staff within the contact

centre were confident and empathetic when dealing with callers who were experiencing domestic abuse.

Other police systems should also be checked to establish whether there is any information available which will help the contact centre staff (and officers who attend the incident) establish the level of risk the caller faces. The systems hold information such as previous calls to the address; information about the caller and alleged perpetrator; information relating to children in the house, who may also be at risk; and other actions that may have been taken in the past, for example court proceedings or the involvement of other agencies. There are intelligence officers within the FCR to do these checks. This information is passed to the call handler, and is then given to the attending officers. In the majority of the incident logs (90 percent) reviewed by HMIC there was a record of these checks having been done. However, frontline staff stated that the information they receive from the FCR is often about officer and staff safety, rather than the victim, perpetrator and incident. While this is important, it is essential that officers attending a domestic abuse incident are given as much information as possible, to help them understand the risk faced by a victim and their family.

The force has a policy to attend all reported incidents of domestic abuse. The decision on how quickly resources have to attend is based on the contact centre's assessment of threat, harm and risk faced by the victim. The FCR call handler then locates and dispatches the nearest available officer, usually a response officer (called the targeted patrol team), to the incident. Unless there is a risk to an officer's safety the FCR do not usually deploy more than one officer to incidents of domestic abuse. This means that the officer is unable to easily separate the parties involved in the incident, and hear each account for what has happened in isolation.

Contact centre staff receive inputs on domestic abuse at their regular training days. These inputs include learning from incidents. A wide spectrum of what domestic abuse is, including coercive control is recognised and understood by officers and staff.

A repeat victim is defined by the force as someone who has experienced more than one incident in the previous 12 months. Staff demonstrate a good understanding that any case where a victim has reported domestic abuse to the police or another agency or where a victim states they have been subjected to abuse in the past is a 'repeat case'. This will influence any risk assessment that is made.

All domestic abuse incidents are reviewed by a local policing supervisor to make sure that relevant evidence has been captured at the scene of an

incident. They also review the DASH risk assessment form to make sure it is completed correctly, and the assessment, based on the information available, is accurate. They will provide support and advice to those officers attending incidents. Supervisors have not been given any specific training to oversee domestic abuse incidents.

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

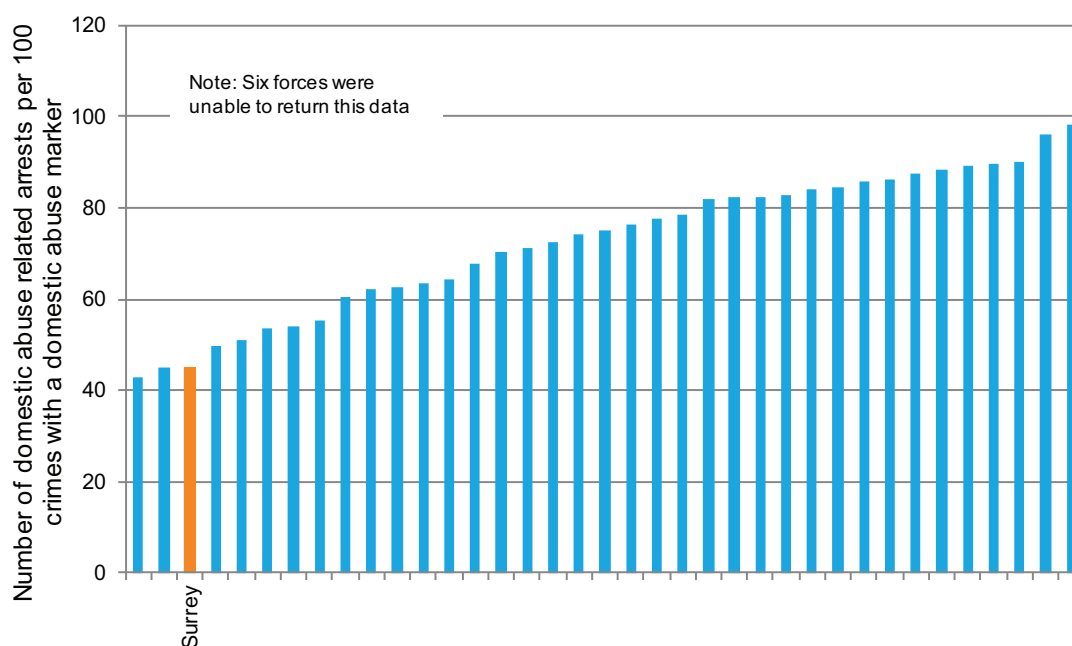
Domestic abuse is regarded as important by the force. Officers and staff have had relatively little training in respect of domestic abuse. However, they are encouraged to use their own discretion to think beyond using the domestic abuse, stalking and harassment (DASH) risk assessment as a 'box-ticking' exercise. This helps them make a rounded assessment of the level of risk that a victim of domestic abuse faces, which is vital if appropriate measures are to be put in place to keep the victim and children safe.

All victims who are assessed as high or medium risk are referred to and supported by, the public protection investigation unit's (PPIU) officers and staff. Force policy is that standard-risk domestic abuse is dealt with by the prisoner investigation unit (PIU). However, there is some evidence of confusion over who deals with those victims who have been assessed as being at a standard risk. Ownership of cases moves through the organisation, with different officers, staff and departments being responsible for the case and victim safety at different stages. This can mean that victims receive a disjointed response, particularly in respect of contact about their case. They may not be contacted at all, as officers or staff think it is someone else's responsibility, or they may be contacted by a number of different people, which can be equally concerning (as victims may lose confidence in the police response if they are repeatedly asked similar questions by different staff).

For every 100 domestic abuse crimes recorded there were 45 arrests in Surrey. For most forces the number is between 45 and 90.⁸ The low arrest rate compared to other forces indicates that this is an issue the force may want to review.

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

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



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Source: HMIC data collection

Dealing with domestic abuse is a priority for the force. The PCC has a number of ‘people’s priorities’, two of which relate to and specifically refer to domestic abuse:

- Take a zero-tolerance approach to policing.
- Put the victims at the centre of the criminal justice system.

The force has a strong customer focus of “putting Surrey public first”. It is seeking to increase the levels of reported violence related to domestic abuse as this will show confidence in victims in feeling able to report incidents. There is an additional focus on reducing the level of repeat victims.

Officers and staff understand that tackling domestic abuse is one of a number of priorities for the force. They understand the importance of their role in properly assessing threat, harm and risk at each incident they attend. However, frontline officers state that their focus is on volume crime detection and reduction, for

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

example, on vehicle crime and burglaries, rather than the detection and reduction of domestic abuse incidents. This is due to the messages they receive from the force about the need to reduce volume crime (rather than domestic-abuse-related crime) and the lack of recognition they get when they deal well with an incident and victim.

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 adults and children. There is a structure of meetings in place, for example the community and public safety board and the domestic abuse development group, which ensures that the necessary programmes of work to improve police and partnership response to domestic abuse are delivered. The PCC, force and partners recognise the importance of these groups and ensure that the appropriate level of representation and support is given to them.

Officers and staff have previously received training specifically about domestic abuse. This is included the completion DASH risk assessment process which must be completed at every domestic abuse incident. However, other than for those who have recently joined the force, or attended other ad hoc training, for the majority of officers and staff, this training was approximately three or four years ago. There are force policies and procedures that officers can refer to for guidance. The force recognises that it needs to develop officers' knowledge, understanding and awareness. To address this, refresher training is being developed. DASH risk assessment refresher training has started, with the first session taking place in mid-November 2013. Some 75 officers and staff from the PPIU, domestic abuse champions (see below) and other supervisors within the local policing divisions have been trained. A training package is also being created which supervisors can cascade to their staff.

Despite this lack of formal training, staff display a good understanding of coercive control, stalking and harassment. They display commitment and willingness to obtain the best evidence at domestic abuse incidents and taking action to make the victim feel safe.

The force has recently introduced domestic abuse champions. These are frontline officers (mostly supervisors) based in the local policing divisions, who will be receiving a higher level of domestic abuse awareness training. Their role is to offer support, advice and guidance to those officers dealing with domestic abuse incidents.

The DASH risk assessment form is used to establish the level of risk to a victim. It has a number of questions that must be asked in order to assess the risk to the victim accurately, and officers understand why they are asking these questions. In addition to the assessed level of risk identified through the

questions, officers are able to use 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, harm and risk to victims, and that their role is to do whatever they can to reduce this.

There is a clear commitment displayed by staff in the contact centre and FCR, and attending and specialist officers to understand the risk to everyone connected to domestic abuse incidents, in particular, children and any vulnerable adults. 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.

The force has a policy that officers will attend incidents – including domestic abuse incidents – alone, unless it is thought their safety is at risk, in which case, more than one officer will be sent. This means that if they are on their own, they are not able to speak to each party separately to gain an understanding of what has taken place, which could mean they are not being given the full or correct details of an incident. Once in attendance, officers' main priority is the safety of the victim and anyone else who may be at risk, so they must take some form of 'positive action'. Positive action does not necessarily mean arrest, but can mean support for victims and witnesses, and referral to social services. The action must provide the necessary safety arrangements for the victim and other people present. Officers are expected to make an arrest where an offence has been committed. Officers are also expected to complete safety planning for the victim. The management of risk is the responsibility of the attending officer until – if it is a high or medium risk case – it is passed to the PPIU, or if a standard-risk crime case, to the PIU. If it is a standard-risk incident, then no further safeguarding is provided to the victim after the officer has left the incident, unless the victim has been given details of support agencies to contact. Immediate action taken by officers is monitored by their supervisors.

When officers attend a domestic abuse incident and make an arrest, the case is dealt with by either the PPIU or the PIU. The cases are allocated for investigation based on the threat, harm and risk to the victim, rather than the seriousness of the crime committed. This means that a case where a minor crime is committed, but the risk to a victim is high or medium will be dealt with by an experienced officer who will have the skills and confidence to achieve the best possible outcome for a victim. This is positive.

The investigation of offences where the victim has been assessed as standard risk are dealt with by a PIU officer. This means that a victim may be supported

and managed by an inexperienced officer, who may not have the skills or confidence to achieve the best possible outcome for them. Staff and officers, both on the front line and in the specialist units, indicate they would benefit from better communication between teams. There is some confusion as to who (which team or unit) is responsible for what. This means that where cases are passed between teams and units, there is a danger that appropriate action may not be taken, as there may be an expectation from one team or unit that another would take the action. It could also be the case that a number of different people could be taking the same or similar action, which can be equally concerning. The responsibility of and support to those victims who have been assessed as high and medium risk was robust, but it was less so in respect of those victims who are assessed as standard risk.

All domestic abuse incidents where a DASH risk assessment has been completed are reviewed and re-assessed by supervisors. They are then reviewed again by staff within the PPIU. This means that, at the start of police involvement, there is a level of scrutiny of risk which helps to ensure that the action taken and level of support given to victims is appropriate.

HMIC reviewed a small number of files, and found that in the majority of cases the actions taken by officers when initially attending the scene of a domestic abuse crime help to provide a better prospect of a successful outcome for the victim.

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

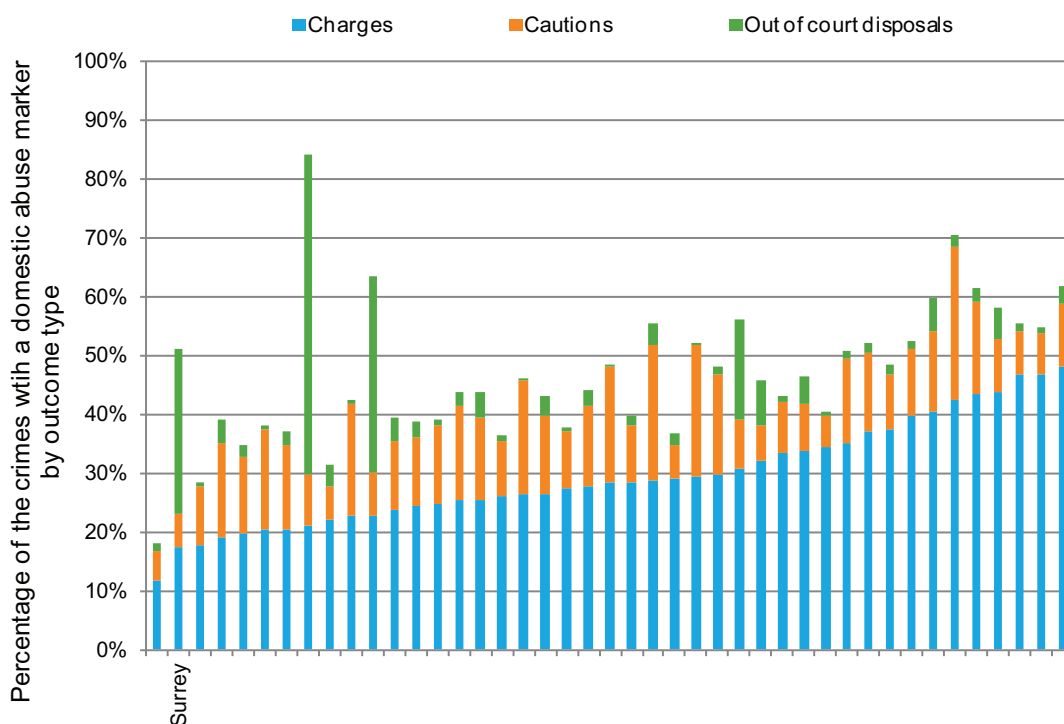
Officers and their supervisors review the completed DASH risk assessment form to make sure the assessment made is accurate, based on the information available. All cases of domestic abuse are referred to the PPIU. Those cases that are assessed as standard risk are dealt with by the force's PIU. This team deals with domestic abuse in the same way as any other crime and does not have staff with specialist skills.

The force has recently introduced a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) and its MARACs are regarded as working well. There are good relationships with partners which means that information is exchanged promptly, and victim safety plans are put in place to reduce risk.

However, there is a lack of knowledge among frontline officers about what the specialist team does. Despite force policy, there is also a lack of clarity about who is responsible for victim safety throughout the investigation and criminal justice process, particularly for standard-risk cases.

Surrey recorded 4,339 domestic abuse related crimes for the 12 months to the end of August 2013¹⁰. Of these crimes, 17 percent resulted in a charge, six percent resulted in a caution and 28 percent had an out-of-court disposal, for example a fixed penalty notice for disorderly conduct.

Figure 2: Percentage of different outcome types used for crimes with a domestic abuse marker for the 12 months to 31 August 2013

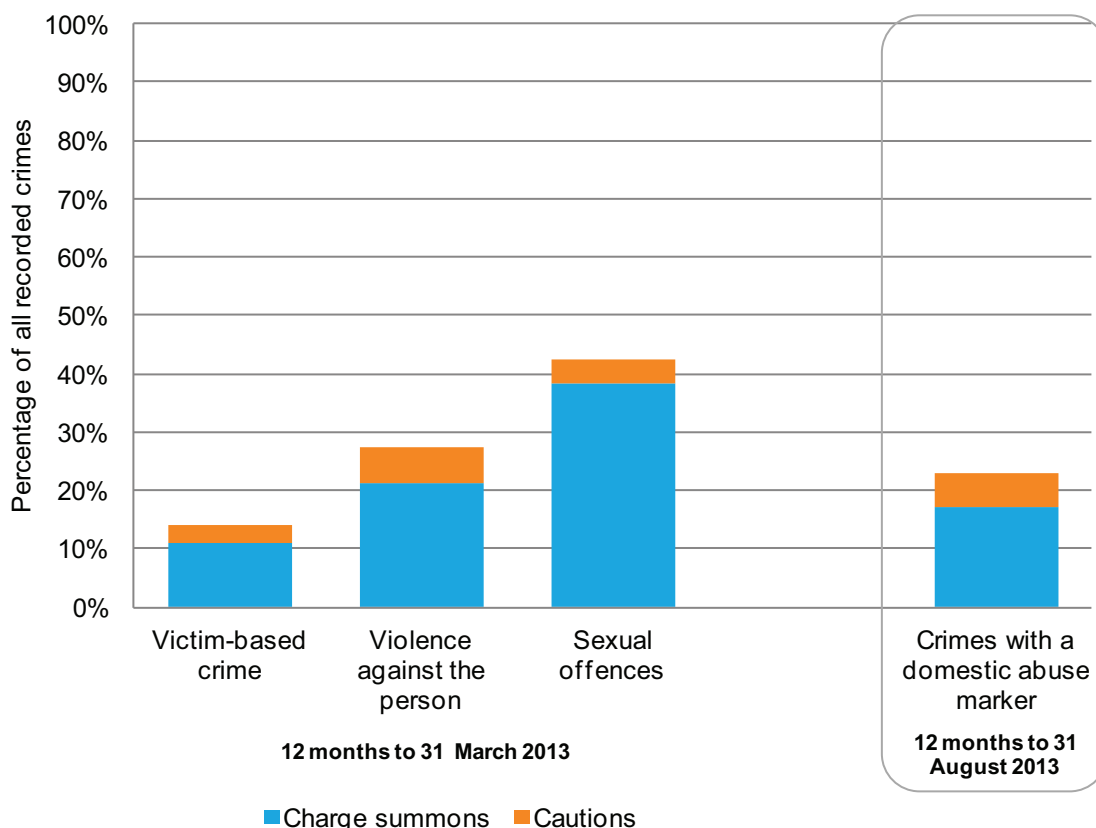


Source: HMIC data collection

Surrey 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.

¹⁰ 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 marker¹¹



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

The force has specialist officers and staff within its PPIU. They deal with child abuse, vulnerable adult abuse and domestic abuse crimes and incidents. They have not received any additional training in respect of tackling domestic abuse and managing the safety of the victims. However, their level of expertise is enhanced by the experience they gain on a daily basis when dealing with domestic abuse incidents, victims, offenders and other partners and agencies. Work is allocated to these officers and staff based on the level of threat, harm and risk. This means that, due to staffing pressures, a domestic abuse incident, particularly a historic case, may not always get a timely allocation of resources to it. The force is aware of this and a business case is being prepared, proposing an increase in the number of staff within the PPIU, to ensure that all

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

incidents of abuse get the appropriate level of response and resource allocated to them.

Specialist officers and staff within the PPIU review all completed DASH risk assessment forms. They 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 high or medium levels of risk, or those who are repeat victims, should receive appropriate support and actions to reduce risk, for example, help to secure their house or a mobile phone to contact the police in an emergency. If there are cases that raise further concerns, or there are standard-risk cases that are repeat incidents, the PPIU will conduct the investigation and support the victim and manage safety arrangements. This provides reassurance that all victims will receive the appropriate support as dictated by the information available to the reviewing officers at the start of police involvement. However, HMIC is concerned that once the investigation has been concluded, there is a gap on reviewing and re-assessing the risk level for victims, and who has the responsibility for this.

The specialist officers within the PPIU have not received any additional training in relation to domestic abuse awareness and investigation. However, the majority of the specialist officers are very experienced and have been working in the domestic abuse area for a number of years. When speaking to them they were very confident and knowledgeable. Unfortunately, officers on the front line and other teams do not really understand what the specialist unit does, and who has responsibility for what.

The force has a MASH, where police and partner agencies (children services and mental health) work together to protect vulnerable people. This unit risk-assesses cases (domestic abuse, child abuse and vulnerable adult abuse) and shares information with other agencies. The MASH will continue to be developed, and other partners have agreed to join it (health and probation). A countywide *Domestic Abuse Strategy for Surrey 2013–2018*¹² has been agreed. This is a joint strategy with other partners and agencies, as much of the victim support and assistance is provided by partners, who have considerable influence over keeping victims safe. An action plan to deliver the objectives within the strategy is under development.

The force has access to two independent domestic abuse advisers (IDVAs) and ten IDVA trained outreach workers. The role of the IDVAs and outreach workers is to offer advice, advocacy, information and support via face-to-face meetings,

¹² Available from: www.surreycc.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0008/709532/Surrey-DA-Strategy-2013-18.pdf

telephone calls, text messages and email. They offer 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 undertake risk assessments using the DASH risk assessment process and safety planning to maximise safety and minimise risk and harm. They are not managed or controlled by the police.

They are currently jointly-funded by the force, PCC and Surrey County Council. There are good working relationships with partners including health, housing and the local authorities. This helps reduce risk to victims through sharing information between organisations in order to develop a better understanding of risk. There are four MARACs within the county. These each meet on a monthly basis and are attended by police and partner agencies. The purpose of the MARACs is to review high-risk cases, which have been referred by any of the attending agencies. The MARACs assesses any new information and ensures that every organisation takes responsibility for what they can do to reduce the risk to a victim. The Surrey MARACs are regarded as well run, and they have good representation from each of the agencies. This means that when high-risk victims' cases are discussed, they are likely to receive a good multi-agency response to reduce risk. A detective inspector from the PPIU chairs each of the MARACs.

The PPIU re-assess all incidents and risk assessments. Safety plans are also reviewed to ensure that all that needs to be done to help make victims safe is being done. There are no formal mechanisms in place to ensure that at key stages in the investigative process, risk is routinely re-assessed and appropriate action taken to protect the victim. For example, there is no re-assessment on release of a perpetrator from police custody, or when a court date is approaching. However, staff from the PPIU said that risk assessments were re-assessed at trigger points. HMIC spoke to a number of frontline officers who said they would benefit from having more information about domestic abuse victims, perpetrators and locations of offences. This would help them provide a better service, particularly in respect of keeping the victim safe.

The majority of information on victims, perpetrators and incidents, together with information received from the MARAC, is available on police systems. However, particularly in the case of the MARAC, information officers were either not aware of it or did not access it.

There is a lack of clarity about who is dealing with the victims of domestic abuse throughout the investigation and criminal justice process. The role of the PPIU is unclear to many staff, who do not understand the structures and processes within it. The identity of the domestic abuse champions is also not widely known within the contact centre or among frontline officers. Therefore, they are not

being sent routinely to domestic abuse incidents or asked for advice. This means that the skill and expertise of these officers is not being made available to support the victims of domestic abuse and attending officers.

Officers attending incidents are expected to produce a safety plan to reduce risk to victims. This might include re-housing the victim or perpetrator, or ensuring that any future call to an address is treated as an emergency by marking police systems to show this. At the start of police involvement these safety plans are reviewed and updated by the PPIU. Any change in circumstances, for example, when a perpetrator is released from police custody, should mean the risk assessment is reviewed. In such a situation, it is not certain that a safety plan would be reviewed and updated to deal with any changes in risk. It is also not clear – particularly in those cases where the PPIU is not available, or in those cases that have been assessed as standard risk – who has responsibility for doing this or who makes sure a victim is aware that this had happened or is to happen. The PIU deals with standard risk domestic abuse crime as they would any other crime, such as burglaries or vehicle crime. No additional focus is given to incidents of domestic abuse and in particular victim safety and support.

The MARAC process in Surrey is regarded as working well. Both police and partner agencies, including the voluntary sector (for example, Women's Aid and Refuge) refer cases into the MARACs and each is discussed to ensure that risk is being managed by all agencies and information is shared. Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA) has recently analysed the outcomes from the MARAC process. The findings will help the force understand how the process is working and where it can be improved.

All staff, throughout Surrey Police, display a commitment to reducing threat, harm and risk to victims of domestic abuse. Each understands their role in this, although there is a lack of clarity about what the specialist team is responsible for. In addition, there are no minimum standard for how the safer neighbourhood teams (SNTs) across the force should respond to and manage domestic abuse victims on their areas. In some areas, this work is not being done by SNTs because it is not recognised as a priority.

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

The PCC and force are keen to improve services for domestic abuse victims and they are working with partners to do this.

Domestic abuse performance, strategy and delivery of services are discussed at a number of police and multi-agency meetings. The force has a number of plans, either directly focused on domestic abuse or with a domestic abuse element within them. However, at present, the force needs to apply more rigour and improve the implementation process in order to achieve success.

It is not always clear who is responsible for updating victims and re-assessing their risk when perpetrators are released from custody. This could result in a victim being contacted by a number of people or not contacted at all, and the force and partner agencies might not be aware of the victim's increased risk.

The force does not have a clear process to make sure any learning from domestic abuse incidents is understood and that action is taken to improve.

It is essential that victims are updated prior to a perpetrator being released from prison and their levels of risk re-assessed in light of this. There is a lack of clarity about who is responsible for informing a victim of a release; it could be the witness care officers within the criminal justice department, the specialist officers within the PPIU, the IDVAs, outreach workers, or the officer who dealt with the case. This means that some victims may not be updated before a perpetrator is released, and a true understanding of their risk may not be established because the professionals involved may think someone else has done this. In addition, a victim might be contacted by a number of people, which could again be an issue for them. However, if a perpetrator is bailed or released by a court, then the victim should be updated in a timely way, as the force has made a commitment that an officer will attend every court hearing relating to domestic abuse crime. This means that their level of risk should be re-assessed at this critical time.

At the time of inspection, the force did not have a process to manage, or actively police, those serial domestic abuse perpetrators who pose the greatest risk. Frontline officers state that they do not routinely receive information about those perpetrators who are living or visiting their areas. Officers and staff were keen to know who the high-risk perpetrators and victims are in their communities so that they will be able to provide a better service to help keep victims safe. By not being involved in the whole process and by not knowing all the information available about a person or incident, they felt they were just

providing an immediate response to an incident, rather than being fully equipped to give the best service possible.

SNT officers are invited to MARACs and their area inspector sends details of the high-risk cases in their area. However, there is evidence that SNT officers are not consistently made aware of the 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 through previous attendance at a domestic abuse incident, or from colleagues. Access to systems which contain details of domestic abuse incidents and the intelligence associated with these is available, however, not all officers were aware of the full range of information that can be accessed, for example details of the involvement of, and actions from, the MARAC. As with other frontline officers, those SNT officers we spoke to during the inspection stated they want to be made aware, on a regular basis, of vulnerable and high-risk victims in their area. These are missed opportunities for the force to equip officers with improved information about those who present the most risk, and those who are at greatest risk in their area.

Where there have been no further calls from victims who have been victims on a number of occasions, there is no mechanism to understand why they have stopped calling. This is a gap for the force, as the reason repeat victims of domestic abuse stop calling is often not because the abuse has stopped.

There are two domestic homicides currently under review. Recommendations from these reviews have action plans which are led by the head of the PPIU. The public protection programme board has oversight of this process (see below). However, while the force states that corporate learning is embedded from these reviews or any other reviews through its own internal communication campaigns, at the time of the inspection the HMIC found no evidence of this.

The PCC's police and crime plan has a number of 'people's priorities', two of which are related to domestic abuse. There are no actual targets in relation to these priorities. The force recognises that its approach to domestic abuse performance management needs to change. It has recently introduced a crime performance board which scrutinises key domestic abuse data, for example the number of repeat victims, arrests and criminal charges. In addition, the board looked at links to other crimes, and the number of DASH risk assessments (at each risk level). By analysing these data, the force is able to understand what the issue is, what this means for the force and what actions it needs to take to reduce the number of repeat victims. These actions are included in the *Domestic Abuse Tactical Plan 2013/14*. While the most important measure for the force, for domestic abuse, is how victims feel about the service, there has been no work at this time which gives the force a good understanding of this.

The force had identified a number of actions it needs to take to improve its response in tackling public protection and safeguarding issues which include domestic abuse. To do this, it has a number of plans which are either directly focused on domestic abuse or they have a domestic abuse element within them. However, at present, the force needs to apply more rigor, oversight and governance to these plans. This, together with a review of the actions within each of the plans, to identify the interdependencies between them, and to assess the risks and priorities associated with each of them, will help ensure that the force achieves success in its ambition to improve the delivery of services to the people of Surrey.

The force had recognised that it needs to have more robust governance and oversight arrangements and so it has recently introduced a public protection programme board. The purpose of this board is to provide strategic leadership and direction for the force's approach to public protection and safeguarding, oversee the delivery of strategic and tactical plans related to public protection and safeguarding, and to support the crime performance board in its oversight of public protection performance.

The force does not have a formalised process that manages perpetrators. Its focus is predominantly on victim support through other agencies. However, the force recognises this as an area for improvement and is developing a process that will focus on managing serial domestic abuse perpetrators and actively policing those who pose the greatest risk to victims. Frontline officers indicated that they are not aware of who the serial perpetrators or repeat victims are in their areas, because, at the time of the inspection, this information was not communicated routinely. Staff and officers said that they would benefit from having this information given to them at the regular briefings they have.

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 publicise to staff that domestic abuse is a priority, both in terms of investigation (reduction and detection of incidents) and victim safety.
2. The force should publicise the role of the public protection investigation unit in order that all staff understand what it does, and how it can help make victims safer.
3. The force should review the training and guidance currently provided to all staff including enhanced training for those staff within the public protection investigation unit.
4. The force should review the current policy on deployment and attendance at domestic abuse incidents where only one officer is sent. Two officers would enable the separation of parties in order to get a true account of what has happened.
5. The force should review the contact officers and staff have with victims throughout their involvement with the police, to give one single point of contact who is able to update them and ensure that the risk assessment is reviewed at every stage, to avoid fragmentation of service. This should include a process to update and re-assess risk to victims when perpetrators are released from prison.
6. The force should review the mechanism of how information is provided to officers in respect of both victims and those perpetrators assessed as being the greatest risk to victims.
7. The force should set minimum standards, through a mandated policy, of how safer neighbourhood teams across the force should respond and manage domestic abuse victims on their areas.
8. The force should apply more rigor, oversight and accountability in respect of the various domestic abuse and associated action plans.
9. The force should review the actions within each of the plans and identify interdependencies between each plan, and the risks and priorities associated with each of the actions.

10. The force should review the domestic abuse training programme for the force to ensure all staff have an understanding of, and recognise all types of domestic abuse.
11. The force should ensure there is a process by which learning from domestic homicide review, and other learning is embedded in the way the force deals with domestic abuse in the future.

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.

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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.